

Is the SACP really communist?

DAVE KITSON, a former political prisoner and member of the SACP, responds to Joe Slovo's *Has Socialism Failed?*, and argues that the party does not live up to its claim to be Marxist-Leninist

What is it that makes a communist party different from all other parties, including parties that claim to represent the masses or the workers? It is its adherence to Marxism-Leninism as a guide to action. The spokespersons of the SACP have repeatedly announced that their party is Marxist-Leninist. However the espousal of Marxism-Leninism does not necessarily mean that the theoreticians of the party have correctly used the theory to illuminate the problems before them. Of course, they should not woodenly apply the principles used by their predecessors, Marx, Engels, Lenin and others, in different ages and in different struggles.

Yet there are some principles at least which have become almost self-evident truths. These include that society ultimately has an economic basis. The history of society is the history of class struggles. The Communist Party should lead and serve the working class in the capitalist epoch. The aim is socialism. Socialism is a period of transition between capitalism and communism.

If it is a Marxist-Leninist party, the SACP should uphold at least some of the tenets of Marxism-Leninism, even though the situation in South Africa may be regarded by them as unique. Nowadays party spokespersons have produced statements and documents concerning socialism. This might be thought odd as they do not regard socialism as being on the agenda for the time being. However, eventually the aim is socialism, and one must react to the setbacks which the socialist cause has received in various parts of the world.

Let us see if their reactions are Marxist-Leninist.

In his pamphlet *Has Socialism Failed? (HSF)* (London, Inkululeko Publications, 1990)*, Joe Slovo quoted Rosa Luxemburg on freedom. It is the fashion nowadays to quote her (see Cronin in *SA Labour Bulletin*, Volume 15 No. 3). However the SACP claims to be Leninist. Whatever Lenin's regard

* See also *SA Labour Bulletin* Vol 14 No 6 and WIP 64



for Luxemburg as a person of integrity and as a revolutionary might have been, what was his opinion of her grasp of Marxism? In his 'Notes of a Publicist', published in 1922, Lenin said:

'Rosa Luxemburg was mistaken on the question of the independence of Poland; she was mistaken in 1903 in her appraisal of Menshevism; she was mistaken on the theory of the accumulation of capital; she was mistaken in July 1914, when, together with Plekhanov, Vandervelde, Kautsky and others, she advocated unity between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks; she was mistaken in what she wrote in prison in 1918 (she corrected most of these mistakes at the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919 after she was released)'. (*Lenin Collected Works*, vol 33, p 210. Lawrence and Wishart London) (hereafter *LCW* 33, p210).

In particular, Lenin castigated Luxemburg in his 'The Right of Nations to Self-Determination' dubbing her 'the practical Rosa Luxemburg' for her approach to the national question, a matter of some importance for South African liberation politics. A Leninist should not take Luxemburg's viewpoints for granted but subject them to Marxist analysis. Thus Slovo quotes Luxemburg: 'Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently'. (*HSF*, p14)

Firstly, one can observe that this does not square with Engels' definition of freedom - namely, that freedom is the appreciation of necessity. Secondly, it lacks a class attitude, implying that freedom to differ should apply to everybody, including those who think differently because of their class.

One of the finest democracies that ever existed, with complete freedom of speech, was that of ancient Greece - provided that one was a member of the polity and not a slave. There is freedom in class society for the rulers and their hangers on only. Under socialism, whatever the defeated bourgeoisie might think, they cannot be permitted to act differently from the needs of the people. Rousseau, in describing the action of his concept of the General Will, understood this in saying that after a policy had been decided on by the majority, the minority might have to be forced to be free.

What Luxemburg should have made clear is that under socialism, all members of the ruling proletariat and its allies, the overwhelming majority, should be free to think differently, even, in some cases (the nut cases), in disregard of necessity. Failure to respect this in Soviet society under Stalinism contributed to the diffi-

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'Cease struggling - your
whole struggle is senseless'.
All we do is to provide it with
a true slogan of struggle
— Karl Marx, 1843**

culties it faces today. Ultimately, in Luxemburg's sense, there can be no freedom until classless society appears. As Leninists, the SACP should not espouse Luxemburg's opinion in this respect but Lenin's.

Despite her propensity towards theoretical error, Lenin had great respect for Luxemburg, comparing her to an eagle, which could attain heights no hen could aspire to. She got it right when she said of German socialism that it was 'a stinking corpse'. Were she in South Africa today she would recognize the stench.

Once the programme of the SACP was entitled 'The South African Road to Freedom'; now it is 'The Path to Power'. 'Power' is preferred to 'Freedom'. Of course, the SACP has not enjoyed power, unless one counts its domination of the upper echelons of the ANC. Perhaps one could modify Acton's aphorism 'the desire for power corrupts' to explain the stink of corruption characteristic of the practice of the Stalinist approach to politics.

Slovo and Marx

Slovo complains that 'there was not enough in classical Marxist theory about the nature of transition period to provide a detailed guide to the future' (*HSF* p12) and quotes Gorbachev to this effect. Some people want everything presented to them on a plate. However, Gorbachev was not saying anything new: the first to point this out was Marx himself, in his concern not to be regarded as an Utopian social-

ist.

Scientists base themselves on observed data. Marx analysed the capitalism of his day so thoroughly that his analysis still stands. Because of this we know that if the multi-party democracy advocated by the SACP is a superstructure on the base of a capitalist society, it will not avoid the inexorable crises that are endemic to capitalism, even an enlightened capitalism envisaged as a part of South Africa's future. Thus, Plekhanov says: 'We must study the facts of the past life of mankind in order to discover in them the laws of its progress. Only he is capable of foreseeing the future who has understood the past' (*The Development of the Monist View of History*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1980, p40).

If one prefers a more contemporary authority, one can quote Harry Braverman: 'In this, as everywhere else in Marx, the limits of speculation are clear and definite; analysis is used to lay down the principles and never to speculate on the eventual result should those principles continue to operate indefinitely or over a prolonged period of time. It is also clear that Marx grasped the principles with his customary profundity and comprehensiveness, in a manner which neglected no part of the architecture of the capitalist system and its dynamics of self reproduction. (*Labour and Monopoly Capital*, Monthly Review Press, New York and London, 1974.)

This is what Marx did. Lenin sums this up in his 'What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social Democrats' written in 1894, nearly 100 years ago, before the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party renamed itself the Communist Party (partly because the Bolsheviks wanted to disassociate themselves from the ideological turpitude of the leaders of the Second International like Kautsky and Bernstein). He said:

'Everybody knows that scientific socialism never painted any prospects for the future as such; it confined itself to analysing the present bourgeois regime, to studying the trends of development of the capitalist social organization, and that is all ... Marx wrote as far back as 1843 (and he fulfilled this programme to the letter): 'We do not say to the world: 'Cease struggling - your whole struggle is senseless'. All we do is to provide it with a true slogan of struggle. We only show the world what it is actually struggling for, and consciousness is a thing the world must acquire whether it likes it or not'. (Marx's letter to Ruge, Sept 1843). Everybody knows that 'Capital' for instance - the chief and basic work in which scientific socialism is expounded

- restricts itself to the most general allusions to the future and merely traces those already existing elements from which the future system grows.' (LCW 1, p184)

Everybody knows, that is, except, apparently, Slovo. Thus he should not complain, but think for himself. Of course, now there is an accumulation of detailed knowledge about the nature of socialism, much of it cautionary, in view of the events in Eastern Europe. However one can recommend, for instance, *Che Guevara: Economics and Politics in the Transition to Socialism* by Dr Carlos Tablada (Pathfinder Press, Sydney, 1989.)

This book has sold 250 000 copies in its Latin American editions. It makes it clear that it is not enough to transform the basis of society into a socialist one. One must also simultaneously transform the superstructure of the society concerned by consciously involving the workers, in particular, and the people, in general, in full and continuous participation in the running and developing of socialist society, as part of the process of creating a Communist attitude to life by everyone.

The dictatorship of the proletariat

Whilst recognising that the term 'dictatorship of the proletariat' reflected the historical truth, the term has been abandoned by the SACP due to its unpleasant connotations (HSF p15-16). It is not mentioned in the new party programme, 'The Path to Power', although the need for workers' power to establish socialism is. This is like wearing a transparent figleaf. One can still see the beastly thing, and it will be assiduously pointed out by the enemies of communism.

Workers in particular must grasp the nettle of truth, especially as truth is biased in favour of the working class. Absolutely central to the concept of socialism is the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In 'The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky', a pamphlet which should be read by all interested in the current departure from Marxism-Leninism by the SACP, Lenin said: 'The fundamental question that Kautsky discusses in his pamphlet, is that of the very essence of the proletarian revolution, namely the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is a question that is of the greatest importance for all countries, especially for advanced ones, especially for those at war, and especially at the present time. One may say without fear of exaggeration that this is the key problem of the entire proletarian class struggle.' (Marx Engels Lenin, *On the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, Progress

Publishers, Moscow, 1984, p331).

In passing, it may be said that Kautskyites prate of revolutionary fervour, while practising reformist opportunism. Despite his distaste for it, Slovo complains that the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat was dealt with rather thinly by Marx as a transition to a classless society without much further definition. (HSF p13). However, Progress Publishers have published a collection from the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin *On the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, of which 130 pages are occupied by the writings of Marx and Engels on the subject. Is this rather thin? Maybe Slovo expects it to be as thick as two planks? 360 pages of the same collection are devoted to Lenin's writings on the topic. This is to be expected as Lenin actually lived through three revolutions.

Since the Bolshevik revolution, other countries like China, Vietnam and Cuba have experienced revolutions leading to socialist systems. Whatever might have happened subsequently, there is much data on the necessity of workers' rule exercised through a type of state entirely different from any preceding form of state if socialism is to be built. However, in view of the experiences of Stalinism in the Soviet Union, Rakosi in Hungary, Ceausescu in Romania and the Kmer Rouge in Kampuchea, among other, it is clear that there is a tendency to Thermidor, to put it mildly, in countries where revolutions have succeeded.

On the other hand where they have failed, as in Chile, Indonesia, or Germany, the consequences are even more disastrous, especially for communists. The SACP is walking a tight rope and needs to take careful stock of what to do. The consequences of developing theory incorrectly can be very painful.

Slovo and Lenin

Slovo says: 'Lenin, for example, believed that capitalism was about to collapse worldwide in the post-October period' (HSF p10). In his 'Slogan for a United states of Europe', Lenin said in 1915:

'Uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism. Hence the victor of socialism is possible first in several or even in one capitalist country alone'.

Also in his 'The importance of Gold' written in 1921, which is post-October, he wrote: 'After the victory of the proletariat, if only in one country, something new enters into the relation between reforms and revolution. In principle, it is the same as before, but a change in form takes place, which Marx himself could not foresee, but which can be appreciated

only on the basis of the philosophy and politics of Marxism' (LCW 33, p115).

Thus it is most unlikely that he believed there would be a worldwide collapse of capitalism. On the other hand, he observed that there was a worldwide crisis of capitalism in 1917 (after all crisis is endemic to capitalism) called World War 1, and keenly followed events in such countries as Germany and Italy, which caused him to believe that workers' rule might be established in such countries. Indeed the equivalent of rule by Soviets did emerge in Bavaria and communists came constitutionally to rule in Hungary. All put down by force leaving the Soviet Union to attempt to build socialism alone, even though Lenin saw 'that the joint efforts of the workers of several advanced countries are needed for the victory of socialism'. (LCW 33, p206).

Of the chances of building socialism in the Soviet Union, he said in 'Notes of a Publicist' in 1922:

'Those communists are doomed who imagine that it is possible to finish such an epoch-making undertaking as completing the foundations of socialist economy (particularly in a small-peasant country) without making mistakes, without retreats, without numerous alterations to what is unfinished or wrongly done. Communists who have illusions, who do not give way to despondency and who preserve their strength and flexibility "to begin from the beginning" over and over again in approaching an extremely difficult task are not doomed.' (LCW 33, p207)

So it looks like the whole of Eastern Europe will have to begin again as, in view of Marx's analysis of capitalism, no long lasting panacea can be gained from a return to a market economy, or to capitalism itself.

Slovo says Lenin did not address '... in any detail the nature of established socialist civil society ...' (HSF p14).

In the early stages of Soviet socialism, Lenin left copious writings of the problems which confronted the Soviet Communist Party. In *State and Revolution*, written on the eve of the October Revolution, Lenin wrote:

'Until the "higher" phase of communism arrives, the socialists demand the strictest control by society and by the state over the measure of labour and the measure of consumption; but this control must start with the expropriation of the capitalists, with the establishment of workers' control over the capitalists, and must be exercised not by a state of bureaucrats, but a state of armed workers'. (LCW 25, p474).

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In the event, the Soviet Union did not escape the grasp of bureaucracy. Many of Lenin's specific proposals were not put into effect. He said, for instance, that all representatives should be subject to immediate recall, and all public officials should not be paid more than the average wage of a skilled worker. Lenin advocated proportional representation, which implies the presence of more than one candidate in elections, and considered the problem of implementing this in the face of a policy of immediate recall.

He realised that it is not enough just to transform the economic basis of society into a socialist one and to expect that desirable changes in the social and political superstructure will automatically follow. Everybody should be consciously and continuously drawn into the building of communist society and into the understanding of its nature.

Most important is that socialist democracy should be built. On the occasion of marking 30 years of the Cuban revolution, Castro said: 'To some of the Western countries that question democracy in Cuba we can say there is no democracy superior to that where the workers, the peasants, and the students have the weapons. They have the weapons! To those Western countries that question democracy in Cuba we can say: give weapons to the workers, give weapons to the peasantry, give weapons to the students, and we'll see whether tear gas will be hurled against workers on strike, against any organization that struggles for peace, against the students: We'll see whether the police can be ordered to attack them while wearing masks and all those contrivances that make them look like space travelers; we'll see whether dogs can be turned loose on the masses

every time there's a strike or a peace demonstration or a people's struggle.

'I believe that the supreme test of democracy is arming the people!! when defense becomes the task of the entire people and weapons become the prerogative of the entire people, then they can talk about democracy'. (Fidel Castro, *In Defence of Socialism*, Pathfinder, New York, 1989, p81). That is an endorsement, from experience, of Lenin's proposal (and Marx's) on arming the workers! That puts the cat among the pigeons! That would ensure that the way will be open for a peaceful progression towards our party's ultimate objective - a socialist South Africa (HSF p27).

Is the SACP communist?

It is clear that the SACP has made serious departures from the principles of Marxism-Leninism in their repeated and ill-informed denigration of the doctrines of Marx and Lenin. Yet there are countries where the leaders of the people struggling for liberation and socialism appreciated necessity correctly through their understanding of Marxism-Leninism and through their ability to apply its tenets to their problems, thus gaining victory.

Why should one bother with an organisation that has lost its way so thoroughly? It is because one wants to see the victory of liberation and the victory of socialism in South Africa. One knows, from the experience of history, that victory can be won with the correct guide to action through the application of Marxism-Leninism. Many people see the SACP as the vehicle that will produce this guide. There is a discussion going on, to which this piece is a contribution, that might provide such guide.

There might be little hope for aged and crusted Kautskyites, or for the members of the petty bourgeois intelligentsia given to intellectual hawking. But the SACP also has members who are respected workers' leaders, steeled through struggle, who if theoretically informed can lead the workers of South Africa to victory. They must read the works of Marx, of Engels, of Lenin and of their successors. Then perhaps the struggle for socialism in South Africa will win victory too in South Africa one day.

What is needed is a Marxist-Leninist party to lead the struggle for workers' power. It remains to be seen if the SACP can fit that bill. It certainly is not communist at the moment in the sense that Lenin intended it. Perhaps a more accurate appellation of its current theoretical approach is to call it Kautskyist-Luxemburgist. •

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In the 1970s and 80s the ANC and its allies inspired a world-wide anti-apartheid solidarity movement. It was an international success that was the envy of militants confronting regimes (certainly no less vicious than our own) in Chile, the Philippines, the occupied West Bank, and elsewhere.

But there was at least one significant, negative side-effect of our achievement. There has been a tendency within the South African liberation movement to be extremely self-absorbed. We have tended to think of South Africa as the centre of all the world's concerns. We imagine that South Africa is especially deserving of solidarity, that we have very little to learn from others, that we are, in short, unique.

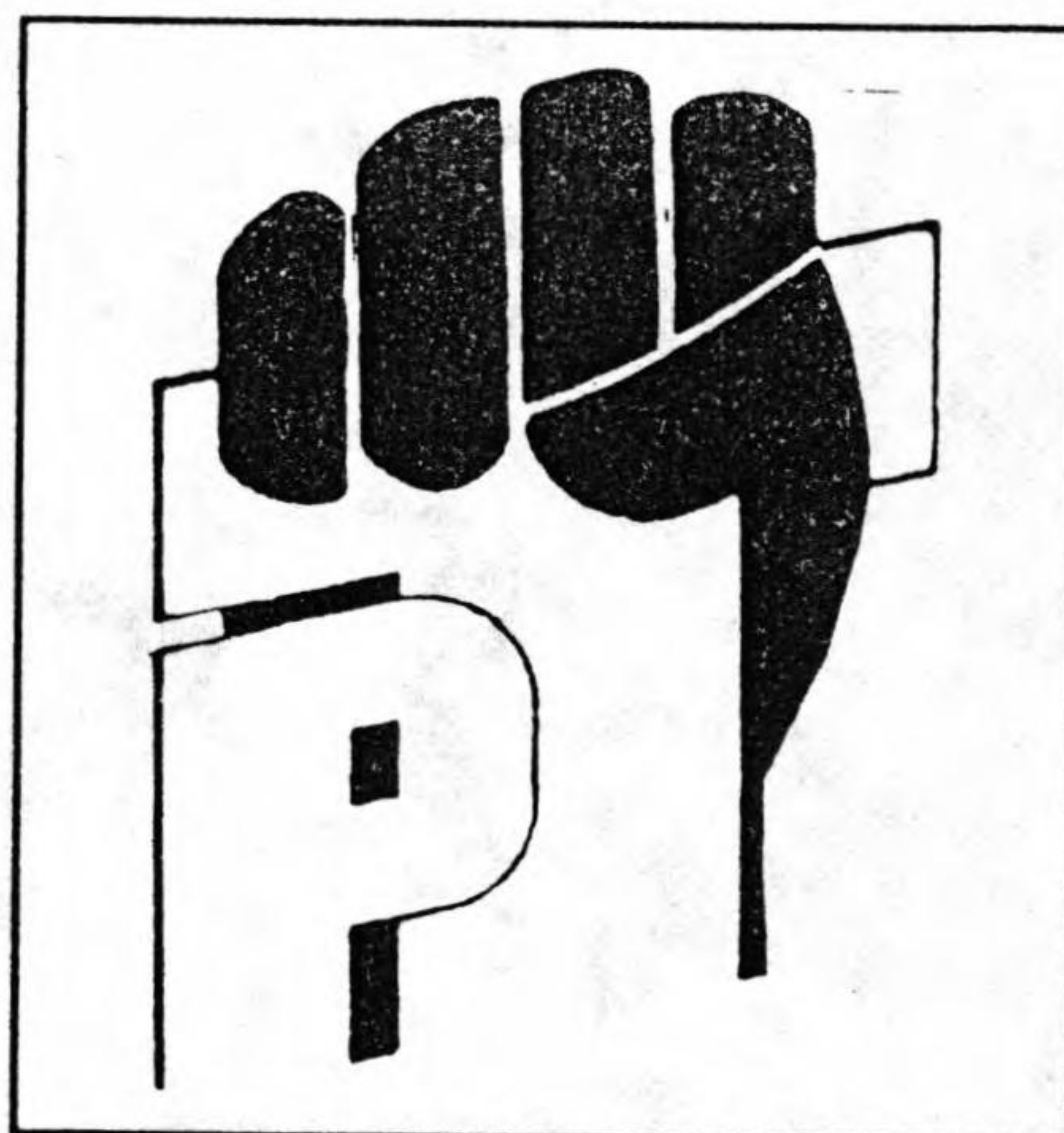
This tendency was never healthy. As we move into a new transitional period in our country, in the context of a rapidly changing international situation, neglecting the world beyond the Limpopo is both dangerous and stupid.

In the first place, and if for no other reason, we need to study the world out there in order to equip ourselves more adequately for the concerted ideological attack we are facing. A whole chorus of local luminaries has taken up the international howl: 'Socialism is dead'; 'The market represents the highest form of economic rationality'; 'Without capitalism, no democracy'; 'A wide open door to the world (i.e. to imperialism) is the only path to economic development'; etc, etc.

Of course, we have local South African evidence to counter this great hymn in praise of capitalism. But when we produce local evidence we run into the other side's version of our own 'South Africa is unique' assumption. The apparent shortcomings of capitalism in South Africa, we are told, are really only the shortcomings of apartheid.

In the context of all this, *The Future of Socialism: Perspectives from the Left* is an extremely useful and timely collection. In fact, it should be prescribed reading for South African activists.

The perspectives offered by the contributors are fairly diverse. The collection includes a slightly abridged version of Joe Slovo's 'Has Socialism Failed?'. There are articles by a Brazilian Workers' Party militant, and by a long-standing Italian communist criticising the decision to re-name and change the character of her party. William Hinton writes on contemporary developments in China. There are a number of contributions from those broadly within the 'World System' Marxist tradition, including Samir Amin.



What hope for socialism?

**THE FUTURE OF SOCIALISM:
PERSPECTIVES FROM THE LEFT**

Edited by William K Tabb

Monthly Review Press

Reviewed by JEREMY CRONIN

There are also two articles on the prospects for a socialist movement in the US. Needless to say, the whole book is written under the shadow of the recent events in Eastern Europe.

Rampart world capitalism...

Although there are many differences of perspective and emphasis, all the contributors agree on two essential points. One: In the last three years or so, the world has become an infinitely more difficult place to carry forward the socialist project; but

Two: The relevance of a democratic socialism is greater than ever before. ('The international conditions that enabled some Third World countries to choose a socialist strategy no longer exist,' writes the Mexican, Carlos Vilas, 'but those that forced them to do it are stronger than ever' (p217).

In a sense, all the contributors subscribe to Gramsci's often quoted call for 'A pessimism of the intellect, an optimism of the will'. There can be no running away from the real crisis and real difficulties confronting socialism. But realism must not be confused with ca-

pitulation. As Pat Devine succinctly puts it: 'It is realistic to start from where people are. It is not realistic to deny them the possibility of changing' (p196).

So where, globally speaking, are we? And what are the possibilities of change?

The collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe and the deep crisis in the Soviet Union finds us in a world dominated by three major and interlocking capitalist power centres - a Europe with its unofficial capital in Germany; Japan and the Pacific rim; and the United States. Notwithstanding recent events in the Gulf, the United States is, increasingly, the weakest of these three power centres.

... is bad news for the world's poor

But this rampant world capitalist order is, to say the least, bad news for the working and unemployed majority of our planet. It is daily bringing greater inequality and poverty, even within the advanced capitalist countries themselves. (Michael Milken made \$550 million in 1987. An American on the minimum US wage would have to work 79 000 years to earn as much).

But, above all this rampant capitalist world order is bringing devastation to the Third World. At least one of the contributors, Samir Amin, suggests that we need to coin a new term, 'The Fourth World' for those countries which are now increasingly not even lucky enough to be the ongoing victims of neo-colonial exploitation.

The 'Fourth World' is made up of countries that are rejects, so to speak, cast-offs, more or less totally excluded from the world division of labour. According to Amin, this is the fate awaiting most of Africa. It is a fate caused 'by a system that has consigned the continent to specialisation in agriculture and mining until the soils are exhausted, and by a technological revolution that provides substitutes for some of its still-plentiful raw materials' (p111).

Eastern Europe rushes towards capitalism ...

And what are the prospects for Eastern Europe? Many of the contributors remark upon the sad naivete with which much of Eastern Europe is rushing into the 'free market'.

'Forty years of communism has unleashed a simple-minded faith in the magic of the market. When Hungarians think of capitalism they think of Germany or the United States or Japan or perhaps South Korea. They don't think of Peru or Bolivia or Kenya...Selling state enterprises to foreign companies is seen as the dismantling of socialism, not

as the creation of new forms of subjugation, not as a headlong rush into rampant deindustrialisation. Having faced the party state for forty years, the world capitalist market is seen as liberator, not as exploiter.' (Michael Burawoy, p169).

While the former East Germany and possibly Czechoslovakia might become components of the First World, the fate awaiting the rest of the old Second World, under the combined impact of 'booty and boutique capitalism' (Burawoy) is a demotion into the Third World.

... and fails to learn from China's tragedy

As William Hinton suggests, we are not without a concrete example when it comes to predicting possible outcomes in Eastern Europe. The processes that are underway in most of Eastern Europe have already been in motion for a decade in China. Over the last ten years, under the leadership of Deng, China has privatised agriculture, attempted to privatise industry, and introduced a free market and decentralisation which has privileged coastal regions against the interior.

The results have been tragic. Bureaucratic corruption is rife, the enormous social and moral achievements of the Chinese revolution are being reversed. Open prostitution and begging have returned to the streets, and there is now a huge pool of unemployed. In the winter of 1988-9 50-million people were uprooted from the countryside, but without any job prospects in the cities. In order to combat inflation the government shut down 10 000 construction projects and created some four or five million more unemployed. The birth control and family planning programme, one of the outstanding achievements of the Chinese Revolution, has now virtually collapsed (Hinton, p146-7).

It is against this background that the mass actions in Tiananmen Square unfolded. This generalised crisis, and the eventual bloody Tiananmen Square massacre are, of course, being portrayed in the Western media as the last gasp of communism in China. But, according to Hinton, 'it's not that at all. It's the ultimate result of having betrayed the revolution ten years ago... Ten years ago Deng was a very popular man [in the West]. Ten years ago he was supposedly saving China from the debacle of the Cultural Revolution and putting China back on its feet by introducing a measure of freedom and discussion, a free market and other liberating innovations. And here, ten years later, there is absolute military dictatorship...' (p146-7).

Is this also the fate of Eastern Europe

ten years hence? Will all the euphoria of the Spring of 1990, turn into bloody, authoritarian dictatorships, as the new comprador booty and boutique capitalists combine forces to teach the masses a lesson in the free market? After all, however flawed the socialism of Eastern Europe has been, the working people of these countries have come to expect full employment, free education, free health-care, and low rents. The people of Eastern Europe want democracy in addition to these rights, not instead of them. But that isn't exactly what the free market will deliver.

Clearly, then, looking at events worldwide there is much on which to exercise a pessimism of the intellect.

Renewing the socialist tradition

But is there a socialist way out? And what specific lessons can we draw for South Africa from the contemporary international situation?

Again, the different contributors have different emphases and somewhat differing perspectives on the way forward. But there are at least a number of important points of convergence.

In the first place, there is the need to renew and review the socialist tradition.

This means a number of things. As Joe Slovo (in his contribution familiar to us here) and the Italian communist, Luciana Castellina, both agree, it means rediscovering the essentially democratic and humanist vision of Marxism. For Castellina this means, amongst other things, reviving the critique of the state by Marx and Lenin. After all, Marx and Lenin called for a 'withering away of the state'. They agreed with the anarchists in this objective, but disagreed that this meant renouncing political struggle for state power in a first stage.

Reviewing the socialist tradition requires, also, not throwing the baby out with the bath water. Economic planning is, as Pat Devine argues, a case in point. The failure of the administrative command system is an argument against over-centralised and undemocratic planning, not against planning. 'No less than the direct instructions of command economies, the coercion of market forces reinforces and reproduces alienation' (p197).

Reviewing the socialist tradition also means going back over some old divisions, and assumptions. According to Castellina, in Europe 'the old divisions between reformers and revolutionaries are obsolete; national fragmentation will

Marxism in South Africa - Past, Present and Future

A three-day conference on 'Marxism in South Africa - Past, Present and Future' is to be held at the University of the Western Cape, under the auspices of UWC's Marxist Theory Seminar, from Friday 6 to Sunday 8 September. The conference provides a forum for assessment of the achievements and limitations of Marxist theory and practice in South Africa, and debate on the way forward in the changed conditions of the 1990s.

Contributions are invited on topics concerning the historical development of Marxism in SA; theoretical issues of Marxist economics, politics, philosophy, etc, especially as these relate to SA; and problems and prospects for building a Marxist tradition in SA today.

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be lessened as the result of European unification; and there is no longer a social-democratic model to rebuild or a revolutionary model to replicate. Everyone is very conscious of this situation, and the abandonment of old divisions may well provide the basis for a new unity.' (p47).

Building a new anti-capitalist movement

Then there are the new movements. Since 1968, there have been a number of major social movements with a world impact (the peace movement, feminism, black consciousness and anti-racist movements, the greens, gay rights, progressive religious movements, etc.). There has been a complex, sometimes hostile,

relation between these movements and the older socialist and working class formations. Connections need to be deepened and a mutual process of learning and development needs to occur.

In Castellina's words: 'To capture this connection, a great renewal of theory and practice is necessary, because if the traditional capital/labour conflict does not find a new discourse of struggle, the working class will remain isolated and the new movements will remain mere expressions of distress' (p45-6).

In forging links between mass social movements and the working class movement, the experience of the Brazilian Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT) is instructive (see the contribution by Maria Helena Moreira

Alves). Emerging in 1979 out of a whole range of mass movements (the trade unions, civics, the women's movement, a black consciousness movement, and indigenous people's organisations), the PT has as a major objective providing a socialist political umbrella to these various formations, without undermining their grass-roots independence.

There are many interesting parallels between the Brazilian mass democratic formations and those in South Africa. And indeed, we have built up our own dynamic experience in this area. But the parallels between our two countries are more profound, and need to be related to the overall world system.

Where, in this present world capitalist system, is the weak link? Where does a democratic socialist breakthrough hold out the most promise? Several, if not all, of the contributors agree that the weak link in the present world system lies not in the core centres (the advanced capitalist countries), nor in the peripheries (in the Third World, sinking into the Fourth), but in the 'semi-periphery' (in countries like, precisely, South Africa and Brazil). Working class motivation, according to Chase-Dunn, is lacking in the advanced capitalist countries. In the peripheries there is motivation but not opportunity.

'These things are less true of the semi-periphery. Here we have both motivation and opportunity. Semi-peripheral areas, especially those in which the territorial state is large, have sufficient resources to be able to stave off core attempts at overthrow and to provide some protection to socialist institutions if the political conditions for their emergence should arise.' (p81).

All of this is the product of changed patterns of capitalist development. 'Large-scale heavy industry, the classical province of strong labour movements and socialist parties, has been moved to the semi-periphery.

This means that new socialist bids for state power in the semi-periphery (eg. South Africa, Brazil, Mexico, perhaps Korea) will be much more based on an urbanised and organised proletariat in large-scale industry than the earlier semi-peripheral socialist revolutions were.' (Chase-Dunn, p82).

There is room, then, at least here in South Africa and in other 'semi-peripheral' countries, for a socialist optimism of the will. In this sense, South Africa could be said to be relatively unique. But it is a uniqueness that we can only fully grasp if we begin to study seriously and come to grips with our connections to that world out there, beyond the Limpopo.



THE WEEKLY MAIL

THE PAPER FOR A CHANGING SOUTH AFRICA

ON SALE EVERY FRIDAY

'When I turned to women's past I realised how unconscious I had been of how the history I had studied before women's liberation had neglected women. We were always led to believe that women were not around because they had done so little. But the more I read, the more I discovered how much women had in fact done - (Sheila Rowbotham, *Dreams and Dilemmas*, London: Virago, 1983, p174)

Although the bland title of Cheryl Walker's edited volume on *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* conceals it, the reader will find herself confronted with the same sense of discovery, and excitement, upon reading the range of articles spanning the 150 years from pre-capitalism through colonialism to the Second World War.

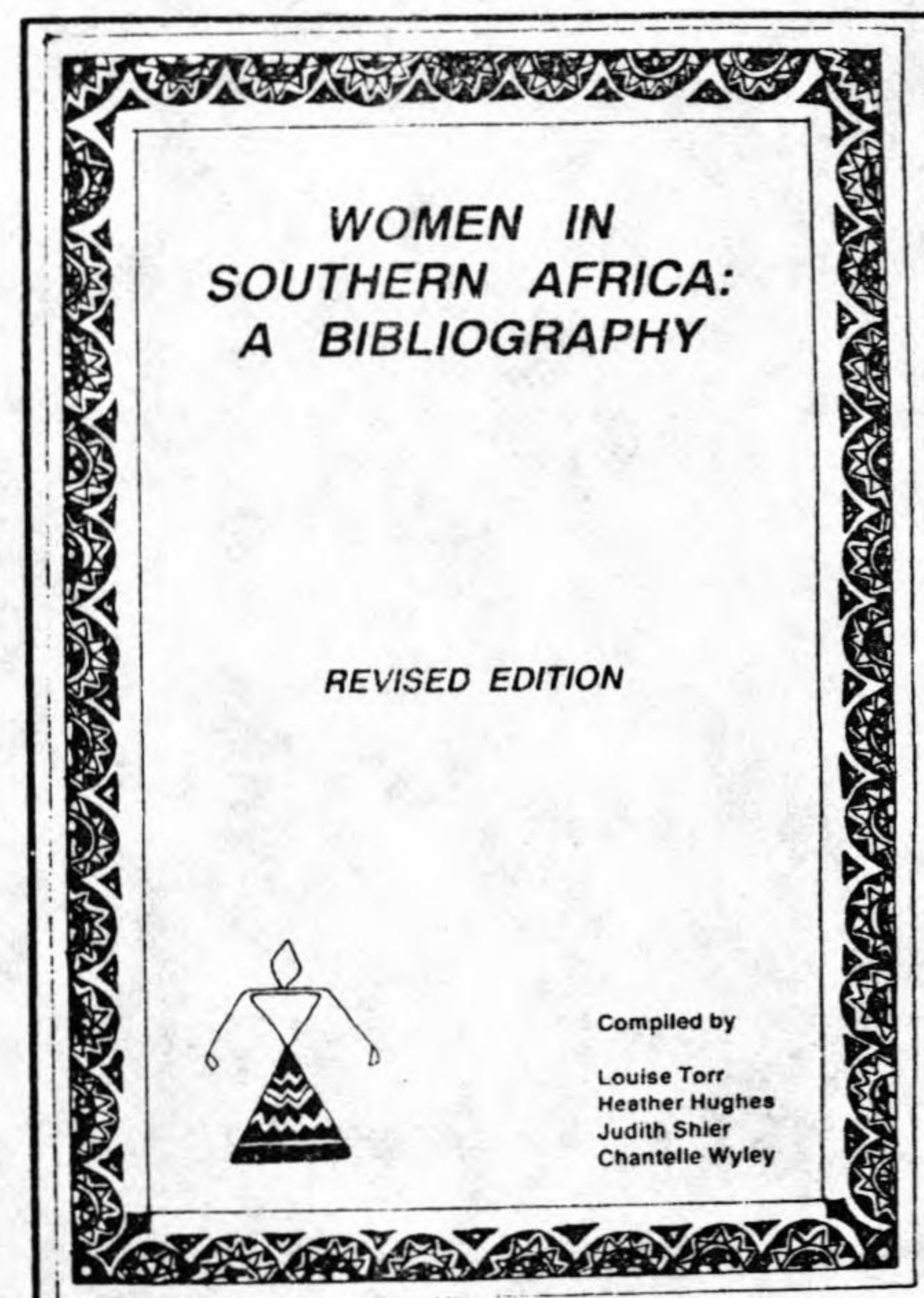
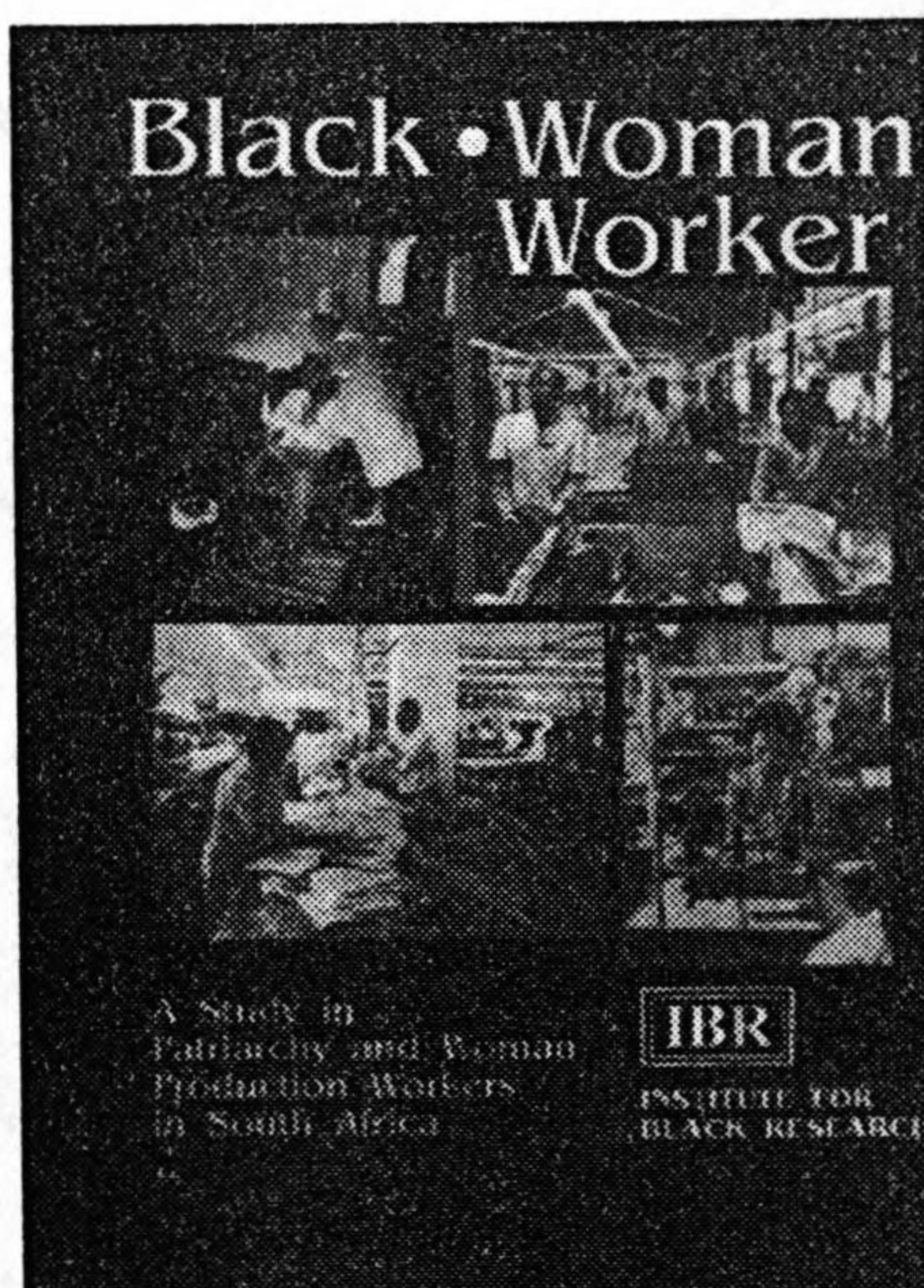
The contributors discuss gender oppression in precapitalist societies (Jeff Guy), the changing legal status of women (Sandra Burman), constructions of patriarchy (with a substantial focus on education) (Anne McClintock, Jacklyn Cock, Sheila Meintjes, Heather Hughes), Indian women under indenture (Jo Beall), ideologies of domesticity and motherhood (Debbie Gaitskell and Elsabe Brink), migrant labour (Phil Bonner and Walker), deviance (Linda Chisholm) and (white) women's suffrage (Walker). These are all well-known South Africanists, but here they bring to light areas of their research which had hitherto been buried within theses or in boxes of unpublished research notes.

Walker's introduction attempts to put forward a framework for understanding the period. She makes a strong plea for the importance of rigorous historical research in developing this framework: '...before one can construct a more sophisticated theory of gender, one needs to have a far better understanding of the dynamics of men and women's experience in society and cross-culturally - one's theory needs to be empirically grounded' (p4).

The recovery of this experience is, of course, more than an academic exercise. It is a significant part of any movement of women to liberate themselves. Claiming and giving voice to their past is a central feature of women discovering their power to represent themselves in the present.

Imperialist research?

In South Africa this is a more complex process than might appear at first glance, however. There are very few black woman academics, and these few are often reluctant to engage in Woman's



Gender, Race and Class

WOMEN IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: A BIBLIOGRAPHY

By the Durban Women's Bibliography Group

Available from the Group, c/o Dept of Politics, University of Natal, King George V Avenue, Durban 4001

(1991 revised edition) R30 (approx)

BLACK-WOMAN-WORKER

Edited by Fatima Meer

Madiba Publications, Durban (1990)

Available from Institute for Black Research, PO Box 3609, Durban, 4000
R30 (approx)

WOMEN AND GENDER IN SOUTHERN AFRICA TO 1945

Edited by Cheryl Walker

David Philip Publishers, Cape Town (1990)

R33.95

Reviewed by SHIREEN HASSIM

Studies for fear of even greater marginalisation. The task of recovering the history of women in South Africa, black and white, has largely fallen upon white women (and in this volume white men). Their work has contributed to the growing history of the underclass in South Africa, a factor not insignificant in undermining the power of apartheid's propaganda.

Walker anticipates the charge that *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* represents 'imperialist research', that is white women writing about black women. She demolishes the notion, expressed by Dabi Nkululeko in Christine Qunta's book *Women in Southern Africa* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1987), that the history of 'Azanians (including women) is being written by those who have colonised them' (p88). Nkululeko

argues that '...the subjects of historical knowledge have the most legitimate right to carry out research and to write about themselves' (p89).

Walker counters, rightly, by pointing out the dangers of such a position: 'If one were to follow Nkululeko's point to its logical conclusion, one would end up in a solipsistic cage where the historian would have to abandon her or his work in favour of autobiography and the specifics of personal experience only' (Walker, p7).

A more powerful point about the importance of history is made by Christine Qunta: 'African women must speak for themselves. They should also decide for themselves who they are, where they are going, what obstacles face them and how to remove these'. (Qunta, p13). This self-representation is a necessary process for

any oppressed grouping and should not be excluded by the demands of intellectual rigour. On the other hand, it cannot develop healthily within exclusivist circles only - indeed, some of the tools for self-representation are to be found in Walker's unique volume.

Gender: an elastic concept

Taken as a whole, the Walker volume points to the relative fluidity and elasticity of the concept of gender. Colonisers and colonised alike continually shaped and reshaped social roles and cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity. Beall's piece, for example, shows how difficult it was for indentured Indians to maintain the elaborate rules of caste in their new environment. She argues that 'although the form in which gender relations was culturally specific, much of its ideological content was confirmed and reinforced by the dominant ideology of gender prevailing among the ruling settler class' (p159).

At the same time, Walker argues in her introduction that definitions of 'woman' were ultimately constructed differently within colonist and colonised societies. 'While both indigenous and settler women bore and raised children, this act took place in a web of socially specific relationships that were embedded in two profoundly different sets of productive relationships' (p26).

By the late 19th century, though, a more coherent capitalist economy had begun to emerge. Walker perhaps under-emphasises the extent to which this new capitalist society began to impose itself through its interaction with the indigenous communities. This theme is pointed to by Meintjies, Gaitskell and other contributions.

The impact of capitalist penetration

Meintjies, for example, writing about the Christian community at Edendale in an earlier period, argues that 'the transposition of the evangelical Victorian ideology of gender and sexuality and its assimilation by an African mission community was a complex process, and did not represent a mere imposition on a malleable and passive community... The process involved interaction, compromise and synthesis' (p126).

This captures the point that, while constructions of gender may have originated from vastly different social and productive contexts, as capitalism established itself, especially in the cities, the increasing collusion between cultures, particularly the embracing of Christian-

ity by african women, made differences more difficult to detect.

This process of interaction and collusion underlay the paradox which was to dominate the twentieth century: contact with capitalism increased african women's economic options and their capacity to survive independently of men, while at the same time its ideological impact tended to make them reluctant to explore these options. Many chose to sink into the arms of a religion which confirmed their subordinate position. Perhaps this paradox will offer a theme for a companion volume to Walker's, which traces the path of women's lives into the present.

Culture, subordination and struggle are also the motifs for Fatima Meer's volume *Black-Woman-Worker*. This book records and interprets the findings of a 1984 survey into the status of black women factory workers in the Durban-Pinetown area. Some 1 000 women and 243 men were interviewed by a team of researchers led by Prof Meer.

Poor spelling, punctuation and sloppy editing notwithstanding, the book is an important contribution to the body of literature on gender. It represents a collective effort by black women researchers to come to grips with the experience of black working women. It not only offers useful statistics on employment patterns and aspirations; it also contains fascinating and sometimes moving comments from women on their experiences of race, class and gender oppression. In reproducing interviewers' questions as well as respondents' answers, the book makes explicit the dynamics of women interviewing women, the sharing of common perspectives and the space for personal insights to be aired.

The power of ideology

Like Walker, Meer's chapter introductions offer a theoretical framework for analysing gender in South Africa. Meer discounts the argument that women's subordination is rooted in biological difference. Instead, she looks to the power of ideology and of social institutions (in particular the family) for explanations. Like Walker, Meer believes that definitions of 'woman' are culturally constructed. However, Meer's notion of culture is closely bound up with that of religion. Exploring the 'foundations of women's domination', she examines in turn Vedantic philosophy, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam.

There is little explanation as to why these religions were selected: presumably they represented the 'cultural roots' of the women interviewed in the survey.

It is baffling that while Meer makes such careful distinctions between the different religions of her indian subjects, she treats Christianity as an undifferentiated system. As Debbie Gaitskell shows in her contribution to Walker's volume, african women belong to various Christian denominations, each with its specific set of cultural rituals.

There is no sense in Meer's formulations that tradition might include non-religious forms as well, and that African women may draw on a memory of their past that falls outside Eastern and Western religions. Unlike the Walker volume, there is little understanding here of the complex interaction between different cultures, of the mutual moulding and contestation between dominant and subordinate cultures.

There are several interesting findings in the Meer study, which could make for interesting comparisons with similar work such as *Vukani Makhosikazi* and *NUMSA Women Organise*. The survey shows how, in the factories studied, racial differences override gender and class solidarity. Just over a quarter of the women interviewed expressed positive feelings towards their fellow workers. For the most part, african, indian and coloured women chose to eat their lunch separately and chose not to socialise with each other.

This is further underlined by the women's lack of faith in workers' organisations. Again, just over a quarter felt that conditions could be improved through united worker action. There are clearly implications here for the future organisation of working women.

In a work concerned so directly with women, it is ironic that nowhere in the book is the work of other South African women acknowledged or referred to (bar one reference to Jill Nattrass). By contrast, references to Marx, Engels, Gandhi and Freud abound. Meer's work stands stranded on an intellectual island.

A wealth of women's research

That there is no shortage of writing on women and gender issues is underlined by the over 1 500 references contained in the new edition of *Women in Southern Africa: A Bibliography*. This invaluable source provides a map for a voyage of discovery of 'how much women have in fact done', as Rowbotham put it.

The Durban Women's Bibliography Group, based at the University of Natal, has revised and updated its 1985 edition, adding approximately 600 new entries in both English and Afrikaans. Sixteen categories, from 'Love, marriage and divorce' through 'Women's associations'

BOOKS

to 'Bodies and minds', are comprehensively covered. At the same time, its extensive coverage of work and workplace organisation, and of resistance, offer activists a wealth of background material for workshops and popular publications. Readers will be encouraged to discover that there are no less than 13 journals which cover women's issues in the region.

The *Bibliography* is sure to become the first recourse of any researcher wishing to examine gender issues. A pity therefore that its bulky A4 format makes

it a little unwieldy for those frequent trips to the library.

Reference works such as this remain useful only if they are continually updated - one way to do this easily and cheaply would be to make available annual editions on floppy disk. However, the future of the *Bibliography* is by no means secure, and depends largely on the energies and time of the compilers, three of whom are already bearing the double loads of motherhood and careers! Typically for feminist publications, the *Bibliography* was produced with mini-

mal resources by a voluntary group. Despite the sellout success of the first edition, the group received no personal financial reward, nor were they able to afford any assistance in producing the second edition.

Hopefully, the demonstrable demand will encourage some publisher to take on the third edition. Where else would we ever discover that in 1905, the *Imperial Colonist* published an article on 'The terms and conditions of domestic service in England and South Africa', written by Lady Knightly of Fawsley? •

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R: What went wrong?

vided for people in the country at minimal rents. That is now going to be a thing of the past. Rents are expected to rise to almost four times the present level. All these and other social measures with which the population was spoilt cost the state around 58 billion marks a year. The other side of the coin was that such huge subsidies (which included cheap transportation and basic food) meant that there was very little investment in industry. The poor state of many industrial plants results directly from this policy.

Unemployment was an unheard of thing. Today, after the *Wende*, thousands of people from all walks of life are roaming the streets in search of work. The economy has been run to the ground. The much promised help and investment are almost non-starters. This in turn has prompted many people to comment that yesterday we were the "Zone" (this was a derogatory term used by the West to denote GDR as a Russian Zone) and today we are the "colony" (of the West). According to estimates the number of people out of work by mid-June will run into about 2 to 3 million. The future really looks bleak for the vast majority of the population. It is an unbelievable situation, something many people had not even dreamt of just over a year ago. What went wrong and why?

PERSONALLY I don't think that one needs look too far for the answers. Without doubt the root cause of all this misery must be laid on the shoulders of the old leadership of the SED (Socialist Unity Party – an amalgamation of the Communist Party (KPD) and Social Democratic Party in the Eastern Sector of Germany in 1946). They failed to read the situation having been blinded by being too long in office. Even when the Stasi pointed out to the SED bosses the real situation in the country it was brushed aside. Honecker says this very openly in an interview published recently – that studying Stasi reports gave him the impression of reading the western media which means they could not be taken seriously.

The SED leadership felt too smug and failed to understand that their state was built on a very shaky foundation by the victorious Red Army. The state was never accepted by the masses. This was my impression when I arrived here in early 1967 and over the years that did not change. The division of Germany was rejected by the people. It was difficult to find people who honestly accepted the GDR and the majority of those who did, did it for opportunistic reasons. The mass resignations

from the SED when things got too hot is a shining example. This opportunism was created by the SED. If you wanted to get anywhere, then membership in the SED was your safest passport. The simple truth is that the leadership of the SED failed to liberate themselves from the cold war mentality.

The backbone of socialist democracy is undoubtedly its practice of 'democratic centralism'. But whilst centralism was enhanced, the democratic part of it died. No arguments were accepted in party meetings. Orders came from above and the branches had to endorse them. They became merely rubber-

stamps. Failure to accept these orders resulted in the 'culprit' being branded a 'dissident' which took on the mantle of a swear word.

But there is another side to the former GDR which is being completely neglected by the media and others who are only concentrating on the mistakes of the past and are out to grab their pound of flesh from the former leaders. Those of us who are from the so-called Third World will never forget the solid support we received from the government and people of the state which went out of existence on October 3 1990. It can be said without any shadow of doubt that we from the ANC found in the GDR a true friend and a solid pillar of support when we really needed a friend and ally in those dark and hazy days of the early 1960's.

Who will deny the terrific role played by *Sechaba* (official organ of the ANC in exile) in countering the apartheid propaganda dished out by Pretoria and its allies? The columns of *Sechaba* (printed monthly from January 1967 until October 1990 as a gift of the people of the GDR to the ANC) presented the horror of apartheid in its proper colour. In the course of time *Sechaba* became a must for the shelves of libraries throughout the world. It became the mouthpiece of the struggling people of South Africa.

The fact that the ANC was able to build such a model school in Tanzania to cope with the flood of youth escaping from the scourge of apartheid in the 1970s is also a tribute to the generosity of the GDR. Whilst SOMAFCO (Solomon Mahlangu Freedom Col-

lege) is a product of international solidarity there is no denying the fact that the manpower needed to get this project started came from ANC experts trained in the GDR. Today, SOMAFCO stands as a monument to the back-breaking work of these pioneers and the role of this institution in the ANC's educational programme is priceless.

The ANC was not the only recipient of the GDR's generosity. According to figures released by the Solidarity Committee in 1989 close to 120 000 people from Africa, Asia and Latin America studied in the GDR, or underwent vocational training since 1970.

An ANC perspective

Working as engineers, doctors, farmers, teachers, economists, cultural and highly skilled workers, they are now active in the economic and cultural development of their countries.

Over the same period, more than 22 000 specialists from the GDR worked in developing countries as economists, engineers, teachers and vocational instructors, physicians and other vocations on the basis of on-the-spot training.

MY MOST important observation is that whilst rejecting the GDR, there was no hesitation by the masses in identifying themselves with the West German state. What is remarkable about this state of affairs is that Bonn was ruled by people who were active officials of the Third Reich until Willy Brandt and his Social Democrats ousted them from power. This did not stop Nazis from holding key positions in the judiciary and other important sectors of the state. Younger Nazis have now replaced the old guard, especially in the police force.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the ugly head of fascism is now openly showing itself in this part of Germany although there are efforts to try and pin this on imports from the West. But the Fascist mentality was always here. The only difference was that during the reign of the SED, their presence was kept deep down in the underground.

Hopefully, the Germans have learnt from history, though at times one has doubts. Can one blame people for being scared, especially the older generation? ■

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Winnie Mandela

The alarming revelations during the protracted trial of Winnie Mandela provided ready ammunition to the detractors and enemies of the ANC, whose predominant response has been to close ranks around her. In many ways the affair raises even more painful and critical questions to long-term supporters and would-be sympathisers. TONY KARON, who edited the Marxist magazine New Era during the darkest days of the State of Emergency, argues that the movement's handling of the affair raises fundamental issues of public accountability which cannot be avoided in the interest of bringing about a more democratic South Africa.

“In a generation of swine,” the famed American journalist Hunter S Thompson once wrote, “the one-eyed pig is king.” It is a cynical sentiment, but perhaps an appropriate one for the cynical times we have entered in South Africa.

In the dawn of the new South Africa, those of us who ever conceived of political battles here as a moral crusade have woken to the ultimate moral *babbelas*. It is, perhaps, unsurprising, on the proverbial “morning after” a night of heady consumption of large doses of faith and naivete.

Perhaps it was inevitable. Perhaps not. Certainly the Winnie Mandela saga has caused great anguish and despair among would-be and erstwhile supporters of the ANC.

Moreover, it is clearly only one sheet (or perhaps duvet cover might be more appropriate) in the bulging basket of ANC dirty linen.

The ANC's response to the crisis – even if quietly contested within the organisation – is to actively work to make it difficult to differentiate Mrs Mandela from the movement. Effectively, and to the consternation and pain of many of its truly principled members, the ANC is telling us “love me, love my dog”. In macabre rhetorical gymnastics, they are even trying to present her as a victim of some obscure conspiracy to undermine the movement.

It is unsurprising that in the high drama of Mrs Mandela's trial, with witnesses disappearing and crowds toyi-toying, that some perspective may be lost on the affair. In a climate of ANC press-bashing, with peculiar press conferences being held daily – the most unusual, perhaps, the Tumahole ANC's wheeling out of Stompie Moketsi's mother to exonerate Mrs Mandela, and have questions answered for her by her comrades who were there to ensure that she was not “misquoted” (a rather original euphemism) – the journalist is loath to open yet another “trial by media”.

Nonetheless, it is important to understand the background to the drama presently unfolding in the Rand Supreme Court.

Winnie Mandela's character has been shaped by more than 20 years of official harassment, mostly alone as the mother of two children. She lived under strictly enforced banning orders for decades, and spent 17 months in prison in 1969. She has had to bear the heavy burden of the Mandela name through the darkest periods for the opposition in South Africa, when there were no organisations for her to relate to.

When the trade union, civic and youth bodies which made up the core of the ANC's organised mass base began to emerge during the early 1980s, Winnie Mandela was isolated in Brandfort, in an internal exile reminiscent of Tsarist Russia (and, it must be admitted, its Soviet successors).

She calmly told journalist Graham Boynton in *Vanity Fair* that she learned from her official tormentors “how to hate my political opponents”.

While the ANC-aligned mass organisations sought to elevate to an inviolate principle the organisational accountability of leadership, Winnie Mandela was forced to operate alone. Even in her position as an unconnected individual, her name thrust her into the international limelight for an American TV audience who could only relate to South Africa through hero- and villain-personalities.

WHEN Mrs Mandela defied her banishment and returned to Soweto in 1986, this background, together with some obvious personal weaknesses, could only spell trouble. The ANC was constantly embarrassed by Winnie's antics. By the palace she built for her husband amid the squalor of Soweto, by her association with black American businessman Robert Brown who claimed he had been given “copyright” over the Mandela name. And so on.

But Mrs Mandela was not only out of touch with organisational practice, she also seemed out of touch with the ideology of the move-

RIGHT: With the symbol of justice in the background... Winnie Mandela leaving the Rand Supreme Court during her trial.

THE WINNIE MANDELA CASE

ment. Indeed, she is prone to identifying the enemy as "the white man", which smacks more of Black Consciousness/PAC thinking than of her husband's.

"Together, hand in hand, with our boxes of matches and our necklaces, we shall liberate this country" she said at a funeral in April 1986. Four years later, she told Phil Donahue on US television that she had been quoted out of context. But not even the most breathtaking rhetorical gymnastics could alter what she had said – a crisp, clear sound-bite captured on tape for all time. ANC President Oliver Tambo had to repudiate her the following year. And it would not be the last time. Indeed, it was a weary Walter Sisulu who went on TV last August to make it clear that the suspension of the armed struggle was not, as Winnie had suggested, 'merely a strategy'.

But it is not simply outrageous opinions and rhetorical provoca-

And so here in the grey dawn of the new South Africa cupboards rattle with skeletons and so much has been swept under the carpet that it looks like the valley of a thousand hills.

tions that have led to Winnie Mandela being tried. The issues of the moment concern her conduct in relation to the reign of terror in Soweto by her "football team". In the dark days of the 1986 Emergency, when hit-squads and vigilantes roamed the townships, the Mandela United Football Club was formed as a personal bodyguard for Winnie's protection in Soweto. It is not surprising, therefore, that the team saw very little of the ball, as it were. But the unrestrained thuggery that became its hallmark – reminiscent more of the game's hooligan fans than its players – brought it into conflict with the Soweto community. As much as anything, the present court case is about determining the extent of her responsibility for, and involvement in, some of the 'footballers' actions.

SIMMERING tensions reached a head in August 1988, when Mrs Mandela's Diepkloof home was burned down by a crowd of local schoolkids. The culprits, pupils from Daliwonga High School, were taking revenge after a football club member had allegedly raped a girl from their school. Soweto organisations, and even Nelson Mandela himself, intervened to ensure that the youths involved were not prosecuted.

It was at this point that ANC-aligned structures in Soweto formed the Mandela Crisis Committee, whose name was quickly changed to the Soweto Crisis Committee, to deal with the problem posed by Mrs Mandela and her football team. It is significant to note that one of the members of that committee was the Soweto Methodist priest, Reverend Paul Verryn, who Mrs Mandela and her associates are keen to discredit as a child-molester.

During 1988, Mandela footballers were charged with kidnapping two boys and carving 'viva ANC' into one's chest, but acquitted after the traumatised youths (still bearing the scars) contradicted each others' evidence. Another was convicted of killing two people and firing at two others after losing a fist-fight at a shebeen, while early the following year a third was convicted of killing a 13-year-old girl in a grenade attack on the house of a rival.

A number of other incidents did not reach the courts, but resentment in the Soweto community grew. By the end of 1989, when the events pertinent to the present trial began, there was major undertow of conflict between Mrs Mandela and ANC structures in Soweto.

James Moeketsi Seipei, known to the world as "Stompie", first hit the headlines in 1985. At the age of 10, he was the commander of a 1500-strong children's army – the "under fourteens" – who battled municipal police and vigilantes in Tumahole, a township near Parys in the northern Free State. The following year, he was the youngest Emergency detainee in the country, and was held for almost a year.

After a second detention, during which he allegedly suffered electric shocks and other torture, Tumahole activists decided to move him to Johannesburg, where he could be rehabilitated. He moved into the Methodist Church manse run by the reverend Paul Verryn.

On December 29 of that year, Stompie was abducted from the manse and taken to Mrs Mandela's house, along with Gabriel Pelo Mekgwe, Thabiso Mono, and Kenny Kgase. A fifth boy from the manse, Katiza Cebekhulu (a co-accused in Winnie's present trial) apparently went along voluntarily. Football team coach Jerry Richardson, Winnie's sycophantic FC coach, was found guilty and sentenced to death for Stompie's murder 8 months later.

Justice B. O'Donovan accepted the evidence of the three survivors of the ordeal. In his judgement, he found that: "Mrs Mandela punched and slapped each of them and called for a sjambok to be brought to her. Each of the four was beaten by Mrs Mandela." This laid the basis for the present charge against Mrs Mandela. Winnie was also implicated in criminal activity in a further murder trial.

In February the Mass Democratic Movement, representing the alliance between the restricted UDF and Cosatu, issued an unprecedented statement expressing outrage at the Football Club's reign of terror, distancing themselves from Winnie and openly accusing her of complicity in Stompie's death.

The statement, read by Murphy Morobe, said "had Stompie and his three colleagues not been abducted by Mrs Mandela's 'football team', he would have been alive today". The statement was a restrained outpouring of years of frustration: "Mrs Mandela has abused the trust and confidence that she has enjoyed over the years. She has not been a member of any of the democratic structures of the UDF and Cosatu, and she has often acted without consulting the democratic movement. Often her practices have violated the spirit and ethos of the democratic movement". The statement called on supporters of the MDM to distance themselves from her.

Within days, the ANC had tried to soften the impact, criticising Winnie's judgement with respect to the team and calling upon her to accept organisational discipline, but calling on the community to close ranks on the issue. I interviewed Murphy Morobe the morning after the statement was released. We discussed a number of issues, but he preferred not to talk about the Winnie issue.

He wanted to avoid becoming the individual spokesman on the issue, because that would set up a personal conflict between her and himself. If Nelson Mandela was released there and then, both Winnie and Murphy would have to be there to greet him, and the latter did not want to make that situation intolerable.

A mere two years later, Winnie Mandela is on the rise in the ANC, while Murphy Morobe is at Princeton University, New Jersey, studying for an MBA.

IT WAS perhaps inevitable, given Nelson Mandela's absolutely unconditional adoration for her, that Winnie Mandela would be 'rehabilitated' in the wake of his release. One could not really have expected Nelson Mandela to "distance" himself from the woman whose naturally idealised, image had sustained him through almost three decades in prison.

Within months, Winnie was taking platforms all over the place, sometimes in embarrassing outfits (none more so than the camouflage fatigues and clumsy combat boots which made her look like a refugee from a *Grensvegter* photo-comic) and issuing statements clearly at odds with ANC policy – most notably on the armed struggle.

Even then, Nelson Mandela seemed reluctant to acknowledge a problem. In September 1990, Mandela told an interviewer that her contentious statements were his fault, for not informing her properly of the ANC's decisions.



Picture: TJ Lemmon

Mandela supporters and police clash during the trial

This was, at best, wishful thinking, for she had made it clear during her Donahue interview in the US that she did not share her husband's trust of the government in the negotiation process. Nor had she previously taken the issue of organisational discipline particularly seriously – a point reflected in both the UDF/Cosatu and ANC statements on the Stompie issue.

Protest against Winnie, mostly rather subtle, continued. When the red Mandela Benz rolled into the stadium for the SACP launch, and the Mandela's emerged, Comrades – a Tumahole jive band on stage at the time – played a song with words to the effect that "Stompie is everywhere". Perhaps it was just a coincidence...

Winnie's appointment as the ANC's coordinator of Social Welfare provoked open protest from a number of ANC branches, but nothing was done. In October 1990, she was elected onto the executive committee of the ANC's PWV region. She also became President of the Transvaal region of the ANC Women's League. While there is significant opposition to her in the ANC, it is clear, at the same time, that she has a significant constituency in the organisation.

Winnie has said she would welcome being charged over the Stompie affair, in order to clear her name. This theme predominated most of Nelson Mandela's statements on the issue – let due process of law take its course, so that truth could be distinguished from rumour. When charges against her were first announced last October, ANC general secretary Alfred Nzo stated that "the matter is now in the hands of the courts and as such it would be improper for the ANC to make any comment on the pending judicial process".

After his measured response in October, Nzo appears to have had a major 'revelation' over the holiday season. At the end of January, he made a statement to the effect that the trial was a continuation of 30 years of harassment of Winnie, that it was a "political trial", part of a conspiracy by "elements opposed to the peace process". In his new-found clarity on the issue, Nzo was positively unrestrained: the trial, in fact, was in violation of the spirit of agreements negotiated between the government and the ANC, he said. He called for the suspension of the trial, and lashed out at trial by media. In other words, he told us that we should all simply forget the whole thing.

In the weeks that followed, the ANC remained silent as witnesses disappeared and others refused to testify. Despite the ANC's formal commitment to recognising sexual preference as a personal choice, crude gay-bashing was a rallying cry of the toyi-toying legions outside the court-room. When he received the Johannesburg Press Club's newsmaker of the year award together with FW De Klerk, Mandela's prepared speech handed to journalists contained a criticism of behaviour of supporters outside the court-room. He skipped that part when delivering the speech.

Defining the trial as a political one had a significance beyond Nzo's fulminations about violation of agreements and so on. There is

an unwritten, but iron, law in the ANC tradition that nobody gives state's evidence in a political trial. The consequences, at the very least, are total ostracisation.

A Winnie Mandela Support Committee announced itself in sycophantic terms, expressing its "unqualified" support for "our comrade Mother". The ANC's official response to the Support Committee is unclear. ANC resources have certainly been mobilised in her support – to the extent that its allies in the International Defence and Aid Fund are paying her legal costs – and there was an official ANC presence at the Winnie Committee's press conference.

At the same time, there are reports that some disquiet was expressed in senior ANC circles, and posters supporting her which had been put up inside the movement's head office were reportedly ripped down overnight (there is strict security at the building).

On the first day of her trial, many were surprised to see the likes of Joe Slovo and Cosatu's Jay Naidoo at court. But Nelson Mandela, so the story goes, had personally asked them to be there, and his personal power carries tremendous weight given the importance of "the chemistry" between himself and De Klerk, which is crucial to the negotiation process which ultimately neither the ANC, nor the government, can afford to scupper.

The ANC has always been a broad church, whose congregations ranged from those who would feel comfortable in the Salvation Army to those who would be upwardly mobile in the Khmer Rouge. And the movement's restored legality has (temporarily at least) removed much of its coherence, so that we now see a range of quite different statements, perspectives and sometimes even activities being advanced under its name.

The Winnie Mandela saga squarely raises the question of accountability. This has been raised within the ANC, particularly at its consultative conference last December where the leadership took a roasting from rank-and-filers enraged by how much had been compromised in negotiations.

Nelson Mandela is playing to a far broader constituency – black and white people, who are not actively involved in politics or might even be members of other parties – who seek an end to the politics of fear and loathing in South Africa. The issue, therefore, is one of the ANC's accountability to the broader public.

FW De Klerk, the other half of the partnership nurturing the new South Africa, is weighed down by his own baggage of dark secrets – the tales of official death squads and corruption of which we have perhaps only seen the trailer thus far. But De Klerk and the Nats, in parliament, face public scrutiny. Often they withhold things, but then the public is aware that they are not coming clean, and pressure mounts. What little public inquiry we have seen into phenomena like the CCB has come as a result of that public scrutiny.

THE ANC demands an interim government. But is it prepared to be accountable to the public? Just as we demand a public inquiry into the activities of the CCB and other hit squads, it is our right to know, for example, the true story of the torture and excesses that occurred in the ANC's military camps – the fact of which has been acknowledged by Nelson Mandela. If the ANC's response to the Winnie Mandela issue is anything to go by, its attitude to the issue of public accountability does not bode well.

And so here in the grey dawn of the new South Africa, at different ends of the political spectrum cupboards rattle with skeletons, laundry baskets are full and so much has been swept under the carpet that it looks like the valley of a thousand hills.

The muscles of faith have turned into the fat of cynicism, and when that ballot paper finally comes, it may take a discerning eye to spot the one-eyed pig.