
South African Labour Bulletin

volume 12 number 5 July 1987

The South African Labour Bulletin

303 Geldenhuys, 33 Jorissen Street, Braamfontein, South Africa
P.O. Box 31073, Braamfontein 2017, South Africa
Phone 3398133

Editorial Board

Cape Town:

Johann Maree, Dave Kaplan, Di Cooper

Durban:

Rob Lambert, Ari Sitas, Bonginkosi Nzimande, Charles Meth

Johannesburg:

Eddie Webster, Phil Bonner, Doug Hindson, Jon Lewis

Production: Jon Lewis, Maimuna Suliman, Coletane Markham, Jabu Matiko

Published since April 1974.

Eight issues yearly. Guidelines for contributors and subscription form on back page.

The South African Labour Bulletin is a refereed journal.

The views expressed in the contributions are not necessarily those of the editorial board.

Contents

volume 12 number 5, July 1987

	page
Editorial comment	1
<hr/>	
briefings/reports	
Jabu Matiko & Coletane Markham	Harassment of COSATU 3
SALB correspondent	NUMSA launch 7
SALB correspondent	CCAWUSA congress 17
SALB correspondent	CCAWUSA merger 22
SALB correspondent	Postal strike victory 26
SALB correspondent	SARHWU victory 30
NURW statement on the SATS strike	41
CWIU statement	National congress 46
SALB correspondent	May day 1987 47
LMG	5-6 May stayaway 49
LMG	June 16 stayaway 52
<hr/>	
interview: Jay Naidoo	57
<hr/>	
debate: Isizwe Collective	Workerism - a rejoinder 67
<hr/>	
FOCUS: Labour and the Agrarian Question	
Sebastian Hempe/FAWU	Unionising the farms 78
Phillip Masia/OVGWU	87
Mahlomola Skhosana/NACTU	Five million unprotected workers 91
Jeremy Krikler	Transition to a socialist agriculture 94
<hr/>	
Labour Research Service	Economic notes 122

Editorial comment: harassment of SALB staff

At 2 am on May 7 1987 Labour Bulletin research officer Jabu Matiko's home in Alexandra was destroyed by petrol bombs. On the same night the offices of COSATU were bombed. Fortunately Jabu was able to escape this attack and ran outside while huge flames gutted his house, also destroying all his clothes and possessions. The editorial board is deeply disturbed by this attack on a member of our staff.

Jabu joined the Bulletin at the beginning of 1987 after serving for three years as an organiser in the Metal and Allied Workers Union.

Our managing editor, Dr Jon Lewis (who is a British citizen), has been ordered to leave South Africa. We deplore this arbitrary intervention by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Jon Lewis first arrived in South Africa as a research student from the University of Cambridge in May 1976. His research on South African trade union history culminated in the publication of his book Industrialisation and trade union organisation in South Africa. He was appointed editor of the SALB in February 1984.

Under Jon's editorship the SALB successfully recorded and analysed the major developments in the labour field. In this regard we would point to the growing politicisation of trade unionism and the Bulletin's recording of this development. Jon was a founder member of the Labour Monitoring Group which played an important role in recording the re-emergence of stayaways since late 1984.

During Jon's editorship the circulation of the SALB more than doubled and the sale of Bulletins at union meetings became a regular feature.

Jon brought to the Bulletin a particular combination of academic scholarship and political commitment to the labour movement. This was reflected in the pages of the Bulletin and the expanded international coverage over this period.

He leaves behind in South Africa his wife, Savetree, and a two-week old child, Leila, both South African citizens who will join him later. The editorial board wishes Jon and his family the very best for the future. We look forward to their eventual return.

Meanwhile, Shamim Marie has resigned from the Durban committee of the Labour Bulletin, having now left the area. The editorial board wishes to thank her for her efforts on behalf of the Bulletin. Her contribution reflects her interests and commitment: her research into Natal's divided working class and her involvement in a women's group and journal in the Durban area. In particular Shamim helped prepare the focus edition on Natal published last year. We hope to maintain contact in the future.

The Durban committee however regains Charles Meth who is rejoining the editorial board. Charles' contribution to the Bulletin in previous years is well known (see SALB 10.1).

The Cape Town Committee is also enlarged with the addition of Di Cooper to the editorial board. Di has worked as an organiser since the late 1970s for first the General Workers Union and then for Transport and General Workers Union. The board sends congratulations and best wishes on the birth of her daughter, Tara.

Editor's note: This edition was completed in a short space of time under difficult circumstances. If the number of errors is greater than usual we ask your indulgence. Special thanks to Jeremy Krikler who typed in his own article.

When I first arrived in South Africa in 1976 it was to undertake academic research in labour history. In the few years since then we have witnessed labour history being made, and on a grand scale. It has been a unique experience to be a part of that development through my work on the Labour Bulletin, and a privilege to have met and talked with trade unionists from amongst the tens of thousands of workers, shopstewards and officials who are building a South African labour movement.

The nature of that movement - based on grass roots organisation and mass democratic participation - has ensured its survival in the face of state repression and make it uniquely qualified to take up a leading role in the struggle for a democratic and egalitarian society. It is in this spirit of optimism that we leave South Africa.

Particular thanks to editors and friends who have assisted us during recent months and to the many people who made representations on my behalf to the authorities (from both sides of the class divide it should be added).

Harassment of Cosatu

The past few weeks have seen unprecedented attack against the workers' movement, particularly COSATU. This has been evident in the sieges on COSATU House, headquarters of many of the Federation's affiliate unions. The first rally to launch the COSATU "Living Wage Campaign" was banned. Basically the Campaign was to include both organised workers and workers active at all other levels of the struggle, i.e. the unemployed, the youth, workers active in civics. The detention of shop stewards and union officials was coupled with right-wing violence which saw the bombing of COSATU house in Johannesburg. In Kroonstadt COSATU offices were closed down, in Vereeniging the state attempted to close down SARHWU offices by implementing the Group Areas Act.

Detention of shop stewards and union officials, and finally the rightwing violence all over the country also featured in the harassment. COSATU House was bombed. Offices in East London were burnt down. In Kroonstadt COSATU offices were closed down, while in Vereeniging the state attempted to close down SARHWU offices by implementing the Group Areas Act.

At the same time the state and COSATU have been involved in a vicious media war campaign, making accusations and counter accusations in the commercial press, or in the case of the state through the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). The harassment of COSATU somehow became linked via the press to the SATS dispute. COSATU launched the "Hands off COSATU" Campaign as a response to the attack.

"Through the hands off COSATU campaign we want to make each and every member aware of the measures against COSATU. We are calling on every member to strengthen our structures at every level. Every organised factory must be represented at the locals and be part of the campaigns taken up in that local. Every union must play a role in our Regional structures, there must be extensive discussion on how to defend our organisation... Ironically these attacks are having a tremendous politicising effect on our members, workers and shopstewards are seeing that unity in action is not just something academic but has become a matter of life and death for our organisations, for our campaigns around poverty, degradation and

- harassment of COSATU -

low wages. There is an urgency now which is forcing everyone to rally together, in that sense our campaign is quite broad as attacks are directed at the entire democratic movement. There are other aspects to the Campaign which involves countering the propaganda and lies put out to discredit us, and asserting our right to hold meetings, to put out media, and express our views and opinions freely.²

What saved COSATU so far

As Jay Naidoo, the Secretary General of COSATU pointed out "COSATU is not a building". Most COSATU affiliates are built on factory structures, i.e. factory shop steward committees elected by the rank and file members. This form of organisation based in factories has enabled most affiliates to withstand the challenge against them during the period of harassment. A unionist pointed out that "breakdown of communication had a positive effect on factory structures. Workers began to build the structures themselves."³

The devastating effect the bombing of COSATU House had was the dismantling of an administrative network established by unions after a long struggle and setbacks. In the words of COSATU, "the disruption caused by the bombing still applies today. There are unions today which are struggling to survive in small offices, which do not have access to telephones, which have no documentation or equipment. Directly after the bombing many affiliates had to cancel meetings with management involving negotiations over one thing or another."

At present most affiliates are unable to hold meetings at their offices with rank and file members including shop steward councils. In each case alternative venues have to be found. The reluctance by landlords to offer new offices had contributed to this problem. During this period militant SATS strikers used any space available in Johannesburg to hold their meetings.

"After the COSATU bombing strikers scattered all over Johannesburg. Most public parks in the area were used for the purpose of holding meetings, giving report backs and getting new mandates. This practice continued until we used Lekton House, the headquarters of NACTU unions."⁴

The problems of space affected almost all unions. The National

Union of Mineworkers was initially forced to use the Victoria Hotel in Johannesburg before getting new offices. Some unions were forced into hiding, breaking contact with their members as they got refuge from sympathetic organisations who had to hide from their respective landlords the presence of Cosatu affiliates in the building.

"COSATU has tried to get new accommodation for us but in vain,. We initially moved to a "host" organisation. We mainly used their offices and telephones. This was to contact shop stewards and management, etc. Them problem we had during this period was that we were unable to inform our members; they were not supposed to know where we were as their presence (in most cases workers came in groups of five or ten or even more) in the building especially in the "host" organisation offices was going to attract the landlord who would question this."

COSATU explained the problem of new accomodation as follows:

"For us it has been quite a rough time. Whenever we approached owners of buildings wanting to lease premises we have generally received a negative response. The government has also been threatenig a Group Areas clampdown making life insecure for many of affiliates even now. Basically it has meant unions have been inconvenienced for a long time, that we have had to lease more expensive premises. It has meant many unions operating from a single open office."

Operating from small offices poses problems with regard to consolidating factory structures. The absence of shop steward council meetings, shop stewards with their rank and file membership during weekends and even after work is detrimental to building strong and educated membership. A unionist expressed this view angrily by stating that "As a democratic union, meetings with members are important for us. We can't do this at factories given the time limits set by management, and hence our union premises are important. "

A shop steward also said "In the building - Tudor Mansions - we used to have meetings with workers but the landlord has recently given us notice to vacate the offices at 7.00 p.m. This has disrupted our meetings, it has meant that we can no longer come and discuss developments at the factories amongst ourselves as shop stewards from different factories and with our union officials."6

- harassment of COSATU -

A more worrying aspect of the harassment of COSATU in the longer term is the rise of more subtle and covert right wing attacks, most notably in the form of petrol bombings of shop-stewards and workers homes, the vigilante attacks, killings of members and so on. "This involves a long term response to repression. These right-wing attacks in the interim are designed to have a debilitating effect on us. Through the 'Hands Off Campaign' we hope to address some of these issues." 7

Most affiliate and COSATU plans for 1987 as a whole were affected. COSATU states the extent to which it was affected as follows, "It has made a big impact on us. Whereas up to that point we had been concentrating on offensive campaigns, the living wage campaign, mergers, building action around June 16, the moves against COSATU has now lead to us taking on a more defensive position - the 'Hands off COSATU' campaign - it has meant us turning a lot of resources and energy into that defensive position, although the 'Hands off' campaign is not entirely defensive." 8

References

1. Interview with COSATU, June 1987
2. *ibid.*
3. Interview with CCAWUSA official, May 1987
4. Interview with SARHWU, June 1987
5. Interview with TGWU official, May 1987
6. Interview with PWAU official, May 1987
7. Interview with COSATU, *ibid*
8. *ibid*

Postscript: This article is based on an interview with COSATU headquarters and a survey of all affected unions.

(J. Matiko and C. Markham)

NUMSA Launch

A new giant metalworkers union called NUMSA - the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa - was launched after a three-day congress held at the Crown Mines showground in Johannesburg. NUMSA has a paid-up membership of 130 000 workers. According to the President, Daniel Dube, "NUMSA has a potential of 500 000 workers in the metal and motor industries. At present it is second only to the 369 000 National Union of Mineworkers.

Participating unions

NUMSA was formed after the merger of six unions, that is MAWU, NAAWU, GAWU, MACWUSA, UMMAWOSA, and MICWU, participating unions had to subscribe to the principles of non-racialism, internal democracy and worker control. SAAWU was also expected to take part in the merger but was refused participation in the Congress. According to the co-ordinating committee spokesperson, SAAWU had failed to meet the registration deadline for participating at the congress. All unions except MICWU; which was an IMF affiliate, were affiliates of COSATU. At the Congress a resolution was taken to affiliate to COSATU which brings into COSATU workers who were members of an unaffiliate union, the Motor Industry Combined Workers Union - MICWU. NUMSA will also seek affiliation to the IMF and the International Chemical and Energy Federation.

National Office-bearers

National office-bearers elected are Daniel Dube; a former NAAWU executive member; as President. The first vice-President is David Madupela; a former MAWU Transvaal branch chairman and member of the National Executive Committee. Percy Thomas from MICWU was elected as second vice-President while Moses Mayekiso who is presently in detention facing high treason charges for his involvement in Alexandra community politics, and a former MAWU General Secretary, was elected as NUMSA General Secretary. Messages of support were received from both local and overseas unions. Guest speakers included Herman Rebhan, IMF General Secretary, Jay Naidoo, COSATU General Secretary and Peter Mokaba, President of the South African Youth Congress.



photo: left to right, David Madupela (1st vice president), Daniel Dube (President), and Percy Thomas (2nd vice president) [Afrapix]

Repression

An important aspect of NUMSA in the South African labour movement's history is that plans which started two years ago succeeded despite the repression of Trade Unions. In his opening speech Mr Joe Gomomo, a former NAAWU executive member said the new union was being attacked as never before by both the state and the employers. Tens of thousands of union members in the metal and motor industry had been retrenched in the last five years. Key union leaders had been detained. Police action had also been demonstrated by shooting at worker mass meetings like in Durban and Kathlehong. Organisers, especially in the Natal region, had been harassed and killed by Inkatha-backed vigilantes. The recent COSATU House bombing and the police siege that took place earlier saw important documents and correspondence, which facilitated day-to-day activities of the union, ransacked and destroyed. He said the new union reflects the determination of workers to go on and build their own democratic trade unions. He called on workers to strengthen shop-steward councils and engage in campaigns which would draw in most metalworkers. NUMSA is another realisation of COSATU's policy of one union one industry. A few months ago unions in the food industry merged to form the Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU).

Wage negotiations in the metal industry

NUMSA comes at a time when wage talks in the metal industry have run into dispute. All unions affiliated to the South African Coordinating Council of the International Metalworkers Federation (IMF) as well as the unions affiliated to the Confederation for Mining and Building Unions (CMBU) have declared a dispute against SEIFSA; the employers organisation. The CMBU unions are likely to withdraw the dispute as the gap between their demands and the bosses offer is narrow and will probably be settled before the dispute spills over into strike action. Among South African IMF affiliates MAWU has made it clear that it plans to fight for a living wage this year (See NUMSA metal sector report on collective bargaining.) NUMSA is bound to give a boost to wage negotiations in the motor and metal industries.

The bargaining structures, that is industrial councils, in the motor industry, motor assembly, the tyre and rubber industry and the metal industry will continue to function. It remains to be seen what wage negotiation strategy NUMSA will evolve given the

- NUMSA launch -

power and unity of metalworkers in the giant union. When asked to comment on the new union - NUMSA - Sam Van Coller, executive-director of SEIFSA said they see NUMSA as an expression of how employees wish to exercise their right of freedom of association.

At the congress the following demands were endorsed:

1. To fight for a forty-hour week.
2. A national living wage of R4.50 an hour.
3. The right to strike.
4. Six months paid maternity leave for women.
5. The declaration of 21 March, 1 May and 16 June as paid holidays.
6. An end to the migrant labour system with interim efforts to improve the living conditions of migrant workers.
7. Extension of equal job training opportunities to women and youth.

In the meantime SEIFSA has rejected most of the demands as presented by MAWU. SEIFSA has for example, accepted the government's declaration of a 'worker day' instead of granting 1st May as a paid holiday.

Political direction

NUMSA political direction is twofold. Unlike the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), NUMSA has adopted the Freedom Charter as minimum political demands that reflect the view of the majority of metalworkers' vision of a free and democratic, non-discriminatory South Africa. At the same time the new union called for a "workers charter" and declared its belief in the leadership of the organised working class in the struggle for socialism. (See Political Resolutions)

Given the voting strength of NUMSA and NUM and the observation made by Jay Naidoo in his speech that "The most important thing about COSATU is that its affiliates shape its political policies as shown by the NUM and NUMSA, it is likely that the COSATU Congress will adopt the Freedom Charter. NUMSA's challenge to the COSATU Congress is whether to go further and call for a worker's charter.

NUMSA Political Resolutions

The Freedom Charter and the Struggle for Socialism.

Noting:

1. That the vast majority of the working masses of our country recognize the Freedom Charter as containing the basic minimum demands for a free and democratic South Africa.
2. that the Freedom Charter enjoys mass support amongst organised metalworkers nationally.
3. that the Freedom Charter has majority support amongst the natural, and most reliable, allies of the working class - the women, the unemployed, the youth and the students.

Believing:

1. that only the working class masses, under the leadership of organised industrial workers, can truly liberate our country from the chains of capitalist exploitation and apartheid oppression.
2. that organised workers and their allies have a common interest in the creation of a worker-controlled, socialist society where there will be no exploitation, oppression or discrimination of any form.
3. that the national democratic struggle against apartheid oppression and the socialist struggle against capitalist exploitation are complementary parts of the uninterrupted struggle of organised workers for control over the industry and government of a liberated South Africa.
4. that only under the leadership and control of organised workers over the mass democratic struggle of today, and the government of tomorrow, will the demands of the Freedom Charter be fully and completely exercised in the lives of the working masses of our country.

We Therefore Resolve:

1. to adopt the Freedom Charter as containing the minimum politi-

- NUMSA launch -

cal demands that reflect the view of the majority of metalworkers' vision of a free and democratic, non-discriminatory South Africa.

2. to develop amongst metalworkers in particular, and the organised working class and its allies in general, a coherent understanding that the demands of the Freedom Charter, and all other demands of organised workers, can only be realised in the lives of the working class masses through the practical leadership of the industrial working class in the struggle for the establishment of a socialist society, where workers control of government and industry will be enforced in the practice of a liberated South Africa.
3. to struggle to uphold and advance the leadership of the working class in all spheres of society.

Political Policy

Noting that:

1. we are committed to building socialism
2. we are committed to the leadership of the organised working class in the struggle.
3. the political policy resolution of COSATU calls for full discussion at all levels of the aims of the workers in the struggle.
4. worker leaders are increasingly playing a leading role in the community. The lack of initiatives and the confusion that exists within the community itself on political issues arises from the lack of a working class programme.
5. the Freedom Charter is also a good foundation stone which to start building our working class programme.

Therefore resolves that:

1. the organised working class can only take the lead in the struggle if it has a clear programme and aims, which clarify exactly what is wanted by the working class and what is meant by their demands.

2. the organised working class can only make correct alliances and lead these alliances if it has a clear programme and aims.
3. the working class and its allies can only build true socialism and democracy if it has clear aims and a clear programme of how to build them.
4. it should be a priority of the new union and other organisations of the working class to build a clear political programme.
5. the new union will discuss the aims and programme of the working class at all levels: factory meetings, shop steward councils, RECs, CCs and the National Congress.
6. the new union will participate fully in all COSATU discussions on the political programme of the workers.
7. the organised workers should consult with their allies, especially the organised youth, in order to build a programme which can bring together as many groups in society as possible.

NUMSA Report on Collective Bargaining in the Metal Industry

MAWU's campaign for a living wage has reached deadlock. A dispute has been declared against the employer associations.

A number of meetings have taken place between the 16 unions in the Industrial Council and the employer association, SEIFSA.

1st round : 9 March 1987

The parties agreed that we would have a small committee to make it easier to negotiate smoothly to reach an agreement. MAWU shop steward committee chairmen attended the wage negotiations. Each plant was represented by the shop steward chairperson. SEIFSA made only a small wage offer: 30c per hour increase for Rate H and I,

- NUMSA launch -

up to 60c per hour at Rate A. The minimum wage would be R2,52 per hour at Rate H and I. SEIFSA rejected our other demands.

2nd round : 14 April 1987

SEIFSA agreed that they will divide up the increase into two pieces: one piece which they call a "special" increase is to rectify the racial discrimination in the wage curve. This curve is much lower for unskilled and semi-skilled workers. The second piece of the increase they call "standard" increase. This is to cover cost of living and improvements to living standards.

On other demands

Tax deductions: Employers said they have nothing to do with politics and were not prepared to break the laws of the state; They can't afford to pay tax for workers.

May Day: SEIFSA support the declaration of the State President, i.e. Labour Day on the 1st Friday of May each year. (We demanded 1st May.)

16 June: waiting for the Government Commission.

40 hour week: to reduce the working hours will increase the production costs too much even for 1 hour reduction.

Overtime: SEIFSA said that we will kill the metal industry if we insist on limiting overtime.

Maternity leave: the agreement has been finalised. It gives all women in the industry 6 months maternity leave.

3rd round : 28 April 1987

SEIFSA final offer which was not accepted by the unions is listed in the table below:

Job Grade	Existing wage rate	Employers final offer offer (special wage adjustment & standard wage adjustment)	Proposed new Wage Rate
	c/hr	c/hr	c/hr

A	581	70	651
AA start	458	66	524
AAA after 6 months	487	66	553
AB	436	62	498
B	436	58	483
C	414	52	466
D	403	47	450
DD	328	46	374
DDD	285	46	331
E	268	44	312
F	244	42	286
H	222	37	259
I	222	37	259

On the 12th May 1987, MAWU and IMF unions indicated that they had reached deadlock, and declared a dispute against the employer association on two areas:-

1. Wages;
2. Refusal of company level bargaining by SEIFSA.

MAWU also raised a dispute because of SEIFSA's refusal of other demands and because they refuse to give us figures of how much profit the industry earned.

Dispute Settlement:

The NICISEMI Executive Committee met on the 26/5/87 to consider the dispute.

The possible channels in the dispute procedure are:-

1. Refer the matter to a sub-committee;
2. Re-open the wage negotiations;
3. Refer the matter to arbitration;
4. Refer the matter to mediation;
5. Report the deadlock to the Minister.

It was agreed to have a sub-committee and SEIFSA made the following recommendations:-

1. They will add a further 2 cents per hour onto their previous offer making it 39c per hour at the lowest rate I.

- NUMSA launch -

2. They will agree to add a clause in the Main Agreement allowing negotiations at company level on further increase only to rectify the wage curve and any industrial action on this would then not be illegal if it followed negotiation and deadlock and the normal dispute procedure.
3. Only if all the unions accept the above terms will the employer recommend to re-open negotiations and make this offer.

Numsa rejected SEIFSA's offer and opted to embark on a strike. At the time of going to print the union had conducted strike ballot at more than five hundred factories.

photo: The launch of NUMSA, 24.5.87 [Afrapix]



CCAWUSA Congress

320 delegates from 8 branches met over the weekend of the 12 to 14 June at Crown Mines (NASREC) and at Wits University for this year's National Congress. It was to be the union's last National Congress before the proposed merger two weeks later with other unions in the retail and catering sector. (Report on the merger follows)

Congress this year was marked by heightened tension with minority branches of the union and a hard-line approach adopted by branches with the majority of delegates. A number of far reaching resolutions were passed on questions relating to (1) shop-floor democracy, (2) working class unity, (3) worker alliances in the struggle, and (4) the struggle for socialism. Tensions around the adoption of these resolutions resulted in four minority branches, who objected to the nature of proceedings, abstaining from voting. Two other branches were not given voting rights as they did not comply with constitutional provisions. The theme adopted indicated the general trend at Congress, "unite, organise, mobilize and educate for a socialist future".

Further resolutions were also passed on state harassment of the worker movement, on physical violence, on the Freedom Charter, and on financial self sufficiency. Two proposed resolutions had to be withdrawn because of objections raised by some branches about insufficient time to discuss these.

After the President's opening speech the General Secretary delivered a report summing up developments in the union movement in general and CCAWUSA in particular over the past ten months. The General-Secretary noted that "the government is using the state of emergency to undermine and attack the serious challenges to its power from union, community, the youth sector, women and political movements, ...thousands of activists have been detained - many of them members or affiliates of COSATU, hundreds of people killed in the townships, right-wing vigilante forces established to attack workers". The events at COSATU house "are part of an overall strategy to disrupt and undermine the labour movement".

In the wake of these attacks he called on CCAWUSA to "consolidate all its positions, to build and strengthen all its structures,

starting from shop-floor or grass-roots level, to organise and build strong shop-stewards councils, to educate and inform members and shop-stewards, to carefully plan and strengthen campaigns, especially the Living Wage Campaign".

Following his report branches then reported progress in the planning of the Living Wage Campaign. The relative peace which accompanied proceedings until then was suddenly shattered when the issue of election of a National Education Co-ordinator arose. The National Executive Committee (NEC), which normally appoints someone to this position, had been unable to reach consensus on the two nominees due to regional differences around the issue. At Congress clear divisions between the Orange-Vaal, Natal, Pretoria and E. Province branches and the Cape Town and Johannesburg branches emerged. Eventually an official from Cape Town was elected. Tensions heightened when proposals for the election of an assistant to the Educator were made. Heated discussion ensued resulting ultimately in a walk-out by the four minority branches. After a while they returned and it was eventually decided to drop the idea of voting for this position.

RESOLUTIONS

The discussion on resolutions followed. Congress debated for some time about procedure on resolutions, particularly as objections about domination by Cape Town and Johannesburg branches were repeatedly raised. The Johannesburg Branch had tabled a comprehensive range of resolutions addressing both political and shop-floor issues. Cape Town tabled one resolution on shop-floor matters. Pretoria which tried to table resolutions at Congress was turned down on the basis that they failed to meet the deadline for tabling of resolutions. A number of points were made by the minority branches before their decision to abstain from participation, notably:

- * Domination by two branches
- * The Johannesburg Branch resolutions had not been ratified at their branch congress. Johannesburg responded by saying that a great deal of time and resources were spent on presenting the resolutions at every shop-steward seminar in the region and that the resolutions had been ratified at their branch congress
- * Not enough time was given to discuss the resolutions at branch level as these were distributed very shortly before the congress.

Johannesburg remained firm however, deciding only to drop two

resolutions because of the time factor. In a subsequent interview Johannesburg explained their approach as follows. The Witwatersrand is the centre of activity in the retail sector, that therefore it is not surprising that the majority of delegates should come from this region. Given the amount of workers they represent, this is democratically correct. The Johannesburg branch also pointed out that the issue of domination from one branch inside of CCAWUSA has historically been solved by allowing equal representation for all branches at the NEC, a very important decision making body within the union. They also argued that no other branches had tabled their own resolutions so no debate ensued on issues delegates may have felt unhappy about. They also acknowledged that Congress had been moved forward at short notice so as not to clash with Cosatu's July Congress and that this meant lateness in tabling resolutions and credentials on the part of most branches. The result was that all Johannesburg branch resolutions were adopted, that there was very little compromise as there was nothing presented in the alternative, and four branches abstained from voting.

MERGERS

Delegates subsequently discussed the proposed merger with HARWU and RAWU on the weekend of the 27 and 28 June. According to the Johannesburg branch all the delegates participated in this discussion. A decision was eventually taken that CCAWUSA go to the merger as one union with one mandate, meaning that the union constitution, logo, name, and all office bearers remain intact. Individual branches were bound by the national mandate, according to the Johannesburg branch. There were reportedly no abstentions or objections as this decision was made.

Congress ended with a number of branches obviously unhappy with proceedings and the decisions taken. These tensions were to be carried forward to the merger talks opening up greater division.

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED AT CONGRESS

On the Freedom Charter and Azanian Manifesto

Noting that:

The Freedom Charter is an historic document

Some members of CCAWUSA support this document and others the Azanian Manifesto.

A large number of workers have not had the opportunity to

thoroughly discuss these documents.

Believing that:

The demands of the Freedom Charter though important are limited
Endorsing either of these two documents lays the union open to
serious divisions

Therefore resolves:

To discuss at all levels of the union and our Federation the im-
portance of a Socialist programme of action which will bind
together all workers regardless of political affiliation.

On Socialism

Noting that:

We are committed to building socialism

We are committed to the leadership of the working class in the
liberation struggle

We believe in non-sectarianism

Believing that:

True socialism is fully democratic. To make correct socialist
policies, the working class must have open and free debate on all
issues, ideas and policies.

We must build a tradition of democracy and free debate for the fu-
ture.

Sectarianism can suppress free debate and can be a stumbling block
in our efforts to build democratic socialism.

The organised working class can only take the lead in the struggle
if it has a clear programme and aims, which would clarify what is
wanted by the working class and what is meant by their demands.

The organised working class can only make correct alliances if it
has a clear political programme and aims.

Therefore resolves that:

CCAWUSA discuss the aims and programme of the working class at all
levels starting from the shop-floor upwards.

We demand the unbanning of all banned organisations, the release
from jail of all comrades including Nelson Mandela, Zeth
Mothopeng, and Moses Mayekiso, and the uplifting of all restric-
tions on our comrades.

On State Harassment

Noting that:

The state has embarked on a vicious and offensive attack against

the black working class in general and COSATU in particular
This offensive has included slander, harassment and detention of
union officials as well as physical damage to property.

Believing that:

At this critical juncture the working class needs to embark on a
united front.

Hereby resolves that:

It is essential that all unions that are not reactionary or
sweetheart unions join forces and plan campaigns together regard-
less of affiliation to Union Federation.

This unity must be extended to include all organisations that are
anti-capitalist and who take the independence of the working class
seriously.

On Physical Violence

Physical violence between individuals and organisations in the
broad liberation movement is harmful and impedes the struggle of
the working class.

This violence gives the state and its agents the opportunity to
step in.

Believing that:

The liberation movement is made up of many organisations.

Differences and the allowing of debate must be handled correctly
and can only strengthen our organisations.

Democracy means allowing different viewpoints and organisations,
however small, to exist and to propagate their perspectives on the
road forward.

Therefore resolves that:

To condemn any violence between organisations involved in the
liberation struggle.

To encourage democracy both on the shop-floor and in the com-
munity.

Divisions Mar CCAWUSA Merger

The merger meeting in the commercial and catering sector saw unfortunate fragmentation and the creation of two opposing wings both claiming to represent the Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa (CCAWUSA). It is the first time that political tensions within a Cosatu affiliate, manifested in a power struggle around voting rights, have been openly expressed threatening to divide workers and create fissures in the federation's stated objective of "one union one industry".

The launching congress, held at Wits University over the weekend of the 27 and 28 June, was attended by over 400 delegates from the three unions to be included in the merger. These are Hotel and Restaurant Workers Workers Union (HARWU), Retail and Allied Workers Union (RAWU) and CCAWUSA. According to a Cosatu CEC directive two other unions, General and Allied (GAWU) and South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU) would simply hand over members to the new union. Natal and Cape Liquor and Catering Unions, presently outside of the federation, attended as observers.

Tensions around the question of credentials of the Johannesburg branch and between four minority branches of CCAWUSA, said to have broken the Congress mandate adopted two weeks earlier, delayed the opening of the launch until late Sunday (28 June) afternoon. By this time two CCAWUSA branches, Cape Town and Klerksdorp had already left due to lateness. Debate around credentials and the fact that Johannesburg was unhappy with four branches breaking the Congress mandate continued, resulting ultimately in the chair ruling closure. At this stage the majority of Johannesburg branch delegates started leaving. Later however the meeting was re-opened and the chair invited back onto the platform. Four branches of CCAWUSA, including Natal, Eastern Province, Orange-Vaal, and Pretoria subsequently went on to "launch" the new union together with RAWU and HARWU in the absence of the other branches. Pietersburg branch had unfortunately not attended.

The two opposing wings within CCAWUSA are presently in dispute about the legitimacy of the second meeting and whether this meeting in fact constituted a merger launch or not. Backing Johannesburg and Cape Town branches, the position of the other branches not being clear, is the entire Head-Office of the "old" CCAWUSA

including the National General-Secretary Vivian Mtwana, National Negotiator Jeremy Daphne, the National Organiser Willie Dichaba, the National Educator Graham Van Wyk, and National Administrator Cheryl Abrahams. On the other side are the new office bearers elected by branches at the launch who have received the official backing of Cosatu.

The Cosatu statement released shortly after the launch reads; "The merger of CCAWUSA, HARWU and RAWU into a giant CCAWUSA is a great step forward for Cosatu's One Union One Industry policy. Cosatu salutes CCAWUSA and calls on all members to respect the democratic decisions of the majority and build CCAWUSA into the organised, fighting voice of every shop and hotel worker in the country". A CCAWUSA Transvaal branch press release, backed by the old Head Office reads: "The meeting was of course unconstitutional, totally undemocratic without a mandate and divisive. As such all decisions are null and void. We cannot go along with this meeting, its decisions and do not recognise the merger and new office bearers. At a time when we face massive state repression and attacks by the bosses these moves are reactionary and cannot be supported by any progressive force".

The new National office bearers are:

President - Makhulu Ledwaba (ex-CCAUSA President and Cosatu 2nd Vice-President)

First Vice-President - Hebert Mkhize (ex-CCAUSA Vice President)

Second Vice President - Chris Mohlatsi (ex-HARWU National Chair)

Treasurer - Dinah Nhlapo (ex-CCAUSA National Treasurer)

General Secretary - Pappi Kganare (ex-CCAUSA Vaal Branch)

National Organiser - (Commercial Sector) Mxolisi Godana (ex-CCAUSA Jo-burg branch organiser)

National Organiser - (Catering Sector) Alan Horwitz (ex-HARWU Jo-burg branch organiser)

National Negotiations Co-ordinator - Jeremy Daphne (ex-CCAUSA National Negotiations Co-Ordinator)

National Education Co-Ordinator - Jay Naidoo (ex-CCAUSA Natal Branch organiser)

One of the members elected to the new executive, Jeremy Daphne, has since withdrawn on the basis that the merger meeting was undemocratic.

It was agreed at the meeting that the name of the new union would be changed within three months after discussion at shop-

floor level. Resolutions passed called for a struggle led by workers for a democratic and socialist society. The Freedom Charter was adopted as a working document which lays down the basis for socialism. A separate catering sector in the new union and other constitutional changes were also agreed to.

In an interview with the Johannesburg branch after the merger, officials expressed the reasons for their objection to the merger having ever taken place on the following grounds. The determination of credentials, they argue, was carried out in an ad-hoc and inconsistent manner. The method of determining credentials was changed just before the launch began. A dispute around credentials arose after the unions HARWU and CCAWUSA had exchanged financial documents. HARWU tabled a bank statement whereas six CCAWUSA branches tabled financial statements. RAWU had nothing to table.

According to HARWU they became aware of a vast discrepancy in the financial statement tabled by the Johannesburg branch. "We are talking about paid-up and not signed up membership. On examination of their statement we found that they could only account for 22 000 members, whereas they had delegates on the basis of a membership of 40 000. This represents a discrepancy of 18 000 members". The Johannesburg branch on the other hand argue that they thought the reasons for exchange of financial statements was to examine the financial health of the organisation and not to determine membership which is normally done on a workplace by workplace breakdown. Further they argue that there was no way of checking HARWU's membership on the basis of their own bank statement or that of RAWU. Proposals to cut down membership by HARWU were consequently rejected.

Johannesburg branch argue that the launch was actually closed by a ruling from the chair. The second meeting was attended by only four branches, representing about 30% of the union's membership. Individuals from these four branches spoke out against the Congress mandate, such as the agreement to change the name of the union. Also these individuals spoke on all the HARWU resolutions with no mandate whatsoever. The second meeting, according to Johannesburg branch was simply a meeting and in no way was a merger congress, hence all decisions taken are null and void. The Johannesburg branch therefore feels that issues must first be thrashed out inside CCAWUSA. "We feel that if Cosatu pushes ahead with the new union, in spite of its undemocratic nature and the divisions it would be a disastrous and foolhardy exercise. This

will not achieve Cosatu's objective of "one union one industry". In order to achieve real working class unity and all the benefits it brings CCAWUSA must resolve its' own problems first. This must be carried out in a decent, comradely and democratic manner".

The new union however argues that there was a quorum. In addition they wish to point out that all the officials from Head-Office stayed throughout the proceedings, no-one objected to its undemocratic nature. Some of these were even nominated in the elections and one actually elected. In the caucus of the Johannesburg branch they decided to renege on a compromise with regard to credentials offered by their own General-Secretary, also they were all called back inside when the second meeting began but chose to ignore this.

HARWU argues that a long history of tension with the old CCAWUSA, their inflexible approach to the question of a separate organiser for the Catering sector and their intransigence on the question of absorbing HARWU and RAWU and not actually merging may be seen as some of the root causes of the tensions around the merger. This is in addition to their domination of minority branches within CCAWUSA, which caused problems at their last Congress." Our demand that a separate Catering sector exist within the new union is not just capricious but is based on past experience with CCAWUSA. Many of our members had in fact left the "old" CCAWUSA because of their failure in organising this sector. This is also why we wanted a change of name, CCAWUSA has a bad reputation amongst many of our members", says HARWU.

Notwithstanding divisions within the union both sides agree that there is an urgent need to resolve the situation as soon as possible. Both sides maintain that they are firmly committed to Cosatu's objectives and are willing to resolve the dispute through Cosatu structures. Meetings to try to resolve the situation are already underway. The Johannesburg branch maintains that bearing this in mind they are perturbed with press reports about a split in CCAWUSA, and are calling for a special CCAWUSA Congress to try to resolve the situation.

Postal Workers Victory

Postal workers on the Witwatersrand recently scored a major victory after nearly five weeks of strike action. The outcome of final negotiations between their union, the Postal and Telecommunications Worker's Association (POTWA), and management saw nearly all of the demands put forward by the 8 000 workers on strike being met. Moreover the outcome of the strike, together with the SATS dispute, is seen as a major challenge to labour relations in the public sector which defines all strikes as "illegal".

Shortly after the resolution of this dispute POTWA scored a further victory when a strike by 350 workers in East London also ended successfully. The East London workers who came out on the 27 April had presented a very similar list of grievances as workers on the Reef. According to the union most of their demands, including the primary demand that all racist structures and practices within the Postal and Telecommunications sector be removed, have now been wholly or partially met. For the relatively young Potwa the immediate period ahead will be marked by consolidation and further organisation so that issues of national concern can be addressed.

At the talks, held on 30 April, management agreed to pay workers in full for the first two weeks on strike. East London workers will be paid for the period on strike from the 8 to the 11 May. All canteen and toilet facilities will be opened to all races. The Post office has also agreed to buy new microbusses to transport the PowerPark workers. The transport issue had initially sparked the strike at PowerPark. All workers dismissed are to be reinstated, in some cases workers were dismissed three years ago. In future all cases of dismissal will be reviewed with workers allowed union representation at these proceedings. A major victory for Potwa is management's agreement for full union representation at all disciplinary proceedings. The union also views the right to hold weekly meetings at the shopfloor and regular monthly meetings with management as a major breakthrough.

Strangely management refused to allow workers the right to wear Potwa T-shirts at work. Management has also agreed to guarantee the job of arrested member Yannie Malevu, and to pay him in full for the period spent in prison. Malevu and another Potwa member

were arrested during the strike on "intimidation" charges.

The detention of Malevu and another Potwa member delayed the resolution of the dispute as the union was forced to include as a precondition for talks that management agree to secure their release. This was initially met with refusal. Talks scheduled for the 21 April broke down when it became clear that management had no intention of intervening to secure their release. One worker was subsequently released but Malevu had in the meanwhile been charged and sentenced to three years imprisonment with one year suspended. Thereafter the union was forced to set new preconditions for talks; viz that his job be held open, that all benefits entitled to the workers be extended to him, and full payment for the period spent in prison. The dispute was finally resolved after the fresh preconditions for talks had been met.

The reasons for the resolution of the conflict within the Postal and Telecommunications sector are no doubt varied and quite complex. The union acknowledges that the simultaneous strike by over 18 000 SATS workers provided an important context for the resolution of their own stoppage. Nevertheless Potwa makes it quite clear that there was no collusion or "conspiracy" between their own strike and that of the SATS workers, and that the joint timing of the strikes was purely coincidental. This can be seen clearly by a detailed analysis of the events leading up to the dispute.

The immediate pre-history to the dispute dates back to the 1 December 1986 when a meeting was held between the Regional Director (Wits Region) and Regional representatives from Potwa. Amongst the grievances raised by workers at this meeting the primary one related to the question of transport for the PowerPark workers. Workers at this engineering yard wanted transport between Soweto and PowerPark. They also wanted to know why there was no transport for the black workers whilst transport was provided for colleagues from the other "racial" groups. The transport issue is of importance to the workers because they have experienced muggings, they have been assaulted, molested and robbed by thugs on paydays.

Subsequent meetings were held with the Regional Director on the 5 March 1987 and with the Chief Technician at PowerPark on the 27th March. According to the union none of these meetings ended successfully as it appeared that nothing could be done about the transport issue. The Regional Director had in fact suddenly left

- postal victory -

one meeting when the issue was raised leaving the impression that he did not want to discuss it. By 1 April workers decided to take matters into their own hands, and demanded that management address them directly the next day. At 09h00 the next day a certain Mr Links and Mr De Lange came to address workers assembled in the yard outside. They said they had no power to provide transport for the workers. On hearing this workers demanded to be addressed by a higher authority. By the afternoon police had moved in, serving only to fuel workers anger.

On the 3 April the plant was again occupied by uniformed policemen. The gate was locked thereby preventing workers from entering. These events clearly indicate that management had unilaterally decided to "lock-out" the workforce, thereby forcing them on strike. (see SALB Vol 12/4 for more details)

It is also clear that management's recognition of Potwa as the legitimate representative of the majority of workers, as opposed to the lack of recognition of Sarhwu in the case of the railways workers, played a major role in easing tensions during the dispute. Whereas Potwa acknowledges that differences in "management style" may have played a role in the successful resolution of their own strike, the union nevertheless feels that this was a secondary rather than the primary contributory factor for their own success. Any gains made, including the recognition of Potwa, has largely been the outcome of worker struggles in this area. The union feels that the outcome of the present dispute is firstly a victory for the workers, that it is a clear reflection of worker power on the shopfloor in spite of the relatively small numbers of workers involved.

According to Vusi Khumalo, President of the union, black workers have reached the stage where they form the backbone of the entire Postal and Telecommunications sector. This is largely because of the nature of the work done by many Potwa members. "In many cases workers are sent for training by the Post Office. For the more skilled categories this training lasts three years. Each year the Post Office sends 200 recruits to training centres where as much as R20 000 per annum is spent on each worker", says Khumalo. In addition Khumalo points out that the work of even the lowest category of labourer, that of assistant telephone worker (ATW) involves a degree of skill and on the job training which takes years to master. "These workers, involved in connecting telephones and cable laying are not easily replaceable. To connect a telephone is

a complicated process, you must know how to run wires from the exchange". Khumalo points out in addition that the loss of more skilled white technicians to the private sector has forced the post Office to rely increasingly on blacks. "As fewer white workers are concentrated in the more advanced jobs so the lower ranks of skilled work have opened for black workers. Nowadays the installation and fixing of telephones is done almost exclusively by black workers". In essence Khumalo argues, "each worker for the post Office is an investment which they cannot afford to lose".

potwa sees the correctness of this assessment as proved by losses suffered by the Post Office during the strike. "Although the belt which runs between the main Post Office and the railway station saw replacement by scab labour, these scabs were clearly not efficient. The delivery of mail was still affected, even though it did not stop completely, it was nevertheless severely hampered. For the first two weeks mail destined even for the white suburbs had to be physically collected. The banks were complaining that their computer networks were going faulty. Work slowed down as they started using less lines".

Racism

The union feels that in spite of improvements won as a direct result of the strike a number of central problems still remain. Seperate unions for each "racial" group still remain. They argue that the merit system presently in use at the Post Office remains problematical. There is also a quota-system with regard to job opportunities and access to training facilities. Seperate training facilities according to the union results in unnecessary duplication and is more costly. "The existence of seperate facilities also strenghtens our belief that the training facilities are not equal. Racism and the salary structure which is based on this could not be addressed in this strike because the strike was seen as a 'local' issue. As far as parity goes there have been developments along this front since the Minister's address in Parliament. Besides the 12% increase in wages the Minister also announced that there would be parity in future for certain wage categories. The union is presently studying what this means and plans to hold discussion around this throughout the country once details are known after July 1", says Khumalo. Clearly these issues must be addressed on a national basis.

Victory for SATS Workers

Dispute is over

The South African Transport Services (SATS) dispute ended dramatically on the 5 June 1987 with management agreeing to meet most of the demands raised by more than 18000 workers after they were dismissed on the 22 April 1987. The out of court settlement is as follows:

1. All workers who were dismissed as a result of the strike will be re-employed on or before the 15 June 1987.
2. Workers will not lose any benefits as a result of the strike and will return to work with full retention of all pensions, medical benefits and travelling, length of service as well as disciplinary record as at the date of termination of service. However they will lose their bonuses.
3. No worker will be victimised for having been on the strike.
4. Workers in detention will be re-employed on their release.
5. Workers will have the right to democratically elect their own representatives.
6. SATS facilities at Delmore and Kaserne hostels will be upgraded at a cost of about R10 million.
7. A major breakthrough amongst the black workers has been that they do not enjoy permanent status as SATS employees, as opposed to white workers who qualify after 2 years of service. Permanent status will be now granted to all employees irrespective of race.

Developments before the settlement

Soon after the dismissal of the strikers, South African Railways and Harbours Workers Union (SARHWU) lawyers launched an application on behalf of three members of SARHWU in the Johannesburg Supreme court, for their case to be declared invalid on the grounds that an invalid law was used. According to Themba Khuzwayo, the Assistant General Secretary, SATS dismissed workers using the regulation gazetted by the Minister of Transport, which could not overrule the act governing the conditions of employment in SATS. In addition SATS did not follow its in-house disciplinary procedure. This case which was suppose to be heard on the 25 May was postponed to the 9 June. Apparently SATS legal team was still preparing its response.

The legal argument

The court case rested on the special gazette that was published soon after the strike started. Before the strike, there were two categories of employees in SATS. The permanent and non-permanent workers. Most of the strikers had non-permanent status. The SARHWU legal team argued that the Minister of Transport was entitled to issue regulations for one category, i.e. permanent workers, whereas the General Manager is the person responsible for issuing regulations for the non-permanent category. This was rather a technical argument as there is no clear cut procedure which stipulates who should deal with whom between the General Manager and the Minister.

The second argument was that the SATS Conditions of Employment Act lays down procedures for the dismissal of permanent workers and that these should apply to all workers in the railways, and that the Act itself has more authority than regulations issued in terms of the Act, because it is passed by Parliament which is a higher authority than the Minister. On this basis an argument that was to follow was that the regulations that lay down different procedures for dismissing workers were actually in conflict with the nature of the Act. In fact, even for SATS management having to use two sets of conditions of employment was problematic. Mr. Moolman, the Deputy General Manager in charge of personnel, suggested the phasing in of one set of service conditions:

"SATS still has two sets of conditions of service , one for whites, the other for non-whites, which is anathema.
(1)"

The third argument was also based on the Act. According to the Act, when the Minister issues a regulation, he must exercise his discretion and 'apply his mind' to the consequences. In practice he must look at each individual worker, his disciplinary record and years of service at SATS to substantiate the fairness of the dismissal. Nevertheless the Minister decided to dismiss 16000 at once.

Out of court settlement

SARHWU had also instructed its lawyers to find out whether an out-of-court settlement could be reached with SATS. This was agreed and the state attorney together with SARHWU's legal team got in-

- SARHWU victory -

volved in low key discussions to reach a settlement. It was at this stage that SATS attitude towards the strike and out-of-court negotiations became inconsistent. SATS attributed the prolonging of the strike to intimidation by small group of SARHWU members, while the Minister of Transport was reported saying that the parastatal was aiming at a smaller and better paid staff. This widened the gap between the two parties; as strikers were demanding the re-engagement of the entire workforce in their previous jobs, and on the same conditions and rates applicable before the strike. SATS gave a legal understanding that it would not fill the strikers jobs permanently until the dispute was resolved. On the 27 April SATS was reported as proceeding with the court hearing. This dashed hopes for an early out-of-court settlement.

SATS attempts to break the strike

Days after the mass dismissal, SATS management aided by the state began its efforts to break the strike. Over 400 SARHWU members and officials were detained. This included the President: Justice Langa, the Transvaal Regional Secretary: Johannes Ncgobo, and the Education Officer: Mike Roussos. Most officials were detained after the bombing of Cosatu House. In Kroonstad SARHWU offices were closed down, in East London union offices were burnt by right-wing elements.

Eviction

After the mass dismissal management did not immediately evict workers from the hostels, but on the 27 May management was reported as having issued eviction notices to 9000 hostel dwellers. SATS ordered workers wanting to retain their hostel accommodation to re-apply on the 16 June. According to SARHWU, the state knew that workers will not leave their hostels on the 16 June because of this days political significance. The union also claims that food trucks organised by SARHWU were refused entry into hostels.

SABC propaganda

Throughout the strike, the SABC has been the bosses' and the states' mouthpiece, to attack both COSATU and SARHWU. Allegations ranging from intimidation, torture and murder were made. COSATU was reported to have taken the SABC to the Media Council over biased reporting against the Federation:

"We have at our last press conference warned SABC that we would take further steps against them if they continued broadcasting what we believe was distorted and inaccurate information. Throughout the railway strike, and even after our warning, SABC has made no real attempt to get COSATU's side of the story." (2)

SATS court application

To confirm its allegation about assaults and torture, SATS brought an urgent application against COSATU and SARHWU. However this application was later withdrawn.

Why SATS backed down

The answer can be found in a combination of legal leverage wielded by SARHWU lawyers, division within SATS management on the issue of reform on the railways and of course, workers initiative and militancy displayed during the strike.

Legal terrain

Soon after the strike began a special amendment to the SATS Condition of Employment Act was gazetted. This tightened up provisions that allowed the Minister of Transport to dismiss workers on strike. This was unnecessary from SATS point of view as strikes on the railways were already outlawed by the Act and railway management could have used common law to dismiss the strikers - as so many companies do in the private sector.

But SATS clearly intended the gazette as a warning to the strikers. According to the union, SARHWU's lawyers immediately investigated, found a strong case for arguing the hastily drafted amendment to be ultra vires and kept it in store to be used as union ammunition if the dismissals materialised.

When the dismissal did take place in April, the lawyers immediately launched an application by three of the strikers in the Johannesburg Supreme Court for their dismissals to be declared invalid on the grounds that an invalid law was used. The union's hand was strengthened when the state attorney agreed that the outcome of the test case would apply to all dismissed workers. Thousands of workers were waiting anxiously in their hostels for a result. A union spokesperson described the position:

- SARHWU victory -

"This was the real sword hanging over SATS head. They knew we had a strong case and would have been severely embarrassed had they lost the case. As the date for the court hearing came closer, management showed more and more a willingness to discuss a settlement".

Conditions of employment

One major discovery made by SARHWU via their legal team was that the document on conditions of employment on the railways was chaotic. The conditions of employment are made up of the Acts and regulations that are issued in terms of the Act by the Minister and General Manager, and were found to be a "jumble of regulations", a bureaucratic nightmare that made no sense at all. According to COSATU, "These conditions were contained in a bulky document, which was outdated and in a chaotic condition. These were scribbblings, pastings, deletions and amendments inserted in the document which was impossible to understand ... SATS were so embarrassed by the state of this document that they asked for ten weeks to compile a proper copy." (3)

Division within SATS management

Failure by SARHWU officials to persuade workers to go back to work created an opportunity to understand the dynamics within SATS management. After the I.C.W.I.M. church delegation met SATS management at SARHWU's request it became clear that there were different attitudes towards the strike in management circles. According to SARHWU, "While people like Bart Grove, the Director General of SATS, linked the strike to "part of a revolutionary strategy" against South Africa and were interested to see it destroyed, SATS Deputy General manager, Dr Anton Moolman, was willing to resolve the strike by negotiations with workers". Dr Anton Moolman, had in fact participated in an inquiry into SATS labour relations a few months before the strike which recommended the introduction of an industrial council to facilitate collective bargaining on the railways along the principles used in private sector. Another development that took place ten days before the workers were dismissed was the publication of an astonishing article that appeared in the SATS official journal "Momentum" by Prof Nic Wiehahn, architect of South Africa's labour reform and head of the SAT's inquiry into labour reform, which argued for a limited right to strike and the extension of the principle of collective bargaining to the public sector.

The Department of Manpower has also some months before the strike recommended the investigation of dispute and conciliation procedures within the public sector.

"The categories of workers and employers to be excluded from the right to strike and lock-out should be restricted to essential services. However, the NMC deems it necessary to investigate further the criteria that should be adopted for the purpose of determining which employers and employees are involved in the provision of essential services, and who should therefore be prohibited from instituting a strike or lock-out ..., furthermore the possibility of providing alternative dispute resolution mechanisms for these workers needs further investigation."

Workers initiative

The initiative to prolong the strike was taken by workers themselves. Attempts by SARHWU officials to persuade the strikers to return to work failed dismally. "Workers were furious with me when I suggested that they return to work. I was asked if (as an official) I know exactly what the conditions were like in SATS." (4) At the beginning of the strike, the shop-steward council consisting of all shop-stewards from affected depots and stations was the main organisational structure utilised by workers to discuss and resolve day to day problems that resulted during the strike. The negotiating team was chosen out of the shop-steward council. Discussions on this level strengthened workers unity as shop-stewards used to report-back to the respective constituencies or obtain new mandates on issues that were to be decided by the majority of the strikers.

Contacts with the community

Committees of shop-stewards from the shop-steward council were also given tasks of contacting the township organisations, to explain why workers went on strike, and rally support for the strike. Soweto, Tsakane and Western Cape are some of the places visited, Support varied according to the place. In Soweto much was received in a form of practical support. Hundreds of commuters started using taxis and buses. It was at this stage that Commissioner Street in central Johannesburg peak hours was characterised by long queues of stranded workers waiting for taxis. Many com-

- SARHWU victory -

muters who continued using trains took advantage of the absence of ticket examiners (who were on strike) by riding free of charge. It is not clear whether the commuters reaction was a spontaneous or conscious demonstration of support for the strikers. According to the union commuters were reacting consciously in support of the strikers, but nevertheless SATS was badly hit.



photo: SARHWU demonstrate during the strike [Afrapix]

Publicity committee

One important committee that also developed was the publicity committee. This structure consisted of shop-stewards who produced various pamphlets that were distributed during the strike - one of which called on people to stop buying train tickets. This committee also responded to various allegations which were reported on the commercial press and also kept all press cuttings.

White scabs and skills

Prolonging the strike meant confrontation the state but also, more

importantly, disruption and losses for SATS. According to SARHWU, "Already the PWI railtrack - the busiest in the reef - was posing maintenance problems for SATS. White scabs could not maintain railtracks. This is one of those tasks in SATS which is still riddled with racial discrimination. One white supervisor instructs from fifteen to twenty black workers, even though in reality the workers know how to do the job. Besides railtracks, locomotives had to be serviced, and most of the skilled workers responsible for that task were on strike. It is in this context that SATS dismissed some white scabs after re-employing the strikers. A dismissed white worker described his experience as follows, "I was told to move out of my room at the railways hostel in Elandsfontein .. The hostel father said he was instructed by 'Pretoria' to tell us to go ... I felt really good to be earning a regular income even if it was only R15 a day ... but now I am no use to anyone." (5) Surely SATS is more worried about the profitability of SATS and not the plight of white workers. White scabs were at first used to run most of the depots and stations, at the same time they were to boost votes during the white general election. SATS needs experienced, productive workers and the strikers were now the right people to do the job.

Not easy to replace

According to SARHWU, "most workers had acquired skills and have a lot of experience with regard to SATS operations. They work as artisans, from the locomotive department up to the electricity department, even though they are paid at lower rates. SATS knew that it would be blunder to get rid of the skilled black workers. This is the reason why SATS was never quick in evicting workers in the SATS hostels as employers would do after having dismissed workers, and this is why strikers are re-employed".

Support and solidarity

Some COSATU affiliates had difficulties in giving concrete material support to the SATS strike, but it was claimed by SARHWU that Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union (PWAU) and Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU) workers did at times refuse to handle SATS goods, while some Chemical Workers Industrial Union members negotiated with their management to have company transport provided instead of using trains. The COSATU national office was also involved in negotiations which resulted in the out-of-court settlement, and in fighting the propaganda onslaught by SABC.

- SARHWU victory -

Unfortunately practical working relationship between railway unions, especially SARHWU, and National Union of Railway Workers (NURW) posed problems. Even though ordinary members of both unions were on strike struggling against SATS management, leadership was locked up in differences that prevented cooperation between them. According to SARHWU the difficulty was caused by NURW allegations that SARHWU was using intimidation to force NURW membership to join SARHWU, and it was on this basis that no solidarity action took place. (See NURW statement on solidarity).

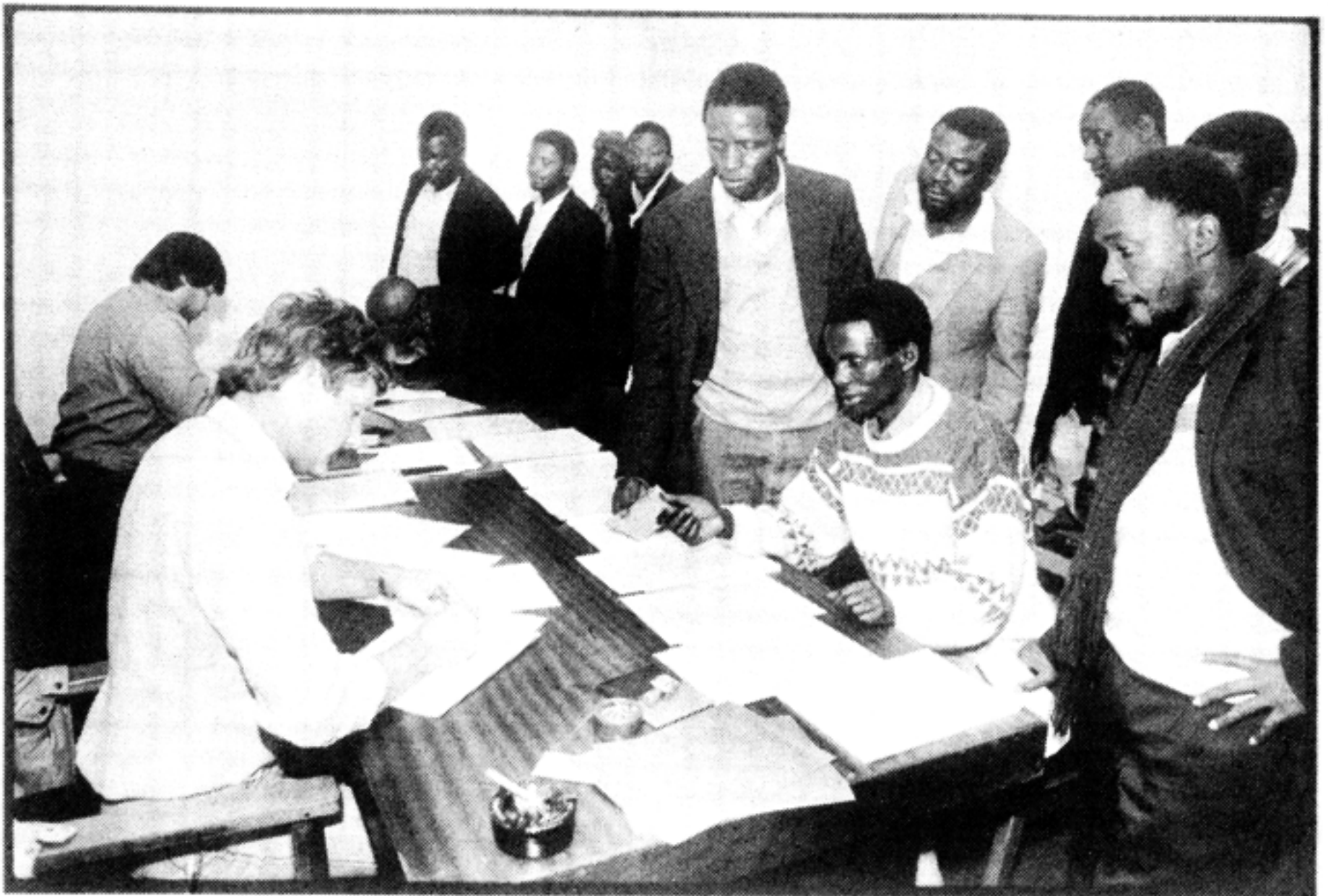


photo: Workers reapply for their jobs after the strike [Afrapix]

International support

International support was brewing for SATS strikers. The British National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) was reported as having set up an organisation called Rail Against Apartheid. Revell, a chairman of Rail Against Apartheid said, "An emergency resolution banning the purchase of all South African goods was taken during a regional Scottish trade union meeting when they heard about the

shooting of six SATS workers.

Future for SARHWU

There is a hard struggle for both the union and its members to defend gains made during the strike. Even after the settlement reached, the Minister of Transport was reported on SABC saying that the settlement reached had nothing to do with SARHWU. It was a settlement reached between SATS and its employers. This is non-sensical given that SARHWU's legal team acted on instruction from the union whose members are SATS employees. It is clear that SARHWU must struggle to be recognised by SATS. At present Blatu is still viewed by SATS as the majority representative union. A SARHWU challenge to have a ballot to prove representativity has been ignored by SATS so far.

Growth in membership

Despite the non-recognition of SARHWU by SATS management, the union has increased in membership. According to the union spokesperson at the beginning of the strike there were 8000 members in the Transvaal. Now membership is 22 000 members in the Transvaal. SARHWU has a major task of consolidating its membership. A union organiser claimed that "an emphasis is going to be made with reference to holding shop-steward council meetings regularly". This is an attempt to produce more worker leaders to curb the shortage of organisers. Also union resources are to be centralised.

Not sticking to settlement

Barely one week after the end of the railway strike, SATS bosses were accused of violating the settlement reached to end the three months dispute. SARHWU claimed some of its members were transferred to lower category jobs despite assurance by SATS that strikers would not be discriminated against and that they would be guaranteed their original jobs without loss of benefits. Workers have also claimed that jobs held by white scabs who are still employed by SATS are not being returned to black workers. At Jan Smuts Airport 78 workers were denied the right to apply for re-employment in terms of the agreement signed by SATS and SARHWU members, but later were re-employed after the matter was dealt with through SARHWU's lawyer. With reference to other violations SARHWU has decided that worker leadership in various stations and

- SARHWU victory -

depots should deal with the issue, but at the same time the union telexed the Minister of Transport, Mr Eli Louw, making him aware of the violation and requesting him to enquire into the matter, and a report be given to the union. To what extent will this carry weight remained to be seen. Days after the telex was to the Minister harassment of railway workers still continued. On the 30th June 1987 seven workers, five of whom were part of the negotiating committee which represented workers during the strike were detained, while workers responded by writing telexes and letters to the authorities. The union expressed fear about the development - "In requesting workers, who doubted SATS sincerity, to end the strike, we had to convince them that the statement was not simply a ploy to facilitate detentions".⁶ The union warned that there could be serious problems if workers are proved right. In the meantime most of the workers originally detained, including officials, are still in jail, and its likely that they might spend more time in gaol. Furthermore some strikers who have returned to work have been detained.

The present situation

What appeared to be victory for workers, turned out to be a state 'ploy' to intensify harassment while at the same time maintaining operation of SATS. The state intends to establish a 'stable' working environment through destruction of the union's worker leadership. The reluctance to recognise SARHWU is a stubborn attempt to force workers to accept Black Trade Union (Blatu).

References

1. Financial Mail, 31 May 1987.
2. COSATU Statement, 4 June 1987.
3. COSATU Statement, 5 June 1987.
4. An interview with SARHWU official.
5. The Star, 23 June 1987.
6. New Nation, 8 July 1987.

NURW Statement on SATS Dispute

SALB publishes the following statement from the National Union of Railway Workers (NURW) on their perception of unity during the SATS dispute. The background to NURW's formation goes back to 1984 where independent committees of railway workers were formed, primarily in the E Cape region. (see SALB Vol 12/1 "SATS Workers on Track") These individual committees eventually formed throughout the country, resulting in the formation of a National Interim Committee. At the launch of NURW in November 1986 the union claimed a total paid up membership of 5 000, with 8 000 signed up. Branches had been established in East London, Western Cape, Port Elizabeth, PWV and Witbank. The union remains committed to unity under COSATU.

NURW RESPONSE

The strike started at City Deep where a worker was dismissed for an alleged irregularity. In spontaneous action workers downed tools in solidarity and demanded his reinstatement. SARHWU soon became involved and other areas took up the call. NURW members considered the situation and after some discussion sent a delegation to meet with City Deep workers. Workers decided to strike in solidarity and to send a delegation from NURW as additional representatives to negotiate with SATS management. A committee was also elected to co-ordinate and publicise events on behalf of our members who were involved.

At this stage SARHWU took an unprecedented step. Workers meetings were moved to their offices and all NURW members barred from attending. Some members claimed they were harrassed because of their union membership.

On 29th March 1987, officials of ARAHWU telephoned the offices of NURW and expressed concern about the SATS strike. Subsequently, we were informed that a meeting would be convened in SARHWU offices and we agreed to attend. At the meeting between NURW, ARAHWU and SARHWU officials sought to iron out joint action and solidarity and address further burning issues. The result was that SARHWU officials rejected any solidarity or communication on the strike. NURW members continued their strike however on the principle that even if SARHWU officials sought to block worker unity or joint action, we sought to advance the cause of worker unity in practice

- NURW on unity -

among workers themselves and not among intellectuals or bureaucrats.

OUR OBSERVATIONS

The commercial press played a dastardly role. They fostered disunity and misinformation. They chose an anti-working class position by pretending to ignore the efforts and actions of NURW in forging ahead to promote much needed unity in a unique situation - a "rival" union giving active support and seeking to meet and discuss unity between the unions in the face of the enemy. NURW public statements were simply not published. Workers and SARHWU members were kept in the dark by the press and officials were ultimately misled about the role of NURW and the efforts it was making.

A further unfortunate consequence was that the majority of organised workers outside of the reef area, many of these our members, would not participate in any way under these circumstances. This was obviously to the detriment of the strikers and had a direct influence on its nature and outcome, as well as on the future of worker unity in this sector.

NURW, therefore decides not to take any solidarity action which has not first been cleared through negotiation and consensus of all unions affected. The principle of support for democratic progressive organisations did not seem to apply in this crucial strike, our members realise this fully now. SARHWU's actions were neither democratic nor progressive, these actions rather fostered divisions amongst the workers. It is more important to analyse our position as workers and map the way forward as railway workers, as against the interests of bureaucrats and intellectuals in a pressure situation.

As we had predicted, all the workers eventually returned to work or were re-instated. Nevertheless this victory needs to be carefully assessed.

(1) Wage parity is claimed: Grading according to race is still strictly adhered to in SATS. Wage parity is impossible under these conditions. We as workers know that we do not earn the same wage as our white counterparts. Even though we do the same work our grades are different and the wage gap remains in force. We note that SATS does not speak of scrapping the racially discriminating grade system. How can anyone praise such a situation on behalf of railway workers who know better?

(2) Pensions and other benefits are also determined by wage levels so they also remain discriminatory.

(3) As part of the "settlement" SATS said that workers could in future elect representatives of their own choice. We do not need permission to elect our own representatives and leaders. To any real democracy elections of representatives is not new. But will they be recognised and be able to operate with all necessary facilities. We want effective recognition of our democratic rights, not promises that are hailed as glorious.

CONCLUSIONS

1. NURW maintains that industrial action against SATS can only be fully effective on a national level. Such action must be orchestrated by workers themselves in an organised and democratic way.

2. Non unionised and unorganised workers are not the enemy and should not be seen, as was the case in this instance, as obstacles. Nothing can replace concerted efforts at organising. A large paper membership is as worthless as a sweetheart union. We re-commit ourselves to effectively organising and mobilising railway workers. Every NURW member is an organised member.

3. Whether or not a small number of individuals continue to foster disunity and antagonism, NURW will continue to fight for unity of workers both in SATS and other industries.

As a result of our concern of the present situation of railway workers, NURW has approached COSATU in an effort to raise these questions with them at their National Congress to be held in July 1987. The NEC of NURW has passed a resolution from our members that NURW should apply for registration of a NURW delegation to COSATU's National Congress. Although we are not affiliated to COSATU, we recognise COSATU as the federation under which all workers should be organised. We are, as always, prepared to discuss with all relevant parties, the present situation of railways workers and the road forward. We have requested COSATU to allow us to address the issue of railway workers at their Congress. We wish to put forward our case and hope they will show the same concern about unity as we do.

NUM Wage Negotiations

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) this week proceeded with strike ballots on 27 gold mines and 18 collieries after a deadlock in annual wage negotiations with the Chamber of Mines. NUM Assistant General-Secretary, Marcel Golding, reports that votes will be counted at the weekend, 11 to 12 July, after which the union executive will meet to consider the result and plan future action. In the event of a "yes" vote strike action by more 200 000 workers in the mining industry is likely - unless the Chamber improves its offer in the near future.

The deadlock in negotiations between NUM and the Chamber of Mines came after two unsuccessful conciliation board meetings, and the Chamber's refusal of union offers of mediation or arbitration. At the last meeting, held on the 30/06/87, the mining houses made offers ranging from 17% (surface and underground) for workers in category 8, to 23% for such workers in category 1 on all gold mines. Three marginal gold mines (Marievale, Grootvlei, and Stilfontein) made offers ranging from 16% to 21,6% for all surface and underground workers. The increases offered on the coal mines ranged from 15% to 23,4%, Rand Mines and Amcoal offering the highest, Gencor and Lonhro offering the lowest.

The deadlock in negotiations was not broken despite NUM's reduction of its initial percentage demands: the union had demanded a 55% increase for workers in categories 1-4, and a 40% increase for workers in categories 5-8; these were reduced to 40% for categories 1-4 and 30% for categories 5-8. The category 8 worker is the highest paid represented by the NUM.

The parties also disagreed on a number of issues relating to working conditions, notably:

- * The number of days holiday leave for workers in categories 1 to 8. NUM initially demanded 44 days paid leave but reduced this to 30 days at the last meeting.
- * The union's demand that workers receive danger pay.
- * The demand that the death benefit scheme be increased from three times the annual earnings of the deceased to five times the annual earnings, to be paid to the beneficiaries.
- * June 16th as paid holiday.

Further demands made by NUM in the course of the negotiations have either been met or remain to be resolved. The Chamber agreed to

seperate negotiations on the Provident Fund, and agreed to approach the governments of the so-called independent states to end the system of deferred payments. The holiday leave allowance has been increased to 55% of the workers' monthly earnings. The unions demands for a live out allowance of R300 and a travelling allowance of R500 have been referred to plant negotiations by each mining company. On the question of an end to tax deductions, employers responded that they are compelled by law to make tax deductions and that they could not agree, in an industrial settlement, to break the law. The Minister of Manpower also refused to include this in the terms of reference at the concilaition board meetings. The Chamber also agreed to reduce by two hours on collieries, and one hour on gold mines the number of hours worked each fortnight by mineworkers. Previously, this amounted to 98 hours.

Despite the deadlock, the Chamber has unilaterally implemented annual wage increases from July 1, in some cases at rates marginally lower than those finally offered to the NUM. Given that the National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA) is proceeding with strike ballots amoungst 80 000 workers, there is now a possibility that massive strikes, involving both miners and metalworkers, will take place simultaneously.

CWIU National Congress

The Chemical Workers Industrial Union has held a National Congress at which 200 delegates represented the 30 000 members. Resolutions on a variety of issues were adopted. On sanctions the Congress noted that only comprehensive and mandatory sanctions were likely to be effective and that the calls for such sanctions had been and are being twisted and distorted by imperialist states into ineffective selective sanctions packages, often serving their own interests, rather than the interests of the working class. The union supported the call for a cessation of a range of international diplomatic, financial, tourist, travel and sporting props to apartheid and its businessmen. The CWIU called on countries abroad to stop accepting South African emigrants, to stop allowing workers for South Africa to be recruited in their countries and for the effective implementation of the arms embargo.

On disinvestment the Congress stated that what was currently taking place in South Africa was not disinvestment. Rather it is little more than corporate camouflage which often allows the 'Disinvested' company to increase its support for the South African regime. The Congress set out a package of minimum conditions for an acceptable disinvestment to take place. These include proper notice, disclosure of information and bona fide negotiations and certain guaranteed payment.

The unions political policy was debated for an entire day. Consensus was reached on the basic principles: worker control, democracy, non-racialism. Working class leadership. organisational independence, non affiliation to political organisations, disciplined alliances with other organisations, and guidelines for such alliances, together with the assertions that only socialism can solve the current political and economic crises was agreed. The need for ongoing and open debate to determine how and what future should be built was also agreed. The major debate revolved around the need to adopt a workers charter/working class programme or the Freedom Charter. In the interests of unity and democracy neither position was adopted and the issues were referred back to the rank and file membership with a view to a further congress being convened in 3 months time. A new logo and slogan was adopted:

"A working class united, can never be defeated"

May Day 1987

More than two-and-a-half million workers this year continued to celebrate May Day, May 1, as their own "Labour Day" despite state attempts to undermine years of shop-floor struggles to have May 1 declared a paid public holiday. In late March, P W Botha announced that in future the first Friday in May would be a public holiday known as "Workers Day". Conveniently, May 1 this year fell on a Friday.

The announcement met with immediate rejection by two of the country's largest union federations, the Congress of South African Trade unions (COSATU) and the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU). Both federations indicated that they would continue to celebrate May 1 as Labour Day each year. Shop-floor struggles to have May 1 declared a paid public holiday would also continue, as would additional worker demands for a forty-hour week, a ban on overtime, decent living conditions and a Living Wage for all, and March 21 and June 16 as paid public holidays as well.

A broad survey, incorporating both registered/unregistered and affiliated/ non-affiliated unions, conducted by the Labour Forum also indicated widespread rejection of Botha's announcement. The Labour Forum is a group of loosely affiliated, mostly ex-TUCSA unions. In total the survey saw responses by unions representing more than 400,000 workers. About 80% of the unions responding, representing roughly 300,000 workers would accept only May 1 as Labour Day.

Eight unions, representing about 14% of the sample were willing to accept the first Friday in May each year, whilst seven unions, about 12%, indicated a willingness to trade May Day with any other holiday.

For mineworkers represented by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) this year saw a small but important victory. After years of struggle the NUM eventually won demands put to the Chamber of Mines to have May 1 as a paid holiday. Thousands of mineworkers were able to celebrate May Day this year.

A noticeable difference in May Day celebrations this year however was the absence of large worker rallies and marches around the

- may day -

country. State repression, indicated by fears and uncertainty about State of Emergency legislation and the extension of a special Government gazette banning all open air rallies in large parts of the country was largely responsible for this. The exception was the Cape Town area where about 6,000 workers turned up for a rally organised by the COSATU Region. This was held after a special court application. The meeting featured several prominent speakers and a rousing football match between teams called "Mandela Spurs" and "Mpetha Spurs". Several indoor meetings were also held around the city. In the other centres; Port Elizabeth, Johannesburg and Durban, COSATU organised indoor meetings. The only rally in the Johannesburg area was held in Lenasia, where close to 600 attended. Several hundred workers also attended a May Day church service in Soshanguve.

NACTU reports that various venues had been organised by the federation throughout the country. In Pietersburg a rally due to be held at the Worker's Centre was moved to the Seshigo Hall because of the large police presence. In this way an indoor meeting was continued, together with workers from the postal workers union, POTWA, who had a meeting there. Further successful meetings were also held in Standerton, Cape Town, Durban and Potchefstroom. A joint meeting planned with COSATU in Port Elizabeth unfortunately barred NACTU speakers. In Pretoria a meeting to be addressed by NACTU Vice-President, Stewart Moletsane, had to be cancelled after police prevented people from entering the venue. The police and army also prevented people from entering the venue organised in Tembisa township.

In Namibia, the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW) was able to hold a very successful rally in Windhoek's Katatura township.

5 - 6 May Stayaway 1987

In response to the racially exclusive elections for the House of Assembly on the 6 May a stayaway was called, in protest, for the 5th and 6th of May.

In a nationwide survey of the manufacturing and retail industries the Labour Monitoring Group estimated that in these sectors an estimated 500,000 workers observed the stayaway on the 5th and 600,000 on 6th. Despite the fact that these sectors cover only 42% of urban African employment (est. total 2,730,000) the number of man days lost in these two sectors due to the election exceeds the total number of man days lost in strikes in all sectors of the economy for the first quarter of this year. (The Star, 5 June 1987). If we assume that the stayaway was only half as successful in other sectors, but not including mining, then at least another 420,000 workers stayed away. This gives a total of 1,020,000 (per day). According to mine employers a further 30,000 mineworkers stayed away bringing the total number of people observing the stayaway to 1,050,000. The mining figure however constitutes only a partial figure for some mine managements were unavailable for comment. Union sources estimate that 100,000 mineworkers took protest action.

A number of features should be highlighted.

1. This was the most extensive stayaway in South African history. Although May 1 and June 16 last year were more intensely observed they were of shorter duration (1 day each). The November 1984 stayaway was also 2 days long but was confined to the Transvaal.
2. This is the first stayaway in protest against a white general election since the 1958 Congress-Alliance led action. Unlike that stayaway, which failed, this stayaway mobilised large numbers of organised workers, students and community organisations in a nationwide protest. According to the Department of Education and Training all school students on the Witwatersrand stayed away on May 5 (est 500,000, L.M.G.) in addition at least four universities were closed on the 6th.
3. Once again the stayaway was most widely observed in the

- 5-6 May

P.E./Uitenhage area (96-99% of Africans) where repression has been the most systematic. Membership of COSATU unions was particularly important in influencing the participation of "coloureds" in the region and in Uitenhage in particular. Membership of COSATU was also important in determining the participation of Africans in the Western Cape region. In Uitenhage "coloured" participation in the stayaway reached 70% on the 6th while the average "coloured" participation in the region was 35%. In general participation of non-Africans in the stayaway in other regions was low or negligible (2% of "coloureds" in Cape Town region).

4. Outside of the Cape Province observation of the stayaway increased by about 10% on the second day i.e. the actual day of the election. Despite conflict with Inkatha supporters the stayaway was observed by 70% of Africans in the Durban region. In the Eastern Cape observation of the stayaway was nearly absolute, and in the Western Cape observation of the stayaway increased almost four-fold on the second day.
5. In the Transvaal the stayaway was less intensively observed (10 - 20% lower) than May 1 and June 16 of 1986. The retail industry was the most severely affected (76% of African Workers on the 6th).

AREA	% 5TH MAY	% 6TH MAY
P.E./Uitenhage	99 (35)	96 (12% PE), (70% Uit.)
Cape Town	12	42
Transvaal	57	70
Natal	60	70

Participation : African Participation in Stayaway for Retail and Manufacturing Industries. ("Coloured" figures in brackets).

5 – 6 May Stayaway in Pietermaritzburg

The Development Studies Research Group (DSRG) at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg undertook a comprehensive survey of the extent of the stayaway in Pietermaritzburg on May 5th and 6th.

70 firms employing 12,138 workers in the industrial and commercial sectors were interviewed.

Some of the salient findings were:

1. 64% of the African workforce stayed away from work on May 6th. The figure was 63% for May 5th.
2. Workers from other racial groups were largely unaffected by the strike.
3. 93% of the firms overall were affected by the stayaway.
4. 3/5 of the firms adopted a 'no work, no pay, no penalty' policy.
3% said they would pay workers who stayed away.
5% said that they would take some form of disciplinary action.
The rest were undecided or would not offer any comment.
5. About 90% of the businesses in the Indian sector of the city were shut on 6th May. The figure on the 5th was 60%.
6. In general the extent of the stayaway across different racial groups and industrial-commercial sectors was much the same on the 5th and 6th of May.

Soweto Day 1987

On the morning of June 16, 1976, a group of 15 000 school children marched towards the Orlando stadium in protest against a government decision that, in black secondary schools, certain subjects would henceforth be taught in Afrikaans.

The marchers clashed with the hastily mobilised police detachment at the Orlando West Junior Secondary School. When teargas failed to disperse the crowd, police opened fire, killing a 13-year old schoolboy.

The confrontation and violence that took place in Soweto during the rest of that day set a pattern for the student revolt that continued on a national scale for several months, and which cost nearly 600 people their lives.

In the 1980s, Soweto Day became a rallying point for community organisations, church groups, and the trade union movement as well as for black school children. Its commemoration in 1986 was preceded by a massive security clampdown with the third state of emergency and mass detentions throughout the country. A year later an estimated 3 000 people remain in detention and the State of Emergency has been renewed.

The worker stayaways that took place nationally on June 16, 1987, in the apparent absence of organisational calls for such action, suggest that this day has become a de facto public holiday for most black South Africans. Trade unionists, notably from COSATU-affiliated unions, have successfully negotiated June 16 as a paid holiday (in some cases in lieu of another day in the holiday calendar) with a number of employers. Other employers, however, have refused to acquiesce to this demand, and have taken disciplinary action against absent workers. The majority of employers appear at this stage to be adopting a policy of no work, no pay, no disciplinary action.

In a recent call by ASSOCOM, for a restructuring of South African public holidays, it was suggested that anniversaries of historical but sectarian significance (presumably this would include June 16) should be celebrated on the closest Sunday. While such an arrangement might make sound economic sense, it reflects a remarkable in-

sensitivity to reality.

The significance of Soweto Day in the national calendar is now indisputable. The events that occurred on June 16, 1976, symbolise for millions of South Africans, the tragedies of their divided land. On the labour front, there is growing evidence of the success of the COSATU affiliated unions' drive for acceptance by employers of June 16 as a paid public holiday. With the backing of the UDF, SAYCO and AZAPO, and other community organisations, the annual commemoration of Soweto Day, seems assured.

Despite the fact that no major political or trade union organisations were able to call for a stayaway to commemorate June 16 the Labour Monitoring Group observed a massive participation in the commemoration. From our nationwide survey of the "stayaway" we can deduce that 60% of black workers from the sample universe participated in the stayaway whilst 82% of African workers participated in the stayaway. A regional breakdown of the results reveals the following participation rates.

AREA/SECTOR	% BLACK	% AFRICA
P.W.V :		
Manufacturing		75
Commerce		54
P.E./Uitenhage	45	93
Durban	46	55
Cape Town	40	75

% Participation in the Stayaway in Major Urban Regions.

Note: We will not be issuing an estimate of the total number of people who participated in the stayaway this is due, in part, to the fact that some media, notably the S.A.B.C. have published the figure previously made available without including the qualifications made by the L.M.G. In one instance the figure of 1.5 million people observing the stayaway.

Once again African participation in the stayaway was greater than that of other population groups yet in some regions participation

- June 16 stayaway -

in the stayaway by other groups was marked, e.g. in the Uitenhage region "coloured" participation in the stayaway reached 79%. This was however in contrast to "coloured" participation in other regions - P.E. (22%) and Cape Town (30%).

A major variable of participation in the stayaway was membership of a COSATU union. Participation in the stayaway in the Cape Town region in companies organised by COSATU unions was 88% for Africans (and 56% for blacks). This tendency, which was apparent in most regions was due in part to companies arranging for the members of unions to have the day off whilst not extending the same arrangement to non-members. Consequently attendance amongst unorganised and non-COSATU organised workers was higher. Although there are an increasing number of companies who stay open and manage with whatever labour is available.

Due partially to a concerted program against the stayaway, by Inkatha and the state, participation in the stayaway in the Durban region was lower than on 5th and 6th of May. These efforts included the publishing of advertisements in the local press urging people to go to work.

The mining industry seems to have been only partially affected by the stayaway with most mining houses reporting normal absenteeism in their gold divisions. The highest "absenteeism" rate reported in any mining house for the gold division was 14%. Collieries seem to have been affected to a greater degree with some reports of stayaways reaching 50%.

This report has been modified to conform to the latest emergency regulations.

June 16 - Special Report on Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage

To ascertain the extent of worker participation in the June 16 stayaway, as well as local employer response, the Labour Monitoring Group at the Industrial Relations Unit conducted a telephonic survey of 47 companies in the Port Elizabeth - Uitenhage area. A Total of 17 877 black workers and 15 435 Coloured workers in the manufacturing, commercial and public sectors were covered by the survey. The results are presented in the Table below.

Port Elizabeth

	Black	Coloured
Total workforce	12 513	12 012
Attended work	1 206	9 798
Stayed away	11 305	2 221
	90% stayaway	18.5% stayaway

Uitenhage

	Black	Coloured
Total workforce	5 364	3 416
Attended work	65	784
Stayed away	5 299	2 632
	98% stayaway	77% stayaway

The two most significant points of information from the table above are (i) the massive support for June 16 by black workers despite prolonged emergency conditions, and the continued detention of prominent community leaders, and (ii) the substantial and consistent support from Coloured workers in Uitenhage companies, which contrasts with a drop in Coloured support of nearly 50% in Port Elizabeth workplaces (from 33% in 1986).

Of the 47 companies interviewed, 9 (approximately 20%) have agreed to give June 16 as a paid public holiday (in most cases, in place of another paid holiday). Thirty-three companies adopted a policy of no work, no pay, no disciplinary action, and the remaining 5 companies report taking some form of disciplinary action (usually concerning the loss of overtime bonuses).

In all cases, the reason given for the stayaway was Soweto Day; no other demands were made to management.

Although it was generally presumed prior to June 16 that a workers stayaway would take place, a certain amount of uncertainty regarding the duration of the stayaway was expressed. There were rumours that action would last up to 15 days in protest against the extension of the State of Emergency and possible police action in the townships over the period 12-16 June. In addition, no specific

- June 16 stayaway -

calls for a stayaway were made through the media prior to June 16, although local COSATU officials informed the Labour Monitoring Group that action would be restricted to a one-day stayaway.

Labour Monitoring Group : 17/6/87.

ADVERT: MANAGING EDITOR

Following the withdrawal of Jon Lewis's resident permit, applications are invited for the managing editorship of the SALB.

Applicants should demonstrate an active commitment to and knowledge of the democratic labour movement. Experience in some of the following areas would be desirable:

- *writing
- *administration
- *editing
- *layout and design
- *sales

the applicant would work collectively with other members of staff and be subject to the control of the editorial board.

Conditions of employment available from SALB, phone: 339 8133

Send application and references to: SALB, Box 31073, Braamfontein 2017.

Deadline for applications 14 August 1987

Jay Naidoo on Cosatu

SALB: How would you assess the first 18 months of COSATU? What have been the main achievements, and the limitations that still have to be overcome?

Jay Naidoo: Before the launch of COSATU there were five different trade union groupings - FOSATU, CUSA, AZACTU, TUCSA, and unions affiliated to the UDF. Today COSATU represents the vast majority of organised workers in the democratic trade union movement - with the exception of SACWU in the chemical industry.

The response of workers to COSATU is proof of this. In 18 months the paid up membership has nearly doubled from approximately 450,000 to about 769,000 and together with our signed up membership COSATU is now over a million strong. This membership will have been consolidated from 33 affiliates into 12 industrial unions/sectors by the Congress. With few exceptions, organised workers outside of COSATU are tiny in comparison and are generally too weak to mobilise strong worker action in support of demands.

Whereas before COSATU workers had only been organised on a regional basis in the main industrial centres, there are now nine fully established COSATU regions covering the whole country. And at a local level COSATU has facilitated the formation of 31 locals compared to less than ten before the formation of COSATU.

Although these are obviously important and significant organisational gains, we still have plenty of work to do in consolidating our organisation and structures; organising the millions of unorganised workers and developing our structures - especially at a local level.

Within COSATU itself one of our main problems has been to consolidate our industrial unions according to our principle of "One Union, One Industry". Although the launching Congress of COSATU set a target for 6 months for this to be completed, this Congress will finally complete the process in terms of COSATU structures. COSATU was launched with 33 affiliated unions and one other union affiliated afterwards. However at this Congress there will only be twelve industrial unions/sectors represented plus SARHWU.

- interview -

The sectors where single industrial unions have already been formed are : mining (NUM); metal (NUMSA); food (FAWU); commercial and catering (CCAWUSA); public sector (NEHAWU); chemical (CWIU); textile (NUTW); domestic (SADWU) and construction (CAWU).

In the following sectors the final process of merging will only be completed after Congress: municipal and paper. However unions in these sectors will only be represented at the Congress and in COSATU structures after Congress as sectors and mergers should be finalised within a few months of Congress. The only exception to this is SARHWU. Because of the SATS strike, they were unable to partake in the transport sector's merger talks. They have been allowed to attend Congress as an independent union. SARHWU will merge with the transport union soon after Congress.

Our structures have not functioned nearly as well as they could have so far - but this has mainly been because the process of consolidating industrial unions was not complete. COSATU's constitution assumes big industrial unions and these will only be properly and entirely in place after this Congress. We now expect that progress at national and regional levels will be far smoother than has been the case up to now. On a local level our task is to massively increase the extent of local organisation and to ensure that shop-steward local councils are properly represented and well organised. In the light of increasing state repression and imperialist intervention in our struggle, the tightening of our structures is central on our agenda.

SALB: At the beginning of this year the COSATU executive issued a statement outlining major areas of activity for the movement in the coming period under the theme of the need for consolidation and decisive action. Areas for attention included: closer alliance with organised youth, organisation of unorganised groups (unemployed, farmworkers, building workers, domestic workers), the living wage campaign, establishing defence committees, mergers, building shop steward councils, raising the level of solidarity action, and building mass united action under the leadership of the working class. What moves have taken place in these various areas and what are future plans?

Jay Naidoo: There has been good progress in terms of most tasks that COSATU outlined at the beginning of the year. The message spelt out the need to reassess our strategies particularly in the light of major failures on our side to mobilise and provide

decisive leadership to our membership when we were under attack (e.g. July 14 and December 1 protest actions and the Campaign for United Action). The Executive Committee message focussed the thinking and energies of COSATU on the urgent tasks that faced organised workers in South Africa. We are sure that this will continue and deepen after Congress.

Links between organised workers and youth are better than they have been before. At many levels of COSATU structures formal and informal contact has been initiated and maintained. We expect this to be strengthened much more in the second half of the year. The Congress is expected to give much more decisive direction on this issue.

The organisation of sectors like unemployed, farm, domestic and public sector is proceeding though organisation is still weak. The construction union has rapidly established a national presence.

COSATU has built solid links with the National Unemployed Workers Coordinating Committee (NUWCC) and we hope it will not be long before the unemployed are sufficiently well organised to form a national union and affiliate to COSATU. Much energy and more active involvement of affiliates and our locals needs to take place to assist the organisation of the unemployed.

FAWU's Farmworkers Project has employed 4 organisers and organisation is taking off in some areas. One national recognition agreement has already been signed for farmworkers.

Our Living Wage Campaign has not achieved the depth of organisation, co-ordination and solidarity that we need. But again the fact that single industrial unions are only now coming into place in COSATU has been a big factor hindering the development of our living wage structures. Established industrial unions like NUM and NUMSA in particular have been the main beneficiaries of the campaign so far in practical terms. By next year this should extend to the whole of COSATU. It is however obvious that a national campaign for a living wage seriously threatened the apartheid state and employers - given their response in the form of banning of our rallies, confiscation of union material and the attempt to try and criminalise our campaign by calling it a "communist plot".

The campaign was also important in that it gave COSATU a concrete issue, affecting directly our membership, to link up with our

- interview -

democratic allies amongst the youth, civics and other progressive organisations. COSATU will clearly emerge from our coming Congress with more strategies to forge working class leadership in the mass struggles against national oppression and economic exploitation.

The proper organisation and mobilisation of our Living Wage Campaign and other campaigns we decide on are at the same time the best defence COSATU can build against all attacks. This question is expected to be seriously discussed at our Congress.

Solidarity action has very definitely increased as one saw in both the OK dispute and the SATS strike. COSATU has given the organised working class a greater confidence in their collective strength. We see the growth and development of our shop-steward councils as the pillars of strength and the voice of organised workers unity in each industrial area and township.

SALB: To what extent has the programme of COSATU been affected by the state of emergency, and by the intense harassment of the federation and its affiliates in the last few months? How have detentions, bombings and the rest affected your ability to function normally?

Jay Naidoo: COSATU was born in a state of emergency. But our organisational abilities were severely hamstrung by the declaration of the State of Emergency on June 12th last year. However the democratic and strongly rooted shopfloor structures we have built up through mass struggle ensured that we not only survived but emerged more strongly. The attacks have made many more workers conscious of the need to defend our organisation. In this sense it has led to a rallying of forces and has helped to strengthen the organisation. We believe that we are learning to survive under conditions of repression.

The apartheid state and their capitalist allies have no intention of allowing a truly democratic solution to the political and economic crisis South Africa faces, because true democracy will have to involve a fundamental restructuring of our economy and lead to a social and political transformation.

Faced with this, the democratic movement has no option but to build democratic grassroots organisation that will not only advance our struggle for freedom but also defend us from the violence that faces us now. The detentions, the massive smear cam-

campaign mounted against us, and the destruction of COSATU House cannot destroy COSATU because our organisation is not a building or individuals, but the tens of thousands of shop stewards and workers activists across thousands of factories, shops and mines in nearly every city and town in South Africa. For us normality has never really existed and will only exist when we have won our liberation.

SALB: The executive statement issued at the beginning of 1987 also reiterated the slogan "one federation, one country". At the time you did not say how this was to be achieved, however. We are thinking here of the fact that a substantial minority of black workers is organised by NACTU, a situation that weakens COSATU's industrial organisation particularly in those sectors where NACTU affiliates are strong. How do you see such division being overcome?

Jay Naidoo: COSATU's orientation is towards the whole working class - irrespective of what organisations some workers may find themselves in at the moment. Now that we have consolidated our own organisation into industrial unions, we can concentrate on building COSATU in to the one federation in the country.

This is mainly an organisational task. We need to organise the millions of unorganised workers. And we need to win over the underorganised workers from the hundreds of ineffective, undemocratic and politically bankrupt little unions around. Where there are well-organised unions outside COSATU's ranks we will try, as we have already done through our affiliates, to persuade the workers and their leadership that workers must be united. We have succeeded already with this within COSATU. The principles and policies that we forged as workers in the furnace of mass struggle and over 4 years of unity talks are cherished and defended not only by COSATU members but by millions of workers outside COSATU.

Our doors remain open to any democratic union to join our ranks and we can see no reason why all such unions should not come in if they are really interested in mass worker unity, It goes without saying that this will be on the basis of our principles. NACTU, in particular, has had problems with our principle of non-racialism. For us, and for the NACTU leadership I think the principle is an important political one. More than ever before it is crucial to win white workers in to our ranks. Our organisation and policies are, whether white workers know it yet or not, the only way out of

- interview -

the nightmare of racism and fascism for the whole working class. We think the basis for a non-racial society has to be laid in the practice of our organisations today. We are opposed to racial-ethnic exclusivity in whatever form it occurs in the labour and democratic movement.

SALB: There are of course other organisational and ideological divisions within the working class whose origins are more suspect. We are thinking here of UWUSA and of the thousands of workers still organised into ex-TUCSA unions. What is COSATU's policy on this front?

Jay Naidoo: We don't consider UWUSA to be a genuine workers organisation and we said that its formation represented a tragic and reactionary step that is attempting to split the unity of the working class and will only serve the interests of our enemies. We have seen considerable violence against our members, like the murder of an NUM official in Vryheid and the subsequent interdict against UWUSA members and officials to prevent further attacks on our members.

SALB: When COSATU was launched it was with a legacy of division loosely along lines of "workerists" versus "populists". You have stated on a number of occasions that this characterisation no longer holds true and is misleading and divisive. What then has occurred to break up the old political patterns and blocs within the labour movement? And how would you characterise political debate within COSATU in the present period - concretely, in the different political policies adopted by NUM and NUMSA for example?

Jay Naidoo: We are seeing a genuine working class politics emerging within COSATU on the basis of the massive and militant struggles that especially organised workers have been waging since the launch of COSATU. The democratic structures of COSATU will not allow so called "workerist" and "populist" fringe groupings to impose their undemocratic control over militant, politicised and organised workers in South Africa. Underlying both the "workerist" and "populist" minority positions is a lack of confidence in the organisation, strength and vision of millions of workers in the country.

Workers are facing forward - in the direction of national liberation and socialism. I believe that everything the militant working class stands for will triumph over any interventions from the

fringe who subvert everything a militant working class movement stands for. Workers class consciousness and confidence in the leading role of their class has developed to a point where they can control their organisation - in the factory and the community - and their policies. The mass struggles fought by workers on the ground have created the basis for this and this has more and more isolated these fringe tendencies.

This is reflected in the resolutions adopted and proposed by NUM and NUMSA - who together represent the majority of COSATU workers. I don't believe there is anything contradictory in these resolutions - they both emphasise different aspects of the workers struggle against apartheid and capitalism for national liberation and socialism. In general both unions see the Charter as laying the basis, or being the minimum programme, for struggle for socialism. Both insist the Charter must be widely discussed among workers and that a workers understanding of the Charter and democracy and/or socialism and/or workers own aims must be developed in struggle.

I feel these resolutions together reflect the direction that workers are actually moving in struggle and the main debate that is going on within COSATU. The struggle for socialism is already unfolding within the struggle for national liberation. The Charter and COSATU's own programme - as reflected in the resolutions adopted at our founding Congress - are part of the bridge workers must build and cross in struggle in order to reach socialism. If workers do not build and lead the workers struggle for the basic democratic rights that all our people have been denied for so long, how will workers ever lead the struggle for socialism.

SALB: More generally how would you describe COSATU's political development since the launch - in terms of alliances it has made as well as its policy orientation? To what extent has COSATU successfully been able to play a leading role in the struggle for national liberation whilst continuing to promote the specific interests of workers and socialism?

Jay Naidoo: COSATU's political policy is shaped by the policies of its affiliates and the mass struggles fought out by workers on the ground. Since the launch of COSATU we have seen the confidence of working class leadership in their class and their power increase tremendously. Examples of bitter working class struggles include BTR, OK, SATS and NUM struggles to gain control of the hostels.

- interview -

In this environment, the political policy adopted by our launching congress reached certain limitations.

With organised workers now thrust to the forefront of the mass struggles being fought out, the question of alliances with democratic organisations emerged in struggle and in practice and has been hotly debated in our ranks.

The issues have been dealt with both in NUM and NUMSA where, in addition to the existing principles that have so far guided our political policy (viz. non-racialism, worker control and democracy, national organisation in the form of one union per industry, operating on the basis of paid-up membership/constituency and national co-ordination between affiliates), more concrete guidelines have emerged: the need to ally ourselves with organisations that have a history and record of mass struggle and whose principles are compatible with ours; organisations whose programme of action has the support of workers.

We have also seen joint action with other democratic organisations such as UDF and NECC on May Day, June 16, 5/6 May action.

On our Living Wage Campaign we agreed to draw in our key democratic allies - SAYCO, SANSCO, FEDSAWU, NATSOC and the civics in a campaign led by the organised workers under COSATU.

We don't believe that the struggle for national liberation is antagonistic to the struggle for socialism. Our view is that they are complementary to each other and the working class must locate itself in a leadership position in the national liberation struggle.

Workers, as we have said before, cannot achieve leadership by fighting on isolated fronts - working class leadership is won in struggle - not just in theory.

The organised workers of COSATU have contributed substantially towards putting socialism centrally on the agenda of the mass movement. At the same time, one must recognise that the socialist debate began decades ago - and it was not through the inspiration of comfortable university-based intellectuals, but working class leaders like J B Marks and Moses Mabhida and thousands of worker leaders on the ground.

SALB: What are the major areas that the July Congress will be required to debate and decide upon?

Jay Naidoo: - The political direction of COSATU and the nature and form of COSATU's alliances with its democratic allies.

- The international policy of COSATU in the struggle against imperialism and neocolonialism.
- The international campaign for the isolation of apartheid including disinvestment and sanctions.
- Repression and the need to defend COSATU against the violence unleashed against it.
- Trade union unity and building of one federation in South Africa.
- Unemployment and the steps to be taken to consolidate the organisation of the unemployed and the building of a co-operative movement in South Africa.
- Health and safety in the light of ever increasing loss of lives of workers because employers put profits before safety.
- Migrant labour and the hostel system, which we have committed ourselves to dismantle.

SALB: The Congress is the highest authority within COSATU. Can you explain the relationship of the Congress to the affiliate unions? Are its decisions binding on the affiliates, for example?

Jay Naidoo: The affiliate unions are autonomous. However, they have to operate within the policies and framework of the resolutions and the constitution adopted at the National Congress. These decisions are binding on all affiliates. To us democracy means respecting the decisions of the majority as this is a basic working class principle.

The affiliates are represented on the Congress by one delegate per 500 paid up members. Resolutions or constitutional amendments are submitted by affiliates for discussion and decision of the National Congress. The national office bearers of COSATU are also elected at this Congress.

The National Congress is where the principle of workers control is exercised and where the evaluation and reassessment of past tasks and the future way forward is debated and decided on.

SALB: In very broad terms what are your hopes for the future; how do you see COSATU moving over the next few years?

- interview -

Jay Naidoo: I cannot answer that I am certain that COSATU will fulfill its historic role in contributing to the building of working class politics in South Africa and establishing the leading role of workers in our struggle for total liberation. But I am certain that this is what the mass of workers in COSATU are striving with all their energy to do.



photo: Jay Naidoo addresses the Inaugural Congress of COSATU

Workerism and the Way Forward – A Rejoinder

the Isizwe Collective

Isizwe welcomes South African Labour Bulletin's re-publication of our article, "Errors of Workerism", and the debate that the two trade unionists take up with this article (SALB, Vol.12 No.3, 1987). We are pleased to note that, whatever their differences with the article in question, the two trade unionists agree with our basic definition of workerism, and with the need to criticise this ideological position. Such criticism is required in the interests, not of minimising, but in fact deepening the leading role of the working class in our struggle for liberation, democracy and an end to exploitation.

Any debate we conduct must be fully aware of its serious responsibilities. Our debates occur in a context in which, in little over a year, in joint national action spearheaded by COSATU and UDF, the working masses of our country have marshalled their forces together in major actions. The most notable have been the massive May 1st and June 16th stayaways of last year, and this year's May 5-6th general political strike. We are also debating questions of strategy and tactics in a period in which, at a mass level, a deeply significant process has been developing. In a variety of ways, through workers' locals, factory occupation, defence committees, neighbourhood care groups, street committees, rural village committees, student SRCs and PTAs, we have seen the development of rudimentary organs of democratic popular power. However uneven they may still be, we have no doubt that, looking back in 20 years time, these grassroots developments in the period since 1985 will be seen to have been turning points in the liberation and transformation of our country.

We are also involved in discussion and debate at a time when, precisely because of the gains referred to above, state repression and acts of rightwing terrorism against progressive organisations are attaining new heights. Again we can only repeat, our debates must be conducted with the fullest sense of responsibility. We trust that all concerned are not trying to score points off each other in a little debating society contest.

- workerism, a rejoinder -

In this, our reply to the two trade unionists, we would like to do two basic things. In the first place, we would like to put the record straight on the main criticisms made against our original article. In general, we feel the criticisms are based on misunderstandings. In the second place, we would like to look closely at their closing section, where the two trade unionists go beyond a critique of our article to consider, as their section subtitle puts it, 'The Way Forward'. In fact, these two basic tasks we are setting ourselves are not unconnected. There are close links between their misunderstandings of our original article and the particular way in which they conceive the way forward.

A. A rejoinder to criticisms

1. Workerism and socialism

The two trade unionists write:

"As we have said the label 'workerism' is used as a smear to discredit many socialists. If the intention of the authors was to attack genuinely workerist tendencies in the liberation struggle then we stand fully behind them. If this is not the case - and the term 'workerism' is being used as a smear - then the result will be to hinder open debate ... etc." (p64-5).

We are pleased to say that, in this case, the two trade unionists will be 'fully behind' us. We are surprised there should be any doubt about this issue. We refer readers to the subsection of our original article titled 'A Warning' (pg 54 in SALB reprint), in which readers are warned against using words like 'populism' and 'workerism' as loose, sectarian slogans. And in the concluding paragraphs of the article we say quite clearly that the major shortcoming of workerism is, ironically, that it obstructs the realisation of working class leadership and the struggle to remove all forms of oppression and exploitation - i.e. (do we need to spell it out?) it obstructs the advance to socialism.

We would also like to refer the two trade unionists, and SALB readers in general, to an article 'Notes on the present situation' in Isizwe Vol.1 No.4, especially the section titled, 'The debate about socialism'. Since the relevant paragraphs express exactly the views of the Isizwe collective on this matter, we would like to quote at some length:

- workerism, a rejoinder -

In the last year, there has been a growing mass interest within the UDF and COSATU ranks, in socialism. There is a great hunger for more information about socialism, and for wiser discussion about a possible socialist future in South Africa. These developments are widespread and national in character. (..) The handling of this reality from the side of the UDF leadership has not always been self-assured. It is clear that the UDF is not, and should not be a socialist front. The UDF and the broader liberation front include both socialists and non-socialists. This is not a short-coming. The last three years of intense struggle have confirmed, once more, in the hard school of practice, the absolute correctness of the broad strategy of national democratic struggle. Any individual who imagines that the NDS strategy is a delaying tactic, or the result of a 'petty bourgeois takeover' of the liberation movement, is lacking in any concrete understanding of the material conditions in South Africa. (And, it should be said, such an individual is also lacking in any understanding of the real possibilities of transition to socialism in our country.)

On the other hand, a genuine interest in socialism and its propagation is not to be equated with dissidence, workerism, or any other deviation. Where such accusations have been made, where for instance interest among youth in socialism is dampened or suppressed, this merely encourages divisions between generations, and the formation of factions.

More positive, open discussion on the future of our country needs to be encouraged with the ranks of the UDF. (p.18-19)

The two trade unionists may not agree with our line, but at least we hope that their fear that our attack on workerism was an attack on socialism is finally laid to rest.

2. History of the re-emergent trade unions

In their appraisal of our treatment of this topic, the two trade unionists have missed the point. In the first place, we were not trying to write a short history of the trade union movement over the last period. But, rather, we isolated the role of a certain group of intellectuals within this movement and tried thereby to trace some of the ideological roots of workerism.

It was also never our contention that academic 'Marxism' gave "rise to mass democratic organisation in the factory floor", as

- workerism, a rejoinder -

the two trade unionists allege (p.66). As we make quite clear, the major participants in the re-emergence of progressive trade unions were: (1) the workers themselves, (2) veteran leaders from the earlier SACTU period, and (3) young intellectuals from the campuses. We also said quite plainly that these intellectuals assisted greatly with advice, research, resources and organisational skills. Of course, it was in using these skills that, in the words of the two trade unionists, in handling the "menial but very important complaints, pay slips, Workmen's Compensation, UIF, etc., that these activists had some influence amongst the workers" (p.65). It was of course, these practical tasks, and not an abstract 'Marxism' that helped lay the basis for the re-emergent progressive trade unions.

However, and this was our argument, when it came to developing broader strategies beyond the crucially important but limited bread and butter issues of trade unionism, when it came to assessing how to relate, for instance, to the major liberation forces in our country, it was then that academic 'Marxism', amongst other things, played its negative role. It imparted an isolationist, workerist tendency in certain quarters within the trade union movement.

The two trade unionists also, very unfairly, criticise us for 'functionalism' in regard to the trade union movement and the defeat of the liaison committee system. Using a very small pair of scissors they cut out these two snippets from our article:

- (i) "the ruling class abandoned the liaison committees and went for a different approach"; and
- (ii) the state "decided to recognise the new trade unions and in this way they hoped to tame them. They hoped that by recognising the trade unions it would keep them from politics."

On the basis of these snippets, cut out from the pages on which they occur in the original article, the two trade unionists then tell us that we are claiming that the trade unions gained recognition thanks to the bosses and government, and not as a result of intense struggle. We invite readers to return to the relevant section in our article, which they will find on p.53-4 of the SALB reprint. Quite clearly the whole point of this section is that the bosses and the apartheid regime were forced to retreat on the trade union front by the 1976-7 uprisings. [For this we drew upon

- workerism, a rejoinder -

Eddie Webster's Cast in a racial mould, Ravan Press, Johannesburg 1985, pl48f] Perhaps the two trade unionists feel that we put too much emphasis on the 1976-7 uprising of students and workers, and too little emphasis on solid factory floor struggles as the cause for gaining trade union recognition. We would partly accept this criticism. But that is quite a different point from admitting functionalism. We hope that readers will agree that nowhere do we suggest that the Wiehahn 'reforms' were made independently of struggle, and were the result of ruling class charity. Nor do we remotely suggest that the 'reforms' functioned for the bosses and the regime as they had intended. In fact, we saluted the trade unions for their ability to exploit the space provided by these 'reforms'. (p.54)

3. Democracy

Here we do not want to correct a misreading of our original article, so much as correct a constant distortion of fact. There is a prevailing argument in certain circles, which the two trade unionists repeat. This is the view that in the progressive trade unions democracy is uncomplicatedly "prevalent" (p.72), whereas it can be questioned (p.72) whether such basic democratic practices as mandating, reporting back, and accountability of leadership are even accepted, let alone practised in political organisations.

Frankly, we find this position ill-informed and (we are sorry to use direct words) smug. In the UDF we salute the pioneering work that the progressive trade union movement has carried forward on the shop-floor and within its broader structures. For our part, we in the UDF take the building of militant, mass based democracy with the utmost seriousness. Indeed, we see this as our major task. We have already referred to the historic achievements realised at the mass level in the last two years in the building of rudimentary organs of democratic people's power. In every issue of Isizwe this aspect of our struggle has been reflected and popularised, and at all times undemocratic practices have been criticised.

We do not claim that our democratic processes are perfect. The building of democracy, whether in trade unions or in other mass organisations, is a difficult and ongoing task. Apart from massive destabilisation by the regime and constant vigilante attacks, any organisation confronts dangers of bureaucraticism, selective reporting back, domination by intellectuals and experts, per-

- workerism, a rejoinder -

sonality clashes, factionalism, and so on. Progressive trade unions, like other mass based organisations are not immune to the problems. It is neither accurate, nor helpful to any of to simply present trade unions as five star hotels of democracy, while all other organisations are written off as undemocratic.

There are other inaccuracies and problems that we have with the paper of the two trade unionists. But, in the interests of brevity, we would like now to move directly to the final part of their paper.

B. The way forward?

We find the final section of their paper, entitled 'the way forward', interesting but confused. It is interesting because it expresses publicly what has been in the air in certain circles in the last period. Because it puts some of these issues down in print, it enables all of us in the broad liberation movement to assess the merits of this position about which we have heard whisperings for some time.

What are our problems with this section? In the first place, the whole concluding section begins by saying:

many activists are debating as to how the workers struggle can advance and consolidate itself so that it is not used by other groups and classes. (our emphasis)
(p.74)

It is a great pity that the two trade unionists should see the central issue facing the working class in South Africa in this way. Note that they do not centre the debate about the way forward on: How the workers struggle can advance and consolidate itself so that power can be transferred to an alliance spearheaded by the workers, with a view to the most rapid, uninterrupted socialist transformation of the mode of production. They do not even pose as central the more immediate question of how the workers movement can protect itself against the terrorist attacks of the system. No. Both the long term and immediate struggles against the main class enemy of the workers are backgrounded. Instead, what is highlighted is this rivalry with 'other groups or classes' who might 'use' the workers struggle. Later references to 'petty bourgeois nationalism', and to problems with the 'major dominant political groupings that have a gravitational pull on the mass of

- workerism, a rejoinder -

workers in South Africa' (p.75), make it fairly clear that these 'other groups' are, in fact, the national liberation movement.

Earlier in their reply, the two trade unionists had agreed with Isizwe's criticism of those who see 'the working class as weak and ignorant and constantly threatened by "populism" and "petty bourgeois nationalism"', (p.73). But it is precisely such a defensive attitude which governs their own approach to the 'the way forward'.

Let us proceed with their argument. The two trade unionists tell us there are two suggested approaches for 'safeguarding' the workers' struggle. The first is the 'establishment' of a vanguard workers' party. While obviously not entirely unsympathetic in principle, they suggest three problems with this approach.

(1) They are worried that a vanguard party made up of "advanced elements", and they add, "i.e. intellectuals" - as if workers could not be advanced politically - "would not accommodate the traditions of mass democracy (mandating, report-backs, etc.)" (p.75). We are surprised that the two trade unionists confront this issue so naively, so innocently. It is as if South Africa in the year 1987 were the first place and time that this issue of the relationship of a vanguard party to mass democratic organisations was raised.

This issue goes back, at least, to 1901 and debates within the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP). In this period, Lenin began to argue that a revolutionary vanguard, proletarian party was needed in order to steel and strengthen mass organisations to ensure socialist victory. Lenin's views were supported by the grouping within the RSDLP that became known as the Bolsheviks. It was this group that formed the kernel of a new, communist party. Within the RSDLP, Lenin's arguments were opposed by the grouping that became known as Mensheviks. The Mensheviks argument was, in essence, exactly the same as the two trade unionists' first problem, or at least misgiving, with the vanguard party idea.

Of course, in assessing the value and the possible problems of a vanguard party we do not have to go back in history. Today, in all existing countries of advanced and developing socialism, whether in Europe, Asia, Latin America or Africa, there are vanguard communist parties. These parties while practising their own internal

- workerism, a rejoinder -

democratic centralism (involving, of course, mandating, report backs, electivity and revocability of leadership) interact with mass organisations (trade unions, women, youth, student, peasant, etc.). Does the existence of a vanguard communist party necessarily undermine the mass democracy of trade unions and other mass organisations? This is neither a new question, nor is it an abstract question. There are decades of concrete experience - problems, gains, mistakes, deviations, victories - in socialist countries now involving one third of the world's population.

We do not believe the two trade unionists are completely unaware of these facts. But for the purposes of their article they seem to have forgotten them. Why this forgetting? It seems to us that this forgetting enables the two trade unionists not only to ignore the international workers' movement, but also to ignore something much closer to home. Their whole discussion about the possibility of 'launching' a vanguard, workers' party with a socialist programme, passes over in complete silence the actual existence of such a party (SACP) within South Africa since 1921. But this brings us to the trade unionists second problem with a vanguard party.

(2) We quote:

Secondly, what would the relationship be towards the major dominant political groupings that have a gravitational pull on the mass of workers in South Africa? Is it possible to wish away the popularity and support that these movements enjoy? Can it (the proposed vanguard party) afford to be hostile? (p.75)

Well, there are a number of queries that must be raised here. In the first place, who are these "major dominant political groupings"? The UDF? Perhaps. But certainly the ANC which, as even the US State Department knows, is in a longstanding alliance with a vanguard workers' party, the SACP. Why are the two trade unionists not spelling this out more clearly? The topic of a vanguard party is precisely what is under discussion. Why these vague references to "major dominant political groupings"? Could it be that while relying on the prestige enjoyed by socialism amongst the broad South African working and democratic masses, the authors hope to disguise their own fundamental anti-communism?

Frankly, we find it hard not to arrive at this conclusion.

- workerism, a rejoinder -

This second shortcoming to a proposed new, vanguard party (in fact, it turns out to be more a regret than a shortcoming), is, we are sorry to say, opportunist. It amounts to saying that however good an idea it might be, we would not get away with it - 'It would appear as an alternative' ... to 'the dominant political organisations' ... 'The leadership of the dominant political organisations are quite aware of this' ... (p.75). In other words: It's too late, our move has already been spotted! This is not principled politics, it is invoking the 11th Commandment, "Thou shall not get caught".

There is another worrying aspect to this second "shortcoming". We are referring to the way the two trade unionists refer to the support enjoyed by the ANC-SACP alliance as "a gravitational pull on the mass of workers in South Africa". That is an unfortunate choice of words, suggesting that workers are so many bags of sand dumbly pulled by a gravitational force. We do not think that this choice of words is accidental, but we will come back to this point in a minute.

Let us first consider the third and final shortcoming advanced by the two trade unionists to the projected, 'new', vanguard party.

(3) Is it possible, they wonder, "for one to talk of a pure working class politics that is rid of petty-bourgeois nationalism? Is there something like "pure working class politics"?" (p.75) This puzzlement must be related to an earlier explanation that this proposed vanguard party "will be independent of nationalism".

Now here, and indeed throughout this paper, the two trade unionists consistently equate nationalism with petty-bourgeois nationalism, as if nationalism were the property of, at best, the petty-bourgeoisie. There seems to be no understanding of the possibility, let alone reality, of proletarian nationalism. As one of the founding fathers of scientific socialism observed, the internationalism of the revolutionary working class is not the country-less, free-floating 'man of the world', Swiss Bank cosmopolitanism of imperialism (an ideology to match the transnational flow of its capital). No, working class internationalism is related dialectically to revolutionary, proletarian nationalism. Each working class has its own national tasks. These include the most immediate objectives like the demand for a national, minimum wage, or the struggle to build united, industrial, national unions. The national tasks of the working class extend to the final settling of

- workerism, a rejoinder -

accounts with its own national bourgeoisie, and the development of a new nation, with a socialist economy, requiring patriotic defence against counter-revolution and the plots of imperialism.

In carrying forward its tasks, the proletariat is able to draw upon its own national traditions of struggle and culture, songs, slogans, symbols and heroes. In playing its leading role, the working class is also able to rally allies to its cause, partly through inflecting the national traditions of the broad popular masses with a revolutionary, working class content and direction. In short, it is not the task of the proletariat, or its vanguard party, to be 'independent of nationalism'.

Now the two trade unionists are, in fact not necessarily disagreeing with our point. But they make it sound like a regrettable fact of life, as if it were unfortunately not really possible to rid the working class of nationalism, which is (we are asked to believe) petty-bourgeois by definition. Because they have such a limited, negative understanding of the relationship of the working class and its vanguard party to revolutionary nationalism, it is not surprising that they can only explain the conceded effectiveness of the ANC-SACP alliance, based on a strategy of national democratic struggle, as a blind gravitational pull. The possibility that this strategy might actually answer the most immediate demands of the broad working masses in South Africa, while also laying the basis for the most speedy and effective socialist transformation of our country, is simply not considered.

These, then, are the three problems that the two trade unionists find with the idea of a possible, 'new' vanguard party. We have looked at their counter-motivations because they reveal so much about their own position and assumptions.

The alternative to this 'new' vanguard party that has emerged, the two trade unionists say, within debate (presumably in the same circles).

concerns the general idea of working class leadership. This thinking has it that in each struggle the working class should be pushed forward bit by bit into the forefront enabling it to take up its leadership role.
(p.75)

In this alternative conception, this process of 'pushing the working class forward' would be aided, we are told, by the development

- workerism, a rejoinder-

of a workers' charter.

We have no problem whatsoever with the idea that the working class must increasingly provide leadership on all fronts of our struggle. However (maybe we are being too sensitive about words), again we cannot help noticing how the working class emerges as so many bags of sand. On the one hand, the workers are (unfortunately) under the 'gravitational pull' of the ANC-SACP, now (as a counter?) they must be 'pushed'. Who does the pushing?

Faced with this last question, the two trade unionists are not unaware of their dilemma. Earlier they criticised the Isizwe article for arguing that trade unions have certain inherent political limitations (p.71-2). In trying to work out how workers will be 'pushed', and a workers' charter advanced, they themselves now bump into these limitations.

It could be argued that the impact of a workers programme would be minimised if its corollary is not there, that is the need for giving form to a political leadership capable of serving as the pivot of this process (p.75).

And so they come back to the very idea they have just dismissed, a vanguard party! Then, realising their confusion, they conclude:

It is only in the heat of struggle that guidelines to these questions will start to emerge. (p.76)

Their argument has got nowhere, they have to toss it all back into the melting pot of the 'struggle'. Well, that might be honest, but it is not helpful. 'No revolutionary can profess to have "the line" on the way forward,' they have told us earlier (p.74). Certainly blind dogmatism is not a helpful revolutionary quality. But not having any line, a programme of action, principles, strategies and tactics, and leaving it all to 'the heat of the struggle' is surely blinder even than any dogmatism.

FOCUS: Labour and the Agrarian Question

The following three papers submitted by trade unions and that by Jeremy Krikler were given at a workshop on the Agrarian Question held at the University of the Witwatersrand during May 1987.

Unionising the Farms

Sebastian Hempe
Food and Allied Workers Union

If we talk about organising farm workers into a union, we do not envisage starting another talking shop. There have already been a number of farm workers organisations established where discussion takes place and resolutions are adopted but in practical terms the organisations are powerless to effectively change the situation of farm workers. No doubt more such "unions" are to be established. The union we want is a real union, which will be effective first of all in changing the situation.

We have no blueprint for successfully organising farm workers, which is why we welcome debate on what is involved. We also welcome debate so that there can be greater awareness of the enormous problems there will be in starting a Farm Workers Union.

It is of great importance that there should be the widest possible support for the establishment of an effective Farm Workers Union, bearing in mind that the organisations, people and resources which a union might normally draw on for support are concentrated in cities and have little to do with the rural areas.

It is also necessary to say that much of what follows is based on limited experience and observation, and needs to be more carefully evaluated. We would welcome criticism and comment.

What is it like for workers on farms?

It is generally known that the situation of farm workers is bad. Comparing the situation of farm workers with other sections of the working class such as workers in industry (manufacturing), shops and offices and mines, the position can be summed up as follows:

- Wages are low. Moreover wages are not simply reckoned in money, but also in kind. This refers to "benefits" which workers commonly get such as food rations, housing, "dop" (wine). In some cases workers may have the right to grow crops for themselves, or to keep animals. It is often very difficult to put a money value on such benefits.
- There are no minimum basic conditions of employment which apply to farm workers. There are no set hours of work, per day or per week. There is no set annual leave, sick leave or public holidays. At best there are certain standards which have been got by custom, such as that Sunday is generally not a work day, or that certain public holidays are observed. However these standards have been set by the farmers on their own.
- There is no control over health and safety hazards on farms. For example, it is likely that there is widespread use of hazardous pesticides without proper safeguards for workers using them.
- There is no restriction on the age at which a person may work and child labour is common.
- The only law protecting workers at the workplace which does apply to farm workers is the Workmens Compensation Act. However, here too workers are largely dependent on the farmer to get their benefits.
- Housing is a condition of employment, in that workers with a very few exceptions have to live on the farms where they work. If they are dismissed they have at the same time to vacate their houses.

It is obviously not enough to describe the difference between farm workers and other workers simply in terms of their wages and conditions of work. Wages and conditions of work are so bad that one

- unionising the farms -

may wonder why farm workers put up with their situation. The reason they do so more often than not is that they have no choice. We need to understand why workers are in a situation of no choice, and see what can be done about it. If workers had a choice, it would be to leave the farms and find alternative employment. Or to stay on the farms and become organised. Up until the present both choices are extremely limited.

Some of the factors which limit the freedom of movement of farm workers are:

- * There are a number of government controls which have made it difficult for farm workers to leave the farms, and look for alternative employment. In the past the government relied mainly on the pass laws, nowadays it relies mainly on other measures e.g. availability of housing. In many areas the only housing available is on farms.
- * Workers have so little cash that it is impossible to move. Many are in debt to the farmer, and are not able to leave unless the farmer agrees to transfer his debt with them.

Some of the factors which make organisatin difficult for farm workers to contemplate as an option:

- * Fear of victimisation, where losing your job means losing your house.
- * The isolation of being on private property in the rural areas. There are few if any allies or resources that workers can draw on, and even to get to or contact someone in a nearby town can be a major problem.
- * The workforce on farms is relatively small and dispersed. The smaller any workforce is, the more difficult it will be for workers to organise themselves.
- * There is no legal recognition of the organisatin of farm workers, and little or no legal recourse if workers are unfairly dismissed or victimised.
- * There is no widely known example of the success of organisa-tion, such as a victory workers have won through organisation.

Different kinds of farms

In describing what it is like for farm workers on the farm, we have also to take into account that there are differences in the

situation of farm workers on different kinds of farms, and in different areas. These differences are also important.

It is useful to distinguish, from a union point of view, the following kinds of farms, and farming operations:

Small, medium and large farms

What would probably be regarded as a typical South African farm is of the "boer op sy plaas" type, where there is the farmer and his family and a handful of male workers and their families living on the farm. In this situation the wages and conditions of work are likely to be the least favourable, and the employment relationship is most personal. The opportunities to organise the workers are very limited.

In fact small farms of this kind are no longer typical, although in certain regions, for historical reasons, they may be more common than elsewhere. Increasingly farmers have got into debt and been forced to sell-out to bigger farmers. In the process small farmers have been consolidated in medium and large farms. Obviously the larger the farm the larger the total workforce required. There will probably be one or more farm managers, and the employment relationship becomes more formal. Also, the larger the farm, the more favourable the wages and conditions of work are likely to be, and the better the opportunities for organisation.

More or less labour-intensive farming operations

To give a clear description of what we mean by farms such as small, medium and large, is not possible without considering also what type of farming operation it is. For example, some kinds of farming operations are more labour-intensive, and require a much larger workforce, than others. Fruit farms are generally labour-intensive, for example, while maize and wheat farming operations are more mechanised, and vast farms can operate with a very small workforce.

It follows that labour-intensive farming operations offer better opportunities for organisation than the more mechanised operations.

- unionising the farms -

Privately owned and company owned farms

As small farmers have been forced to sell-out, companies have increasingly been buying up farming land. There are a number of reasons why companies might do this. For example, it may be a tax dodge, or an investment. Or it may be that the company intends to integrate the farming operation with its other business.

Other things being equal, the prospects of organising company owned farms are likely to be better than privately owned farms, both because a company is less likely to be threatened by its workers being unionised and because there is a chance of the company's workers in its other subsidiaries supporting the farm workers. This is particularly so where the company's farming operation is integrated into its total operation, which is what is usually termed agribusiness.

Farm factories

It is probably true to say that the larger and more mechanised the farm, the more closely it is likely to resemble a factory in its methods and practices. A stage is then reached when production is taking place on the farm in a manner no different from production in a factory. A typical example of this would be a packing factory situated on a farm, which is producing (and competing with) the same product as a factory in the industrial area.

It is not always clear at what stage a farm becomes a factory. In law a farming operation has been defined to include any operation which processes its own produce, e.g. Rainbow Chickens factories would be regarded as part of farming operation because the chickens slaughtered and processed are supplied only by the company's own farms. (It is not clear whether this definition still holds in law.)

From a union point of view factories such as those of Rainbow Chickens belong to the food industry. However it is not clear what the situation should be where factories are actually situated on the farms. The issue is even more critical where factories on farms are competing with factories in industrial areas. If workers in such factories or farms are unionised as part of the food industry, it may be easier to bring their wages in line. At the same time a farm worker's union would be deprived of its best potential.

Agribusiness

We have termed as agribusiness where a company's farming operation is part and parcel of its total business. Typical examples of this are broiler farms which supply poultry factories, or plantations which supply factories with sugar, tea, cotton, fruit, as the case may be.

There are also farmers co-operatives engaged in production, such as SASKO (milling and baking), LKB (canning), Sentrallwes (milling), SAD (dried fruit), Stellenbosch Farmers Winery (wine), NCD (dairy). This is also agribusiness of a special kind. The farms are an integral part of the factories they supply, but the difference is that the owners of the farms are the shareholders of the co-ops, and to that extent the co-ops are controlled from the bottom up rather than from the top down. (We would very much like someone to research to what extent this is really true.)

Farms in an agribusiness set up lend themselves to organisation. However a similar issue arises as in the case of farm factories. Should the farms be organised as part of the food industry or as farms?

Strategies in organising farm workers

Apart from the problems faced by the workers themselves, there are a number of problems relating to how farm workers can be organised. Below are the problems, and the strategies devised to cope with them.

1. What kind of union for farm workers?

Farm workers could either join an existing union in an industry closely connected to farming (food, paper and wood) or join a union set up exclusively for farm workers. There are problems either way.

The attraction for farm workers of joining an existing industrial union, e.g. the food union, is to join an organisation which is already strong. There are certain kinds of farms which could conveniently be included in a food union. However, the problem is that a union organising industrial workers is not set up to deal with the specific problems of farm workers.

- unionising the farms -

To set up a union for farm workers is also a problem. How can a new union, without resources or experience, begin to tackle the problems of organising farm workers? The question of legal recognition here is also crucial. A union with resources and experience might be able to make progress with or without legal recognition. However a new union in a sector which has never been unionised has little hope of doing so.

FAWU, by establishing a Farm Workers Project, has left open the question as to what kind of organisation farm workers will eventually have. Rather this is a question to be settled by the workers themselves, once sufficient numbers have been organised. By organising workers under the umbrella of FAWU we hope to offer the benefits of an established organisation. At the same time by establishing a separate project, which will be separately financed, we hope to deal with the particular situation on the farms.

How the union will be structured

The detailed structures of the union will have to be worked out in time. However in order to take account of the fact that farm workers are dispersed over such a wide area, there would have to be at least 5 levels of representation:

At the farm: Members would be represented at the farm by stewards (farmstewards) elected by the members themselves.

At local level: Representation at the local level, covering the local farming area, would be by stewards from different farms in the area. In the case of large farms the area of the farm might be large enough to cover the local area. Meetings at this level should be within walking distance of all the farms in the area, so that it is possible to organise meetings easily and at short notice.

Branches: Branches would be centred in the towns which are based on the farming and other activities of that area. In most cases these towns are fairly easy to identify: it is where the workers go to shop, where the farmers bank their money, and so on. Each local area would be represented at this level.

Regions: Regions would cover the main geographic regions of the country e.g. W Cape, Natal, etc. Each branch within the region

would be represented at the regional level.

Nationally: The regions would represent workers at a national level.

In short, if the structure of the union is to adequately cater for the situation of farm workers, there will have to be a great many locals and branches established. At the outset it should be clear that these will not be equivalent to the structures of other unions, where a branch implies an office and office facilities, with full-time persons manning it. Such structures will also have to function with a minimum of direction from a higher level.

2. Where to start

The problem in organising a Farm Workers Union is where to start. If one is successful from the start, there will be quicker progress.

It is our understanding that there is no likelihood of an organisation of farm workers getting off the ground in isolation from the organisation of other workers. It is the food industry more than any other which is closely linked to farming, and it is therefore in areas where the food industry is well organised and its links with farming are closest that we have the best chance of unionising farms. It also follows that in areas where there has been little unionisation, and especially in areas where there are industrial workers which have not been organised, it is not realistic to expect unionisation of farms. This is important for unions in South Africa for a variety of reasons tend to be concentrated in the main centres, and are only recently becoming established in outlying areas.

Looking at different kinds of farms, we have identified large farms, company owned farms of farm factories, and especially those forming part of an agribusiness operation as starting points.

3. How to negotiate

Presently there are company-owned farms which are prepared to formally recognise unions and to negotiate demands on wages and conditions of work. In the case of the one company they are prepared to recognise the union and to negotiate in respect of farms nationally. However, recognition to this extent will remain an ex-

- unionising the farms -

ception, unless the government allows the legal recognition of unions for farmworkers. Given the growth of the conservative party particularly in the farming areas of the Transvaal this is most unlikely. This means that it would be unwise to base our negotiating strategy on our getting formal recognition. Instead we shall have to be prepared to negotiate by other means.

The following kinds of negotiations are possibilities:

- * Negotiations with individual farms: This is practical in the case of farms which are prepared to negotiate and in the case of larger farms. It is not likely in the case of small or medium farms.
- * Negotiations at a local area level or branch level. In fact wages and conditions of work are being determined to an extent at these levels by farmers. Farmers are in contact with one another both directly and through organisations such as co-operatives and agricultural unions. It is possible that negotiations could take place with farmers collectively or through such bodies.
- * Negotiations at a higher level would concern demands relating to farm workers as a whole, such as for the introduction of legislation to provide minimum basic conditions. It is difficult to see bodies like the South African Agricultural Union negotiating with a farmworkers union at such a level in the foreseeable future, and what is more likely to take place is campaigns, drawing attention to the workers' basic demands.

4. Our weapons

Clearly no union is going to make headway with its demands unless it has weapons to back it up, and defend the organisation against attack.

In the early stages while the first farms are being organised, the workers' biggest fears is victimisation. The example of 19 workers in Delmas who were dismissed merely for filling in forms, evicted from their houses, and the next day arrested for trespass for trying to go home, shows us that this fear is well-founded. The only safeguard there is at present is where the farm is linked to a factory or company which is unionised, where the bosses face repercussions from organised workers.

Strike action at individual farms is only a possibility on large

farms, company-owned farms, farm-factories or farms linked to agri-business. Even there it is a risky business until the union is established. Once the union is established, the possibility of the withdrawal of labour on an area basis is a potent threat. Action of this kind is likely to minimise the threat of victimisation. It is probably only when such actions take place or are threatened that farmers will discover the benefits of negotiation.

5. Private property

The fact that farms are private property is an obstacle to organisation which farmers will use without hesitation. One of the demands which will have to be made in whatever forum it is possible to do so is for access to farms, by stewards and officials. At the same time this emphasises the importance of structures at the farm and local area level, which depend on the farmworkers themselves. It should be possible for these structures to operate without exposing the union to trespass charges.

Organising Farm Workers

Phillip Masia
Orange Vaal General Workers Union

Orange-Vaal General Workers Union (OVGWU) will try to share some of our experiences of organising farmworkers. I will speak firstly on how we found ourselves organising farmworkers in the union. Then I will try to tell you how we responded to that challenge, and what types of farms we are organising. Then I will talk about the expectations of farmworkers and the problem we face in trying to meet these. In our union we have been holding workshops to try to get farmworkers to tell us exactly the problems they are facing and how they would like a way forward to be mapped from there.

In 1982 the union coincidentally met with farmworkers whilst organising civil engineering workers in the Vaal area. This came about through the influence of organised workers on unorganised workers irrespective of which sector they come from. It was because of this influence by civil engineering workers that we were

- agrarian question -

introduced through them to the farmworkers. After we met, after a few meetings we responded by saying that there was nothing much which we could do for them - but as part of the class, that is the working class in the country they can carry their struggle forward to recognition. From our side, that is from the side of the office we said that what we could do is to try to inform them of weapons which they could use, and to try to come up with the structure of the trade union. Needless to say this was too much of a challenge, and we wanted to keep our backsides up that we have accepted the challenge. Why do I say it was too much of a challenge, because when we started looking for weapons or information about how to carry that struggle, after organisation, we found that we were running into one dead-end after another.

So this is going to be a record, a record of one defeat after another defeat. At the end of the day maybe we can come up with some solutions to these problems.

OUR RESPONSE

The first organisation fortunately was in what we call Agribusiness. These are the people that we met who are wage earners and who are allowed to live with their families on the farms in match-box type of housing. The employer here is Anglo-American. Now his (Anglo's) reaction was the human reaction, ridiculing our organisation when it started, later trying to repress it. When we started to challenge this they started to respect the organisation, but not entirely. With this group of workers we came to meet and organise workers on other farms owned by the same corporation.

The reaction of the corporation was to move in, as they tried with industrial trade unions, trying to substitute trade unions with their own internal machinery. Immediately they came in with personnel departments and said that they were going to establish works committees and so on. We fought, we said that we were going to establish independent shop-steward structures. But there is uneven development within the same corporation and with the same workers. Those who approached us at first were told to form their own organisation, they were not joining our organisation as yet, but then later as the other groups came in they started joining the organisation immediately so we are not as strong as the first base. We are making some progress in Agribusiness and with some of the poultry farms. Needless to say however there is the question of private property. You can't enter when you want to and you

are faced with things like trespass charges. With private farms this is where there is no movement at all, it is very difficult, it is inaccessible. The farmer is always there, or his son is there, or a nephew, to stop you from coming into the farm. This is our challenge and this is where we haven't moved an inch. We are trying all sorts of ways to reach the workers on private farms. You cannot go and wait at the gate of the farm for them to knock off, or talk to them in a township elsewhere. You will actually have to take the workers out of the farm in order to talk to them.

EXPECTATIONS OF FARMWORKERS

When we look at the expectations of farmworkers we find that they are the same as the expectations of anybody today - influenced by technology and so on. They want proper mattresses not straw ones, they want Television and radios, and to be included in social security benefits, unemployment benefits. They want better wages and better schooling for their children, they want what anybody wants in an advanced society.

PROBLEMS WE FACE

So the problems we are facing relate mostly to that of dismissal. You can talk to them, you can convince them and tell them about organisation but at the end of the day they will ask you that one question. "Tell us what happens if we get dismissed, what can the union do?" and you know that to be honest there is nothing much that you can do. We are having a similar situation with the Rand Water Board which also runs parks. In January about nine workers were retrenched and were to be evicted. The only way you can go to court is by saying to the court that we want the proper notice. Now the proper notice is one calendar month and still there will be the eviction. So at the end of the road you know its a defeat. You can always play for time, but dismissals will occur. That is the main thing. Other problems that we face are distance, the distance that one must travel from one farm to another or from the office to the farm. There is also the question of access, where one faces trespass charges each time.

WORKSHOPS

So what we did in the face of all these defeats, forgetting about our success, is that at some stage the union said it would try to

- agrarian question -

bring in as many people as possible together with the farm and rural workers. These workshops were to try to get the workers to tell us about their problems and to formulate a farmworkers organisation. So the union has been running this series of workshops where we have invited groups with the relevant interest to the struggle of farm and rural workers, particularly how to link the struggle of farmworkers on the white farms and the rural workers. From the rural workers that where you get the migrant stream, they may come only during harvest time, they are constantly coming and going. Our problem is how to link the two, the union does not always have the energy to work with the migrant stream.

At our first workshop we looked at the problem of farmworkers and rural workers as told by themselves. At the end we were able to divide these into six categories. We ended up with problems related to health care; poor health care, bad facilities, bad nutrition, poor sanitation and so on. Other problems included the children; education, lack of transport to schools, control over education, unemployment, right to remain on the farms, etc. Then there were conditions of work, housing, wages, casual workers, rents, position of women on the farms. We have also looked at questions of publicity, information and more research. In our series of workshops we have tackled each category. At the moment however we feel that we have been having one workshop after another, not having evaluation or taking the experiences and lessons gained from these to put it into concrete organisational practice.

The Five Million Unprotected Workers

Mahlomola Skhosana
National Council of Trade Unions

Introduction

Since 1924 black farmworkers and their families have been effectively excluded from the regimes labour reforms. Farmworkers are almost forgotten workers of South Africa. The last 20 years have seen farmworkers' wages deteriorating and the workers have suffered from the declining purchasing power of their wages. Depending on which part of the country you are, wages range from R32 to R130 per month. During harvest season farmers use scab labour from various human dumping grounds, so called "homelands", and pay people in kind instead of cash. A whole village maybe paid in tomatoes during picking season. Slave labour in a form of prison labour is also extensively used by farmers.

Education

The education of farmworkers children is at the mercy of farmers. Schools are built on their property and are seldom properly staffed, furnished or equipped. Needless to say that most of these schools do not go beyond standard six. Part of the running cost of the schools, like hiring and paying teachers salaries, is said to be the responsibility of the Department of Education and Training. With all DET's shortcomings the end results are shortage of almost everything in these schools.

Trade union rights

It is a well known fact that there is strong hostility from farmers especially their union, the South African Agricultural Union (SAAU) against farmworkers being unionised. They argue that such a union will harm the agricultural sector. In fact they are saying such a union will stop us from exploiting workers and escape with it.

- agrarian question -

The effective exclusion of farmworkers from the Labour Relations Act does not prohibit the formation of trade unions by farmworkers. Farmworkers have been recently brought within the scope of the Workmen's Compensation Act No.30 of 1941. This is the first attempt to grant them access to compensation from the regime.

However the WCA limits their common law right to sue their employers for damages against daily exposure to extremely dangerous toxic substances. The regulations under the Hazardous Substances Act No.15 of 1973 are simply inadequate and not enforced at all due to lack of proper monitoring system.

Training

With the increased mechanisation in the agricultural sector, workers are exposed to serious hazards in that these machines are heavy to operate and the accidents they cause are severe and often fatal.

Most farmers do not offer their workers adequate training for fear that workers would leave them, the end results are fatal accidents that occur.

The main kinds and dangerous machines are:

- Soil tillage machine
- Planting machine
- Cultivating machine
- Harvesting machine
- Sorting and packaging machines

There are three types of hazards faced by farmworkers:

1. Traumatic injuries
Such as cuts turns electrocution fractures and amputation caused by contact with moving parts of machines and collision with machines.
2. Organic injuries
Caused by noise and vibration from machines.
- 3.. Health impairment
Organic injuries caused by noise and vibration are not easy

to diagnose and may be incurable. The high level of vibration encountered on certain agricultural machines may cause fatigue pains on the body and loss of sensation on the hands.

Exposure to toxic substances

The refusal of farmers to provide workers with adequate personal protective clothing and equipment such as respirators and barrier cream, leaves workers openly exposed to extremely dangerous toxic substances like pesticides, insecticides, fungicides, dipping chemicals, fertilizers and fuel. Inhalation or skin contact with these chemicals may result in serious skin injuries and incurable diseases like cancer of the lungs with no compensation from the employer.

Housing

Employment is linked to accommodation. Farmers provide housing which is far below standard and there is no monitoring system by housing inspectors of these dwellings. Loss of employment means automatic loss of accommodation.

Influx control

While the regime claims that it has relaxed influx control regulations in reality farmworkers cannot move freely to sell their labour in industrialised centres if and when they choose to leave a farm. They are expected to go to the human dumping grounds and reside there or be recruited by companies so that they can come as migrant workers in urban areas. Depending from which human dumping ground they come from, if they come from the so called "independent one" they are subject to repatriation under the Aliens Act if found in urban areas.

Problems of a Transition to a Socialist Agriculture in South Africa*

Jeremy Krikler

Any serious consideration of the possible path to a socialist agriculture in South Africa would have to fulfill three tasks.

First, a clear historical theorisation of the rural world would have to be provided - a theorisation which delineated the essential "lines of force for transformation" bequeathed by the country's history.¹

Second, a survey of the basic agrarian elements and struggles of contemporary South Africa and their likely (future) trajectory would be required. On the one hand, the size and composition of the agrarian work-force, the degree and nature of its organisation as well as a typology of its struggles (and their weaknesses) would demand exposition. On the other hand, a socio-economic - and, indeed, political - map of the rural ruling class would be needed: what is its size? how is its capital concentrated? what are the linkages between it and the industrial bourgeoisie? what coercive and administrative resources are in the hands of this class over and above the state resources to which it has access? how is the economy which it commands being transformed? and how does capitalist agriculture in South Africa relate to the wider world capitalist economy? Each of these questions would merit sustained scrutiny by those seeking a transition to socialism in South Africa.

Third - and finally - on the basis of the above, and with reference to the historical experience of countries which have attempted to make a socialist transition, such a study would sketch the essential features of such a transformation in rural South Africa.

*Text of a talk delivered at the Workshop on "The South African Agrarian Question: Past, Present and Future", at Wits University, May 1987.

In other words, then, the discovery and elucidation of the primary prerequisites for a transition to a socialist agriculture in South Africa is a task of considerable magnitude and complexity. Only a concerted collective intellectual endeavour will accomplish it. The present paper can do no more than provide some preliminary observations on the question and furnish some elements for discussion.

1. Agriculture : The weak link in South African capitalism.

The present economic recession in South Africa afflicts the agricultural sector more severely than any other.² So precarious is this sector that significant shifts elsewhere in the national economy actually threaten to retard, or even snuff out, some of the existing productive forces deployed within it: mere increases in electricity tariffs in 1986, for example, raised fears that Natal and Eastern Transvaal farmers "heavily dependent on electricity-fuelled irrigation" might be forced "to shut down their pumps";³ the upward-adjustment of interest-rates during the 1980s, meanwhile, has proved sufficient to plunge significant sections of the agrarian capitalist class into crisis.⁴ And a crisis even partially provoked by such a phenomenon points to the inability of many farmers to generate sufficient capital on their own to maintain and expand their enterprises. Indeed, the latter fact is now openly acknowledged by representatives of agrarian capital.⁵ Subject to the vagaries of the finance market like no other 'fraction' of capital in South Africa, the "credit-worthiness" (or unworthiness) of thousands of farmers has become a key factor in deciding whether or not they will continue to plant at all.⁶

The most dramatic index of the depth of the crisis besetting farmers is, of course, their national debt which, in 1986, vigorously breached the eleven billion rand barrier and led organised commerce to warn the President's Economic Council that a farming collapse might have "a damaging effect" not only on the rural economy but on the very "banking system itself".⁷ Those agricultural capitalists most heavily-indebted to finance institutions have probably passed the point at which they could have retrieved their positions independently: the national farming debt now exceeds gross agricultural income, is ten times the sum of total annual profits and is concentrated, obviously, amongst those farmers whose operations contribute least to those profits.⁸ The prospect for a large number of farmers must now be bankruptcy and

the absorption of their lands in the process of creeping monopolisation which has been underway in South African agriculture for almost four decades and which, since 1950, has halved the number of farm owners in the country.⁹

It is all too easy to ascribe the present agricultural crisis merely to the severe drought that has parched South Africa since the early-80s. Such an ascription, however, begs several questions. Why has the impact of so general a drought been differential, bringing some agrarian sectors (above all, maize) to the very edge of catastrophe, leaving others formally vulnerable to drought (such as sugar) able to survive its exigencies with profits and actually allowing still others (wool, citrus, deciduous fruit) to prosper?¹⁰ How is it that maize farmers have so limited a control over natural forces that, in October 1986, agricultural authorities warned that just one more "long, hot, dry summer" might be sufficient to "decimate the maize industry"?¹¹ Clearly, the present crisis in South African agriculture (more particularly, in its giant maize sector), whilst exacerbated by the drought, has a profounder (structural) causation and has been maturing for some time.

In fact, the present problems of South African commercial agriculture are the upshot of so deep an historical process that they are unlikely to be solved definitively within a capitalist framework at all. The absence of any truly autochthonous and general movement towards agrarian capitalism in the country's history has marked the South African rural world deeply. Whilst no more than cursory comments on the peculiar genesis of capitalism in the South African countryside can be offered here, and a fuller investigation of it will be attempted in another place,¹² certain 'grand facts' of history impress themselves immediately. Many of the decisive transformations by which labourers on South African farms became proletarians were wrought not by the organic development of indigenous agriculture, but by the external agency of an imperialist power. The abolition of slavery and the creation of an incipiently 'free' labour market at the Cape were executed from above, by Britain in the 1830s;¹³ again, it was an external force - the British Army coupled with a crop of imperialist administrators - which broke the fundamentally pre-bourgeois state power of the Boer Republics and erected in its stead a state order that permitted and encouraged the development of capitalist property relations and fostered a scientific agriculture.¹⁴

Unlike, say England, where agrarian capitalism preceded and encouraged its industrial counterpart¹⁵, in South Africa it was industrial capitalism - only firmly implanting itself in the country in the late-nineteenth century - which furnished the markets, much of the infrastructure, the state revenues and, indeed, often the capital itself for the capitalist transformation of much of the rural world.¹⁶ The hesitant, tortured path of this transformation - constantly spurred on and subsidised by successive governments - has been confirmed by the most modern scholarship. The agriculture of the inter-war years, concludes Helen Bradford is the most fundamental contribution to South African agrarian historiography in recent years, was generally not marked by 'capitalist production but by primitive accumulation - a view which historians who do not share Bradford's (Marxist) methodology nevertheless concur with.¹⁷ The long, state directed campaign against labour tenancy (often orchestrated amidst the din of resisting farmers), beginning in the early-twentieth century and reaching its term only in the 1970s, is perhaps the most cogent proof of the hesitancy of the landlords' transition to an economic order based on wage labour.

Propped up and spurred on, capitalism in South African agriculture (above all in its key maize sector) cannot but bear the marks of the 'artificiality' of its genesis. The immense and rising farmers' debt of today - immune, it appears, to every state palliative, whether massive subsidies (half a billion rand in 1985 alone) or governmental reduction in interest rates¹⁸ - is a malady whose ultimate source lies not in drought or usury but in the silent, unreachable depths of a history upon which, in the last analysis, South African agrarian capitalism rests. So trapped by this history are some landowners, that the present economic recession has induced in them a backward-slippage into apparently pre-capitalist production relations with forms of labour tenancy rising yet again in the countryside¹⁹ - vivid symbol of the backwardness of agriculture, the laggard of South African capitalism.

If agriculture, however, is the primary locus of backwardness in the 'combined and uneven development of capitalism' in South Africa, then it itself evinces an 'uneven development'. That wine (and deciduous fruit), wool and sugar are its most profitable flagships is no accident; it is precisely these (unindebted) sectors which had the earliest (least aided) launch into agrarian capitalism in South Africa, little wonder then that they developed an autonomous vigour.²⁰ Maize, the largest single sector in agriculture²¹ - was launched much later, tugged out by a state

- agrarian question -

without which it would be drifting still further into debt. There is nothing capricious in the fact that the present agrarian debt maze is, above all, a maize debt.

When all due allowance is made for growing monopolisation and the fusion of agrarian and industrial capital in such farming-divisions as sugar, it is the general backwardness of South African farming which impresses. Fully half of South Africa's commercial farmers account for a mere 10% of agricultural production, their own representatives berating them for an inefficiency born of "bad management".²² And it is precisely at the very centre of development of the agrarian economy that rural capitalists are weakest. For, as G A Cohen has demonstrated in a fundamental work, "the development of productively useful science" lies at the heart of the development of the productive forces generally.²³ Where, on South African agricultural enterprises, research is closely linked to production, yields can surpass sectoral averages fourfold and more.²⁴ Sugar, timber and deciduous fruit - some of the most advanced sectors in agriculture in South Africa - display the benefits of a certain emphasis on research and technological innovation²⁵ but South African agriculture, generally, does not. A mere 0,8% of the country's gross agricultural production is devoted to research, more than three times lower than the percentage so devoted in "many" other countries, almost twice as low as the average in "the developed countries" and, in fact, almost 20% lower than the equivalent figure in "less developed countries".²⁶ The vacuum of inputs at the very heart of the agricultural economy is the product of a class historically dependent upon subsidies rather than science for its profit.

2. The Implications of the Weak link for the Labour Movement and for Socialism

a. The labour movement

For the labour movement, the "weak link" status of agriculture within South African capitalism constitutes an obstacle. A sector which generates less profits than any other is bound to be hostile to the organisation of a workforce which would then press for higher remuneration. Of particular importance in this regard is Marx's demonstration that it is only "variable capital" (i.e. that portion of the outlay of an entrepreneur which, as wages, purchases labour power) that is capable of generating profits.

"Constant capital", which is spent upon means of production other than labour-power; provides essential conditions for the creation of surplus-value: in itself, it does not and cannot produce profit.²⁷ Indeed, the commodities it purchases (in the case of the South African farmer: fertilisers, machinery and the like) lie inert, mere expensive outlays, until labour-power sets them in motion, producing commodities which incarnate profit because only some of the labour power objectified in them is paid for in wages.

In fact, capitalists - except those of the advanced monopoly species - have little control over the prices of the commodities they purchase with their constant capital.²⁸ And South African farmers, few of them commanding monopoly capital proper, appear to have no control over the cost of the essential foreign agricultural 'inputs' upon which they spend much of their own constant capital. Indeed, the steep rise of the prices of such inputs, attendant upon the fall of the rand in recent years, has in fact considerably worsened the conditions for the drawing of profits from agricultural enterprise.²⁹

It is otherwise with variable capital. Wages are the one item in their ledgers over which farmers have most control. And it is a control they will jealously and ruthlessly guard given their profound lack of control over the prices of the items upon which they spend their constant capital. The escalation of those prices in recent years has, in fact, led some farmers to exert such pressure upon the the price of the commodity bought with their variable capital that money-wages have been erased from their account books altogether.³⁰

Given these facts, then, most farmers must oppose strenuously organisations that seek to increase the price of labour-power. Just as the high profitability of the mines, and the monopoly character of mining capitalism (which allows mine-owners much greater control over the cost of the items they spend their constant capital upon), has been one of the conditions for the spectacular advance of the National Union of Miners in recent years, so the low profitability of the farms, and the non-monopoly nature of most agrarian enterprise, is a major reason for the present retarded development of unionisation in agriculture. The deliberate exclusion of those organising the agricultural proletariat from the legal machinery to which the unions of industrial workers have access is, therefore, not merely an expression of the weakness of that proletariat, but of the capitalists to whom they are subor-

- agrarian question -

dinated.

What does the above imply for agrarian unions? First and foremost, that the most profitable grounds for unionisation on farms are the fertile areas of capitalist agriculture - deciduous fruit, sugar, timber, wool, the most prosperous maize farms and the zones of agri-business. In fact, the present pattern of unionisation (sparse though it is) suggests that unions organising farm workers have been gravitationally pulled, as it were, to such regions: Paper, Wood and Allied has taken root amongst timber plantation workers, the Orange Vaal General Workers' Union amongst the workforce of the highveld estates of the Anglo American Corporation, FAWU on farms owned by canning and milling companies.³¹

Given the limited resources of the labour movement in this country, and the vast and fractured nature of the million-strong agricultural proletariat, the unions would be adopting the correct strategy in rooting themselves firmly in advanced capitalist agriculture before attempting implantation in its backward counterpart. The tendency of capitalism is, after all, towards monopoly, its leading sectors endlessly encroaching upon and absorbing its lagging ones. 'Industrial practices' entrenched by unions operating within advanced capitalist agriculture are thus likely to radiate outwards with it as its arc of control widens. Moreover, the unionisation of the less profitable farms will, as wages rise, either spur farmers into more modern techniques (historically, one of the results of unionisation)³² or drive them still further into debt, perhaps even into bankruptcy. The land of those so driven is all too likely to be absorbed by profit-making commercial farming units which, if already themselves unionised, will find it difficult simply to rout union organisation in the 'rationalisation' of their new acquisitions that will no doubt follow. At present such rationalisations appear to involve mass redundancy on the one hand, and the intensification of labour amongst workers from the profit-making enterprise on the other, as they are compelled to perform the tasks which retrenched workers on the bankrupt estate no longer perform.³³

Another key reason why the first wave of agrarian unionisation should break over the zones of advanced agriculture flows directly from the precarious position of the backward farmers. For the low profitability farmers, able to concede very little economically in any struggle with labour, are likely to be unremitting in their political campaign against it. Retarded capitalism - especially of

the patriarchal agrarian variety - is always reactionary. In South Africa, it remains one of the core regions of support for the politics of the ultra-right.³⁴ The first systematic attempt at unionising farm workers in South African history met with the organised violence of landowners.³⁵ Given the politics of the unprofitable farmers today, and the presence of the AWB's Brandwags (armed reaction forces) in rural areas³⁶, it is unfortunately likely that union activists would suffer a similar violence today. Only unions with a secure organisational base in advanced capitalist agriculture will have the resources and the strength necessary to mount concerted, successive organisational offensives on such unfavourable terrain. Nevertheless, a political campaign against the armed gangs that lurk on the edges, and sometimes at the centre, of the far-right will be a necessary complement to - indeed, precursor of - the unionisation of the most backward zones of agrarian capitalism in South Africa.

b. Socialism

With regard to the question of a socialist transition, the weakness of agrarian capitalism in South Africa possesses both advantages and disadvantages. Ideally, socialism is erected upon the technical and productive base of the most advanced capitalism. Lenin, in one of his forthright aphorisms, declared "monopoly capitalism", particularly when it was commanded by the state, to be "the fullest material preparation for socialism."³⁷ Precisely because monopoly capital has made so few strides in agriculture, unlike those it has made (with seven league boots) in mining, the South African agrarian world evinces much less "material preparation for socialism" than does its industrial world.

Although the process of "creeping monopolisation" alluded to earlier has halved the number of South African farm-owners over the last four decades, it is important to emphasise the creeping quality of that process as well as its incomplete nature. A relatively thin stratum of agrarian capitalists accounts for the bulk of South Africa's agricultural production but it, nevertheless, enjoys no corresponding control over the land itself. Today, more than 60 000 landowners command the 85 000 000 hectares of land reserved for white-ownership in South Africa. This level of monopolisation is not only far lower than that which exists in other sectors of the South African economy, it does not approach the plateau of control to be found in the topography of advanced agrarian ruling classes: in late-nineteenth century Britain, locus

- agrarian question -

of the most powerful class of rural capitalists in history, a mere 7 000 persons owned 80% of the private real estate in the UK - a percentage not much lower than that owned by the 60 000+ South African white landowners of today; in the 1870s, only 360 magnates owned a quarter of all England's land.³⁹ Beside such a concentration, the diffuse nature of landholding in South Africa more than a century later, must make those who stress monopoly control of rural enterprise in this country pause to reflect. Agribusiness, in fact, comprehends no more than 10% of white-owned land in South Africa, the state controls less than 2% of it.⁴⁰

Any attempt at a properly socialist transition in agriculture would have to take these facts into account. Given the precarious purchase upon profitability displayed by the contemporary rural economy, a reckless tampering with economies of scale will send the productivity of agrarian labour spinning downwards taking the possibilities of planned economy with it. Socialism is not posited upon the dissolution of capitalist monopolies but upon their expropriation and subjection to workers' control. Lenin's aphorism needs to be recalled here with particular force. Where the development of capitalism in South African agriculture has provided a "material preparation for socialism", socialists should respect, preserve and extend that materiality. To flout it would not be to enter the 'kingdom of freedom' but to flounder further (and needlessly) in the realm of necessity.

In one sense, however, the relative lack of monopolisation in South African agrarian capitalism presents an advantage for a transition to socialism. Any attempt at such a transition on the mines will, of course, be met by sabotage of the most sophisticated stamp: in the first instance, the mining conglomerates are likely to attempt, with computer-swiftness, a capital-flight of immense proportions. With their monopoly control of the industry and international connections, whether or not the mines themselves are occupied by workers, they could effectively withdraw the "circulating capital... necessary to keep any industrial installation going at all"⁴¹ and perhaps even cut off markets in the short term. These are problems which socialists have had to face and overcome, in other - though less monopoly-controlled - economies (by such measures as nationalising all finance institutions and the accounts held in them, save those of the small depositors - as did the Bolsheviks).

The composition of capital in South African agriculture simply

of the land, with workers in many cases providing for their own sustenance on farms (so different from the mines), with the rural enterprises principally directed at a local market, and with so many farmers in debt, the expropriation of the agrarian ruling class in South Africa would leave less opportunity to landowners to induce an economic collapse than that open to the mineowners. What would considerably enhance their opportunities, however, would be hesitation in implementing a socialist programme. Any gradual measures towards expropriation would lead landowners swiftly to run down their enterprises, perhaps in the hope of creating food shortages and thereby exerting pressure upon those wishing to expropriate them. The history of Salvador Allende's Chile, a regime resolute in its commitment to a gradual transition to socialism, clearly revealed the dangers of slow movement in this regard.

Allende's Unidad Popular was elected in 1970, Chilean society rapidly becoming "a whirlpool of political forces" as millions (including the hitherto-dormant "seasonally employed in agriculture") "mobilised in support of new demands", the Right - in its turn - counter-mobilising. Very rapidly, large private farmers ceased to invest in agrarian enterprise: in 1971/2 crop output fell by almost 10%; between 1971 and 1973 (the date of the military coup), the production of wheat - perhaps the most important staple of all - declined at an annual rate of almost 14%. There can be little doubt that this contributed to the severe economic crisis that was the back-cloth of the Pinochet coup: indeed, by the time of that coup, food imports were consuming a third of Chile's export earnings.⁴²

This is not to say that severe economic difficulties will not attend a fully socialist transition in the countryside. They will. But those difficulties will be more an objective factor for transcendence than a subjective weapon in the hands of a ruling class seeking a return to the status quo ante. No illusions need be sown about the potentially tortured path that the transition to socialism in rural South Africa might take. Can that path be otherwise? The low level of monopolisation in agriculture, whilst making farmers economically weak, nevertheless multiplies the number of landowners and gives them a social weight that will be difficult to unbalance, let alone throw into the chronic disequilibrium necessary if socialism is to triumph. It will not be a handful of monopolists, but tens of thousands of landowners, with a history of political - indeed, military - organisation who will

- agrarian question -

handful of monopolists, but tens of thousands of landowners, with a history of political - indeed, military - organisation who will be resisting expropriation. The counter-weight to this social bloc would have to be extremely powerful: encompassing the broad mass of agrarian working people, mobilised on the basis of a socialist programme, the insurgent bloc would have to be capable of waging a class struggle that had been raised to its highest plane and that will, no doubt, assume lacerating forms. In this end-game situation, the countryside will be seized by a convulsive politico-economic transformation that would certainly dislocate the agrarian economy. It is precisely at this point that the level of unionisation in the countryside could be decisive in ensuring that economic dislocation was not radical enough to threaten food supplies. And this brings us logically to a brief consideration of the place of trade unions in the transition to socialism.

c. Trade Unions and the Transition to Socialism

By their objective position in capitalist society trade unions are precluded from leading a socialist revolution.⁴³ Put simply, unions are an expression of the conversion of labour-power into a commodity under capitalism. They seek to increase the price of labour-power and to improve the conditions under which it is employed. But socialism - seen by Marx "as the suppression of class society by the proletariat, and therewith the suppression of itself"⁴⁴ - aims precisely at the abolition of labour-power as a commodity. Constructed to defend that which socialism ultimately seeks to liquidate, unions, are not well-placed structurally to overthrow the capitalist state.

The key weapon in the hands of unions is forged (and limited) by their organic link to 'labour power as commodity'. For the strike, essentially, is a collective withdrawal of a commodity. Unions, typically make their power felt negatively - by absenting their members from the means of production they are employed to operate. And absence, even on the most massive scale, is incapable of superseding an existing social system. Such a project demands not withdrawal but what one writer has called "an aggressive over-participation in the system, which abolishes it and creates a new social order."⁴⁵

The most powerful weapons in the trade union arsenal - general strike and mass occupation of workplace - are unable to breach the order of capital. No socialist revolution has ever been effected

by these methods. The failures of the 1905 general strike in Russia⁴⁶ and that in 1968 in France, respectively the most insurgent and the largest in history, revealed the inability of the mass-stoppage to overthrow a state order. (The difference between defeat and victory in 1905 and 1917 in Russia was, in many ways, the difference between an insurgent strike movement and an armed insurrection of the working class: significantly, in 1917 strikes never assumed the importance they had in 1905.⁴⁷) Meanwhile, the failure of the most militant (and socialist-oriented) wave of factory occupations - that in Turin in 1919-20, in the heartland of Italian industrial capitalism - rapidly revealed the limits of occupations on their own as revolutionary weapons.

Yet, when all this is conceded, the crucial roles that can be played by trade unions at moments of revolutionary transition must be noted. There can be little doubt that the more organisationally-powerful the working class is at the moment of transition, the more ordered and less marked by privation the transition is likely to be. Thus, whilst Russian trade unions played no significant role in the October Revolution itself, they became a crucial organisational network for the Bolsheviks during the Civil War and in the Soviet attempt to build a planned economy.⁴⁸ Likewise, although trade unions played no role in the seizure of power during the Cuban Revolution of 1959, Cuba's relatively long history of organised labour and working-class struggle were important in laying the foundations for socialist transformation. At the moment of Castro's seizure of power, approximately half of the Cuban labour-force (much of it agricultural) was unionised. The giant Cuban Federation of Workers was, by this time, "dominated by an ideology of 'business unionism'". But "the organisational experience of the working class and its roles in the struggle over decades", nevertheless, "provided an important foundation for the reorganisation of the economy along socialist lines."⁴⁹

To shift the focus back to South Africa, then, powerful trade unions in agriculture, as elsewhere in the economy, can play a crucial infrastructural role in the creation of a planned economy. More than this, as has already been noted, a high level of unionisation in the countryside might well be the central factor determining that agricultural production continues amidst the torments of the economic dislocation likely to attend the transitional period. In this regard, as important as the level of unionisation in the countryside will be its pattern. A 1983 es-

- agrarian question -

estimate suggested that a mere 1% of South African agrarian enterprises generated 16% of farm income, that 6% of farm-units accounted for 40% of income and that 30% of farms produced fully three-quarters of commercial agriculture's income.⁵⁰ A later computation estimated 1% of the agrarian capitalist class to be responsible for half of the country's agricultural production.⁵¹ Whatever the precision of these figures, they do suggest that even a relatively-low level of unionisation, provided it is concentrated on the most productive farms - and, importantly, on the farmers' cooperatives and marketing boards which together overwhelmingly control agricultural inputs and outputs⁵² - may be sufficient to ensure that the transition to socialism in South Africa is not plagued by that acute scarcity of foodstuffs which so blighted the socialist project in the USSR.

3. Problems of Expropriation and 'Peasantization'

a. Expropriation

The first and fundamental pre-requisite for a transition to socialism in the countryside is, of course, the expropriation of the existing possessing class. To leave that class's social existence intact would be to leave capitalist exploitation untouched. As more than one writer has pointed out, the abolition of the Land Act would in itself do little to alleviate land hunger in South Africa.⁵³ Its prime result could well be the provision of investment opportunities to groupings now denied them, such as the organised African bourgeoisie which has recently called for just such opportunities.⁵⁴ The lifting of racial fetters upon the acquisition of land, then, would in no way alter property, and therefore exploitative, relations in the rural world. Nevertheless, such an assertion is likely to be viewed as no more than a mere truism: perhaps the experience of another country will lend it force.

The abolition of the Southern Rhodesia Land Apportionment Act (actually struck from the statute book under the Muzorewa regime), and the agrarian reform undertaken by the Mugabe Government, have manifestly failed to alter the structure of property in the Zimbabewean countryside. Whilst no attempt at a socialist transition has been made in Zimbabwe (five years after independence, less than 1% of the means of production had been nationalised⁵⁵), even the modest aims of the agrarian reform have been hampered by the regime's failure to expropriate, to any degree, capitalist

agriculture. Blocked from any large-scale acquisition of land by its insistence upon 'buying out' landowners, the ZANU-PF Government's initial target of settling over 160 000 peasant families by 1984 on "land bought...from...whites" has not nearly been approached. By mid-1985, only 30 000 families had been so settled. Today, more than seven years after independence, the number of resettled peasant families stands at 40 000 - less than 5% of the peasantry as a whole.⁵⁶

The real significance of Zimbabwe's agrarian reform, of course, lies elsewhere. For, quite obviously, the state's agricultural infrastructure has been opened to the peasantry in a way unthinkable in Southern Rhodesia. Well-placed peasants now have access to markets, prices for their produce and actual finance in a way they never did before: in 1979, the Agricultural Finance Corporation lent a mere 3 000 peasants a paltry \$1,5 million; in the 1984 agricultural season by contrast, the comparable figures were a fulsome \$54 million to 90 000 peasants.⁵⁷ The results have been a quantum leap in peasant production: before independence, the largest maize crop ever marketed by the peasantry was a scanty 67 000 tons; in 1985, it brought more than twenty times that tonnage to market.⁵⁸ These figures, whilst a great advance on those registered under settler rule, are not the upshot of general peasant prosperity (differentiation proceeds apace in the class) and should not be considered to imply a solution of the agrarian question in Zimbabwe.

Indeed, it is precisely the countryside which has, since independence, witnessed the most militant and violent events in the country - at once, site of the largest strikes and location of continuing armed attacks upon landowners.⁵⁹ It is estimated that "communal lands" in Zimbabwe carry 400 000+ peasant families more than, economically-speaking, they should.⁶⁰ The resettlement programme has run its course; the vast commercial farming units remain intact. Awash with maize and yet malnutrition⁶¹, it may take only the next severe drought to detonate the contradictions that have been building up around the massive agrarian capitalist enterprises that were never expropriated in Zimbabwe. For expropriation remains the precursor of any significant agrarian reform, let alone a socialist agriculture. In contemporary Nicaragua, only the Sandanista's confiscation of 'Somocista' properties, comprising one-fifth of the country's agricultural land, has enabled the Ortega Government to embark on a significant (though not socialist) programme of land reform.⁶²

In the case of South Africa, no significant expropriation could be effected unless landowners were not compensated for the confiscation of their property. Capital assets held by farmers amount to more than forty-three billion rand⁶³; they pay their employees, both waged and salaried, not much more than half a billion rand annually⁶⁴, drawing more than twice this sum in profits⁶⁵. Compensation on this scale, clearly, would bind the working class to paying an indemnity to its present exploiters in perpetuity, in effect ensuring that capitalist exploitation continued by another route. Wages would be held down and the reinvestments required to replenish means of production would disappear into dividends paid in compensation for assets that workers had already 'bought' - by way of profits extracted from them over generations. Expropriation without compensation remains the only feasible first step towards socialism in rural, as in industrial, South Africa.

2. 'Peasantization'

Expropriation without compensation - a major revolutionary act by any standard - need not be followed by the socialist project of converting farm-units into collectives under workers' control within the broader framework of a planned economy. Confiscated properties could instead be divided and distributed to the existing farm labour-force. Given the centrality of this scenario to some prescriptions for the South African agrarian future, it would be appropriate to rehearse some of the (socialist) arguments against it.

Socialism, fundamentally, requires the subjection of the economy to plan. The parcelling out of South Africa's white-owned agricultural land amongst those who work it is tantamount to converting approximately 65 000 farms into at least a million economic units - for such is the size of the agricultural proletariat today.⁶⁶ All anarchically-pulling in the direction of their own individual interests, these units would rend beyond repair any attempt at a planned economy in South Africa. It was the market-dynamic of millions of peasant households (not, it should be noted, primarily "kulak" households) which threatened to shatter the economic project of socialism in the USSR in the late-1920s.⁶⁷

The triumph of the Bolshevik Revolution, however, was made possible only through a revolutionary alliance of the proletariat and the middle and poor peasantry. This necessitated initial conces-

sions to small private property - albeit de facto rather than de jure since the land was immediately nationalised. But private property, in effect private economy, on so massive a scale was bound in the end to shred the economic plan upon which socialism, in the final analysis, depended. Significantly, Lenin - before the Bolshevik seizure of power and (surely) in full cognizance of the need to effect an alliance between worker and peasant - "showed preference for measures tending towards collectivization and, in conformity with Marxist doctrine, expressed very definite reservations about the regime of small-scale ownership."⁶⁸

Such doctrine, however, could not be applied immediately in a country where the peasantry constituted the vast majority of the population - especially in the midst of the civil war and the economic devastation that followed the victorious socialist revolution. From the mid-1920s, however, the doctrine could have been applied progressively⁶⁹; but by that time, the policy of appeasing small property had become a veritable cult amongst most sections of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, its most extreme manifestation being Bukharin's cry to the peasantry: "Enrich yourselves!". The results were to be well-nigh fatal. Collectivization, instead of being carried through over many years and not in the midst of crisis, was clamped upon the peasantry at that point, in the late-20s, when private property began to subvert planned economy and when hunger (summoned forth by grain-hoarding) stalked the cities. The character of the collectivization - belated, brutal, undemocratic - has scarred Soviet agriculture to this day, Deutscher's analysis of its fundamental contradictions still pertaining.⁷⁰ In Part, the torments of the Soviet experience were made inevitable by the contradictory nature of the alliance between peasantry and proletariat which alone had made the Revolution possible. But there is no reason why South Africa should suffer similarly. For South Africa possesses that which Russia lacked in the early-twentieth century: an overwhelming preponderance not of the peasantry but of the proletariat. Peasants have ceased to be a strategically or numerically significant class in this country. The sequence of peasant rebellions that swept South Africa in the 1950s were already stamped⁷¹ by the proletariat, migrant workers playing a key role in them. Today there are extremely few self-sufficient peasants. Some statistics indicate that in the areas where most peasants are located, the bantustans, "agricultural production contributes as little as 10% to household income and sustenance".⁷² Overwhelmingly, wage labour not subsistence agriculture maintains such households.⁷³ Outside

- agrarian question -

describes its relative prosperity in "one of the few areas in South Africa where a black peasantry has been able to survive, to an extent, the onslaught of Apartheid...and capitalist agriculture". But even this community is said to be dependent on wage labour "in the PWV area".⁷⁴

All evidence points, then, to the extinction of the peasantry as a significant social class in South Africa. To divide commercial farms into small plots would be, in effect, to recreate a class. Some mention has already been made of the radical violation of the economic structure of the countryside this would entail. It is worth recalling here that the landowning class of Czarist Russia was a rentier class, drawing a surplus from peasant families working small plots of land: the expropriation of Russian landlords, and the division of their estates amongst the peasantry, therefore entailed no fundamental rupture of the economy, although where economies of scale existed they were initially undermined.⁷⁵ The basic unit of agricultural production in South Africa, however, is not the rented smallholding but the giant capitalist farm. The degree to which economies of scale exist in South African agriculture, therefore, is incomparably greater than the extent to which they existed in the Czarist countryside. Consequently, a fragmentation of farms into smallholdings in this country has an immeasurably greater potential for destroying economies of scale.

A division of the great capitalist estates of rural South Africa carries with it the danger of rendering redundant existing agricultural technologies: such technology, as one writer has recently pointed out, cannot be utilized on the smallholdings of the bantustans;⁷⁶ at present, the combine-harvester cannot be used profitably on South African farms where the maize-harvest is less than 250 tonnes⁷⁷ - a threshold far above the capacity of the peasant smallholder. Marx's judgement on the economy of "the small-holding peasants", for all its harshness, appears correct.

Their mode of production isolates them from one another instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse....Their field of production, the small holding, admits of no division of labour in its cultivation, no application of science and, therefore, no diversity of development....Each individual peasant family is almost self-sufficient, it itself directly produces the major part of its consumption and thus acquires its means of life more through exchange with nature than in intercourse with society⁷⁸

life more through exchange with nature than in intercourse with society⁷⁸

Moreover, aside from the liquidation of economies of scale, the recreation of the peasantry on the basis of a division of the land amongst those who work it, must terminate the basic social prerequisite for socialism in the countryside: the rural proletariat. That great force, still largely unharnessed organisationally, would be dissipated as its members dissolved into a sea of smallholdings. Where the basis now exists for united struggle and defence, there would instead be a petit-bourgeoisie, incapable of playing a revolutionary role because its plots of land would not be under the fist of landlords or state. Agricultural unionisation would be shattered in an instant.

And it is perhaps on that somewhat alarmist note that this paper should conclude. For the peasantry is the most quicksilver of classes, capable of multiple political permutations. The French peasantry, revolutionary in the late-18th century became the mainstay of a reactionary Bonapartist despotism in the mid-nineteenth;⁷⁹ the Russian peasantry, revolutionary against its landlords, proved itself sullen and intractable once those landlords had been extinguished; the Bolivian peasantry, radical and violent in the wake of the 1952 Revolution, proved itself (after land reform) to be inhospitable to Che Guevara and an ally of the military.⁸⁰ Indeed, where revolutionary upheavals of a socialist nature have been based upon the peasantry, that class has been led by organisations which were careful to canalise the social forces they were unleashing in a collectivist direction: the essential political achievement of the Chinese and Vietnamese Communist Parties. For Marx, writing in The 18th Brumaire, the peasantry only became "revolutionary" when it struck out "beyond the conditions" of its "social existence, the small holding".⁸¹ To set it in the opposite direction, back towards its smallholdings, is merely to recreate the conditions out of which rural capitalism has often come. If that were done in South Africa, in the midst of a "socialised" economy in industry, then socialism itself might snap at what is presently the weak link of South African capitalism.

REFERENCES

1. Given the hoary debate over the place of history and historical

research in political struggle, it is perhaps worth re-stating here the classical Marxist conception of it: "For...historical materialism...one of the central purpose of understanding the past is to provide a causal knowledge of historical processes capable of furnishing the basis for an adequate political practice in the present, aimed at transforming the existing political order into a prepared, popular future...". "For historical materialism, as for socialist politics, what the past bequeaths the present is first and foremost a set of lines of force for transformation...".

See Perry Anderson Arguments Within English Marxism (London, 1980)

2. See, for example, Business Day, Oct. 28th 1986, p. 3

3. See Business Day, Nov. 5th 1986, p.1

4. David Cooper, "Ownership and Control of Agriculture in South Africa", University of York Centre for Southern African Studies Paper, presented at the Conference on The South African Economy after Apartheid (29th Sept. - 2nd Oct. 1986), provides a brief analysis of the role of rising interest rates in plunging farmers into debt. See pp. 15-16 of this paper, hereafter referred to as Cooper (York, 1986)

5. See, for example,, the comments of the vice-president of the Transvaal Agricultural Union quoted in Business Day, Sept. 5th 1986, p.3.

6. See, for example, Business Day, Sept. 23rd 1986, p. 3

7. See Business Day, Oct. 7th 1986, p. 1, "Beleaguered farmers now owe R11,2 bn".

8. See Business Day, Nov. 10th 1986, p. 2, which cites the official estimates of total agricultural income for the year ending in June 1986 as almost R9,9 billion and profits as R1,3 billion. As has already been pointed out, the farmers' debt at the same time was R11,2 billion.

9. For evidence of the increasing bankruptcy of farmers, see Business Day, May 6th 1987, p. 3 and Sept. 23rd 1986, p.3. The process of monopolization alluded to in the text is well-proven by government statistics. According to such figures, the number of farms in South Africa increased by a few thousand after 1946 to reach 116 848 in 1950; since then, there has been a more or less continuous decline: in 1980, for example, the figure stood at 69 372 (see Abstract of Agricultural Statistics, 1987, issued by the Directorate Agricultural Economic Trends, Dept. of Agricultural Economics and Marketing, p. 6. Table 6). Since 1980, given the accelerating monopolization attendant upon the recession, the number of farms is likely to have fallen still more. A recent paper, citing what appear to be government statistics for later than 1980, gives the number of white-owned farming units in SA as

65 972 : see Cooper (York, 1986), p. 2, table 1. Moreover, as a recent work has pointed out, the number of units will be more than the number of owners in South Africa; i.e. government statistics are based solely on the number of farms in the country; they do not take into account the fact that particular owners may own more than one estate. For the latter point, see Tessa Marcus Restructuring in Commercial Agriculture in South Africa; Modernising Super-Exploitation: an investigation into the impact of restructuring on the position and conditions of farm workers (Amsterdam, 1986), p. 6. Marcus, in fact, underestimates the decline in the number of farming units in the 1980s - see her page 4.

10. For allusions to the differing fortunes of these various sectors, see, for example, Business Day, Sept. 8th 1986, p.2 and Sept. 11th 1986, p. 1 (citrus); Sept. 23rd 1986, p. 3 and October 14th 1986, p. 3 (maize); Sept. 24th 1986, p. 1 (wool and maize); November 20th 1986, p. 2, "Tongaat turns in a little sweetie" which (circumstantially) suggests that the drought, whilst having adversely affected sugar-cane supplies, has not prevented profits for Tongaat-Hullett. For the vigour of the deciduous fruit sector during the drought, see, for example, Business Day, Nov. 11th 1986, p. 16

11. See Business Day, Oct. 14th 1986, p.3

12. I attempt such an investigation in the first chapter of The South African Agrarian Future, a study I am presently preparing and which should be completed by early next year.

13. For which see Robert Ross, "The Origins of Capitalist Agriculture in the Cape: A Survey", pp. 56-100 (esp. pp. 79-96) in Beinart W, Delius P and Trapido S (eds.) Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850-1930 (Johannesburg, 1986). Readers are warned, however, that Ross's essay is vitiated with a conceptual confusion that leads him, at times, to confuse slavery with capitalism and slaves with proletarians thereby cancelling the interesting and important points he makes about the social and economic effects of the abolition of slavery. Critical comments on Ross's approach will be offered in a critique of Putting a Plough to the Ground in Transformations.

14. See Stanley Trapido and Shula Marks, "Lord Milner and the South African State" in P. Bonner (ed.) Working Papers in Southern African Studies (Johannesburg, 1981); Jeremy Krikler, "The Transvaal Agrarian Class Struggle in the South African War", Social Dynamics, 12 (2), 1986, especially p. 18 ff. For massive, preliminary evidence of the British attempt to create a scientific agriculture in the defeated Boer Republics, see the British-

- agrarian question -

sponsored Transvaal Agricultural Journal of the early-twentieth century, a journal circulated in the Orange River Colony as well. Beinart and Delius, in their "Introduction" to Putting a Plough appear to concur with the view that the period of direct British control of SA was central to later agricultural developments; on pp. 40-1, they write: "...the period around the turn of the century can be seen as that in which the initial foundations were laid for the development of a racially exclusive form of capitalist accumulation on the land...". See also their p. 31.

15. See, e.g., E. Hobsbawm Industry and Empire (Harmondsworth, 1970), pp. 29-32.

16. This was, of course, one of the contentions of the famous study with which South African agrarian historiography proper began - W. M. Macmillan's The South African Agrarian Problem and its Historical Development (Johannesburg, 1919), esp. pp. 36-41, 62-3, 76-7. Crucial economic infrastructure, e.g. railways, was, as Macmillan pointed out, distorted and skewed by the needs of mining capitalism. Later studies appear to reinforce Macmillan's contentions: see, e.g., Putting a Plough, pp. 28 & 31-2.

17. See the comprehensive and convincing demonstration by Bradford in her chapter "Masters and Servants in the South African Countryside" in her Wits Ph.D. thesis: "The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa in the South African Countryside, 1924-1930" (1985). For the concurring historians, see Delius and Beinart, "Introduction" to Putting a Plough, p. 17.

18. For the subsidy statistic, see Cooper (York, 1986), p. 8, table 5 - using figures provided in the 1986 Abstract of Agricultural Statistics; for the information concerning the reduction of interest-rates, see Business Day, Oct. 29th 1986, p. 2, "Land Bank cuts rate": the reduction (by 1%) affected both existing and future loans to farmers.

19. See M. Sarakinsky and J. Keenan Dying For Change (Zed Press, forthcoming), a book which notes that some farmers have done away with wages entirely, demanding labour from their workers merely in return for residence rights and access to paltry plots. In an interview with a member of the South African Agricultural Union, it was revealed to these writers that such arrangements were expected to increase on South African farms. It should be noted that Sarakinsky and Keenan do not detail this as a pre-capitalist production relation and I am not imputing the designation in the text to them. For further evidence of the reappearance of labour tenancy (this time in the Lydenburg District of the Transvaal), see Alan Mabin, "Land ownership and the prospects for land reform in the Transvaal: a preliminary view", University of York Centre for

southern African Studies paper, presented at the Conference on The South African Economy after Apartheid, Sept-Oct 1986, p. 6. Hereafter Mabin's paper will be referred to as Mabin(York, 1986).

20. Wine and deciduous fruit are concentrated in the south-western Cape, the oldest zone of agrarian capitalism in South Africa - the zone in which an already commercialised group of slaveholders were forcibly mutated into proto-capitalists by the abolition of slavery in the 1830s. Wool and sugar, likewise, have a long history of capitalist orientation in South Africa, stretching well back into the nineteenth century. In South African agriculture, these were the first major 'crop belts' to use wage-labour comprehensively in production. Importantly, these sectors capitalized in an era preceding that during which the state began comprehensively to aid agriculture (i.e. before the early-twentieth century). They were, therefore, forced to rely more on the enterprise and organisation of farmers themselves than was, for example, the maize sector in the twentieth century. For the early history of agrarian capitalism centred on wine and wool in the Cape, see Ross'

s "Origins of Capitalist Agriculture in the Cape" and (for wool) Saul Dubow's important study Land, Labour and Merchant Capital in the Pre-Industrial Rural Economy of the Cape: the Experience of the Graasf-Reinet District, 1852--72 (Cape Town, 1982); for sugar, see Peter Richardson's forbidding but erudite, "The Natal Sugar Industry in the Nineteenth Century", pp. 129-175 in Beinart, Delius and Trapido (eds) Putting a Plough to the Ground

21. Michael De Klerk, "Seasons that will Never Return: The Impact of Farm Mechanization on Employment, Incomes and Population Distribution in the Western Transvaal", Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol. 11, No. 1, October 1984, p. 84.

22. Such statistics and complaints were to be heard at the annual conference of the Transvaal Agricultural Union in Pretoria in 1986: see Business Day, Sept. 5th 1986, p. 3.

23. See G. A. Cohen Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence (Oxford, 1982 edition), pp. 41-2 & 45-7. Cohen advances his argument, with customary devastating logic, not simply in terms of the Marxist schema he is defending.

24. See, e.g., Business Day, Nov. 11th 1986, p. 16, "Research ups Westfalia's...crop". Westfalia Estates in Duiwelskloof, an export-oriented avocado estate employing 1200 workers has been the site of a concerted application of research-findings and scientific technique to agriculture. The result: "The estate produces 13 tons per hectare - compared with the industry average of about three tons - due mainly to research inputs."

25. As is made manifest in the business press. See the following articles in Business Day: "Fruit Board a major currency earner" (Nov. 11th, 1986); "Sappi beats price hikes working on new system" (Sept. 2nd, 1986); "Adendorf proves to be a miracle-worker" (Sept. 2nd, 1986); and "Pests alive! Borer gets radioactive" (November 18th, 1986), the rather flippant title of which belies the serious programme of research sponsored by the South African Sugar Association.

26. Computed from figures provided by D. J. Agenbach, Director-General of Agricultural Economics and Water Supply in Business Day, 27th October 1986, p. 11.

27. "...that part of...capital that creates surplus-value [is]...variable capital." See Marx, Capital, Vol. 2 (Harmondsworth, 1978), p. 140. The fundamental demonstration of this is, of course, to be found in Vol. 1 of Capital: see chapters 7-9 of the Harmondsworth, 1982 edition.

28. In advanced monopoly capitalism, the giant corporation evinces "various degrees of vertical integration within which hierarchical 'direct allocation' replaces the market." (See Alec Nove, "Markets and Socialism", New Left Review, No. 161, January/February 1987, p. 98.) By controlling certain production-inputs, then, the advanced monopoly capitalist is able, to some degree, to protect his or her enterprise from the vagaries of the market.

29. See Cooper (York, 1986), p. 15. Shortly before the parliamentary elections in 1987, the Minister of Agriculture "hoped suppliers" of agricultural inputs, "particularly those with an import component", "would pass the benefits" "of the improved rand exchange rate" "on to farmers". The Minister's hope pointed to two barriers farmers have yet to hurdle if they wish to exert some measure of control over the inputs they depend upon for production: a) the exchange-rate, and b) the manipulations of businesses producing and marketing such inputs. Only in exceptional circumstances can monopoly capital control, to some extent, the first (clearly, the finance capitalists off the City of London help to shape the sterling exchange-rate). But such capital, typically, exerts considerable control over the second. Farmers in South Africa have yet to manifest such control For the Minister's statement, see Business Day, May 6th 1987, p. 3.

30. See my footnote 19 for evidence of this.

31. Cooper (York, 1986), p. 36 has a brief, useful delineation of the various agrarian union 'areas'.

32. See Perry Anderson, "The Limits and Possibilities of Trade Union Action" in Tom Clarke and Laurie Clements (eds.) Trade Unions Under Capitalism (Fontana, 1977), p. 343. Anderson's argu-

ment implicitly supports this contention. It was, of course, Marx who first noted the relationship between the struggles of the organised working class and the advancement of capitalist technique. Thus the successful battle to shorten the working day in nineteenth century England provided the decisive stimulus for the further employment - and refining - of machinery in English factories, as well as the 'streamlining' of their labour processes: see Marx Capital, Vol. 1, pp. 533-536

33. See Debbie Budlender, "Technological Change and Labour on 'White' Farms" in South African Research Services (ed.) South African Review Two (Johannesburg, 1984), p. 305..

34. See Cooper (York, 1986), p. 8 who, it appears, geographically overstates the case. In the 1987 election, the ultra-right won seats only in the Transvaal, thoroughly sweeping its platteland: see Business Day, May 11th 1987, p. 7, "The 'Boer Republic' is CP's seat of power" and map. Significantly, it is Transvaal farming which appears to have taken the worst of the present agricultural crisis.

35. See, for example, Helen Bradford, "Lynch Law and Labourers: the ICU in Umvoti, 1927-1928", pp. 420-449 in Beinart, Delius and Trapido (eds.) Putting a Plough to the Ground

36. See, for example, Business Day, Sept. 3rd 1986, p. 3, "Malan won't comment on AWB's claims" with reference to the (more than 300-strong) Eastern Transvaal Brandwag. Another article in a September issue of Business Day specifically referred to the central role this Brandwag was to play in protecting farmers.

37. Quoted in E. H. Carr The Russian Revolution from Lenin to Stalin (London, 1979), p. 186.

38. See my footnote 9. The figure concerning "hectarage" is from the Abstract of Agricultural Statistics, 1987, p. 6, table 6. In 1978, the last year the Abstract provides a figure for the area of agricultural land under white ownership in South Africa, it amounted to 85 447 000 hectares.

39. See Perry Anderson, "The Figures of Descent", New Left Review, No. 161, Jan/Feb 1987, p. 29.

40. See Paul Daphne, "Agrarian Reform in a Post-Apartheid South Africa: Issues and Options", paper presented to the Conference of The South African Research and Training Project: A Policy Workshop, Amsterdam, December 1986, pp. 14-15. Daphne provides statistics which reveal that, in 1980, public and private companies owned 7:25% of the agricultural land held by whites in SA, while the state (both central and municipal) held 1:8% of it. Even allowing for an upward-adjustment in the 1980s, the figures are likely to fall below 10 and 2 per cent respectively.

41. Perry Anderson, "The Limits and Possibilities of Trade Union Action", p. 339.
42. All statistics come from Leonardo Castillo and David Lehmann, "Agrarian Reform and Structural Change in Chile, 1965-79" in Ajit Kumar Ghose (ed.) Agrarian Reform in Contemporary Developing Countries (London, 1983), pp. 255-6, quotation from p. 254. The authors make the point that Allende's agrarian policy was basically an extension of the agrarian reform undertaken by the preceding (Christian Democrat) government - see p. 255-6. No fundamentally new programme was implemented in the countryside.
43. A brilliant analysis of this is Perry Anderson's "The Limits and Possibilities of Trade Union Action" (reference above). Much of the analysis which follows is drawn from the theory he advances in this article.
44. See *Ibid.*, p. 334. The quotation is not from Marx but from Anderson, paraphrasing Marx.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 335-6.
46. This general strike took place in the most optimum conditions imaginable, conditions dependent upon the structure of the Czarist state and the technology of its administration: see *Ibid.*, p. 340. It is a sobering thought that the logistical conditions which made this general strike immediately so potent have passed away forever.
47. For this latter fact, see Isaac Deutscher Soviet Trade Unions (London, 1950), p. 13.
48. Again for this, see generally *Ibid.* For the role of the unions in the Russian Civil War, see esp. pp. 25-28.
49. See Arthur MacEwan Revolution and Economic Development in Cuba (London, 1981), esp. pp. 23-6 & 9. Unfortunately, this work does not provide the kind of systematic analysis of the role of trade unions in the Cuban economy as does say Deutscher in his analysis of trade unions in the USSR. Quotations from pp. 25 & 29.
50. Figures provided by Cooper (York, 1986), p. 20, using statistics provided in the SA Agric. Union Survey of Farmers, 1983.
51. This estimate was made at the 1986 Annual Meeting of the Transvaal Agricultural Union: See Business Day, Sept. 5th 1986, p. 3.
52. See Cooper (York, 1986), p. 11 for this. The marketing boards, as Cooper points out, "control the sale of 86% of all produce"; and "cooperatives...are the major input suppliers to agriculture". See also Daphne (Amsterdam, 1986), p. 5.
53. See Mabin (York, 1986), p. 4 & Daphne (Amsterdam, 1986), p. 1.
54. As Mabin (York, 1986, p.4) points out, at its congress in Cape Town in 1986, the National African Federated Chamber of Commerce

expressed interest in "the purchase of large tracts of rural land".

55. See Guardian Weekly, July 21st 1985, "Zimbabwe after the elections"

56. Statistics gleaned, and percentage computed from Ibid. and an article by J. D. F. Jones of the London Financial Times ("The white life in Zimbabwe seven years on") published in Business Day, May 6th, 1987, p. 6.

57. Figures provided by the Zimbabwean minister of Agriculture in The Herald, 29/5/1985, "Favouring small farmer the right step, says Norman".

58. Calculated from figures in Guardian Weekly, July 21st 1985, "Zimbabwe after the elections" and The Christian Science Monitor, 6/4/1985, "Zimbabwe peasants ...reaping...unprecedented harvest".

59. Significantly, killings of white farmers often follow disputes over "squatting" or illegal grazing -classic symptoms of land hunger. For the strikes on Zimbabwean plantations in 1985, see the Financial Gazette, 4/10/1985, "Labour Unrest As New Wage Comes Into Effect" and the article on Zimbabwean agro-industrial workers which appeared in the South African Labour Bulletin in that year.

60. See Colleen Butcher, "Planning for Rural Development: A Political-Economic Study of Agricultural Policy in Zimbabwe", unpublished MA thesis, Faculty of Architecture, University of the Witwatersrand, 1985, p. 336.

61. See, for example, the report in The Herald dd. 2/8/1985 which quoted an expert on hunger in Zimbabwe, Thomas Shopo: "...in spite of being a substantial food surplus nation, Zimbabwe has a malnutrition problem of major proportions. Upwards of 20% of children under five have second or third degree malnutrition...".

62. For which see Eduardo Naumeister, "The Structure of Nicaraguan Agriculture and the Sandanista Agrarian Reform", pp. 10-35 in Richard Harris and Carlos Vilas Nicaragua: A Revolution Under Siege (London, 1986); see pp. 19-21 for the properties confiscated from Somoza.

63. See Abstract of Agricultural Statistics, 1987, Table 81, "Value of capital assets in agriculture". The figure is for 1985.

64. This is calculated from a set of figures provided in Cooper (York, 1986), p. 23. His statistics are for 1980. Since then wages have risen but the size of the workforce in agriculture has fallen considerably, not to mention the resurgence of labour tenancy in some areas which will have further reduced the collective wage bill of farmers.

65. See my footnote 8.

66. In 1980, there were approximately one and a quarter million

- agrarian question -

farm employees (see Abstract of Agricultural Statistics, 1987, table 4). Since then, there has been a shrinking of the collective labour-force, diminishing its size by perhaps a quarter of a million: a recent study, for example, estimates that this number of jobs was lost in agriculture between 1977-1985: see Daphne (Amsterdam, 1986), p. 7.

67. See Isaac Deutscher Stalin: A Political Biography (Harmondsworth, 1982), chapter 8 and E. H. Carr and R. W. Davies Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926-1929, Vol. 1 (London, 1969), pp. 3-237. Carr and Davies stress that the crisis was caused generally by the operation of the peasant economy and not merely by "kulaks". The middle peasantry, numerically the largest section of the class, appears, in fact, to have been more crucial in sparking the hoarding crisis than were the wealthier peasants: see, for example, Carr and Davies, p. 55.

68. Marcel Liebman Leninism Under Lenin (London, 1985), p. 183.

69. In the work cited above, Carr and Davies make the point that from about the mid-20s, the Soviets had nothing more to gain from NEP in the countryside.

70. See pp. 121-4 of Isaac Deutscher's essay, "Mid-century Russia" in his Heretics and Renegades (London, 1955).

71. See Matthew Chaskalson's convincing demonstration of this in his "Rural Struggles in the 1940s and 1950s", presented at the Workshop on the South African Agrarian Question: Past, Present and Future, Wits University, May 1987.

72. See Daphne (Amsterdam, 1986), p. 5

73. See, for example, Kevin Danaher, "Bantustan Agriculture in South Africa: Obstacles to Development Under a Post-Apartheid Government", paper presented to the University of York Conference on The Southern African Economy After Apartheid, Sept.-Oct. 1986, pp. 5-16, which demonstrates that effective subsistence agriculture has ceased to exist in the bantustans.

74. Alan Morris, "A Peasantry Under Siege: A Case-Study of the farms 'Bloedfontein' and 'Geweerfontein'", paper presented to the Wits History Workshop, Wits University, February 1987, p. 2. A report in Business Day, October 17th 1986, p. 7, "Influx control takes a new guise", notes that another peasant community outside the bantustans - that at Braklaagte - was facing removal: fully 90% of its population, presumably of its adult population, "work in SA" today.

75. A point which has been made by Isaac Deutscher in his biography of Trotsky.

76. See Danaher, "Bantustan Agriculture", p. 31.

77. De Klerk, "Seasons that will Never Return", p. 100; for De

- Klerk's discussion of economies of scale more generally, see pp. 90-1.
78. See Marx The 18th brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (New York, 1972), pp. 123-4
79. The burden, of course, of part of Marx's Brumaire: see Ibid., p. 123 ff.
80. See James Dunkerley Rebellion in the Veins: Political Struggle in Bolivia, 1952-1982 (Verso, NLB) for the inconsistencies of the peasantry in post-war Bolivia - especially pp. 33, 35, 37, 41, 50, 65-74, 85, 87 & chapter 4.
81. Marx Brumaire, p. 125.

Ruth First Memorial Trust

The Trust is presently cataloguing the papers of the late Ruth First. We should be grateful if anybody with relevant material, especially personal correspondence from Ruth herself, could contact:

Ruth First Memorial Trust
c/o The Old Manor House
Manor Road
Walton-on-Thames
Surrey
U K

Economic Notes for Trade Unions

A Bad Bargain for Bloemfontein's Black Building Workers

Bloemfontein is not known as a centre of collective bargaining. But in Bloemfontein the industrial council system is taking on the new "de-regulated" shape planned for it by the government and the bosses. The new shape aims to reduce labour costs and weaken the power of unions.

This is clear in the new agreement reached by the (whites only) parties to the industrial council for the building industry. Although no black workers had any say in the negotiations, the agreement will cover them too.

Most wage agreements set a range of minimum rates for different jobs. But the new Bloemfontein agreement has only two minimum wages, one for qualified artisans and a lower rate for all other jobs. So now a truck driver can be paid the same as a labourer.

Other "innovations" in this new agreement are:

- A minimum wage which has not risen by one cent since it was last set, in November 1985. The minimum rate is still only R1.15 per hour (R51.75 per week). In terms of buying power, it is now about 20% below its 1985 level.
- Employers no longer have to get permission from the council to work overtime.

The new agreement has scrapped job reservation. This sounds like good news. Now blacks can do work that previously only whites were allowed to do.

But there is no guarantee that they will be paid more. Black workers doing skilled work, but who have not had the opportunity to take the official trade tests, may still be paid the labourers' rate!

The winners are the Bloemfontein Master Builders Association. Mr Barney Bester of the MBA says:

"The intention behind changing the agreement was not to create an exploitative situation. There are now fewer

restrictions in the agreement and a wage structure that gives us room to move."¹

De-regulation, then, means "room to move" on wages and other conditions of employment. But in giving the employers room to move, the whites only unions have abandoned the rest of the workforce. Their conditions will now surely sink to the level of the worst employer.

The Minister of Manpower has said before that he will not publish an agreement unless the industrial council is "representative". Will the Minister publish the new agreement reached by the de-regulating employers and the whites only unions to the detriment of the unrepresented black workers? The majority of Bloemfontein's building workers await his decision with interest.

Inflation

The annual rate of inflation was 17,3% in May 1987, which is above the April figure of 16,2%. Food prices have gone up 26% in the last year. This is the fastest annual increase for six years.

Area	Consumer Price Index (1980=100)	Annual rate of inflation (% increase over 1 year)
	May 1987	May 1987
Cape Town	262,4	19,3%
Port Elizabeth	256,9	18,3%
East London	241,7	16,7%
Durban	256,4	15,7%
Pietermaritzburg	261,0	17,1%
Witwatersrand	260,7	16,5%
Vaal Triangle	266,9	16,6%
Pretoria	275,6	19,3%
Klerksdorp	260,2	23,0%
Bloemfontein	239,6	13,3%
OFS Goldfields	269,5	17,6%
Kimberley	248,5	16,3%
SOUTH AFRICA	261,2	17,3%

Source : Central Statistical Services

If prices increase by 17% every year, they will double in less than five years. An inflation rate like this has very serious effects on the buying power of wages.

For the buying power of wages to increase, the wage rise every year must be above the annual inflation rate. Only then will workers see an improvement in workers' standard of living.

Top economists agree that the shrinkage in workers' buying power is slowing down the economy. People cannot afford to consume as much as before. The economists want wages to rise "to revive the economy through increased spending" (Prof Brian Kantor, UCT.)²

Mr Rob Lee, the head economist of Old Mutual says that:

"Nominal wages are improving in most sectors of the economy, but real wages are not picking up in all sectors."

(The 'real wage' is a measure of the buying power of wages. Mr Lee's jargon means that cash wages are rising in most industries, but not by enough to beat inflation.)

"Higher average pay rises and lower taxation are necessary for the economy to embark on a path of sustained growth. Any revival in real private consumption expenditure depends on an improvement in real wage increases."³

These gentlemen are strange allies for the trade union movement ! But their message can only be welcomed.

References

1. Finance Week, 4-10 June 1987.
2. Cape Times, 29 November 1986.
3. Cape Times, 4 May 1987.

SALB Publication Guidelines

The South African Labour Bulletin is a journal which supports the democratic labour movement in South Africa. It is a forum for analysing, debating and recording the aims and activities of this movement. To this end, it requires contributors to the Bulletin to conform with the following publication guidelines.

* Constructive criticism of unions or federations in the democratic labour movement is welcome. However, articles with unwarranted attacks or of a sectarian nature which have a divisive effect on the labour movement will not be published.

* Contributions to the Bulletin must not exceed the following lengths:

analytical articles	8,000 words
debate, reviews, documents, reports	5,000 words
briefings	1,000 words

Articles should be submitted in a final and correct form and in duplicate. Articles are refereed and may be edited. In the event of the editors deciding that other than minor editing changes are required, the article will be referred back to the author.

Briefings should concern topical events and developments of concern to the democratic labour movement. They should be easy to understand and keep footnotes and references to a minimum. Debate, reviews, reports and documents are designed to make more widely available important statements emanating from the labour movement; reviewing new literature or other material of relevance to the movement; making available more in-depth reports and research; and allowing for debate on important contemporary issues.

* Contributions must be written in a language that is clear and understandable.

* All contributions to the Bulletin must be typed and where applicable include proper footnoting and references.

* Except in the case of public documents, all submissions to the Bulletin will be treated in confidence.

* The editors reserve the right to recommend to the author of any submission that it be placed under another category to that under which it was submitted.

* For more details contact the editor.

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

To: SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR BULLETIN

P O Box 31073

Braamfontein 2017

SOUTH AFRICA ph. (011) 339-8133

**NEW Please open a subscription to the Bulletin beginning
with Volume: No:**

RENEWAL

NAME:

ADDRESS:

.

.

.

OCCUPATION:

RATE:

**PLEASE NOTE NEW RATES
RATES FOR EIGHT ISSUES**

	SOUTH AFRICA	OVERSEAS
Workers	R8,00	
Students	R20,00	\$20,00/£15,00
Salaried Individuals	R36,00	\$36,00/£25,00
Institutions	R100,00	\$75,00/£50,00
Companies	R200,00	\$150,00/£100,00 or equivalent

If claiming cheap rates, include
place of study, factory etc.