Drake, St. Clair, 1964, "Democracy on Trial in Africa", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*. Philadelphia.

Gendzier, I.L., 1985, *Managing Political Change: Social Scientists and the Third World*. Boulder, Co. and London: Westview Press.

Huntington, S.P., 1968, *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Kasfir, N., 1976, *The Shrinking Political Arena: Participation and Ethnicity in African Politics, with a Case Study of Uganda*. Berkley: University of California Press.

Kasfir, N., 1990, "The Uganda Elections of 1989: Power, Populism and Democratisation", Mimeo.

Kiggundu, P., 1987, *The Right to Vote and Participate in Government: With Special Reference to Uganda*. LLM Dissertation. Cardiff University.

Lobel, J., 1988, "The Meaning of Democracy: Representative and Participatory Democracy in the New Nicaraguan Constitution", *University of Pittsburgh Law Review* , Vol.49, No.3.

Mamdani, M., 1987, "Contradictory Class Perspectives on the Question of Democracy: The Case of Uganda", in P.A. Nyong'o (ed.), *Popular Struggles for Democracy in Africa*. London: Zed Books.

Mamdani, M., 1996, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Nyong'o, P.A. (ed.), 1987, *Popular Struggles for Democracy in Africa*. London: Zed Books.

Nyong'o, P.A., T. Mkandawire and S. Gutto, 1988, "Political Instability and Development", *Africa Development*, Vol. XIII, Nos. 3 and 4.

Schatzberg, M.G., 1993, "Power, Legitimacy and Democratisation in Africa", *Africa*, Vol. 63, No. 4.

Sklar, R.L., 1987, "Developmental Democracy", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* , Vol. 29, No. 4.

Tidemand, P., 1995, *The Resistance Councils in Uganda: A Study of Rural Politics and Popular Democracy in Africa*. Ph.D. Thesis, Roskilde University, Denmark.

Tordoff, W., 1984, *Government and Politics in Africa*. London: Macmillan.

Young, T., 1993, "Elections and Electoral Politics in Africa", *Africa*, Vol. 63, No. 3.

Chapter 7

From Peoples' Politics to State Politics: Aspects of National Liberation in South Africa

Michael Neocosmos

Al die mamas en die papas, die boeties en die sussies, die oumas en die oupas, die hondjies en die katjies—almaal is saam in die struggle (popular slogan/song from Cape Town, 1985). (All die mamas en die struggle (popular brothers and the sisters, the grandpas and the grandmas, the dogs and the cats—all are together in the struggle).

Generally... I can say that the community is the main source of power, because the state has really lost the control over the people. He (sic) has no power over the people in terms of controlling them. This is why the people have formed these area committees, so that they can try to control themselves. What has been preached in the past about the Freedom Charter, even now we are trying to do that practically. (An activist from the Eastern Cape, Isizwe, Vol. 1, No. 2, March 1986).

There is a remarkably strong corporatist current flowing in South Africa. The major actors—labour, capital and the state—are so caught up in it that they are hardly aware of the fact that they have become part of the current (Maree, 1993:24)

South Africa's tradition of a strong and vibrant civil society needs to be re-asserted. We must not replace apartheid statism, and top-down rule, with a new form of statism (Sam Shilowa—General Secretary of COSATU—1995:27).

INTRODUCTION

In early May 1994, less than a week after the first government of a liberated South Africa had been elected, the new foreign minister, Alfred Nzo, gave his first speech in his new capacity to a meeting of the Organisation of African Unity. In the speech, he, *inter alia*, made the point that South Africa had finally won the struggle for political freedom, and that it now had to address the battle for the development of its oppressed majority. In uttering those words, the minister was truly conveying a widely shared sense of South Africa's final arrival into the community of free African post-colonial

states. Since Nkrumah, practically every African leader had reiterated the same basic message at independence. It was this message, and the aspiration which it embodied which formed the basis for post-colonial "development-alism" and the nation-state project in Africa, namely, the end of popular politics and the beginning of state mobilisation for bureaucratic "development", with its attendant emphasis on "nation building" and "Africanisa-tion" (now known in South Africa as "affirmative action"). While "nation-building" in Africa was reduced to state building and the systematic sup-pression of regional and ethnic grievances under an obsessive concern to which the creation of a "national" petty-bourgeoisie could be undertaken by providing access to jobs in the expanding "public" sector.

These jobs were ostensibly to be reserved for all citizens, but often ended up being provided simply to members of the state-controlling ethnic group/coalition, thus undermining any "national" pretensions that a newly form-ing class might have. In addition, access to state jobs meant, for this petty-bourgeoisie, access to state resources which could then be utilised for private appropriation rather than accumulation. Hence, economic appropriation by the new ruling groups largely went hand in hand with the reproduction of "ethnic" or regional divisions as these increasingly constituted the main routes to such appropriation. This process of state formation was related, therefore, to the well-known absence of a clear separation between politics and economics in Africa—between political power and accumulation—which itself provided the conditions for authoritarianism and statism. It has now clearly been recognised, largely as a result of the crisis of legitimacy which has become more apparent in the SAP and post-SAP periods, that this state project in Africa has reached a point of profound crisis from which some even argue, the state seems incapable of extricating itself (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1993; Wamba-dia-Wamba, 1993, 1994; Olukoshi and Laakso, 1996).

Despite the currency of this debate, there is evidence that a consensus on some fundamental points is emerging, namely, that this crisis is the result of the entrenched authoritarianism, more simply the overall *statism*, of the African state since independence, that to a great extent this statism was built on the coercive practices taken over from the colonial period, and that the re-emergence of ethnicity as a central issue in Africa is intimately related to the failure of statism. At the same time, it is also reasonably apparent that statism prevailed relatively independently of whether state politics were based on a no-party, one-party or multiparty system, as, in the words of Wamba-dia-Wamba (1993:103), the African state was, "in the "decoloniza-tion process", grafted onto a colonial, essentially undemocratic (variant of apartheid) state". But statism was not an inevitable outcome of independ-ence. Rather, its features, it is argued, have their origins in what Mamdani (1990) has called the "defeat of popular movements" in the period of transi-tion from colony to independent state.

The more or less protracted struggles for independence in Africa had involved large numbers of people (overwhelmingly but not exclusively from the most oppressed and exploited strata) in a process of struggle over a more or less long period of time. These processes had been ones in which a whole variety of organisations (parties, trade unions, women's organisations, youth organisations, peasant cooperatives, small business organisations and so on) expressed the aspirations of the majority of the hitherto oppressed popula-tion. Although they were not always clearly distinguishable (nor did they always wish to distinguish themselves) from a broader "national move-ment" during the anti-colonial struggle, these organisations were rarely simply appendages of the political party which was eventually to achieve state power. They, arguably, always had a significantly independent exis-tence and often an independent support base as well as distinct, if not always explicitly articulated, demands. Neither were popular movements simply stages or steps on the road to the realisation of a nationalist ethos. The popular movements of which such varied organisations were the com-plex expression, had often distinct forms of organisation and demands which were not always simply reducible to the common denominator of political independence. They often involved (explicitly or implicitly) demands for social transformation, popular forms of democracy and equal-ity, which went beyond the slogans of the political party which was to emerge victorious at independence (Kriger, 1992; Mamdani, 1990; Gibbon, 1994).

In Africa, it has generally been the case that as the independence process proceeded, these popular and politicised "civil society" organisations were gradually replaced by state organisations in a number of ways—incorpora-tion, co-optation, disbanding (voluntary or enforced), the bribing of leaders, and the general destruction of their autonomous basis of existence. In brief, these organisations of civil society were usually eliminated or transformed and substituted with state (and/or party) institutions as part of a gradually developing nation-state project. Although these defeats were in no way inevitable, it is this general process which arguably lay at the inception of the statism which has been dominant in Africa since independence. The consolidation of this form of state power was largely secured in the run up to independence, as the colonial state and its chosen successors collaborated in structuring the new state (Mamdani, 1990; Gibbon,1994).

Part of this process was one whereby such popular organisations which had, during the struggle for independence, entered the realm of political society (by addressing explicitly political questions, through interpellating their supporters as citizens) were gradually restricted to the realm of civil society (where they were to address the narrower concerns of "interest groups" defined by the division of labour) before finally losing their inde-pendence altogether. The gradual restriction of popular organisations from a role in political society to one in civil society, is, arguably, part of the general

trend of demobilisation experienced by popular organisations in the period immediately preceding and following independence/liberation (Gibbon, 1993). More precisely, this process amounted to the exclusion of popular organisations from the plane of territorial politics where "national" issues were addressed exclusively by the colonial state and its chosen interlocutors, usually in the form of the incoming nationalist party, itself already organised along state lines (e.g. with various departments corresponding to ministries, foreign representatives, etc.) (Gibbon, 1994).

It is the argument here that the transition to liberation in South Africa (the equivalent of independence in other countries) can only be understood in this African historical context. Indeed, it may be suggested that despite many important differences, the process of transition in South Africa exhibits fundamental elements which parallel the history briefly outlined above. While it was thought by many, including the present author, that the popular movements which had developed during the 1980s in that country were strong enough to provide a counterweight to statist tendencies, the 1990s have witnessed a systematic (and astonishingly rapid) process of political demobilisation in the country. This has reached an extreme situation where the urban population, which had been massively involved in political activity in the 1980s as all aspects of life were politicised, was in 1995 showing signs of extreme apathy towards the local elections (*Mail and Guardian*, 27 October, 1995).

During the 1980s, South Africa had the unique experience of having a mass popular movement which was inaugurated in 1976, and which differentiated it sharply from the experience of the rest of Africa in the 1960s. This largely urban movement differed from the African norm not simply because of its spatial uniqueness, but, much more importantly, in its involvement of large numbers of ordinary people in a mosaic of political organisations of an enormous variety engaged in independent and coherent nation-wide political activity. It was an experience which transformed people's lives and often resulted in the setting up of democratic popular political structures autonomous of (and directed against) the state (Marx, 1992; Murray, 1987; Lodge et al., 1991). This process was arguably typified by practices (and not just slogans) of "People's Power" particularly associated with the United Democratic Front (UDF), along with the establishment of what has been called "Social Movement Unionism", i.e. the involvement of trade unions in mass national politics (Webster, 1987). Along with these went practices and debates on the nature of "non-racialism" and the future character of a non-racial, and not just a "multi-racial", state. While such practices were undoubtedly contradictory and should not be idealised, they differed starkly from the present context (which has its origins in the early 1990s) in which "nation-building", "affirmative action" and elite-based "reconciliation" all organised and led by the state, are more typical of a now "official" practice and discourse of "liberation".

The popular experience of liberation politics in the South Africa of the 1980s was a far cry from that of the largely elitist guerrilla army in the bush, more often trampling on water rather than swimming like a fish in it, or, for that matter, from the equally elitist, teacher-dominated organisation having independence thrust upon it by a departing colonial power, which was so typical of the experience of other African countries. And yet, interestingly, the period 1990-94 was, in South Africa, largely also characterised by a process of popular demobilisation as an elitist deal was struck behind closed doors by an outgoing National Party and an incoming ANC in their interests (the story of which is told, with some accuracy, in Sparks, 1995) and, arguably, in those of a "new" South African bourgeoisie, while in the townships, whatever popular structures that remained were largely destroyed through systematic, state-inspired violence. The objective of this essay is to trace the main features of this process of transformation of the politics of liberation from a situation where dominant popular politics (with all their attendant contradictions) were substituted by state politics, i.e. a process whereby the centre of gravity of "national politics" was moved from the people to the state.

The argument will follow a structure whereby some of the main political and ideological features of the South African popular struggles of the 1980s and their alteration into different forms of politics in the 1990s will be outlined. This will be followed by a brief assessment of the competing interpretations of this period in the literature, and an outline of a theoretical perspective which encompasses recent debates on the African experience. Implicitly underlying our argument in this chapter is the view that the weakening of the autonomous, popular organisations of the people represents a significant dilution of oppositional capacity to the ANC-led project of statism that is currently taking shape, a project which, if it is to be successful, requires the autonomous democratic prescriptions of the people as opposed to the impositions of the state elite.

KEY FEATURES OF THE STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION IN THE 1980s AND 1990s

It is not intended in this section, to provide a history, however brief, of popular struggles in the South Africa of the 1980s as such histories can be found elsewhere (Marx, 1992; Lodge et al., 1991; Murray, 1987). Rather, after some brief comments on its origins, illustrations of the most characteristic aspects of popular politics in the 1980s in both township-based and trade union movements will be given and contrasted to the liberation politics of the 1990s. Throughout, the emphasis will be placed on urban movements, the dominant source of protest during the period.

Struggles in the Townships

The origins of the mass urban protests of the 1980s are usually traced to the student upsurge of 1976 in Soweto. It was these youth struggles which forged, in Mamdani's terms, "a new path of liberation" which was based on the lived experiences of ordinary people rather than on the failed sterility of the strategies of exiled movements cut off from the people on whose behalf they were supposed to be struggling (Mamdani, 1996:232). The so-called "decade of peace" after Sharpville was a testament to the overall weakness of these exiled organisations. The 1976 Soweto uprising, along with the series of mass strikes in Durban three years earlier, shattered this "phoney peace". In fact, in structural terms, it was effectively this period of extreme repression which was to provide, through exceptional economic growth, the seeds of the destruction of the apartheid state.

During the 1960s, South Africa's GNP grew at 6 per cent per annum and South Africa was at the time, along with Japan, the country with the highest growth rate in the world (Baskin, 1991:17). This had a number of important consequences, including a dramatic increase in the number of Africans working in manufacturing (from 308,332 in 1960 to 780,914 in 1980) denoting not only an increase in the industrial working class but also a rise in the number of skilled African workers. At the same time, the South African economy became more dependent on consumption by Blacks for its internal market (Marx, 1992:193). Another effect was an increase in the number of Black South Africans entering the education system to acquire the skills necessary for this increased industrialisation. Between 1965 and 1975, the number of Black students in secondary schools increased nearly fivefold, while between 1980 and 1984, their enrolment doubled from 577,000 to over a million; the number of graduates tripled during the same period (Lodge et al., 1991:30–31).

By 1982 however, not only were the effects of the world economic crisis being felt in South Africa, but a fall in the price of gold which lasted until 1985, along with a balance of payments deficit created by the importation of capital equipment for this mini-import substitution industrialisation process, led to "an unprecedented level of foreign indebtedness" (Lodge et al., 1991). As a result of IMF loan conditionalities, the government scrapped whatever subsidies to consumers were in place and increased sales tax which shifted the fiscal burden to the poor. By 1985, the inflation rate was just below a record 17 per cent. All this led to a steep increase in the unemployment rate, beginning in 1982 and accelerating thereafter.

By 1985, African unemployment represented about 25 per cent of the economically active population. Two-thirds of all unemployed Africans by the mid-1980s were under the age of thirty, and unemployment was often long-term especially for school leavers (Lodge et al., 1991).

A prolonged drought increased the price of food and also the level of rural-urban migration, while cutbacks in state expenditure affected the townships in particular, so that the local authorities administering them had accumulated a deficit of R32 million by 1982–1983. From 1981, township residents were subjected to rent hikes which increased in frequency after municipal elections in 1983. At the same time, reviled township councillors were given more powers in 1982 through the Black Local Authorities Act which increased their control over the allocation of housing, trading licences, business sites, student bursaries and the collection of rents (Lodge et al., 1991). They were obviously seen as benefiting from "the system", as the apartheid state structures came to be known among activists. The state attempted to manage the growing discontent by legal reforms which were designed to regulate union activity and restrict it to the workplace (primarily through the Industrial Relations Act of 1979) and to co-opt Indian and Coloured South Africans into a tricameral parliament while power rested firmly with Whites (the new constitution was inaugurated in 1984). It was these structural changes which formed the background to the mass upsurge of the second half of the 1980s.

The Birth, Growth and Dissolution of the United Democratic Front

The most important and truly original organisational expression of popular resistance in South Africa in the 1980s was the United Democratic Front (UDF) which was formed in 1983 initially/ostensibly to mobilise opposition to the state's constitutional proposals and other legislation (known collectively as the Koornhof Bills), including the Black Local Authorities Act. The UDF brought together under its umbrella, a coalition of civic associations, student organisations and youth congresses, women's groups, trade unions, church societies, sports clubs and a multitude of organisations which retained, and often increased their ability to organise independently as a result of their affiliation to the UDF. At its peak, the UDF claimed it had around seven hundred affiliates grouped in ten regional areas and amounting to a total of over two million people (Lodge et al., 1991:34). With the upsurge of township unrest beginning in earnest in 1984, it was the young people of the townships who provided the main impetus behind the struggle, while the leadership passed over to the trade unions in 1988. In one important respect at least, the UDF managed to build on the experience of township-based organisations such as the "civic associations", in that it successfully combined local and national grievances. In the words of one civic activist and intellectual:

From the late 1970s, civic associations not only opposed community councils, they challenged the very laws upon which such bodies were founded. For example, in 1979 the Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organisation (PEBCO), (now the P.E. People's Civic Organisation), called for a single municipality for the city of Port Elizabeth and rejected the community councils (in charge of African town-

ships) and the white municipalities (in charge of white local affairs). PEBCO's aims included a commitment to fight discriminatory legislation, to seek participation in all decision-making processes, to fight for African freehold rights and to resist attempts to deprive Africans of their citizenship. Thus it can be seen that from their inception, civic associations tackled both local problems and issues with national political implications. In due course, local demands assumed a national dimension (Botha, 1992:63).

It is not possible to undertake a detailed history of the UDF here due to considerations of space; fortunately this can be found elsewhere (e.g. Swilling, 1988; Lodge et al., 1991:23–141; Marx, 1992). Nevertheless, it is important to point out some of the phases which this organisation went through, as they provide an accurate reflection of the changes in urban-based forms of struggle and popular involvement during the period of the UDF's existence until 1990 when it was disbanded. The analysis which we undertake here largely follows those of Swilling, 1988, and Lodge et al., 1991.

The first phase of the UDF followed its activity to oppose elections to the tricameral parliament and the Koornhof bills. But soon after August 1984, opposition political activity shifted to struggles initiated by local communities and became concerned with basic issues affecting township life. This inaugurated its second phase. The mass upsurge started in earnest in September 1984 and took the form of bus and rent boycotts, housing movements, squatter revolts, labour strikes, school protests and community stayaways. This change in the focus of protest was not the result of any strategy by the leadership of the UDF or of a change in policy. It seems ultimately to have been forced on the leadership from below (Swilling, 1988:101). Indeed, by mid-1985, it was becoming clear that the UDF leadership was unable to exert effective control over developments despite its popularity. In Lodge's words:

The momentum for action came from the bottom levels of the organisation and from its youngest members. It was children who built the roadblocks, children who led the crowds to the administrative buildings, children who delegated spokespersons, and children who in 1984 told the older folk that things would be different, that people would not run away as they had in 1960 (Lodge et al., 1991:76).

According to Swilling, local organisations:

... exploited the contradiction between the state's attempts to improve urban living conditions and the fiscal bankruptcy and political illegitimacy of local government. They managed to ride a wave of anger and protest that transformed political relations in the communities so rapidly that the UDF's local, regional and national leaders found themselves unable to build organisational structures to keep pace with these levels of mobilisation and politicisation (Swilling, 1988:101–102).

He also stresses that mass actions mobilised unprecedented numbers of people. These succeeded in mobilising:

... all sectors of the township population including both youth and older residents; they involved coordinated action between trade unions and political organisations; they were called in support of demands that challenged the coercive urban and education policies of the apartheid state, and they gave rise to ungovernable areas as state authority collapsed in many townships in the wake of the resignation of mayors and councillors who had been "elected" onto the new Black Local Authorities (Swilling, 1988:102).

The third phase of UDF activity was inaugurated by the declaration of the first state of emergency in 1985 (and lasted until 1986) as the apartheid state attempted to control this mass upsurge and reassert control over "ungovernable areas". Interestingly, both popular rebellion and political organisation grew during this period which saw the setting up of "street committees" in particular. These took over the functions of local government, especially in ungovernable areas. One local activist in the Port Elizabeth area stated:

We said [to our people]: In the streets where you live you must decide what issues affect your lives and bring up issues you want your organisation to take up. We are not in a position to remove debris, remove buckets, clean the streets and so on. But the organisation must deal with these matters through street committees (Lodge et al., 1991:82).

The ANC view as expressed by their spokesman, Tom Sebina, was that street committees "grow out of the need of the people to defend themselves against State repression...and in response to ANC calls to make the country ungovernable and apartheid unworkable [so as to forge them into] contingents that will be part of the process towards a total people's war". Contrary to this view which saw street committees as tactical adjuncts to the development of a militaristic process and as simply "oppositional" to the apartheid state, local activists spelt out a different assessment:

The people in Lusaka can say what they like...we know that the purpose is to enable people to take their lives in their hands. Local government has collapsed. The state's version of local government was corrupt and inefficient in any case, but local government is necessary for people to channel their grievances. The street committees fill the vacuum. They give people an avenue to express views and come up with solutions (Mathiane, 1986:13).

These popular state structures were proliferating in the urban townships. Marx (1992:167) notes that by 1987, 43 per cent of the inhabitants of Soweto, for example, were reporting the existence of street and area committees in their neighbourhoods. In many townships, rudimentary services began to be provided by civic and youth congresses, while crime also began to be checked and punished through "people's courts". These developed in some areas originally to regulate disputes between neighbours (as in Atteridgeville in Pretoria) and also as attempts to control the proliferation of brutal kangaroo courts (e.g. in Uitenhage and Port Elizabeth). In Alexandra, outside Johannesburg, five members of the Alexandra Action Committee were nominated in February 1986 to sit in judgement over cases of assault and

theft, while street committees were empowered to settle quarrels. In Mamelodi, one of Pretoria's townships, a number of "informal" systems of justice operated in the 1970s and 1980s and there were long-term struggles over the setting up of popularly accountable courts, which were also highly influenced by traditional African custom (e.g. the importance of elders etc.).[1] Lodge et al. concludes that:

> Of all the manifestations of people's power...the efforts of local groups to administer civil and criminal justice were the most challenging to the state's moral authority. More than any other feature of the insurrectionary movement, people's justice testified to the movement's ideological complexity and to the extent to which it was shaped from below by popular culture (Lodge et al., 1991:135).

In addition to popular control of townships and popular justice, there was a complementary development of institutions geared towards the provision of "people's education". These included, in particular, attempts to bring local schools under community control through the establishment of Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSAs) and even attempts to develop a new curriculum in response to "Bantu Education", the central plank of the apartheid state in this sphere. The struggle for people's education was seen as intimately linked to establishing "People's Power". In the words of Zwelakhe Sisulu:

> The struggle for People's Education is no longer a struggle of the students alone. It has become a struggle of the whole community with the involvement of all sections of the community. This is not something which has happened in the school sphere alone; it reflects a new level of development in the struggle as a whole ... The struggle for people's education can only finally be won when we have won the struggle for people's power ... We are no longer demanding the same education as Whites, since this is education for domination. People's education means education at the service of the people as a whole, education that liberates, education that puts the people in command of their lives. We are not prepared to accept any "alternative" to Bantu Education which is imposed on the people from above. This includes American or other imperialist alternatives designed to safeguard their selfish interests in the country ... To be acceptable, every initiative must come from the people themselves, must be accountable to the people and must advance the broad mass of students, not just a select few (Sisulu, 1986:106, 110).

Or again:

> I want to emphasise here that these advances were only possible because of the development of democratic organs, or committees, of people's power. Our people set up bodies which were controlled by, and accountable to, the masses of the people in each area. In such areas, the distinction between the people and their organisations disappeared. All the people, young and old, participated in committees from street level upwards (Sisulu, 1986:104).

---

[1] For greater detail see Lodge et al., 1991: 135-139; Seekings, 1989; and also UDF, 1986:35-41.

However, at the same time as street committees were taking up local "grassroots" issues, they also functioned as vehicles for the direct challenge to apartheid state power by the people. A detailed assessment from 1986 made this point forcefully.

> The street/area committees—the structures of an embryonic People's Power—are not only restricted to playing this kind of [local—MN] role, but also have a far more directly or narrowly political dimension to them. At the same time as they are taking up the grassroots issues described above, they also form the units in and through which major political issues and strategies (e.g. the consumer boycott) are discussed and organised. Thus the street committee system is beginning to form not only the avenue through which people can begin to take greater and more democratic control of the immediate conditions of their existence, but they are also emerging as the form through which direct political action against the state and the ruling bloc can be decided on and implemented (White, 1986:92).

Not surprisingly under such conditions, the apartheid state did not hesitate to intensify its repression. The fourth phase of the UDF lasted between 1986 and 1988 and was characterised by the massive repression of the second state of emergency which now covered the whole country. In the first six months of the emergency, around 25,000 people were arrested and isolated, the ability of the press (especially the vibrant "alternative press") to report objectively was systematically curtailed and the townships were placed under direct military rule while the state introduced a militarised bureaucracy (the National Security Management System) to run local government and to "win hearts and minds" (known as WHAM) following the classic counter-insurgency pattern which the Americans had perfected in Vietnam. In brief, this state offensive succeeded in undermining popular organisations considerably, and probably eliminating popular leadership altogether. This was not because the UDF ceased its activities; on the contrary, rent, bus and consumer boycotts continued unabated at least until 1987 (Lodge et al., 1991:87-100). Rather, it was the popular aspect of the struggle which was fatally wounded as it depended for its democratic operation on consultative processes, relative freedom of movement etc., and there was no army under popular control capable of defending popular gains and structures against military onslaught from the apartheid state.[1]

By 1986, a contradiction had emerged between those who wished to retain the broad *front* structure of the UDF with diverse affiliated organisations, and those who argued for a move to a more centralised *party* structure; in practice it seems that the latter position was becoming dominant (de Villiers, 1986; UDF, 1987:18-22). From late 1986 onwards, UDF campaigns were more and more initiated "from above", by the "national leadership" operating exclusively at the territorial level. At the same time, more and

---

[1] The activities of MK, the ANC's armed wing, were never successfully integrated into the popular struggle, suggesting a failure by the exile movement to adapt organisationally to the changed internal conditions. See Barrell, 1990.

more coercive measures were being applied on township residents in order to get them to adhere to various boycotts (a fact which shows the weakening of popular control); "the struggle" was acquiring more of a militaristic character, and vigilante activities acquired more and more support from businessmen affected by youth directed boycotts.[1]

As a result, when resistance resurfaced in the final phase of the UDF, from 1988 to 1990, it became characterised by completely different practices from earlier periods. While the movement (now in alliance with COSATU and calling itself the Mass Democratic Movement that became closely linked to the mainstream churches) was able to organise mass campaigns (e.g. the "defiance campaigns" of 1989) against segregated facilities such as hospitals etc, these became more and more reminiscent of the American Black Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. These campaigns were now all organised on a territorial plane so that:

> ... in contrast to the mid-1980s, when the insurrectionary movement was being pulled onto unchartered courses by cadres of youth in the streets of the townships, the popular protest in the late 1980s was choreographed and coordinated and seemed much more under the command of its leaders (Lodge et al., 1991:114).

Under such circumstances, it would be relatively easy for leaders to disband the UDF in the wake of the unbanning of the ANC, as it was felt that the latter could now take over the organisation of popular political protest.

Understanding the Popular-Democratic Nature of the UDF

Before moving to a brief assessment of the 1990s, it is pertinent to make some general points regarding the ideology and practice of the mass movement in the way it developed in the mid-1980s. What stands out from that experience is the attempt to develop genuinely popular forms of democracy in both ideology and practice. In particular, the general characterisation of the mass struggle as national and democratic combined both territorial as well as popular democratic aspects of the process. In fact, the two were regularly combined in attempts by leading activists to theorise the process of struggle. As Murphy Morobe, the "Acting Publicity Secretary" of the UDF, stated in 1987:

> We in the United Democratic Front are engaged in a national democratic struggle. We say we are engaged in a national struggle for two reasons. Firstly, we are involved in political struggle on a national, as opposed to a regional or local level. The national struggle involves all sectors of our people—workers (whether in the factories, unemployed, migrants or rural poor), youths, students, women and democratic-minded professionals. We also refer to our struggle as national in the sense of seeking to create a new nation out of the historical divisions of apartheid. We also explain the democratic aspect of our

1 For a detailed study of vigilantes in South Africa during this period, see Haysom, 1986.

> struggle in two ways...Firstly, we say that a democratic South Africa is one of the aims or goals of our struggle. This can be summed up in the principal slogan of the Freedom Charter: "The People Shall Govern". In the second place, democracy is the means by which we conduct our struggle. ... The creation of democratic means is for us as important as having democratic goals as our objective...When we say that the people shall govern, we mean at all levels and in all spheres, and we demand that there be a real, effective control on a daily basis...The key to a democratic system lies in being able to say that the people in our country can not only vote for a representative of their choice, but also feel that they have some direct control over where and how they live, eat, sleep, work, how they get to work, how they and their children are educated, what the content of that education is; and that these things are not done for them by the government of the day, but [by] the people themselves ... The rudimentary organs of people's power that have begun to emerge in South Africa (street committees, defence committees, shop-steward structures, student representative councils, parent/teacher/student associations) represent in many ways the beginnings of the kind of democracy that we are striving for ... Without the fullest organisational democracy, we will never be able to achieve conscious, active and unified participation of the majority of the people, and in particular the working class, in our struggle (Morobe, 1987:81-83, emphasis added).

I have cited this passage at length because it clearly sums up the systematisation of popular experiences and demands which some leaders were able to make so eloquently. Clearly, this statement has more the character of an ideal to be struggled for than a simple description of reality; nevertheless it indicates the centrality of popular democracy within the ideology and practice of the movement. It is important to note first (I shall have occasion to return to this below) that the main slogan of the Freedom Charter ("The People Shall Govern") is given a specific interpretation by the UDF, namely, to mean a popular form of democracy and not simply an electoral multi-party system, or, for that matter, a one-party system (as its vagueness could also imply). In fact, the former is explicitly rejected as the exclusive form of representation, and as too limited a form of democracy. Thus an evidently vague and indeed "populist" slogan could, in the circumstances of the time, be given an unambiguous popular-democratic content. It would be a fundamental error to confuse the content of such democracy with its own slogans and its self-presentation as many who at the time dismissed the UDF as a "populist" organisation in fact did. In practice the social movement was giving rise to a form of mass democracy and a form of state unique in South Africa (and probably also in Africa as a whole); these forms of democracy and state have, arguably, gone largely unrecognised by most intellectuals, by the party of state nationalism, the ANC, and even by many of the movement's own leaders.

Two features of this democracy worth noting include a detailed system of controlling leaders to make them accountable to the rank and file membership, and a different way of demarcating "the people" from "the oppressors". Attempts at instituting internal democracy within organisations were strongly followed, although they obviously had various degrees of success. The important point, however, was that such a struggle for democracy

existed within organisations. The various dimensions of this democracy were, according to Morobe:

1) *Elected Leadership*. Leadership of our organisations must be elected (at all levels), and elections must be held at periodic intervals...Elected leadership must also be recallable before the end of their (sic) term of office if there is indiscipline or misconduct.
2) *Collective Leadership*. We try and practice collective leadership at all levels. There must be continuous, ongoing consultation ...
3) *Mandates and Accountability*. Our leaders and delegates are not free-floating individuals. They always have to operate within the delegated mandates of their positions and delegated duties ...
4) *Reporting*. Reporting back to organisations, areas, units, etc. is an important dimension of democracy...We feel very strongly that information is a form of power, and that if it is not shared, it undermines the democratic process. We therefore take care to ensure that language translations occur if necessary ...
5) *Criticism and Self-Criticism*. We do not believe that any of our members are beyond criticism; neither are organisations and strategies beyond reproach ... (Morobe, 1987:84–85).

However, by (February) 1989, it had become clear that some individuals were beyond criticism, for, when an attempt was made by the UDF (and COSATU) to publicly censure Winnie Mandela (by a committee including Murphy Morobe, among others), it was blocked by the ANC in Lusaka.[1] In fact, the danger posed to popular democracy by the lack of control by the popular movement over a number of "charismatic" leaders who felt they had the authority to speak and act without being mandated, was one of which many were aware. Thus, *Isizwe*, the main journal of the UDF made a rather prophetic statement in 1985:

One thing that we must be careful about...is that our organisations do not become too closely associated with individuals, that we do not allow the development of personality cults. We need to understand why we regard people as leaders and to articulate these reasons. Where people do not measure up to these standards they must be brought to heel—no matter how "charismatic" they may be. No person is a leader in a democratic struggle such as ours simply because he or she makes good speeches....*No individual may make proposals on the people's behalf—unless mandated by them*....We need to say these things because there are some people and interests who are trying to project individuals as substitutes for political movements (United Democratic Front, 1985:17, emphasis added).

The practices of "mandates and report backs" which had been adopted largely as a result of trade union influence were taken particularly seriously in the mid-1980s, although there is evidence that they started to decline at the end of the decade.[2] By 1991, the position had changed substantially so

---

1 See the *Race Relations Survey, 1988/89*, p. 639. As a result, Morobe was "purged" from leadership positions and he paid the price for taking popular democracy seriously, while a famous graffiti in Johannesburg at the time read: "Free Nelson, Lock up Winnie".
2 It is interesting to note here the distance between these popular methods of holding leaders accountable and those conveyed in the utterances of returning exiles such

that *Mayibuye*, the journal of the ANC, now pompously proclaimed:

Accountability is the basis of democratic organisation. Accountability means that leadership must discuss decisions with the membership. Decisions must be explained so that members understand why they are made (*Mayibuye*, Dec. 1991, p.36).

We are a far cry here from "People's Power".

The manner in which the popular movement demarcated its members ("the people") from the oppressive state, is also worthy of note. This largely surrounded the notion of "non-racialism" as a way of characterising the ideology of the movement as well as the nature of the state which was being fought for. Originally inherited from a Black Consciousness discourse which used the term to refer to all oppressed racial groups in South Africa under the characterisation "Black", "non-racialism" was adapted by the UDF to include Whites who supported the struggle. This struggle was visualised as uniting into a national opposition, the disparate groups which the apartheid state divided, hence the main slogan of the UDF: "UDF Unites, Apartheid Divides!". One important aspect of non-racialism was the fact that rather than distinguishing "the people" or "the oppressors" on racial grounds, it did so by demarcating on political grounds: popular-democrats from anti-democrats. The former were those who supported change "from below", the latter those who proposed some form of "tinkering from above" and who had by this period, lost the confidence of the majority. Democrats were all those who opposed "minority rule" and supported "majority rule" through popular democracy. In the words of a UDF discussion document from 1986:

The essential *dividing line that we should promote is between supporters of minority rule and majority rule*. The common ground between the Botha (sic), the PFP (Popular Federal Party), the main White, big business-backed liberal opposition at the time—MN) leadership and big business is that they all seek solutions within the framework of adapting minority rule. Although they differ fundamentally on who to involve in negotiation and how much adaptation is necessary, these elements all agree that the system must be changed from the top down, with the solutions being decided over the heads of the people. All those who accept the right of the people to determine the process of change are allies of the people and part of the NDS (National Democratic Struggle—MN) (UDF Cape Town Area Committee, 1986:10).

This meant that the way the popular struggle was to be conducted should also be "non-racial". Terror Lekota, a senior UDF figure put it this way:

---

as "leadership codes". See, for example, an interview with Joe Slovo in *New Era*, Vol. 5, No. 1, March 1990, pp. 35–40. The Chinese wall between popular practices and the isolated exiles is clearly exposed here. There is also evidence that at the first ANC national consultative conference inside the country, there was "tension between the patrician style of the previously jailed and exiled leaders of the 1950s and the activists who [had] developed constituencies during the 1980s.; the former were accused of ignoring the principles of mandate and accountability which had developed inside the country" (Friedman, 1992, p.85).

In political struggle ... the means must always be the same as the ends ... How can one expect a racialistic movement to imbue our society with a non-racial character on the dawn of our freedom day? A political movement cannot bequeath to society a characteristic it does not itself possess. To expect it to do so is like asking a heathen to convert a person to Christianity. The principles of that religion are unknown to the heathen let alone the practice (cited Marx,1992:124).

Such a position was possible precisely because the social movement was not an elite movement and because White "progressives" (to use the jargon of the time) provided invaluable work both in the trade unions as well as in the UDF, thus becoming known and appreciated by the people of the townships. It served to divide a minority of White democrats from White racists (while forcing the uncommitted to commit themselves), in the same way as affiliation to popular organisations divided Blacks between collaborators with the state (so-called "sell-outs") and the majority of the oppressed.[1] This attempt to create the unity of a "new nation" can be contrasted with the attempts, in the 1990s, to do so "from above" via "reconciliation", "nation-building", the Reconstruction and Development Programme or indeed "affirmative action".

The Retreat of Civics and the Rise of Statist Nationalism

Let us now turn our attention to a brief examination of the period after the unbanning of the ANC and other proscribed organisations in the lead up to the national elections of April 1994. In doing so, my intention is simply to make the point that the politics of liberation has been conducted in a markedly different way which I would describe as "state centred" rather than "people centred". I do not wish here to attempt a detailed explanation for such a change as not only are considerations of space prohibitive, but this is intended to be the subject of future research. Two examples will help to illustrate these changes. The first is the altered role of "civics" and some of the views surrounding this changed role. The second is the changed role of mass mobilisation at least up to the end of 1992, after which it largely ceased to exist altogether.

It is very instructive to note the path taken by civic organisations. Perhaps the most important step that was taken was the setting up of the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO) in 1992. As its name indicates, SANCO was set up explicitly as an organisation designed to operate at a territorial level while its member-organisations transformed themselves from being autonomous affiliates of an umbrella organisation (such as

---

1 A similar process was debated at length in relation to the 'Indian community' and the formation of the Transvaal Indian Congress, but interestingly enough not in relation to 'Coloureds', although the UDF's non-racialism was criticised as phoney by various coloured organisations such as the Unity Movement and the Cape Action League for example.

the UDF) into the *branches* of a national body. In the words of one critical activist: "it requires that local civics surrender their autonomy and local accountability" (Jacobs, 1992:24). The preamble to SANCO's constitution defines it as a body that will "act as a non-partisan democratic watchdog of the community on local government and community development". While not all civics joined SANCO, the overwhelming majority have. Thus the leadership of the "civic movement" no longer sees it as a *political* mass movement or a form of state ("People's Power") but as a *"watchdog"*, i.e. an "interest group" reflecting the aspirations of a narrow constituency defined by the division of labour (urban communities).

The first point to make in this context is that civics, as indeed all other popular organisations, systematically surrendered the plane of territorial politics to the ANC at its unbanning. This surrender was expressed ideologically through the acceptance of all in the "National Liberation Movement" of the organisational "leadership" (i.e. dominance) of the ANC in the "National Democratic Revolution". In other words, it was overwhelmingly agreed by all "mass formations" that now that the ANC was unbanned, it alone was to concern itself with "national politics". All existing organisations which had taken a political role were now to drop such a role in favour of the ANC.[1] While the trade unions and civics relegated themselves to their sectional interests, the UDF was dissolved, and the South African Youth Congress and the Federation of South African Women disbanded and reconstituted themselves as the ANC Youth and Women's Leagues respectively. As a result, the youth have disappeared entirely from the political scene as an independent organised force, while women's organisations are now clearly elite controlled (e.g. the so-called "National Women's Coalition" made up of leading figures from the main political parties).

Insofar as the civics were concerned, the key question that was posed can be summarised as follows: should they retain organisational independence or should they be collapsed into ANC branches? In order to retain organisational independence, it was held, they were required to exit from politics. In other words, having conceded the monopoly of politics to the ANC, civics were forced (or forced themselves) into a position that if they were to retain independence, they should withdraw from politics altogether. There was never any question of them retaining a political role distinct from the ANC (i.e. popular politics). After a short debate in which some (a minority in the ANC/SACP, represented by Nzimande and Sikhosana) argued that the political role of the civics should be maintained as they were the future bases

---

1 As far as I am aware, the idea was never mooted that the returning ANC could disband and become integrated into existing popular organisations, or form a structure responsible to such organisations. The main reason for this is basically that the dominant formations in the 1980s all recognised the 'leadership' of the ANC and its dominant figures over the struggle for liberation, as did the apartheid state, the world powers and the United Nations. The ANC was both organised as a state in exile and treated as such in the international arena. See note 1 on page 231.

of a people's state and thus should become ANC branches/state structures (i.e. "soviets" of some form), the majority view prevailed that civics should not be collapsed into ANC branches, but should continue to represent residents irrespective of party-political affiliation.[1] At the same time, the ANC was adamantly maintaining that it alone should be seen as the "leading organisation" ("vanguard") of the "broad liberation movement" and that all other organisations within this movement should recognise the primacy of the ANC insofar as political questions were concerned (Lanegran, 1995:114). There is also evidence to suggest that the ANC feared losing popular support to the civics if no clear division of labour between them was agreed (Lodge, 1992:61–62).

The compromise eventually worked out and which became the dominant viewpoint, was one in which the ANC would have the sole monopoly of politics while civics would restrict themselves to an independent (party-political) role. This compromise was made substantially easier by the fact that the majority of leaders in the civic movement were ANC supporters anyway. It is this dominant perspective, with all its contradictions, which is expressed by a civic leader as follows:

> The basic role of the civics is not changed in my view. This role is building people's power and it is something that must play itself out in civil society ... Although the civics, within the UDF, were dominated mainly by the concerns of civil society, the front's overall role was largely political. *Pulling the civic movement clear of the political net is not easy*—and overlaps of personnel make that very clear (cited in Collinge, 1991:8, emphasis added).

The question does not seem to have been asked as to how "People's Power", a supremely *political* project, could be secured by civics if they were to be "pulled clear of the political net". At the same time, it was clearly appreciated that the dangers of civics becoming bureaucratised or turning into the "conveyor belts (sic) of the ruling party" (Collinge, 1991) could easily lead to *étatism*. In addition to arguing in favour of a distancing from the leading party, this dominant position also resolved that they should distance themselves from the local state and "not attempt to take over local government"(Collinge, 1991). This was justified in terms of the same arguments but is probably more accurately explained by the fact that the nature of local government was the subject of negotiations at the territorial level along with the nature of the central state. In fact, the comment by the civic leader cited above accurately expressed a real political contradiction between popular politics which civics had incarnated, and the emerging dominance of state politics which required the "depoliticisation" of civics if these were to remain independent of the ANC (as they rightly insisted on being). It is noteworthy that the same debates did not surface as forcefully with respect

---

1 See for example Nzimande and Sikhosana (1991, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c); Mayekiso (1992a, 1992b) as well as the pieces by Swilling (1990, 1991); Botha (1992); Friedman (1991) and Fine (1993).

to the youth and women's movements. These were organisationally much weaker than the civics and allowed themselves to be "swallowed up" by the ANC.

Currently, a new contradiction has arisen between the "civil society role" and the "state role" of civics. This contradiction which is a product of state-centred politics is as yet unresolved, as while civics are said to be "watchdogs" for the community on the one hand, their work is also being pushed more and more towards that of "development" on the other.[1] While the idea behind their "development role" is to replace top-down planning with "community participation", the focus has been on "development through negotiation" as opposed to mass popular struggles for self-help (see *WIP*, 92, Sept./Oct. 1993; Pieterse and Simone, 1994). At the same time report-backs and other measures to ensure accountability have fallen into disuse, while donor funds for "training" and other ostensibly technical programmes have "depoliticised" the role of civics even further and have bolstered the spurious view of these organisations as politically neutral. This supposed neutrality in fact leaves them open to becoming state organisations through another route, whether as development institutions at the bottom of the ladder and/or as adjuncts of the state, incorporated into a corporatist structure.[2]

The events which unfolded following the unbanning of the ANC are also expressed more or less clearly by activists organising in some rural areas in a manner which is of wider significance:

> During the days of the UDF, it was easy for people to understand the struggle. Activity such as stay-aways, barricading etc. involved people on the ground and made sense to them. When it came to [territorial—MN] politics, people lost interest ... When we started, our struggle involved activity, but during the period of the unbanning, people had to go deeper into politics and they lost interest. They no longer wanted to participate ... After the unbanning, there was a lot of confusion amongst the civic organisations because the programme of the ANC and UDF was not the same ... The UDF had encouraged grassroots activity. Even football clubs had a voice in the UDF. The ANC structure and understanding was different as civic structures were not high on the ANC agenda and the civic momentum during the UDF period could not be taken forward. The disappearance of the UDF crippled civic organisations because the ANC was now looking strictly to political issues and not looking to civic related issues and this weakened them (Eastern Transvaal activist cited in Levin and Solomon, 1994:256).

---

1 One civic leader stated: "We must learn how to run organisations better and, I hope, to run local government. But civics must always remain independent, and act like unions for the communities". A footnote to this remark adds that the author "is currently in India studying local government administration"! (See Mdluli, 1991: 12).

2 As in the Local Government Negotiating Forum where only organisations which mobilise on a nationwide/territorial basis such as SANCO, the state and political parties are allowed to operate. See Ngcobo, 1993, pp. 4–5.

The consequences of this process were rather predictable. As the link between local and territorial politics which the UDF had successfully managed to enable was broken, erstwhile organisations of "People's Power" collapsed. A report in the ANC aligned *New Nation* newspaper, which reflected the dominant view among state-nationalists of the role of "popular organisations" in the post-apartheid period, proclaimed soon after the April 1994 territorial elections:

> Except for some of the more centrally located urban settlements, civic organisations are either poorly organised or completely non-existent. And even when they do exist, few have been able to revive street and block committees, which would serve as the ideal forums through which [the government could] consult communities about their [development] needs (*New Nation*, June 3, 1994).

The transformation of popular politics from 1990 was not only expressed in the debates surrounding the role of civics, it was also obvious in the changed role of "mass mobilisation". It became more and more obvious that such mobilisation was now initiated and directed solely "from above" by leading members of the ANC hierarchy, and seen as a measure to "put pressure" on the negotiating partner, the National Party and the state. It was no longer part of a process of "empowerment". So that when the ANC declared 1991 "The Year of Mass Action for the Transfer of Power to the People", such action was designed to force the government to meet territorial demands such as "the immediate release of political prisoners...and the unconditional return of exiles, the dismantling of bantustans, an end to violence against the people, the immediate repeal of all repressive legislation, the establishment of an interim government and Constituent Assembly".[1]

In fact, one of the main differences between the "left radicals" and the more "moderate nationalists" within the ANC, seems to have been the role which such mobilisation was to play in the transition process. This is brought out clearly in a frank review by Jeremy Cronin, one of the main theorists of the South African Communist Party (SACP). He distinguishes between three different "strategic outlooks" characterising liberation politics: "the boat, the tap and the Leipzig way". The first position was one where democratisation was seen as resulting from a negotiated pact between elites which deliver their constituencies. Mass action was perceived as "rocking the boat". The second position was one where "mass action" was to be turned on and off like a tap. He comments, quite correctly, that 'struggle in strategy 2 is not about the self-empowerment of the working masses. Instead, struggle is rather more narrowly seen as empowering the negotiators so that they can bestow upon the people their liberation" (Cronin, 1992:42-43). It is hinted, although never openly stated, that this was the dominant position within the ANC which was associated with Mandela himself.

---

[1] Mayibuye, February 1991, July 1991 and February 1992 for example.

The third "strategic outlook" according to Cronin was "the Leipzig way" or the position according to which "the people transfer power to themselves in a revolutionary moment" of insurrection as in Eastern Europe in 1989. He argues also quite correctly that such a perception is also in essence elitist apart from being impracticable in the South African case so that it ultimately reduced itself to the "tap" position. The author frankly acknowledged that "all three have a tendency to fall into one or another version of statism" (Cronin, 1992:53). These words proved prophetic as an attempt to "turn on the tap" on 7 September, 1992 outside the Ciskei as part of the bid to remove Gqozo, the local bantustan leader, from office through the mobilisation of "mass action", resulted in twenty-eight deaths and over two hundred injured in what became known as the "Bisho massacre". More long-term effects were the end of "mass action" as a tactic, as the ANC dropped it like a hot potato, and the final demise of the "left statists" as a meaningful force within the ANC.[1] This not only showed that "mass action" had by that time little popular content other than providing canon fodder for the state's bullets, but it also allowed the right-wing in the ANC to present the choice facing the political movement as being between peaceful transition which was equated with negotiations on the one hand, and the escalation of violence including mass action, on the other.[2] This comes across very clearly in the ANC document *Negotiations: A Strategic Perspective* (ANC, 1992) which provided, following on from Slovo's theorisation of the famous "Sunset Clauses", the rationale for entering into a government of "national unity" with the National Party.[3]

It must be recalled that state and Inkatha violence was being systematically unleashed on township residents during the period leading to the elections, and that the ANC was powerless to stop it. Even though the formation of "self-defence units" (SDUs) was originally encouraged by the ANC, these were ordered to disband in 1994 as a *quid pro quo* in the disarming of Inkatha and all "private armies". The following highly informative newspaper

---

[1] The Bisho action had been the brainchild of Ronnie Kasrils who had also led the demonstration. He was one of the leading figures of 'radical' or 'left statism' within the ANC and has a military and intelligence background. For his views on the role of 'mass mobilisation' see *Work in Progress* No. 72, January/February 1991. He is now deputy minister of defence.

[2] See Molamu and Fako (1993) for a discussion of some aspects of the violence leading up to the elections. It is important to get some perspective on 'violence' in South Africa, especially as this is not only an emotive issue, but one which is clearly central to state propaganda. The following figures give some idea of the scale of violence during the 1980s and 1990s: during the highest period of popular mobilisation against apartheid between September 1984 and December 1988 the total number of fatalities from political violence were reported as 3,400 for 1990 alone, 2,580 for 1991, 3,446 for 1992 and 4,398 for 1993 during the period of state and Inkatha induced violence on the people (Southall, 1994:633, No.2).

[3] On the 'Sunset Clauses' see Slovo (1992), and the special issue of the *African Communist*, No. 131, 4th quarter 1992, "Negotiations: The strategic debate".

reports which showed that not everyone concurred with the disbanding of SDUs appeared in 1994, immediately after the territorial elections:

> While self-protection is an inalienable right to any person, this has to be done within the existing laws of the country. We also accept that the SDUs came about under special circumstances—the time when police were refusing to apprehend known "vigilantes"... The SANCO (South African National Civics Organisation) activist said the time had come for the weapons of both the SDUs and other private armies (sic) including the right-wing groups, to be handed to the authorities of the democratic government for safe-keeping (*New Nation, No 4 May 13, 1994*). Gunmen armed with AK47 rifles executed 12 residents in Thokoza on the East Rand on Friday night just three days after South Africa's first democratically elected State President, Nelson Mandela was inaugurated. The massacre is the first since the elections (*New Nation, May 15, 1994*). Although the SDUs have been at the centre of controversy, residents described their role as vital—especially at the height of unrest in the township. South African National Defence Force spokesperson Colonel Chris du Toit said initial inquiries indicated [that] "since the ANC ordered (sic) the units to cease operating there has been evidence of in-fighting" (*New Nation, May 20, 1994*).

Trade Union Struggles

Interestingly, the trajectory of the modern trade union movement in South Africa was not all that different from that of other popular organisations. The main difference lay in the fact that trade unions were able to organise a constituency which was capable of effectively challenging the system beyond the structure of apartheid local government. The challenge to South African business interests represented by a relatively powerful and disciplined trade union movement was instrumental in pressurising big business in particular to push towards a negotiated transition to democracy. Trade unions were much less successful in organising workers in small businesses, women, rural labour, and the unemployed, while eventually they even lost support among migrant workers as they concentrated most of their work on the fully urbanised. Their broad historical trajectory was also one of "politicisation from below" followed by a process of depoliticisation which itself only acted as a prelude to a deeper process of "repoliticisation from above"—of entering political society in the 1980s and then exiting from it only in order to re-enter politics on the side of the post-apartheid state in the 1990s.

As is well known, the history of the modern South African trade union movement largely originates in 1973 when 100,000 workers went on strike in the Durban area. These largely spontaneous mass strikes revitalised trade union activity which had been dormant during the "decade of peace" that followed the banning of the ANC/SACP (and the PAC) along with SACTU (South African Congress of Trade Unions), which was, largely, the organ of the "Congress Alliance". The unions which developed as a result of the Durban strikes saw it as crucially important to maintain their independence from nationalist organisations in order to avoid the same fate as SACTU.

Rather, they concentrated on developing strong shop-floor structures and a system of worker representation based around shop-stewards. Apart from being intrinsically democratic, it was argued that such a system would enable a small union organisation to better withstand state repression (Webster, 1987; Lambert and Webster, 1988).

This fiercely independent stance became the dominant position in FOSATU (Federation of South African Trade Unions) which was launched in 1979, and actually came to be adhered to rigidly like an article of faith (until the formation of COSATU in November 1985), theorised by the intellectual high priests of the "White Left" who had been instrumental in servicing the development of the new unions. Basically, the view was that "working class politics" should grow out of shop-floor struggles. Unions should not identify with any nationalist political organisation as union members belonged to different organisations, and also because it would mean accepting the dominance of a petty-bourgeoisie who supposedly dominated the township-based organisations, which, in any case, were said not to be as democratic as trade unions.[1]

With the increasing development of popular struggles in the townships (which, after all, was where most of the trade unionists lived), the question which was to occupy the centre of the intellectual stage on the Left in South Africa came to the fore, namely, the relationship, if any, between trade union struggles and township struggles, or workers' organisations and national politics. This single question has given rise to a large volume of debate covering not only the above issues, but also ranging more broadly to include the question of class alliances, the road to socialism, the nature of the Freedom Charter, the question of "unity in the struggle", "liberation vs. transformation" and so on.

Briefly, it is known as the debate between the "workerists" and "populists" and was conducted far beyond the confines of popular organisations, where it was transformed beyond its original spheres of concern on the relationship between civil society and politics, into an often acrimonious academic debate in which arguments merely served to further entrench already rigidly held positions. Shortage of space precludes a detailed assessment of this debate here although it is proposed to study it in detail as part of future work. What is crucial for our immediate purposes in this chapter is to offer a very brief account of the changes in the trade union movement which paralleled this debate. In this regard, it is important to note that the pressure for unions to become more involved in township nationalist politics came overwhelmingly from the workers themselves as they experienced oppression not only in the workplace but also in their

---

1 For an elaborated argument see the speech by Joe Foster, FOSATU general secretary reprinted in *ROAPE*, No 24, May-August 1982.

homes where they faced the same problems and coercion as all other residents.

The main organisations which voiced the pressures for workers to become involved in township politics were the Local Shop-Steward Councils (known simply as "locals") which brought together shop stewards from a given urban area and which originated in the East Rand (Germiston, Wadeville, Katlehong). According to Webster (1987:183).

> Founded as a way of involving shop-stewards in the organisation of unorganised factories, these councils spread rapidly during the 1981-82 strike waves ... At the centre of this social movement in the East Rand hostels was the migrant worker.

Although the locals were originally founded as a way of spreading union organisation to other factories and to fight against scabbing, since they were organised in urban townships, they were bound to become involved in township issues as well. Among the questions that initially commanded their attention were, inter alia, questions of housing, unemployment benefits, adequate pensions and maternity rights (Webster, 1988.; Swilling 1984:118). In the words of Jeremy Baskin who conducted a study on a Shop-Steward Council in 1982:

> The shop-stewards' council is characterised by its militancy, mutual support ... and strong grassroots organisation ... All this is made possible by strong local organisation. Workers in the area share many problems. They use the same buses and trains, they live in the same areas and they know other workers in neighbouring factories. The common conditions which workers face at local level become a major spur to militancy, once organisation gets started...The fact that workers began presenting common demands generally strengthened their position in the area ... Workers are encouraged to see beyond their own union to the struggles of workers as a whole (Baskin, 1982:47-48).

In addition, the locals became the bedrock for democratic control over unions as more power lay in the hands of shop-stewards and these structures were not bureaucratic. One shop-steward explained:

> We talk of unity ... what kind of unity and how far we should go as a local. What sort of help, what sort of things we should do, and the disciplinary procedures. Because if we are to be united, we have to have disciplinary procedures and some clear objectives ... As workers, then we are involved in political issues, so we have to be clear on how to react to such things ... Problems like rent have come up ... we have to do some things outside the factory (Baskin, 1982:52).

As a result of these developments, the "FOSATU line" came more and more into conflict with that of its own shop-stewards, especially after the formation of the UDF, the accompanying intensification of community struggles, and the increasingly irresistible pressure from below for joint community-trade union action. What had been a very correct tactic in the early 1980s, had become, by the middle of the decade, a sterile dogma, as the objective

situation had fundamentally changed. One shop-steward from the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) argued:

> The situation of the worker in South Africa is that they are oppressed and exploited. The struggle goes beyond the factory gates. Workers must address themselves to the problems of rents, shacks, electricity tariffs, schools, recreation, etc. In FOSATU and MAWU, workers have been openly discouraged from taking up these issues and political organisations have been openly criticised. We recognise that the trade unions are not political organisations. But for them (MAWU) to say no politics in trade unions is nothing else but to keep their politics of reformism inside the trade unions (cit. Swilling, 1984:119).

It was this pressure from below which ultimately led to the formalisation of what Webster has called "social movement unionism", finally expressed in the formation of a new giant union federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1985. Unlike its predecessor, COSATU encouraged the politicisation of trade union activity and collaboration between unions and the UDF, even adopting the Freedom Charter as a guiding principle. COSATU, therefore, became involved in building "worker control" (the equivalent of democratic "People's Power" in the factories and unions) and insisted on contributing to the "working-class leadership" of the "national democratic struggle" (although what precisely was meant by such leadership was not always clarified). Thus, Jay Naidoo, the general secretary of COSATU, was to declare that:

> Non-political unionism is not only undesirable but impossible in South Africa. Therefore, we believe that though COSATU is not a political party, COSATU has a responsibility to voice the political interests and aspirations of organised workers and also more broadly the working class. To do this, we have to look at how we build workers [power] and how do we locate workers as the leading force in our struggle for national liberations (sic) ... The key element in the building of the labour movement was, and still remains, the democratic principles of worker control ... In real terms, it means that the members of the trade union must have absolute control over all decision-making in the organisation. ... COSATU has high regard for those communities and organisations that are building strong grassroots organisation in the form of area and street committees. We encourage this and see it as COSATU's policy for members and local structures of COSATU to play an active role in building such structures (Jay Naidoo, 1986:3,4,8).

In this way, COSATU entered political society and its national campaigns made a conscious attempt to address issues which were pertinent to the interests of the poor and unorganised in general, and not only/solely those of the organised workers. The most famous campaign which COSATU undertook in this regard was the "Living Wage Campaign". A survey on the state of the unions published in 1985 noted that in a sample of twenty-three of the largest industrial unions, there were 12,462 shop stewards, with 1,443 shop-steward councils in place (Collins, 1994:35). Not surprisingly then, COSATU placed much emphasis on the role of "locals" which were seen as the foundation of the organisation:

In particular, the role of the shop steward councils was crucial. They assisted in organisational work and developed ordinary worker leadership. The locals confronted the political issues of the day and developed resistance in practice (Collins, 1994:36).

However, by 1987, a number of weaknesses were revealed by an assessment of the locals conducted by national office bearers. The assessment noted that "local structures were weak and the COSATU regions were not functioning" (Collins, 1994). Moreover, COSATU was unsuccessful in organising the poorer sections of the population. An attempt to organise the unemployed failed, migrant workers were increasingly ignored as the fully urbanised workers came to dominate trade unions more and more (Mamdani, 1994:Ch. 6), while rural labour was left unorganised, a fact which cost the National Union of Mineworkers dearly during its 1987 strike (as scabs could be recruited from rural areas). It is not clear whether an attempt was made to explain and correct these weaknesses.

At the same time, for the overwhelming majority of leaders and commentators, the entry by trade unions into political society was explicitly or, more often, implicitly, taken to be a temporary situation. In the words of the sociologist Eddie Webster:

> Where, as in South Africa, the majority does not have a meaningful voice within the political system, unions will inevitably begin to play a central role within the political system (Webster, 1988:176).

There was of course nothing inevitable about that. If the FOSATU line had remained dominant, the entry of trade unions into political society would have been limited. But the unstated assumption always seemed to have been that as soon as political parties with support among the oppressed majority were able to operate openly, unions would then "withdraw" to their "natural domain" in civil society, ascribed to them by the division of labour.

This is, indeed, what happened but it happened in a complex and contested way. COSATU actually attempted but failed to get a place at the negotiating table, where only political parties and state agencies (e.g. bantustan governments) were represented. The National Party government absolutely refused to countenance the issue of union participation in the negotiations and the ANC did not pursue it with much vigour anyway; neither probably did COSATU as it was agreed that its interests would be represented by the ANC and SACP delegations to the talks[1] (and eventually, a number of COSATU figures joined state structures ostensibly in order to represent "workers' interests" in the state). In actual fact then, the unions in general and COSATU in particular did not so much desert the realm of politics as that of popular politics. In the context of this shift, COSATU has, during the 1990s, geared its main efforts towards having an input in all

---

1 The issue was the subject of a brief debate in *Work in Progress*, No 80, January/February 1982, p. 10.

aspects of policy as they affect workers, and this process has extended more and more into a dominant corporatist trend.[1]

In one recent assessment of COSATU's role in the 1990s, this rather astonishing remark appears: "the opening up of political space after 1990 has meant that the unions are now in a position to directly extend their influence beyond industry to the national economy" (Collins, 1994:36). This statement is astonishing because it has been regularly stated in different ways since 1990[2] (often precisely as an argument in favour of corporatism) and because COSATU's role had never been restricted to "industry" alone. The remark systematically brushes aside the political role of COSATU in the 1980s and is indicative of the political amnesia suffered by many leading trade unionists in the 1990s (in this case, of a person ostensibly opposed to corporatism). Yet another major writer on trade unions (this time a major advocate of corporatism) openly remarks:

> the trend is towards corporatism—whether it is expressed through a social contract, reconstruction accord or socio-economic pact. While there remain different expectations of the scope, form and duration of such an arrangement, these are basically differences of emphasis. The end point is the same, and the NEF (National Economic Forum), NMC (National Manpower Commission) and NTB (National Training Board) are first steps in this direction...for its proponents, bargained corporatism is nevertheless the best available option or, more pessimistically, the least worst alternative. For the union movement in South Africa, the corporatist path is, in effect, unavoidable (Baskin, 1993:2, 7; cited Shaw, 1994:247).

Like the supposed inevitability of trade unions entering the political arena in the 1980s, there was nothing inevitable about corporatism in the 1990s. It was the result of a political choice by the COSATU leadership as it decided to vacate the political space, surrender it to the ANC and then attempt to "influence" the policies of the ANC.[3] This concentration on policy was undertaken in such a way that it emphasised the technical aspects of policy detached from explicit politics (let alone popular politics). Policy now became an issue for "experts" (who are overwhelmingly White given South African conditions), and "consultation" with "interested parties" became one for "workshops", so that policy has been depoliticised, reduced to tech-

---

1 For some of the more useful discussions of corporatism in South Africa see Schreiner (1994), Bird and Schreiner (1992) and Maree (1993). For a more propagandistic approach see Baskin (1993) along with debates in the *South African Labour Bulletin* during 1992 and 1993.

2 See for example the columns of the *South African Labour Bulletin* since 1991, a journal which accurately reflects and debates dominant developments in South African trade unions.

3 A nationwide survey of the opinions of COSATU shop stewards in 1991, showed that an overwhelming majority of 80 per cent favoured the involvement of trade unions in politics while "the idea of 'workers' control" ... is deeply entrenched in the labour movement". At the same time, the overwhelming majority ANC (94 per cent) expressed support for the main liberation organisation, the ANC as opposed to any "socialist" party. See Pityana and Orkin (1992: 24, 56–58).

nical questions and removed from scrutiny by democratic structures. As one unionist put it, "policy has become 'received wisdom' and the result is that the structures are simply 'transmission belts' for discussion from above" (Collins, 1994:38). Or again:

> Local agendas are dominated by the very many issues that come from "head office" which require mandates for national policy or national action ... the local has become a function of the national, the passive recipients (sic) of national directives (Marie, 1992:22–23).

At the same time, union representatives often go to "negotiating forums":

> without clear mandates either from the federation (COSATU–MN) or their unions ... Where report-backs are given at the local level, they are often presented as top-down reports with little room for debate. They are often not discussed at all, in favour of dealing with more local issues (Collins, 1994:38).

A survey of trade unionists conducted by the *South African Labour Bulletin* in 1992 (see Keet, 1992 and also Pityana and Orkin, 1992) found a general trend of the weakening of worker control with one national leader remarking that "workers are losing and losing workers control and it is in danger of becoming just a slogan" (Keet, 1992:29). This was manifested *inter alia* in the fact that few shop stewards now turn up to (shop steward council) local meetings (100 out of 500 possible members in Durban, 100 out of 1000 in Johannesburg). "COSATU office bearers are less subject to the direct workers' control that shop stewards can exercise within their own affiliates" (Collins, 1994:35.); "bureaucratic tendencies have become evident both at COSATU and affiliate level. These tendencies are not restricted to officials, but extend to worker leaders as well" (Collins, 1994:39).[1] The reviewer concludes:

> To abandon worker control is to abandon union democracy, and to accept that ... formal democracy empty of any ongoing, direct control by members is the best that the trade union movement can do, given the conditions in South Africa in the 1990s. ... Workers' control of unions was seen as a means to worker control of production and society as a whole. It is a significant irony that in the 1990s, the unions are struggling to return to worker control of their own organisations, with control of production and society an ever receding possibility (Collins, 1994:40).

It would, indeed, be tempting to causally link the dominance of corporatism among trade unions in South Africa with the weakening of control from below but there is, as yet, little to suggest that the former is a function of the latter. It could, in fact, be the case that they are both effects of much broader tendencies which, as we have seen, have involved other organisations of

---

[1] At the same time, recent data show a decline i union membership of about 6 per cent between 1993 and 1995 while total employment has remained constant. Manufacturing unions were the hardest hit, with a decline in membership of 15 per cent between 1991 and 1995. Se Baskin, 1969:8–11.

civil society—such as the civics—as well. In any case, it is not *a priori* impossible that some form of social contract between the state and various organisations of civil society, including trade unions and civics, is compatible with popular politics and genuine popular participation. In fact it is arguably the case that in the absence of such a combination, reversal to other forms of statism is practically inevitable. Corporatism however implies the "*étatisation*" of popular organs of civil society, their "politicisation from above" which in no way requires, of necessity, a surrendering of organisational independence; it only requires the absence of *political* independence. Organisational independence is fully compatible with incorporation within state structures and, after all, this is typical of classical social democracy, where social democratic parties have "their" trade unions in the same way as communist parties had "theirs". Rather than being about the *democratisation of the state from below* as in the 1980s, the dominant trend in South Africa which is in the process of becoming entrenched, is about the *étatisation of civil society from above*. It is not difficult to agree with Sam Shilowa, the general secretary of COSATU (in one of the quotations heading this essay), that a new form of statism is beginning to dominate in post-apartheid South Africa.

I have, so far, attempted to show that between the 1980s and the 1990s there has been an important process of political change in South Africa, involving the major popular organisations of civil society (civics and trade unions in particular) and their relations to the state. This shift in the "mode of politics" has involved a process where a form of *popular politics*, with all its contradictions, has been replaced by "top down" politics, bureaucratic tendencies and, in brief, the greater centrality of *state politics* in the operation of hitherto popular organisations which have either been, or are in the process of being, radically transformed. I have restricted myself to outlining some aspects of this change without attempting to discuss at length any explanations for it. Nevertheless, no explanation, however limited, is possible without some theoretical perspective. We must now turn to the task of briefly elaborating such a perspective.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND POLITICAL SOCIETY

In the 1990s, the process of democratisation in South Africa has been overwhelmingly state-directed not only because political parties and state agencies have taken the initiative and provided the fora in which decisions on such democratisation processes are made, but also largely because of the weakness of a culture of popular democracy and the absence of popular institutions through which that culture could be expressed. At the same time, many of the official documents emanating from the ANC (such as the *Reconstruction and Development Programme*—RDP) pay lip service to the "South African tradition of a strong and independent civil society" and often

uncritically assume that such civil society, in particular what are now called CBOs (community-based organisations—the term basically refers to civics), can provide the vehicle for popular direction of the democratisation process. More sober assessments, however, as we have seen, paint a different picture of a moribund popular movement, so that Sam Shilowa, the general secretary of COSATU recently had to emphasise that: "'the mass-driven character' of the RDP is at this stage a total myth" (Shilowa, 1995:36).

Central to the new process of transformation in the 1990s is what the ANC, drawing from American jargon, calls an "affirmative action programme" which, in the main, corresponds to what, in post-independence Africa, was known as "Africanisation", namely, the appointment of personnel in the civil service particularly and the public sector more generally, from the ranks of the hitherto excluded/colonised population. In Africa, this policy, arguably, had three major effects. First, it created a middle class and especially one which was tied to the state and mainly consisting of those who were appointed as colonial officials left their posts (the lower levels of the civil service were, by and large, Africanised anyway). Second, it transformed a demand for democratisation (i.e. *inter alia* the opening up of job opportunities to as many people as possible and the democratisation of access to resources and, thereby, the democratisation of state structures) into a replacement of "white faces by black faces" in the state apparatuses; in other words, democratisation was reduced to the formation of a middle class "from above". Third, it created important new divisions (or at least intensified old ones) over access to resources as it was only *some* Africans who were given access to jobs (e.g. "Kikuyuisation" was a more accurate description of this process in Kenya under Kenyatta). This last point became extremely dangerous as only some nationalities (or political parties), through their exclusive access to state resources, monopolised possibilities of accumulation, with the petty-bourgeoisies of other nationalities (and parties) left out. In sum, in post-colonial Africa, democratisation was reduced to "Africanisation", "popular democracy "from below" was replaced by state nationalism "from above" (Mamdani, 1990).

In South Africa, "affirmative action" has been exhibiting some similarities to as well as some differences from the pattern above. On the one hand, it is difficult to refer to "Africanisation" in South Africa as everyone (including White South Africans) is African; on the other hand, the term "African" tends to be restricted to the apartheid category (in relation to "European", "Indian" or "Coloured") so that such a term would privilege only one section of the (hitherto oppressed) population. So much for terminology. Turning to more fundamental aspects, affirmative action is described as:

a type of "positive discrimination" as a measure to correct imbalances created by centuries and generations of ... oppression. It cannot be a permanent feature of society or an organisation, but rather an interim measure and a means towards full equality and an end to discrimination (*Mayibuye*, Sept. 1991, p. 32).

The above definition is, in a sense, contradictory since if affirmative action is supposed to correct "centuries and generations of oppression", it can hardly be temporary (unless its temporary nature is measured in decades, if not longer) and if it is to be temporary, it can hardly hope to correct such "imbalances". This is, in a sense, revealing as the contradiction is only reconcilable if we are talking of the creation of a middle class. In this case, racial "imbalances" can be overcome pretty rapidly as Blacks can be appointed to jobs without regard for issues of popular-democratic participation. In actual fact, this is precisely what has been happening. The state bureaucracy rather than contracting as the ANC had always argued in the 1980s, is expanding as the ANC acceded to a demand to keep apartheid civil servants in their jobs (including in the ex-bantustans) and is attempting to by-pass their lack of cooperation by creating new appointments.

In addition, in South Africa, businesses in the private sector are cooperating in recruiting Blacks for managerial positions. Whatever the extent of progress on this score, the point really remains that the process is one where a middle class is being created among "Black Africans" primarily (the lower ranks of the civil service, especially in the ex-bantustans as well as the overwhelming majority of employees in all sectors are Black anyway). In neither of these cases is it a question of democratising appointments or indeed state structures themselves. The popular struggle for democracy has been replaced by a scramble for state posts.[1] This has been but an effect of the ANC's obsessive concern with "attaining state power" as a pre-condition for democratisation, as opposed to the reverse position—the democratisation of politics and social relations as a prelude to the establishment of a democratic state—which was gradually being developed by the popular movements.

The last aspect of this question worth mentioning is that such a procedure is creating contradictions between "racial groups", most obviously expressed as White (and, indeed, Coloured in the Western Cape) resentment against allegedly "unqualified" Blacks taking over highly paid jobs amidst fears for their own job security/prospects. This was a factor in the Western Cape voting for the National Party at the general elections in April 1994, for example. At the same time, the top echelons of the civil service remain largely under the control of appointees of the apartheid regime (as the ANC guaranteed that all civil servants would retain their jobs). This way, the top echelon of the civil service is able to retard (and perhaps even sabotage) government policy. This leads to frustrations and resentment by impatient

---

[1] At this point it is perhaps important to mention the fact that although 'affirmative action' seems to be the main ANC plank for the 'democratisation' of society, the organisation seems less than happy to apply the same procedure to equalisation between genders. While there have been numerous resolutions supporting 'affirmative action' for women within the ANC, the organisation rejected a quota system for women members at its 1991 national conference (see *Mayibuye*, August 1991). Women in the ANC weakened themselves through dissolving FEDSAW and by undermining the existence of a popular independent women's organisation.

politicians who can also use this as an excuse for the lack of progress in "delivering" promises to the majority.

While this is happening, the state is directing a process of "reconciliation" between the races which, arguably, has little "public support". The choice of language is deliberate as, in a state-directed endeavour like "affirmative action" or "reconciliation", it is no longer possible to speak of popular democracy but only of "public support" where the people are reduced to passive spectators. While during the period of the UDF, as we have seen, the construction of a "new nation" was attempted on the basis of combining South Africans of all races under the banner of popular democracy and opposing them to anti-democrats, now the issue is the construction of a nation by the state itself and thereby the reproduction and even possible deepening of racial divisions. This is especially obvious in conditions where the majority have yet to see any benefits from liberation or the RDP (despite its exclusive accent on top down "delivery"), and where official "reconciliation" appears to mollify extreme right-wing racists and to permit the "perpetrators of apartheid" to escape retribution.[1] In this manner, popular "anti-racism" has been replaced by state directed "reconciliation". As a result, nationalism has now acquired a new meaning. A media report commented recently:

> the mood of non-racialism ... is fading. The views of the proponents of Black Consciousness are increasingly being heard again and people are listening to them. It is giving rise to the development of an Africanist ideology ... (*Southern Africa Report*, 8 September, 1995).

In brief, these examples point to a process similar to that of the "statisation" of nationalist politics that was earlier noted with reference to both popular civic organisations and trade unions. Insofar as a dialogue is taking place regarding the nature of democracy, it is increasingly dominated by technical-legal questions regarding the constitution, a bill of rights, regional versus central powers, individual freedoms, "truth commission" and so on, with the result that ordinary people are largely by-passed by debates (although they are asked in the press to participate by writing to the constituent assembly with their suggestions!), and "consultation" is supposed to take place through "workshops". Indeed "workshops" have proliferated in all spheres of political activity and have been justified ostensibly as a way of "consulting" and involving all "interested parties" in the debating and even formulation of policy. This has largely amounted to an extensive form of corporatism where "experts" together with the leaders of various community organisations and trade unions have gradually become part of a complex state structure. In the sphere of "liberation politics", "workshop politics" has gradually come to replace "mass politics". Having no real legal, let alone constitutional, authority, "workshops" have no powers other than

1 See for example the *Mail and Guardian*, Vol. 12 No. 7 1996, pp. 4, 12, 28.

"consultative" ones. They are more often than not representative of no one other than themselves, as participants have not usually been mandated by any political body or organisation. Not only are workshops largely unrepresentative, but popular representatives when they exist are rarely mandated, so, as a result, their resolutions and recommendations can be ignored as and when necessary.

De facto, therefore, the "dialogue on democracy" is not being conducted between the ANC and the people organised under distinct, independent and clearly defined politicised organisations. Rather, it is being conducted between the ANC and the representatives of White capital and the White fraction of the bourgeoisie overwhelmingly represented by the National Party, (along with right-wing Afrikaners and the Inkatha Freedom Party insofar as "regionalism" or "traditional leaders" are concerned), above the heads of the majority of the population.[1] The role of multipartyism and universal suffrage in this process requires some elaboration, as both have been uncritically celebrated as major achievements by the media and in supposedly more academic writing (e.g. Friedman and Atkinson, 1994).

It is perhaps important to recall first of all that multipartyism was established in the immediate post-independence period in Africa as the departing British colonial power in particular imposed a "Westminster system" of government on the newly independent states. Political parties, however, generally mobilised ethnic and regional interests, as the African petty-bourgeoisie had not by then been able to constitute itself as a unity and was fundamentally divided along such lines. Multipartyism was quickly scrapped as the nation-state project could not countenance ethnic resistance and purported threats to territorial unity. Multipartyism imposed "from above", therefore, quickly proved to be a failure. In recent years, African authoritarian statism has generally survived the (re)introduction of multipartyism under the pressure of "political conditionalities" imposed by the West as a requisite for continued financial and political support in the "New World Order".

There have been some similarities between the South African and wider African experiences as neither the incoming ANC nor the outgoing NP government had ever been committed to multipartyism and universal suffrage. Indeed, the ANC only started mentioning its adherence to multiparty democracy in the 1980s as the dialogue was initiated between it and the apartheid regime. Although the Freedom Charter made a commitment to "government by the people", this could easily have been interpreted as a

1 In the same way as the economic debate is being conducted between World Bank economic liberalism and social democratic statism, the latter being the weaker partner. This can be seen in the various drafts which the RDP parliamentary paper has gone through and in which the market has been taking a more and more prominent position. See Adelzadeh and Padayashee (1994) who measure the distance between the original statist ANC version of the RDP and the current "free market" version adopted as government policy.

project for a one-party system where the party is said to represent "the people" (as had been done on numerous occasions in Africa and elsewhere), although it could also have been operationalised in the popular democratic variant represented by the UDF in the 1980s. As to the National Party, it was, after all, the main architect of the refinement of the colonial disenfranchisement of the majority known as "apartheid". Neither the ANC nor the NP, therefore, had a history of commitment to multipartyism and universal franchise. Their commitment to both these features of the state in South Africa was the result of a number of factors both external and internal to the country.

The external factor was clearly the changed international conjuncture and the end of the Cold War which generated pressure from the Western powers for democratisation in Africa (as well as in the Third World and in the ex-Soviet Union more generally). Internally there were arguably two major factors. The first was the obvious fact that both the National Party and the ANC, together with White capital and the emergent Black petty-bourgeoisie, realised that they had to compromise over control of the state and that neither could win an outright victory over the other. A power-sharing arrangement through universal suffrage had to be worked out and, in fact, they went so far as to agree to share the "governance" of the country through the establishment of a "Government of National Unity" until the next territorial elections in 1999.

The second factor was the pressure "from below" which could not have countenanced a "one-party state" as in the rest of Africa, as popular organisations (especially the trade unions, but also the civics) were quite jealous of their independence and, as we have seen, argued strongly against statisation whose dangers they were aware of. Multipartyism and universal suffrage were, therefore, in South Africa, the result of an internal compromise between class forces and not the result of an external imposition. This is why it is seen as having a more secure basis in the country than it had in the rest of Africa, although the two main parties are still representative of racial groups and there is no indication yet of a change in this regard. At the same time, the evident cynicism of the major parties vis-a-vis the first territorial elections of April 1994, whereby honest voting was apparently less important than the clinching of a deal in which all main parties were "given something" and were thus "satisfied", bodes ill for the future as it shows contempt for the "popular will" (Southall, 1994).

Through the formation of a "government of national unity", all radical opposition has largely been delegitimised, and insofar as such opposition is being expressed from the Left, it is emanating from marginalised groups influenced by the "Trotskyist tradition" in Cape Town which restricts itself to denouncing the "politics of class compromise" and the dominance of the petty-bourgeois nationalists, and calling for the formation of a "workers' party". There is little in these statements concerning democracy of the

popular or any other variety, and they largely consist in re-stressing the vulgar fundamentals of some kind of millenarian "Marxism" divorced from popular experience.[1] This perspective is still overwhelmingly statist (as can be seen in any of the political writings of Neville Alexander for example). At the same time, the Left within the "Congress Alliance" is hamstrung by its support of the state (and particularly of statism) to such an extent that even though the need for independent popular organisations is often reiterated, there is a complete failure to understand how this could be accomplished other than by initiatives "from above". Any genuine popular initiative would, of course, have to start by re-politicising "civil society" and would thus come into (some sort of) conflict with the ANC dominated state, something which would be too much of a risk for the territorial leadership. Thus, calls for greater democracy from these quarters remain, unfortunately (and predictably), rather empty.[2]

There is, as yet, as far as I am aware, no serious analytical study of the transition period in South Africa. There are, however, some important studies which attempt to assess the period of the 1980s. Most prominent among these are Marx (1992), Murray (1987) and Lodge (1991).[3] Marx's book provides a wealth of detail but concentrates exclusively on a discussion of the changing ideology of the anti-apartheid movements through the words of their leading personnel. Because of this, it restricts itself to the territorial level and absolutely fails to recognise not only the differences between local and territorial ideologies and struggles, but also possible contradictions between the leaders of such movements and the led. This *modus operandi* is particularly unacceptable in the case of South Africa, as much of the ideological struggle in the 1980s surrounded precisely the issue of internal democracy and the accountability of leaders to the rank and file.

Moreover, it is not particularly useful to concentrate, as Marx does, on a discussion of the ideology of the leadership if, as we have argued, it was in fact the rank and file who were the main motive force behind the opposition

---

1 This ideological perspective has been accurately described as follows: It posits that under conditions of capitalist accumulation, which inevitably reduces the masses to ever-deepening misery, independent organizations, primed with a socialist consciousness and under working-class leadership, will rise up against their unbearable conditions and effect a transition to a society in which "there will be no apartheid, no oppression, and no exploitation (Lodge et al., 1991:213).

2 For example: "We need also to rebuild and reawaken the web of relatively independent mass democratic formations and struggles that characterised the 1980s" (Cronin,1992:52).

3 The three works provide general histories of resistance in the 1980s and therefore attempt some kind of account of the features and ideology of the social movement. Other authors restrict themselves to a description or to analysing specific episodes overwhelmingly as organisational histories of the UDF in specific areas. This is particularly the case with Seekings for example (1988, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c, 1993). See also Chaskalson, Jochelson and Seekings (1987), Carter (1991, 1992), Hughes (1987), Naidoo (1992) and especially Jochelson (1990), Sapire (1992), Bundy (1985) and Sitas (1992) whose discussions are more illuminating.

to the apartheid state for a considerable period of time. Marx is thus forced into accepting the leadership view at face value such as the apparent "pragmatic" conception of the all-inclusive ideology of nationalism contained in the "Freedom Charter". The point was that ordinary people, mobilised as they were in their own organisations, were actually giving the populist slogans of the "Freedom Charter" a popular content most obviously apparent in "People's Power" which was anything but "all inclusive" and "populist", but which had an evident bias towards the working people. Marx's own perspective ultimately leads him to adopt a linear conception of ideological change in South Africa, whereby the opposition's ideology is seen as following the chronological and somewhat teleological path of the organising principles of "race" (Black Consciousness), "nation" (UDF) and "class" (COSATU).

Murray (1987) is more critical of the "populism" of the UDF than Marx, preferring the supposedly more "working class" orientation of the "National Forum" (a small association of Cape Town-based Trotskyist and Black Consciousness groups with little popular support). This is determined by the former's adherence to a supposedly "multi-racial populism" dominated by the "petty-bourgeoisie", rather than the more frank anti-capitalism of the "National Forum" which understands that the "working-class struggle against capitalist exploitation and the national struggle have become one struggle under the general control and direction of the black working class" (Murray, 1987:230). Again, there is little attempt to understand the complexities of ideology here. Not only is this simply the slogan of an intellectual leadership with weak relations to the working people, but there is no attempt to investigate the possible relations or contradictions between the two, or even the possible inventiveness of popular struggle. In fact, there is little attempt to listen to popular perspectives which may not fit within the parameters of the author's rigid dogma.

In many ways, the account of Lodge et al. is the most sophisticated of the three main analyses of the 1980s, as the authors are sensitive to the complexities of ideological formation and identity, and indeed recognise the importance of popular initiatives in the construction of struggles from below. Thus:

> Notwithstanding the ANC's popularity and the universal authority of the Freedom Charter, the UDF was an intellectually intricate organisation, perhaps more so than even its leaders were aware. In its public rhetoric and printed polemics, different political persuasions were evident. And if ideology is taken to mean more than the self-conscious expression of doctrine and principle, and if the term is understood to embrace an organisation's repertoire of activities, then the picture becomes quite elaborate. For, just as the UDF's rhetoric animated its huge army of supporters, the organisation became infused with their ideas and beliefs. These drew on folk morality and local interpretations of tradition as much as on externally derived conceptions of capitalism or socialist democracy. People's power was the crystallisation of the rich and volatile mixture of ingredients within the UDF (Lodge et al., 1991:140).

And yet, despite this excellent assessment, Lodge insists on demarcating the ideology of the UDF along three strands: "nationalist", "national democratic", and "socialist" which, at the time, were clearly "vertical" divisions (Lodge et al., 1991:129-134). They were "vertical" because they corresponded to divisions around which leaders would attempt to gather support and interpellate audiences. Thus, whether or not one agrees with Lodge that these currents were the dominant ones, the fact remains that it could be argued that a far more important division in the movement, especially with some historical hindsight, was that between those who attempted to stress popular democracy and control, consultation in decision-making, independence from political parties and leadership accountability, and those who were on the side of authoritarianism, statism and, later, the exclusive adherence to multiparty democracy. In other words, it could be argued that a more important ideological division which cut across those identified by Lodge, was a "horizontal" one between popular democracy and statism ("state democracy" or authoritarianism). In the absence of an attempt to at least examine this distinction—to detach popular-democratic nationalism (or socialism) from state (petty-bourgeois) nationalism—it seems to me difficult to do justice to the popular movement in South Africa in the 1980s, or to adequately explain the transition from the popular politics of this period to the state politics of the 1990s.

African scholars have recently begun to reassess this kind of question from the perspective of the recent crisis of the African state, which is, in large part, a crisis of legitimacy. Earlier conceptions of the "betrayal" of "the revolution" by a petty bourgeoisie have been rightly rejected as explanations which not only rely on conspiracy theories but often idealise class subjects (the working class and/or petty bourgeoisie) and endow them with innate powers to make history on their own independently of social relations and struggle.[1] Like most such analyses, these conceptions end up ignoring issues of democracy, along with struggles between different forms of democracy and nationalism, conceding such notions in argument and in political practice to the dominance of the hated "petty-bourgeoisie". They, therefore, have little to offer as an alternative to nationalist statism; indeed, what they offer is more statism, albeit one tainted with a different ideological brush.

Central to this new work has been the writings on popular movements and especially the theorisation developed by Mamdani (1990) and Mamdani and Wamba-dia-Wamba (1995). The former in particular analyses the development of state nationalism in the Africa of the 1960s, along with the defeat of the popular movements which had been a major component of the struggle for a new democratic and independent state. He makes two crucial distinctions: first between "popular democracy" or "national democracy" on the one hand, and "state nationalism" (the "nation-state") on the other; and

---

[1] Perhaps the best-known example of this kind of argument is Astrow, 1983.

second, between the "national" as an equivalent of "democratic" on the one hand, and "national" as the opposite of "local" (i.e. as the equivalent of "nationwide" or "territorial" on the other). Through these distinctions, he is able to argue that popular demands and organisations, although often "local", were also usually more democratic than "territorial" demands and organisations which reduced all such demands to the single one of "independence". Anti-colonialism was not necessarily the same as anti-imperialism; for this perspective the latter implies democracy, the former does not necessarily do so. In addition, for Mamdani, state nationalism was legitimised by the nationalist historian who:

> tried to play down whatever features may detract from the national character of a social movement so as to emphasise its nationalist credentials, to remove the notes which could not easily be harmonised within a single national chorus, s/he also ended up obscuring local issues so as to cast in bold the one single national demand: self-government or independence! To use a somewhat modern metaphor, what was really a "rainbow coalition" was painted in a single grey! (Mamdani, 1990:54).

Mamdani argues that the social movements which together made up the nationalist movement in the 1940s were gradually defeated by a reform strategy initiated by the colonial state and continued after independence. This reform had two consequences. First, it led to a splitting of the anti-colonial forces as concessions were made to bourgeois aspirants within the broad front. Secondly, it enabled the legalisation of "the most important political organisations (trade unions, cooperatives, friendly societies) [in order] to bring them under the scrutiny of the state and [thus] undermine their autonomy and any element of popular accountability they may have developed" (Mamdani, 1990:49). He also draws a distinction between the "social movement" and the "political movement", the latter transforming itself into the state at independence.

Gibbon (1993) develops this perspective in his work on civil society and "developmentalist" states. He argues that a democratisation process which functions in the interests of the working people must, fundamentally, always involve not a "deepening" or "strengthening" of civil society but rather two mutually reinforcing aspects: on the one hand, the *politicisation* (not statisation) of civil society, and, on the other hand, the *democratisation* of the state. The former implies the entering of civil society organisations into the political sphere whereby their members are addressed as citizens and not simply as members of a(n) ("interest") group with particular interests determined by the division of labour. The latter suggests the transformation of the state so that it reflects the "sovereignty of popular institutions". This argument is elaborated in his work on late colonial Tanganyika (Gibbon, 1994) where he distinguishes a realm of "territorial politics" ("national politics" without the popular democratic content). He shows that local movements were often raising issues and democratic questions which went far

beyond what TANU was prepared to countenance and that TANU and the colonial state actually combined to suppress and otherwise undermine the autonomy of such movements (similar points are made by Kriger (1992) in her work on the liberation war in Zimbabwe). The determining factor in the defeat of popular movements, he argues, was TANU's monopolisation of territorial politics.

It is interesting to reflect on the South African case in the light of this perspective. Evidently, it is clear that the multiple popular organisations which formed the basis of the opposition in the urban areas entered political society systematically in the 1980s, and very much as a result of pressure from below. Through the "umbrella" of the UDF, they also occupied the terrain of territorial politics which was at the time not distinct from democratic politics. An important characteristic of this movement was the communication between the national leadership and the rank and file, especially while the former were reasonably accountable. Nevertheless, in this connection, a number of different and opposite trends and practices—democratic and authoritarian, consultative and coercive, analytical and celebratory, account-ability of the leadership and independence of dominant (often charismatic) figures—were all evident simultaneously within the movement.

At the same time, there was no distinction between the "political move-ment" and the "social movement" as the latter put itself squarely within the ideological ambit of the "Congress Tradition". Clearly, while the ANC was physically removed from the people and the struggle, divisions between the two were not evident.[1] Distinctions between the two movements probably started developing in an obvious way as the "internal leadership" would regularly visit the capitals of the frontline states for "consultations" with the ANC.[2] At this stage, the latter shared the territorial space with the internal organisations and the South African state. As time went by however, the ANC and the apartheid state started to monopolise this political space and the internal leaders began to deal with the regime as part of ANC delega-

---

[1] Ideological differences did pertain however and not solely at the level of practice as I have tried to show. Perhaps the most obvious conscious ideological difference concerned the fact that while the UDF and COSATU referred to the "leadership of the working class" of the "national democratic revolution", the exiled organisations (ANC and SACP) referred rather to "the leadership of the liberation movement" in organisational terms and bestowed it on the ANC. This ideological contradiction was never satisfactorily resolved although such a resolution was attempted by Slovo who insisted that the ANC had a "working-class bias". See *Work in Progress* nos. 50–51, 1987, p. 14, for example.

[2] This process sometimes took extreme forms as when a Cape Town civic association (WECUSA) actually went to the ANC in Lusaka to "get a mandate" to organise squatter areas. It was given the "mandate". (See Pieterse and Simone, 1994:23. The terminology is theirs.) The cynicism of both parties to this deal is quite amazing, and it seems that this episode was in no way unique. Clearly under such conditions it should not be surprising how the ANC managed to effectively monopolize the territorial political space.

tions. This process took off after 1990, although the journalist Allister Sparks shows quite clearly that the ANC and the apartheid state had been engaged in secret talks long before that (Sparks, 1995).

In general, the politicised popular movement of the 1980s was not incorporated into state politics against its will. What seems to have been the case is that popular control over this movement was severely weakened by the second state of emergency. By the time the organisations were emerging from this extreme repression in the late 1980s, they had much more of a character of being led "from above". It was, therefore, easier for them to disband altogether, to transform themselves into adjuncts of the ANC (a procedure which severely weakened the women's movement and killed off the youth movement altogether—"the young lions were tamed", to use the jargon)[1] or to retreat from politics into "interest groups". The voluntary nature of the ceding of the territorial political space to the party of state nationalism—the ANC—in South Africa is, therefore, interesting to note. It is this distancing from politics which then makes it possible for these organisations, civics and especially trade unions, to re-enter politics within the realm of the state as corporatism becomes more entrenched, and politics is reduced to *state politics*.

CONCLUSION

I have, in this chapter, argued, following recent writings by African intellectuals on popular movements, that it is impossible to provide an adequate explanation of the transition period in South Africa, and to do justice to the experience of the social movements in that country without distinguishing popular-democratic nationalism from state nationalism. The former, I have suggested, was the dominant trend in the liberation politics of the 1980s, while the latter is in the process of consolidating itself in the 1990s. In the 1980s, the dominant trend of popular nationalism corresponded to the *politicisation of civil society and the democratisation of the state from below*, while in the 1990s, we are witnessing the *statisation of civil society or its politicisation from above*. Central to the distinction between the two political and ideological forces of popular and state nationalism were different conceptions of the relationship between leaders and led. While the former stressed popular

[1] The following front page report appeared in the *Sunday Times* 3 December, 1995: In [an] action to rid the organisation of "ill-disciplined elements", Mr Mandela is said to have taken drastic action against the ANC's militant Youth League. Mr Mandela is believed to have issued instructions to the ANC's treasury to stop all cheques destined for the league, effectively scuttling its congress planned for next month. This follows a statement by the league's leader, Lulu Johnson, criticising Mr Mandela's call for the Springbok to be retained as the rugby emblem, and other statements critical of the government.

democracy and control, accountability and direct mandating of leaders, the latter stressed the independence of leadership, top-down prescriptions and statist arguments of various kinds. The latter conception of politics in fact reduced politics to state politics so that, in the words of Wamba-dia-Wamba, in his discussion of post-colonial Africa: "political consciousness and state consciousness tended to be identical [so that—MN] the state tended, then, to be internalised by those fighting or resisting it. This facilitated the emergence of "territorial nationalism" as the foundation of post-colonial politics" (Wamba-dia-Wamba, 1994:250). South Africa has been no exception to this general African trend. The best the state-nationalist position has been able to produce has been a negotiated compromise between different statist forces expressed in multipartyism and various other features of state-controlled democracy, which defeated the experiment of emancipative politics begun under "People's Power". None of the popular experiments of democracy seem to have found their way, so far, into the constitution of the country, and seem unlikely to do so.

I have stressed the importance, therefore, of distinguishing between horizontal divisions between democratic and authoritarian tendencies and ideologies within the nationalist movement, rather than the usual vertical divisions between socialists, nationalists or whatever. This distinction might also help to make sense of what often seem to be the contradictory positions espoused by activists, such as those pointed out in the survey of shop-stewards in 1991 which discovered, as we have seen, that a massive majority supported the ANC and "workers' control" (including socialisation of the means of production and state control over industry). This combination seemed *a priori* contradictory as it suggested support for nationalism (the ANC *never* claimed to be socialist) and some form of "socialism" simultaneously; it seemed to suggest a combination of "nationalist" and "socialist" "consciousness" which are often considered as mutually exclusive (or at least distinct). In addition, it cannot be argued that such a combination implied support for an SACP position which argued for short-term support for the ANC, and long-term support for socialism (even though the "length of the term" was never elucidated); it seems rather that shop-stewards supported "workers' control" as an immediate concern (in any case only a minority mentioned their support for the SACP).

What seems contradictory, if we remain at the level of vertical ideological distinctions, becomes somewhat clarified if we move towards considering horizontal distinctions. There is nothing particularly contradictory in holding that "liberation" ("The People Shall Govern") is equivalent to "People's Power" or "workers' control". After all, this was the actual experience of a large number of people in both townships and unions in the 1980s, and it was the dominant view of activists within civics and trade unions during the same period. Liberation was equated for many with national popular democracy (while this popular democracy was referred to as "socialism" by

some, and in the unions could more accurately be referred to as "syndicalism"), and there is nothing contradictory in doing so; in actual fact, the rigid opposition between "nationalism" and "socialism" has arguably been the overwhelming concern of South African intellectuals. Such an ideological distinction (especially but not exclusively) in Africa has generally contrasted two marginally different forms of statism in which, what Wamba-dia-Wamba (1993; 1994) has called an "emancipative mode of politics", has been precluded. In other words, whether the post-colonial state in Africa called itself "nationalist" or "socialist", was of marginal significance to the majority of the people who were, in either case, equally the subjects of intense oppression. The arguments of South African intellectuals, as I shall show at length in future work, were no exception to this general statist trend.

The kinds of politics which were developing within the mass movement in South Africa stressed (although obviously not exclusively) a distinction between popular and state politics, thus providing some of the fundamental elements of a genuinely emancipatory politics. Thus both "nationalist" and "socialist" oppositional discourses comprised statist as well as popular/emancipatory political trends. The latter form of politics can be understood as conforming in all essentials to democratic politics as formulated by Wamba-dia-Wamba:

Democracy is society instituting itself against its own past traditions [of politics—MN] for better ones. It is a break with the submissive consciousness or culture sustaining past traditions. This means that emancipatory politics emerging in civil society (grass-roots based), should be the originating site of the political prescriptions on the state leading to real state reforms consistent with the rising social demands.

... This [emancipatory—MN] consciousness emerges and develops through the active participation in the development and treatment of matters political. When this participation is stopped, the consciousness is replaced by the internalisation of the state perspective and the ensuing self-censorship. The party in its present form, cannot enhance this development; nor can a multipartyism which reduces politics to a matter of numbers (Wamba-dia-Wamba, 1995:16; 1994:259-260).

It was precisely such a break with submissive consciousness that the South African working people were attempting to institute in the urban townships during the 1980s, and precisely its replacement by self-censorship which seems to have permeated popular consciousness in the 1990s. In the experience of many ordinary people, national liberation in the 1980s came to be equated with such a popular democratic project of emancipation as, in the words of Murphy Morobe:

the key to a democratic system lies in being able to say that the people in our country can not only vote for a representative of their choice, but also feel that they have some direct control over where and how they live, eat, sleep and work, how they get to work, how they and their children are educated, what the content of that education is; and that these things are not done for them by

the government of the day, but [by] the people themselves. In other words, we are talking about ... mass participation rather than passive docility and ignorance, a momentum where ordinary people feel that they can do the job themselves, rather than waiting for their local MP to intercede on their behalf (Morobe, 1987:84).

How can the defeat of this popular project for emancipatory politics and its replacement by state politics then be explained? Clearly, many factors were responsible and a full history can only be the outcome of future research. Yet four main factors seem to be thrown up by the above discussion. State inspired violence was a first crucial factor. This was successful in weakening popular structures, not only because of the lack of a developed underground (including military) with structures subjected to the popular movement, but also because of often bureaucratic practices within the movement itself. Although such authoritarian practices had been contested, especially under the "People's Power" process, they were never successfully supplanted by popular democratic practices and control. Second, such undemocratic practices became more prevalent and dominant as popular structures disintegrated, while the ANC and its leadership who were to negotiate "liberation", were completely unaccountable to any popular structures within the country. Third, popular organisations in both townships and trade unions vacated the realm of popular politics in the 1990s (although there were signs that this had been vacated de facto by 1988-89) and withdrew to a supposed "apolitical" civil society where they became "interest groups" with concerns limited by the division of labour. Fourth, the monopoly of territorial politics was thus acquired by the unaccountable party of state nationalism, initially as it became the only legitimate interlocutor of the moribund apartheid state and international forces, then as state structures were left untransformed and untouched by popular culture, and finally as popular forces, accepting its organisational "leadership", ceded the plane of territorial politics to it.

The outcome of the process was a negotiated series of compromises between the outgoing political forces representing overwhelmingly White capital, and the incoming new Black petty-bourgeoisie eager to appropriate and accumulate and/or to fill state positions with minimal control from below. Because the struggle over the content and form of the new state has, in the 1990s, only very marginally involved democratic popular forces and has largely been conducted over their heads, the prospects of statism dominating in South Africa, albeit within a multiparty context, are overwhelming.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adelzadeh, A. and V. Padayashee, 1994, "The RDP White Paper: Reconstruction of a Development Vision", Transformation, No. 25.

African National Congress, 1992, "Negotiations: A Strategic Perspective", *The African Communist*, special issue, No. 131, 4th Quarter.

Astrow, B., 1983, *Zimbabwe, A Revolution that Lost its Way?* London: Zed Press.

Atkinson, D. (ed.), 1992, "The State and Civil Society", *Theoria*, special issue, No. 79, May.

Barrell, H., 1990, *MK, the ANC's Armed Struggle*. London: Penguin.

Baskin, J., 1982, "Growth of a New Worker Organ: The Germiston Shop Stewards' Council", *South African Labour Bulletin*, Vol. 7, No. 6, April.

Baskin, J., 1991, *Striking Back: A History of COSATU*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.

Baskin, J., 1993, *Corporatism: Some Obstacles Facing the South African Labour Movement*. Research Report No. 30, April. Johannesburg: Centre for Policy Studies.

Baskin, J., 1996, "Unions at the Crossroads: Can They Make the Transition?", *South African Labour Bulletin*, Vol. 20, No. 1, February.

Bird, A. and G. Shreiner, 1992, "COSATU at the Crossroads: Towards Tripartite Corporation or Democratic Socialism", *South African Labour Bulletin*, Vol. 16, No. 6.

Botha, T., 1992, "Civic Associations as Autonomous Organs of Grassroots' Participation", in Atkinson, D. (ed.) 1992.

Bundy, C., 1987, "Street Sociology and Pavement Politics: Aspects of Youth and Student Resistance in Cape Town, 1985", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 3, April.

Carter, C., 1991, "'We are the Progressives: Alexandra Youth Congress Activists and the Freedom Charter, 1983–1985", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 2, June.

Carter, C., 1992, "Community and Conflict: The Alexandra Rebellion of 1986", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1.

Chaskalson, M., K. Jochelson and J. Seekings, 1987, "Rent Boycotts, the State and the Transformation of the Urban Political Economy in South Africa", *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 40, December.

Cobbett, W. and R. Cohen (eds.), 1988, *Popular Struggles in South Africa Today*. London: James Currey.

Collinge, J.A., 1991, "Civics: Local Government from below", *Work in Progress*, No. 74, May.

Collins, D., 1994, "Worker Control", *South African Labour Bulletin*, Vol. 18, No. 3, July.

Cronin, J., 1992, "The Boat, the Tap and the Leipzig Way", *The African Communist*, 3rd Quarter.

de Villiers, R., 1986, "UDF: Front or Political Party", *Work in Progress*, No. 40.

Fine, B., 1993, "Civil Society Theory and the Politics of Transition in South Africa", *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 56.

Foster, J., 1982, "The Workers' Struggle: Where Does FOSATU Stand?", *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 24, May–August.

Friedman, S., 1991, "An Unlikely Utopia: State and Civil Society in South Africa", *Politikon*, Vol. 19, No. 1, December.

Friedman, S., 1992, "Bonaparte at the Barricades: The colonisation of Civil Society", in Atkinson, D. (ed.), 1992.

Friedman, S. and D. Atkinson (eds.), 1994, *The Small Miracle: South Africa's Negotiated Settlement*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.

Gibbon, P., 1993, "Civil Society' and Political Change, with Special Reference to Developmentalist States" Mimeo. Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.

Gibbon, P., 1994, "Some Reflections on State, Civil Society and the Division of Labour in Late Colonial Tanganyika (Some Notes on the Origins of the One-Party State)",

paper presented at the conference on *Dimensions of Economic and Political Reform in Contemporary Africa*, Kampala, April.

Haysom, N., 1986, *Mabangalala: The Rise of Right Wing Vigilantes in South Africa*. London: CIIR.

Hughes, H., 1987, "Violence in Inanda, August 1985", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 13, No 3, April.

Jacobs, B., 1992, "Heading for Disaster", *Work in Progress*, No. 86, December.

Jochelson, K., 1990, "Reform, Repression and Resistance in South Africa: A Case Study of Alexandra Township, 1979–1989", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1.

Kasrils, R. and Khuswayo, M., 1991, "Mass Struggle is the Key", *Work in Progress*, No. 72, January/February.

Keet, D., 1992, "Shop Stewards and Worker Control", *South African Labour Bulletin*, Vol. 16, No 5, May/June.

Kriger, N., 1992, *Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lambert, R. and E. Webster, 1988, "The Re-emergence of Political Unionism in Contemporary South Africa", in W. Cobbett and R. Cohen (eds.), 1988.

Lanegran, K., 1995, "South Africa's Civic Association Movement: ANC's Ally or Society's Watchdog? Shifting Social Movement-Political Party Relations", *African Studies Review*, Vol. 38, No. 2, September.

Levin, R. and I. Solomon, 1994, "National Liberation and Village Level Organisation and Resistance: A Central Lowveld Case Study", in R. Levin and D. Weiner (eds.), *Community Perspectives on Land and Agrarian Reform in South Africa*. Project Report for MacArthur Foundation.

Lodge, T., 1992, "The African National Congress in the 1990s", in G. Moss and I. Obery (eds.), *South African Review 6*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.

Lodge, T. et al., 1991, *All Here and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s*. Cape Town: Ford Foundation/David Philip.

Mamdani, M., 1990, "State and Civil Society in Contemporary Africa: Reconceptualising the Birth of State Nationalism and the Defeat of Popular Movements", *Africa Development*, Vol. 15, No. 3/4.

Mamdani, M., 1994, "Non-Racial Apartheid: The Making of Citizen and Subject in Contemporary Africa". Mimeo.

Mamdani, M., 1996, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Mamdani, M. and E. Wamba-dia-Wamba (eds.), 1995, *African Studies in Social Movements and Democracy*. Dakar: CODESRIA.

Maree, J., 1993, "Trade Unions and Corporatism in South Africa", *Transformation*, No. 21.

Marie, B., 1992, "COSATU Faces Crisis: 'Quick Fix' Methods and Organisational Contradictions", *South African Labour Bulletin*, Vol. 16, No. 5, May/June.

Marx, A.W., 1992, *Lessons of Struggle: South African Internal Opposition 1960–1990*. Cape Town/Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mathiane, N., 1986, "The Strange Feeling of Taking Control", *Frontline*, Vol. 6, No. 7.

Mathiwana, M. and S. Walters, 1989, *The Struggle for Democracy: A Study of Community Organisations in Greater Cape Town from the 1960s to 1988*. University of Western Cape, Centre for Adult and Continuing Education.

Mayekiso, M., 1992a, "Working Class Civil Society: Why We Need It and How We Get It", *The African Communist*, 2nd Quarter.

Mayekiso, M., 1992b, "Hands off the Civics and Civil Society! A Response to Blade Nzimande", *Work in Progress*, No. 21, April.

Mdluli, D., 1991, "Uniting Civics across the Eastern Transvaal", *Work in Progress*, No.74, May.

Molamu, L. and T. Fako, 1993, "Violence in the Political Culture of Contemporary South Africa: Lessons for SADC", paper presented to the SADRA workshop on *SADC After Ten Years*, NUL, Roma, October.

Morobe, M. 1987, "Towards a People's Democracy: The UDF View", *Review of African Political Economy*, No 40, December.

Murray, M.J., 1987, *South Africa: Time of Agony, Time of Destiny, the Upsurge of Popular Protest*. London: Verso.

Naidoo, J., 1986, "Building People's Power: A Working Class Perspective", speech held at Grassroots Conference, 5th April.

Naidoo, K., 1992, "The Politics of Youth Resistance in the 1980s: The Dilemmas of a Differentiated Durban", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1.

Ngcobo, E., 1993, "Local Government Negotiating Forum off to a False Start", *Work in Progress Reconstruct Supplement*, No. 93, November.

Nzimande, B. and M. Sikhosana, 1991, "Civics Are Part of the National Democratic Revolution", *Mayibuye*, Vol. 2, No. 5, June.

Nzimande, B. and M. Sikhosana, 1992a, "Civil Society and Democracy", *The African Communist*, First Quarter.

Nzimande, B. and M. Sikhosana, 1992b, "Civil Society and Democracy: A Rejoinder", *The African Communist*, Third Quarter.

Nzimande, B. and M. Sikhosana, 1992c, "'Civil Society' Does Not Equal Democracy", *Work in Progress*, No. 84, September.

Nzongola-Ntalaja, G., 1993, "Nation Building and State Building in Africa", *SAPES Occasional Paper*, No. 3, Harare.

Olukoshi, A.O. and L. Laakso (eds.), 1996, *Challenges to the Nation-State in Africa*, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet in cooperation with Institute of Development Studies, University of Helsinki.

Pieterse, E.A. and A.M. Simone, 1994, *Governance and Development: A Critical Analysis of Community-Based Organisations in the Western Cape*, FCR.

Pityana, S.M. and M. Orkin, 1992, *Beyond the Factory Floor: A Survey of COSATU Shop-Stewards*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.

Sapire, H., 1992, "Politics and Protest in Shack Settlements of the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging Region, South Africa, 1980–1990", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 3, September.

Schreiner, G., 1994, "Beyond Corporatism: Towards New Forms of Public Policy Formulation in South Africa", *Transformation*, No. 23.

Seekings, J., 1988, "The Origins of Political Mobilisation in PWV Townships, 1980–84", in Cobbett, W. and R. Cohen (eds.), 1988.

Seekings, J., 1989, "People's Courts and Popular Politics", in G. Moss and I. Obery (eds.), *South African Review 5*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.

Seekings, J., 1992a, "Trailing behind the Masses: The United Democratic Front and Township Politics in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal Region, 1983–84", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1 March.

Seekings, J., 1992b, "From Quiescence to 'People's Power': Township Politics in Kagiso, 1985–1986", *Social Dynamics*, Vol. 18, No. 1.

Seekings, J., 1992c, "The United Democratic Front and the Changing Politics of Opposition in Natal, 1983–85", paper presented at the Ethnicity Conference, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, September.

Seekings, J., 1993, *Heroes or Villains: Youth Politics in the 1980s*, Johannesburg: Ravan Press.

Shaw, T., 1994, "South Africa: The Corporatist/Regionalist Conjuncture", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 2.

Shilowa, S., 1995, "Challenges of the Transition Period: A COSATU Perspective", *The African Communist*, Nos. 139/140, 1st Quarter.

Sisulu, Z., 1986, "People's Education for People's Power", *Transformation*, No. 1.

Sitas, A., 1992, "The Making of the "Comrades" Movement in Natal, 1985–1991", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 3, September.

Slovo, J., 1992, "Negotiations: What Room for Compromise?", *The African Communist*, No. 130, 3rd Quarter.

Race Relations Survey, 1988/89, 1989, Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations.

Southall. R., 1994, "The South African Elections of 1994: The Remaking of a Dominant-Party State", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 4, December.

Sparks, A., 1995, *Tomorrow is Another Country: The Inside Story of South Africa's Negotiated Revolution*, Sandton: Struik.

Swilling, M., 1984, "Workers Divided: A Critical Assessment of the Split in MAWU on the East Rand", *South African Labour Bulletin*, Vol. 10, No. 1, August/September.

Swilling, M., 1988, "The United Democratic Front and Township Revolt", in W. Cobbett and R. Cohen, R. (eds.), 1988.

Swilling, M., 1990, "Political Transition, Development and the Role of Civil Society", *Africa Insight*, Vol. 20, No. 3.

Swilling, M., 1991, "Socialism, Democracy and Civil Society: The Case for Associational Socialism", *Work in Progress*, No. 76, August. Also published in Atkinson, D. (ed.), 1992.

United Democratic Front, 1985, 1986, 1987, *Isizwe*, Vol. 1 No. 1; Vol. 1 No. 2; Vol. 2, No. 1;

United Democratic Front, Cape Town Area Committee, 1986, "Broadening the Base", Discussion Document.

Wamba-dia-Wamba, E., 1993, "Democracy, Multipartyism and Emancipative Politics in Africa: The Case of Zaire", *Africa Development*, Vol. 18, No. 4.

Wamba-dia-Wamba, E., 1994, "Africa in Search of a New Mode of Politics", in H. Himmelstrand (ed.), *African Perspectives on Development*. London: James Currey.

Wamba-dia-Wamba, E., 1995, "The State of All Rwandese: Political Prescriptions and Disasters", paper presented at the Arusha conference on the Great Lakes Region, September 4–7.

Webster, E., 1987, "The Rise of Social Movement Unionism: The Two Faces of the Black Trade Union Movement in South Africa", in P. Frankel et al., *State, Resistance and Change in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Southern Book Publishers.

White, R. 1986, "A Tide has Risen. A Breach has Occurred: Towards an Assessment of the Strategic Value of the Consumer Boycotts", *South African Labour Bulletin*, Vol. 11, No. 5, April-May.

Newspapers and Periodicals

Frontline
Mayibuye
New Era
New Nation
South African Labour Bulletin
Sunday Times
Weekly Mail/Mail and Guardian
Work in Progress