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History of Jewish Workers Club

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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

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History of Jewish Workers Club - T. Adler File

The specific contribution and activities of Jews as socialists, or socialist Jews has largely been ignored by the historians both of the Jews in South Africa and of the labour and left wing movements in this country. The former, represented most prominently in a volume edited by Gustas Saron and Louis Hotz[1], have argued that South African Jews are a 'fairly homogeneous group'[2] who 'as a group as opposed to individuals... have played no part in politics.... Therefore general political questions have no place in the history of the Jewish community.'[3] As exceptions to this rule the authors mention the role the Jews played in the struggle against Kruger, the imposition of various immigration restrictions and the fight against anti-semitism.[4] Moreover, Saron and Hotz contend that 'The majority of East European immigrants were deeply imbued with the ideals of Jewish nationalism. Overseas they had been in varying degrees supporters of the Chovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion movement).'[5] 'There were some socialists but few found their way to South Africa'[6] Indeed Saron claims that by 1907 the Bundist[7] tendencies in South Africa had lost all impetus and soon disappeared from the scene.[8]

If the historians of the Jews have been amiss in their discussion of Jewish socialist organisation, the same charge must be levelled at those histories of the labour and left wing organisations of South Africa. Aside from a few personal references in the writings of Eddie Roux[9], himself a teacher at the various classes organised by the Jewish Workers Club (the focus of this paper), I have uncovered no reference to Jewish socialist organisation in the few general histories of working class and left wing activities in this country.[10] As I hope to show in this paper, such an absence is unjustified and unfortunate given the important role of organised Jewish socialist activity, particularly in the period under discussion. Jewish socialists and their organisations played a vital part in the formation and activities of 'the left' in this country and if we are to have an accurate picture of 'the left movement' then this role must be recognised and placed in its proper perspective. At this juncture however, an important point must be raised with regard to the sources available to me, and the bias that this has introduced into the paper.

To a large extent the paper follows the documentary and oral evidence currently available. The written records of the Jewish Workers Club itself do not seem to exist. The Club members burnt their own records, while a fire at the Club's premises in Doornfontein destroyed any official records that might have been kept. Thus the evidence uncovered reveals Club activities that are of concern to newspapers such as the Forward or the political historians such as Roux. This documentary evidence therefore reflects those parts of the Club's activities which were of concern to the political activists and their writings.

2/...

Similarly the people who were willing to be interviewed were those who in the main were most politically conscious and politically involved. Some people who were involved as ordinary members refused to be interviewed.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the paper is biased by the fact that I am not a Lithuanian immigrant who speaks Yiddish. This says volumes for the gaps in the paper. I neither have a sense of Yiddishkeit nor the particular brand of Yiddish humour or expression characteristic of the members of the Club. In addition I do not have a full appreciation of the acute social need those who were newly arrived must have had for 'zein eigene mensen'. The function of the club as a 'landschaft' must therefore be stressed at the outset. Its social content, as opposed to its political activities, must be given due cognizance from the outset. One must not lose sight of the fact that the majority of members were concerned with Yiddish culture and expression. They came to the Club as a social meeting place. Many of them were not involved in some of the activities discussed and were immersed in the cultural aspects of the Club.

Thus while it is true that the historical importance of the Club is in its more general role vis-a-vis the 'left movement', merely to consider it as such and not to acknowledge its existence as an independent entity with a cultural momentum, would be historically inaccurate.

Although a number of individual Jewish socialists were active in South Africa from an early period[11] it is not until the 1890's that Jewish workers as an active and organised group emerge. This emergence would correspond with the first major wave of Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe. As Esra Mendelsohn[12] point out, to be Jewish in the Pale of Russia meant more often than not to be part of a poverty stricken mass. Jews in Russia during this period were structurally inclined to operate within worker and socialist organisations and it is not until 1905 that Zionism can claim to be a major force in Europe[13]. Jews lived in poverty-stricken conditions in South Africa as well during this period and the socialist ideology they had been exposed to and accepted in Eastern Europe was prominent under similar conditions in this country.[14]

In the 1890's a Jewish Workers Club was established in Johannesburg. It was headed by English Speaking Jews who were pro-Boer in outlook and at one stage had a membership roll exceeding 600. It dissolved in August 1902.[15] In 1896 a Jewish Working Men's Club and Night School acquired its own premises also in Johannesburg.[16] In 1898 the Jewish tailors in the Cape held a meeting 'to protest against sweat shops

and other evils.'[17] In 1901 another Jewish Working Mens Club was formed in Cape Town[18] while in 1902 the Cape Jewish Bakers organised a trade union 'with the object of increasing wages and reducing Sunday labour.'[19]

We begin to get an indication of the strength and importance of the Jewish workers in this period by the appearance of Yiddish as a language of the left. At the first Labour Day demonstration ever held in Johannesburg on April 1 1904, a Yiddish speaker addressed the crowd.[20] A pamphlet by W.H. Andrews 'The Workers Revolution in Russia was translated into 'Afrikaans and Jewish'[21] As late as 1930 we find a suggestion being put to a general meeting of the Garment Workers Union to the effect that Yiddis should be used officially by the Union.[22]

In 1905, under the impetus of the Russian Revolution of that year, a 'Friends of Russian Freedom Society' was established in Johannesburg. According to Rochling[23] it was a Jewish organization, strongly Bundist in outlook and particularly active during the visit of a Russian Bundist, Serge Rieger.[24] At this point in time the picture of a homogeneous Jewry is certainly not valid. In addition to the cultural and religious tensions between Eastern European Jewry on the one hand and the Jews of English and German origin on the other, tensions so ably described by Herrman,[25] and Saron and Hotz[26], we find major political differences in the community. In 1905 an opposition group to the Friends of Russian Freedom emerges. A meeting is held i December of that year to consider the establishment of an organisation to support the Zionist self defence movement in Russia. Rochlin reports that the meeting met with some opposition from the Bundists. '...this meeting concluded with the singing of 'Hatikvah' by the Zionists, who waved blue and white handkerchiefs and the chanting of the Marsseilles by the Bundists who carried red handkerchiefs.'[27]

As early as 1905 we see two themes which are to characterise this aspect of Jewish history for the next 35 years. In the first place we see clashes between Zionists and anti-Zionists (which also has a religion/anti-religion conflict intertwined within it) which occur with unfailing regularity in the 1930's when the Jewish Workers Club organises picnics on Yom Kuppur or on a more serious level with the visit of the revisionist Zionist leader, Jabotinsky (described in the Club newspaper, the Proletarishe Sthime as a 'Zionist Hitler'[28]) to South Africa in 1930 and 1937.[29] Secondly we see the intervention of international issues as the dominant feature of political organisation among left wing Jews. This is, of course, a reflection of the origin, and the cultural and political home of these movements during this perioc Although I shall not be concerned to argue this point here, a similar point can be made for left wing movements generally during this period.[30]

4/...

It is important to note the ideological underpinnings of the clashes noted above. In contrast to the Zionists who are concerned to argue that Jews qua Jews are a homogeneous group with similar interests, the Bund, and the various anti-Bundist, but socialist groupings both in Europe and South Africa, point to the class divisions within Jewish society which deny a common 'Jewishness'. The point is made in an article by H.W.H. entitled 'The Jews and Nationalists'. He argues: 'If there are Jews in the Revolutionary movement, it is also true that there are Jews in the most conservative camps which boiled down means simply that the class struggle dominates Jewish society just the same as any other national society. The Jewish working class willy nilly will have to take sides with their class of all nations ... Nationalism is a weapon of capitalism and a snare and a delusion.'[31] This argument is repeated in the Thirties when the Jewish Workers Club denounces German Jewish bourgeoisie for co-operating with Hitler on the basis of its capitalist interests.[32]

Although we find a Jewish Socialist Society involved in the production of 'The Bolshevik', the official organ of the Industrial Socialist League,[32] the most important organisation for our purposes, and the immediate forerunner of the J.W.C. was the Jewish Speaking Branch of the International Socialist League (hereafter called the JSB). It has already been mentioned that Yiddish speakers were prominent at socialist rallies in Johannesburg, or more particularly in the Fordsburg/Vrededorp areas of Johannesburg where Jewish immigrants and workers lived.[34] One such meeting is described in graphic detail in a report in the International.[35]

> "A capital open air election meeting was held last Sunday afternoon at the traditional corner of West and Commissioner streets. The meeting was announced by a Jewish manifesto which was distributed all over the district on the Sunday morning and an attendance of several hundred was the result. The speakers, except the candidate, all spoke in 'Yiddish' and with the humour peculiar to such vernacular created a deep impression on the audience. Indeed the campaign has brought forward four excellent new speakers who will certainly be called upon again... Before nomination, Comrade Bunting was approached by divers (sic) parties, one in close contact with the Orthodox Jewish Board of Deputies, and with others being alleged 'socialists', to desist from proceeding with the election or at any rate from holding public meetings on the ground that there would be a riot, or worse still a pogrom of shopkeepers windows. The inference can hardly be avoided that such rumours originally emanated from the camp of one or other of the rival candidates. They have of course been ignored."

This interest group is formalised in the formation of a Jewish Speaking Branch of the I.S.L. The first meeting, presided over by Comrade Israelstam, attracted

'50 - 60 comrades'.[36] A number of features of the JSB's activities should be noted, for they occur in the activities of the JWC.

In the first place the group was concerned to advocate 'revolutionary socialism' on the 'Jewish street' - a phrase used by one of the former chairman of the JWC, S.Buirski, to denote the activities of the Club 'amongst the Jewish masses'.[37] Secondly we see the establishment of a separate Jewish organisation which maintains close links with the 'party of the working class'.[38] The JSB justified its existence as a separate organisation because '...they are getting in touch with many new members who had hitherto taken only a spectators interest in the ISL but who have been fired by the Russian Revolution to link up with the organised socialist movement'.[39]

It is interesting to note that this separation of organisation runs counter to Lenin's position on the Bund as a separate Jewish workers organisation in Eastern Europe. Owing to Lenin's opposition to a separate workers' organization[40] the Bund was forced to leave the second congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party in 1903 although it re-entered the party in 1906.[41] It remained to play an important role in the Russian revolutionary movement until 1917[42] but was dissolved after the revolution.

Indeed this tension between a workers movement, and a Jewish workers movement is to run through the history of specifically Jewish socialist organisation in South Africa. At a formative meeting of the Communist Party of South Africa, to which a formal document from the Jewish Socialist Society (Poalei Zion) (which seems to be a different group from the JSB) was submitted 'It was decided, subject to the approval of the Third International, which has before it the question of the affiliation of the Paolei Zion, as a whole, to agree to the inclusion of the Jewish Socialist Society (Paolei Zion) as a Jewish National Branch'.[43]

Thus the organisation of a Jewish socialist group seems to have been permitted for practical reasons. An issue of the official organ of the JWC, the Proletarishe Shtime stated[44]: The JWC is a product of the commencement of a process of radicalisation in Jewish circles, as well as the emergence of a group of revolutionary immigrants who were unable to find the opportunities to continue their revolutionary work in the existing liberal, petty bourgeois organisations. This compelled them to lay the foundations of the JWC around which there occurred later a concentration of class conscious elements among the Jews.' It should be stressed though, that while both the JSB and the JWC approved of separate organisation, this was linked firmly to the ISL and SACP and did not have the federalist intentions of the Bund. In fact the

JWC was anti-Bundist.

A second important feature of the JSB is its function as an important financier of left wing organisations. At the first meeting the branch considered a 10,000 shilling fund to acquire a printing press for the ISL[45]. The press was finally acquired in 1919[46]. Similarly we find that the largest contributor to a strike fund for the workers belonging to the Silverton Tannery and Boot and Shoeworkers Union are the JSB with a donation of £11.16.9 The next largest donation from the Management Committees Vote (presumably of the ISL) is £5.0.0., while the third largest donation is £1.0.0. from the Pretoria Branch of the I.S.L. The Fund closed at £30.3.10[47]. In addition the pages of the International often advertise fundraising socials, plays and entertainment evenings arranged and organised by the JSB.

The third enduring feature of the activities of the JSB concerns their educational and propaganda activities. The following is typical of the notices of their activities during this period[48].

> "On Sunday 13th instant an open air meeting will be held at the corner of Ferreira and Commissioner Streets. Speakers (in Yiddish) Comrades S. Datnowsky, I. Kessler, C.H. Traub. The study class will meet at the Palmerstone Hall on Wednesday 16th instant at 8 p.m. A lecture will be given on 'Nationalism and Internationalism.' Comrades and Friends invited."

It is against this background of Jewish socialist activity that we can begin to describe and understand the emergence of the JWC as the most prominent, well organised and long lasting of the organisations of the Jewish left. Before turning specifically to the Club itself, however, it is important to situate it in the environment and history of a particular section of Johannesburg Jewry between 1928 and 1940[49].

The years between 1924-30 saw a noticeable rise in the number of Jews entering South Africa as immigrants[50]. Between 1921 and 1936 the Jewish population of South Africa rose from 62,103 to 71,816[51], and the majority of these were from Eastern Europe[52]. In a survey undertaken in 1968 Dubb found that 70% of Johannesburg Jews were descendants of parents or grandparents born in Eastern Europe, or were themselves born there[53].

The fact that a majority of South African Jews came from Eastern Europe, or more

7/...

particularly from the Pale of Russia[54] has important consequences. As has already been pointed out, to be Jewish in the Pale meant, more often than not, to be poor, hungry and workless[55]. The lives of Jews in the Pale were characterised by high mortality rates, tax delinquencies and, of course, high immigration rates as a result of this. This was as true of 1860 as it was of 1920, and although conditions had changed considerably over this period and many Jews were finding work in the factories that were being established, the conditions of Jewish poverty continued to push people to emigrate.

The economic conditions were not the only factors in Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe during this period. Political considerations (which is not to deny an interaction between politics and economics) played as prominent a role. In the case of the Jews the pogroms of the 1880's in particular played a major part[56]. It was not very difficult for Jews to see that the pogroms were connected with the Czarist state and that the fight to defeat anti-semitism in the Russian empire involved conflict with the Czar. It is for this reason that as a group Jews in Eastern Europe were highly politicised. Jewish socialists such as Paul Axelrod and Lev Deich were active in the first revolutionary circle to adopt a Marxist programme. This was the Group for the Emancipation of Labour (Grupe Osvobozhdeniia Truda) which laid the foundation of the Social Democratic Workers Party[57]. The General Jewish Workers Union (Bund) in Russia, Poland and Lithuania was founded in 1897, a year before the RSDLP[58]. According to Mendelsohn, the structural position of Jewish artisans made them amongst the most militant of the working class in the Russian empire, pioneering the workers circles and the strikes that occurred during the 1880's[59]. By the beginning of the twentieth century many Jews were prominent in both local and national communist movements in Eastern Europe. Many of the Jews who came to South Africa brought with them this experience. Some had, as children, participated as messengers and distributors of literature, in their local political groups. Indeed, one of the early chairmen of the JWC had been imprisoned as a child of 12 for his activities, while another founder member had left Lithuania in 1926 to escape the Lithuanian police who were seeking her for her Party activities.

Both the economic and political features of Eastern European Jewry are reflected in the nature and structure of the Johannesburg Jewish community following the period of major immigration noted previously, i.e. in the 1930's. A survey undertaken in 1936[60] shows the following occupational distribution of Jews in Johannesburg[61]:

MAIN OCCUPATIONS
(% refers to all males over 15 years.)

Occupation	%
Plumbers, mechanics, blacksmiths and similar occupations	2.45%
Tailors, Shoemakers, etc	5.62%
Workers in wood and furniture	2.76%
Transport and Communication	2.04%
Commerce, finance, insurance	39.31%
Professions	8.38%
Personal service	2.28%
Clerks	9.75%
Retired	4.67%
Students over 15 years of age	7.76%

(% refers to all gainfully occupied females.)

Dressmakers, milliners, etc	9.99%
Commerce, finance, insurance	22.17%
Professions	8.95%
Personal service	4.30%
Typists, clerks etc	49.63%

It is difficult to know the proportion of Jewish workers from these figures. Sonnabend shows that 39.34% of all males over 15 years are engaged in commercial, financial and insurance occupations. However, what these figures do not reveal is how many of these were workers in the various enterprises. Indeed the experience of many a Jewish immigrant includes an initial stint in the 'kaffir' eating houses and the concessions stores where working conditions were deplorable involving long hours at low rates of pay[63]. Already in 1923 the Jewish Socialist Society attempted to organise a mass meeting of 'All Jewish unrecognised workers, shop assistants and clerks'[64] and in a Native Reef Shop Assistants Trade Union is started.[65]

In addition we do not know how many of those involved in the tailoring and shoe-making trades were workers or bosses. Perhaps this distinction at this point in time is not very important for the social and economic conditions of the Jewish self-employed were not very different from those of their workers. Accounts of cultural meetings at the JWC note that workers and their employers would mix very easily, living very similarly and having the same cultural background. This situation, it should be noted, is similar to that of Eastern Europe. Mendelsohn comments that although there was class conflict between worker and employer in the Pale, it was described, and often dismissed by Jewish Revolutionaries like Martov and Vladimir Medem as the class struggle of paupers.[66] If Jewish employers were capitalists, they were very much 'penny capitalists.'

9/...

In short, while we do not know the exact proportions of the Jewish working class in Johannesburg, we do know that a certain proportion were engaged in manual labour and that a significant proportion of these were workers.

A geographical breakdown of the occupational structure of the Jewish community gives one some interesting additional factors in the formation of a Jewish working class organisation. According to certain unspecified economic and social criteria, Sonnabend divides the Jews geographically into 6 groups: 1. Doornfontein, Bertrams and Jeppe. 2. Mayfair, Braamfontein, Bez. Valley, Hospital Hill and Rossetenville. 3. Yeoville, Berea, Kensington, Belgravia, Bellevue, Orange Grove and Hillbrow. 4. Parktown, Houghton, Observatory, Parkview, Saxonwold. 5. City. 6. Address unknown. On the basis of this distinction, Sonnabend finds the following occupational distributions[67]:

Main Occupations: 4 Districts

(% refers to all males over 15 years)

Occupations	Groups I	II	III	IV
Plumbers, mechanics etc	4.39	2.83	1.48	.91
Tailors, shoemakers, etc	9.24	5.24	3.17	.61
Workers in wood & furniture	4.89	2.30	1.52	.61
Transport and communication	4.34	2.72	1.39	.61
Commerce, Finance, insurance	32.36	43.25	41.47	39.64
Professions	3.93	5.13	10.94	17.85
Clerks	7.26	9.11	11.06	6.65
Students over 15 years	9.20	7.64	9.63	16.64

The table shows that the highest percentage of people engaged in manual labour are found in Doornfontein, Bertrams and Jeppe (Group One) 9.24% of the Jewish populatic of this district are working as tailors and shoemakers or are engaged in the clothi industry, while 4.39% are plumbers and mechanics and 4.89% are carpenters. Thus, comments Sonnabend, 'about 20% of the Jews in these parts of the town are engaged in one or another sort of manual labour.'[68] In addition one has to take into account those groups involved as workers in Commerce, finance and Insurance and it is surely not to far fetched to suggest that the majority of the 32.16% of the Doornfontein, Bertrams and Jeppes inhabitants working in this sector would be workers. In another table detailing the status of males in the main occupations, Sonnabend finds that in the category of Commerce, Finance and Insurance 62.23% of males are working on their own account, while 37.77% are employees.[69] This table also gives a general indication of the division of Jews into employer/worker categories by occupation.

10/...

STATUS OF MALES IN MAIN OCCUPATIONS.

ccupation.	Working on own account.	Employees.
lumbers, mechanics, etc.	34.78	65.22
ailors, shoemakers, etc.	57.47	42.53
orkers in wood and furniture	45.30	54.70
ransport and Communication	57.15	42.85
ommerce, Finance, Insurance	62.23	37.77
rofessions	69.15	30.85
ersonal Service	63.05	36.95
lerks, etc.	10.15	89.85

Given the predominance of working class elements in Doornfontein, Bertrams and Jeppes, it is scarcely surprising that we should find this area to be the home of a militant organisation which, given the economic and political background of Johannesburg Jewry, was committed to Socialism. An article in the Labour Zionist, the organ of the Zionist Socialist Party in South Africa, congratulated its Doornfontein branch in 1946 for remaining in existence for 3 years, an achievement, according to the article, because 'Doornfontein has been and still is the stronghold of Bundists and Communists.'[70]

The Jewish Workers Club in Johannesburg, according to an article in the Proletarishe Shtime, was formed in 1929.[71] It seems that the idea was mooted at least a year before that[72] and certainly by 1928 a group emerged publishing a radical Yiddish journal called Dorem Afrika.[73] Dorem Afrika appeared first in July 1928 as a 'literary and social monthly magazine: the organ of the Yiddish literary society'. According to Grosman the journal set out 'singlehanded to fight and endeavour to change the outlook, beliefs and pattern of the local Jewish community and applied its efforts to that task with a self assurance and vehemence compared with which all previous attempts made in this direction paled into insignificance.'[74] While not agreeing that there was the need to change the outlook of the Jewish community, Grosman's quote does serve to illustrate the emergence of a substantially different social grouping among Johannesburg Jewry. I shall return to Dorem Afrika at a later point. At this stage I am concerned with the formation of the JWC.

Some former members of the Club have suggested its origins in a group of landsleit (countrymen) who used to meet informally in a flat in Gordon Road, Bertrams. Three elements attracted people to the flat: the fact that all those who went there were from the same area 'at home', and spoke Yiddish; that fact that Mrs. Saloner, the 'Yiddishe mama' of the flat always had a cup of tea and a sandwich available, something not to be scoffed at in those days of poverty; and the fact that one of

11/...

the few eligible young Jewish girls lived in the flat. All three elements were to be present in the decision to form the Club.

The JWC remained a Yiddish speaking organisation, committed to the use of Yiddish as the language of the Jewish masses and to the development of a Yiddish culture.[75] The conflict between the Yiddishists and those advocating the use of Hebrew as the language of the Jews is an old one. In the European context it dates back to at least the 1860's when a clash emerged between orthodox Jewry represented by the scholars and Rabbi's of the various communities of Eastern Europe in particular and the bearers of the Haskalah (enlightenment) movement who saw in Hebrew a lever to bring the Jews out of the medieval ghetto and shtetl into the 'modern' world of the urban Jewish merchant classes.[76] In a specifically political context the Bund argued that as Yiddish was the language of the Jewish masses, it had to be used as the medium of Bundist and socialist propaganda. Hebrew was portrayed as the language of the Jewish bourgeoisie and their political philosophy, Zionism. Hence the cultural arena was one of the major scenes of battle between Jewish workers and Jewish bourgeoisie, and between socialists and zionists.

Yiddish was the first language of the majority of immigrants to this country in the period under discussion. Ideological considerations aside therefore, a common 'Yiddishkeit' brought the various segments of Johannesburg Jewry together. The JWC published all its literature in Yiddish. It established a Yiddish theatre section and had a very impressive Yiddish choir, often brought out on Mayday to sing at various labour functions[77] and even heard singing the Red Flag in Yiddish on the S.A.B.C. in [78] A typical advert in the Forward announces a Chu Chu Tlulu (Satirical, Humanistic and Satirical) evening at 44 Von Brandis Street (the club's premises at the time).[79]

The social environment and function of the Club should not be underestimated. Although at its height there were only 300 paid up members[80], its influence extended to a far larger number of people and to all sections of the Jewish immigrant population because it was this hive of social activity. Ping pong was played every evening, chess was a nightly activity, there was a debating society, the theatre and choral groups already mentioned and a gymnastics club run by a Mr. Itzler. The Forward of May 19, 1933 announces a 'great proletarian masked ball' organised by the JWC, to be held at the Selborne Hall on Saturday May 27th. 'Collective Masks' says the announcement 'will be introduced for the first time in Johannesburg.' In addition socials and picnics were often held, a favourite date for JWC picnics being May day and Yom Kippur[81].

12/...

Thus the social functions of the Club were of extreme importance. They contributed to its large appeal amongst a certain group of Jews in Johannesburg. Jews came to a place where they didn't need to struggle with the language, where they could find companionship and often a husband or a wife; they could express their cultural needs in the drama or choral groups, or they could merely sit around, drink coffee, argue local and international politics of wander up the road with a crowd of friends to get some ice cream at the American Ice Cream Company in Beit Street. They would also be able to find out what was happening in South Africa and the world (or perhaps more particularly their world) for a wall newspaper was set up[82] and the JWC had as a particular function the distribution of socialist Yiddish papers such as Der Hammer and Morgen Vryheid, both emanating from the U.S.A.[83]

These cultural activities, however, had very important political implications. Not only were they seen as expressing proletarian culture, but also as a means of mobilising the Jewish street in the fight against capitalism. 'Cultural enlightment work has been placed on a clear class line after the clearing of the field of petty bourgeois elements, linking lectures (and plays, author) with topical political phenomenon of the local and international revolutionary struggle of the proletariat.'[84] The use of Yiddish culture in this perspective is seen as a weapon in the struggle against the 'Jewish bourgeoisie, the Zionists and the nationalists of all sorts.'[85] This discussion will be taken up at a later point with reference to the African Gezerd.

One of the chief objects of attack is the philosophy of Zionism, not only in its cultural aspects (seen in the use of Hebrew and the need for secular education) but also in its political dimensions. Thus Yiddishists and Socialists could form an alliance in an attack on Zionism. Commenting on an article in Dorem Africa entitled 'Dr. Landau's Pessimism' Grosman shows that this group of Yiddishists saw Zionism as a threat to Yiddish culture. 'In no other country... was the Zionist element and particularly its leadership as estranged from the masses of the people as they were in South Africa. They ruled the movement in a fascist spirit which even Moussolini could envy. They taught that the Jewish people had existed once upon a time, thousands of years ago, and would continue to exist again in some distant future some centuries hence. What constituted the 'Jewish People' of the present time was merely a 'Diaspora-mass' whose only duty was to support Zionist funds. These were the teachings of local Zionist to the Youth. No present existed; no other language than Hebrew (which the young people did not know) played any role in Jewish life.'[86]

13/...

This line of attack is extended by the JWC. Zionism is not merely a denial of Yiddish culture, but is seen as a tool in the hands of Jewish capitalists. An article in the Proletarishe Shtime entitled 'Palestine in the News again'[87] begins by stating 'South Africa has always been regarded by the World Zionist Organisation as one of the most important sources of millions of pounds for the Zionist adventure.' The editorial of Vol. 1 ,no. 1 of the P.S. states: 'Even the non-entity on the Jewish street, which calls itself the Yiddish Press bends over backwards to prove that it serves its capitalist land loyally. It coaxes the reader into the Zionist dream as well as calling the reader to blindly obey God and his earthly representatives.'[88] Another article on the 18th Zionist Congress in Prague connects Zionism with British imperialism in Palestine and argues that the Jewish bourgeoisie has formed an alliance with its British counterpart in an attack on Arab workers and peasants.[89]

The basis of the JWC's anti Zionist position lies in its denial of the possibility of a solution to anti-semitism under the capitalist order. A 'Declaration and Platform of the Jewish Workers Club' written in 1947 states this view explicitly:

> 'The war has proved clearly that the problems of men and nations and their desire for freedom and a full life can not be attained within the framework of the capitalist system, a system built on exploitation and oppression of the great majority by a minority.. for this reason:
>
> 1. the JWC considers that only socialism is capable of finally folving the economic, social and national-political problems of men and nations.
>
> 2. In those countries which have not yet attained Socialism, the security of Jewish life and living possibilities are closely dependent on the growth of freedom and democracy.
>
> 3. In contradiction to the views of political Zionism, that the Jewish problem can only be solved by the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine, the JWC therefore maintains that the Jewish problem CAN AND WILL be solved in the countries in which the Jews live.'

The memo goes on to state the Club's position with regard to Israel:

> 'Politically Zionism, with its watchword of a Jewish State, is opportunistic, relies on the ruling Imperialism, does not aim at an independent Palestine, and is basically directed against the interests of both the Jewish and Arab masses. The same applies to the Arab reactionary chauvinistic leadership which aims at maintaining the feudal rule over the Arab masses.'

14/...

The socialist alternative to Zionism took two forms. In the first place Jewish workers in South Africa were to be involved in the workers struggle in this country. In the main this meant acting as a support organisation to various left wing groups such as the Communist Party, the Friends of the Soviet Union, the Left Book Club, Ickaka Laba Sebenzi, (a workers defence organisation) as well as taking part in the anti-fascist struggle which took place in South Africa during the 1930's. (These aspects will be dealt with later in the paper).

In the second place an anti-Zionist stand meant attacking Zionists in South Africa[91] on the one hand, while supporting the establishment of Biro-bidjan as the autonomous egion for the Jews within the U.S.S.R.[92]

The African Gezerd, founded in 1932,[93] was the instrument of the anti-Zionist cause in South Africa. It provided the last major Jewish opposition to Zionism in this country. By the time of its first National Convention in January 1933 it boasted 1200 active members and 'many sympathisers all over the country.'[94] Throughout 1933 and 1934 the columns of Forward report weekly activities organised by the Gezerd. Socials and picnics are arranged[95] while numerous meetings are held to discuss, publicise and canvass moral and financial support for Biro bidjan. The following report in the Forward is typical of the Gezerd events.[96]

> "A meeting of the African Gezerd in the Cape Town Banqueting Hall was 'filled to capacity to celebrate the founding of Birbidjan. The meeting was presided over Mr. J. Meirowitz and rperesentatives of the Workers International Red Aid and the Communist Party delivered congratulatory speeches. Mr. E. Weinberg discussed the reaction of Zionism to the formation of the All Jewish Republic. Zionism, Mr. Weinberg indicated, had failed in its task. It remained to Russia to show them the way.'

I have not come across any reports of Gezerd activity after 1934. The concern of most left wing organisations in South Africa seem to turn after that date to the anti-fascist struggle both in Europe and in this country. I am therefore not sure when the Gezerd died, nor the specific reasons why. Its importance for the purposes of this paper lie in the fact that it represented an important alternative to Zionism as the dominant philosophy of the Jews in South Africa. The Gezerd had more wide-spread support than the JWC but one can see the similarity of their views on Zionism. The JWC supported the activities of the Gezerd and seems to have a less public presence during the years that the Gezerd was active. Many of the activities that previously went under the banner of the JWC, the picnics, socials, meetings and lectures were now sponsored by the Gezerd.

15/...

The Gezerd was seen as a more 'nationalist' institution than the socialist JWC by the JWC leadership. It is not pushing the point to far to suggest that the JWC saw the possibility of attracting support through the activities of the Gezerd. In a somewhat similar strategy to that of the Third International as regards the evolution of socialist society through various stages, Jews in South Africa would move from a 'nationalist' position to a 'socialist' one. Certainly it is true that the Jewish community in South Africa expressed a widely based support for the Gezerd. Many of them had links with Russie and supported the government which had overthrown Czarist oppression. They could not but support the attempts by the Bolsheviks to provide a better life for their kinsmen in Russia. A comment made by a well known and long established Zionist in Cape Town sums up the attitude of many Jews in South Africa at the time.[97]

> 'How could we be anti-Russian in those days when we knew that the Bolsheviks had alleviated the Czarist oppression of the Jews.'

In the course of the 1930's the concern for the Jewish community in Russia was subsumed within the general movement against Hitler and in the more specifically socialist concern for Russia in her conflict with Germany. Perhaps this is one of the reasons for the decline of the Gezerd.

The most important activities and contribution of the JWC are, I wish to argue, its involvement in the struggles and organisation of the left wing movement in South Africa during the 1930's. As a result a history of the Club falls more easily and assumes a greater significance as part of the history of working class organisation than as a part of the history of the Jews in South Africa. The reas is simple, and will be expanded upon in the conclusion. Jewish workers were a transitory phenomenon in this country, while working class conflict is not. To the extent that Jewish workers played a part in the building up of a movement in this country, their role has been an important and durable one. Put more succinctly in the words of a former chairman of the Club: 'There was no future in the JCW because Jewish workers became Jewish capitalists. Turn your energies towards exploring more worthwhile and long lasting organisation.'[98]

The history of the socialist left in South Africa in this period is noteworthy for three features. In the first place there is an intense involvement and interest International affairs, particularly as they affected the U.S.S.R. Secondly the South African Communist Party in particular is wracked (and many would argue wreck by the internal struggles that occur both over party leadership and over the 'cor line'.[99] Expulsions and denunciations were common and many prominent left winge

16/...

among them S.P. Bunting, E. Roux, S. Sachs and Fanny Klonnerman, were expelled from the Party. The third important feature of those years for our purposes is the amazing proliferation of left wing organisations, often manned by the same people, set up to support the many causes created by the situation in Europe. Among these were International Red Aid, The Friends of the Soviet Union, the Left Book Club, Ikaka Laba Sebenzi (a workers Defence organisation) and, in the late 30's. a joint committee for the Relief of Spain, a Czechoslovakian Emergency Committee and a committee supporting the Chinese in their war with Japan.

The JWC was active and involved in all of these aspects of the left. A glance at a list of their arranged talks and lectures, and of the issues raised in the Proletarishe Shtime confirms their international outlook. An article in Forward of May 19th, 1933 announces a series of lectures at the JWC every Tuesday night. Lectures include those by M.L. Leitman on 'The Modern Jewish Literature in Soviet Russia' and S. Edwards on 'The anti-Soviet Bloc...' On June 23rd 1933 there is a lecture on "The Present Immigration in Palestine." In October 1934 we find a lecture by Comrade Nikin on 'Fascism and Fusion'[100] and in February 1935 the JWC holds a mass meeting 'in connection with the trial of Comrade Rakos, Peoples Commissar, Hungarian Soviet, 1919'. The speakers were W.H. Andrews, J.M. Gibson and E. Roux.[101] In 1936 a mass meeting to discuss the Spanish situation is held at the JWC with Basner, Edwards and I. Trapido as speakers.[102] In 1939 we find the Club still active as a venue for debates, films and public meetings.

The articles in the Proletarishe Shtime over its life span from May 1932 - November 1933, reveal a similar concern. The ditorial of the first issue begins:[104]

> 'For the first time in the history of South Africa we proceed to issue a serious revolutionary organ in Yiddish. It is unneccesary to mention the need for such a forum which should reflect the life and struggle of the local proletariat and to inform it of the heroic battles and tasks of the fighting international army.'

The issue also contains articles on the Second Five Year Plan of the U.S.S.R. and an article by Gina Medem, who spent 18 months in South Africa helping to organise the Gezerd. The article is entitled From Shepetovka to Manchuria. Vol 1, Nos. 5-6 is concerned mainly with the October Revolution of 1917. The editorial of this issue ends in a tone which is characteristic of the journals of the period, and also indicates its international perspective. The editorial ends:

> 'Under the leadership of the Communist International, the Communist Parties of all lands will utilise the anniversary of the Great

October Revolution to mobilise the mass in the struggle:

> against the Capitalist offensive
> against Fascism and Reaction
> against the incipient imperialist war
> and against intervention in Russia and China
> for the destruction of the might of the bourgeosie in the whole world
> for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

This is not to say that the JWC was uninvolved in local issues. Indeed the articles on local issues in the Proletarishe Shtime of 1932 outnumber those on international issues. The first issue of the P.S. has an article by D. Walton, then chairman of the S.A.C.P. on 'The African Proletariat and the National Movement.' This is followed by S.A. Rochlin's contribution on 'The first echoes of class struggle among South African Natives', an article which starts:

> 'In the present fighting times, when the International workers movement witnesses the agony of rotten capitalist system, it is necessary to logically consider and clearly formulate the place and the function of the indigenous proletariat in the international struggle for economic freedom and political justice.'

He goes on to trace the origins of class conflict to 1837-40 in the period when 'chiefs like Sandile, Makama and Tiyale conducted a war against the European settlers in the Cape Colony.'[105]

This concern with indigenous class struggle dovetails with a series of lectures by E. Weinberg on 'The History of the Bantu Tribes in South Africa. The lecture on Friday May 19th, 1933, was on 'Zimbabwe Culture'[106]. An article by J.M. Sherman 'In the footsteps of spilled workers blood - historical episodes of 1913' is found in Vol. 1, No. 3, while Lazar Bach, a prominent C.P. member has an article on 'The Reformist Unions and the African Trade Unions' in Vol. 1, No. 4, October 1932.

We see therefore that the Club is involved in educating its members on both local and international issues,and discussing strategy statements about those issues.

The JWC seems to have been involved directly in the internal organisation and struggles that characterised the C.P. between 1928 and 1935. At the outset we see that the JWC and the CP have a number of informal links. A number of JWC members are at the same time members of the CP. The CP used the various premises of the JWC to hold party functions and meetings. A particularly important function that the JWC performed was its social one. It was one of the few places where party

members, members of all left wing groups, and more importantly, members of different race groups, could meet at a social level. Dances, lectures, picnics, plays were integrated affairs and one informant went so far as to say that the JWC was ahead of the Party in this respect. It should also be noted that this social integration was in accord with the political line of the JWC which saw the working class of South Africa as consisting of both black and white segments.[107]

An indication of the integration of the J.W.C. into the left wing movement of the time is given by the greetings extended on the third anniversary of the Club's establishment. J.B. Marks sent greetings on behalf of the S.A. CP. Edward Mofutsanyana representing the African Federation of Trade Unions, Joyce Mofutsanyana on behalf of the International Labour Defence, Willie Kalk for the Leather Workers Union and H. Basner for the Friends of the Soviet Union. In addition the Central Committee of the African Gezerd and the various sections of the J.W.C. which at that time were the Activist Brigade (concerned with pickets, and the distribution of leaflets), the Drama and Choir section, the Cultural Committee, the Physical Culture Committee, the General Planning Committee and the Publishing Committee.[108]

In addition we see that many of the writings of Communist Party Officials (Bach, Roux, Walton) were translated into Yiddish and published in the Proletarishe Shtime.[109] The JWC allied itself with the policies of the Third International, publishing attacks on the Second International,[110] and at a later point denouncing the Fourth International. Fourth Internationalists at that time like Fanny Klennerman and Max Gordon are still treated with scorn by the former Club members.

A particular function of the JWC was the use of the activist section to both break up and protect meetings. In his biography of Bunting, Roux describes how the members of the Club were used to break up a meeting which Bunting had arranged among his supporters to consider what steps should be taken to revoke the expulsions of himself, Malkinson, Weinbren, Tyler and Sachs. The C.P. decided to hold a meeting of the Labour Defence Organisation in the same hall at the same time. According to Roux, Lazar Bach, himself a newly arrived Lithuanian immigrant and a member of the Political Bureau, undertook to provide an audience from the members of the JWC. This audience started a fight with the Buntingites at the meeting and the meeting was closed.[111]

The Jewish Workers Club also provided the defence for J.B. Marks when he stood as the candidate for Parliament in the Germiston by-election in 1932. Roux's description of the meeting gives an indication of the fervour and jollity of politics in those days:[112]

19/...

> 'On that day (October 16, 1932) we set out early. It was a lovely morning with the brilliant sunshine and a clear sky of the high veld spring. A sympathizer has provided a motor lorry and on to this we piled speakers, interpreters, an assortment of stalwarts from the Jewish Workers Club and girls in their bright cotton frocks. On the way we laid our plans. Our supporters were to stand in close ranks around our platform facing the audience and were not to leave their places whatever in the way of disturbance might develop among the crowd. In retrospect there seems something of quite splendid absurdity in our journey that morning, some thirty young dreamers, setting forth to defeat the oppressors of the toiling masses.'

The Jewish Workers Club was also active in the violent struggles of the anti-fascist campaign in South Africa during the 1930's. Stories of the fights on the city hall steps are a part of the repertoireof any member of the JWC. They even set up their own first aid station in the offices of Dr. M. Joffe (who advertises reduced rates for medical services rendered to members of the JWC in the Proletarishe Shtime.[113] According to one interview, Jewish Workers would be beaten up on the city hall steps, be taken up to Dr. Joffe's rooms which were just opposite in 6 Barbican Buildings, cnr. Rissik and President Streets, and then rush down to re-enter the fray. These personal reminiscences are born out by a report in the Forward of the attempt to break up a mass meeting of the Relief Committee for the Victims of German Fascism. Stewards sent by the Mine Workers Union, the Furniture Workers Union, the Leather Workers Union, the Reef Shop Assistants Union, the Garment Workers Union and the Jewish Workers Club '...made them (the fascist supporters) realise that they were not in Berlin fighting defenceless workers and Jews but were in Johannesburg where they were liable to receive the medicine which they were intending to administer.'[114]

The support for the Communist Party is manifest in the fact that the CP felt that it could hold a meeting to explain the 1935 expulsions of Solly Sachs, Issy Diamond, Eddie Roux and Spilkin, on the premises of the J.W.C. A report in the Trotskyite paper, the Workers Voice, discusses a meeting at the J.W. Hall (sic) on 29th October 1935. At this meeting a 'running battle' over the 'correct party line' as regards the Native Republic slogan developed between Basner and Roux.[115] The choice of venue for this meeting, and for the launching of the attack on Roux indicates the support that the C.P. felt it had in its ongoing ideological struggle amongst the members of the J.W.C. in this period. The J.W.C. was thus an integral part of this fight, a fight which dominated and emasculated the Communist Party during the period.

The third and final theme to be discussed in this paper is the nature and extend of the activities of the J.W.C., in their own right, as a contribution to left wing organisation in the period under discussion. In discussing this theme one must

never lose sight of the fact that the club was a Jewish organisation, started and run by Jewish immigrants of Lithuanian origin. All its activities reveal this characteristic. Its concern with international affairs reflect its origins and immigrant nature. The fate of their original Jewish communities in Eastern Europe at the hands of the Nazis show that this concern was only too well founded.

Secondly, its activities here reveal its origins as a 'homeboy' group. Social functions were a result of Yiddish-speaking people having no where else to go. One of its early functions was to organise English classes for Yiddish speakers which Fanny Klennerman, later to be considered a Trotskyite deviant, ran.[116] Another initial function of the JWC was to organise the collection of money for political prisoners in Lithuania and Poland. One of the members, in jail in Lithuania for political activities in his early teens, described how he got foot and clothes from sympathisers outside.[117] His experience was parallelled by a number of people in the JWC and it is therefore understandable that they wished to use the comparatively wealthy status to send money back for political prisoners. To this end a Gesellschacft Ise Helfen Politische Arresteerde in Liet and Latland was established.[118] I do not have any further information about this organisation. This particular activity emerges again in 1931 when Ikaka Labasebenzi (The Workers Shield), a labour defence organisation was started in that year[119] with the support of the JWC.[120]

Perhaps the most enduring activity of the JWC is its education effort, education here seen in its broadest meaning. In addition to the propaganda, plays and cultural activities, as well as the night school already mentioned, there was a serious and sustained effort at political education. Speakers such as E. Roux, W.H. Andrews, A.Z. Berman, S. Buirski, E. Weinberg, and H. Basner gave lectures on the Tolpuddle Martyrs,[121] the Situation in Germany[122], on Fusion and Exemption from Pass Laws,[123] on the Foreign Policy of the U.S.S.R.,[124] and on the Fascist War in Abbysinia from a politico-economic view point.[125] Marxist theory and practice was also important. On the 16th July 1935 Basner gave a lecture on Trotskyism, while on 19th July I Woolfson led a discussion on a recent strike in the Textile industry.[126] E. Mofutsanyana lectured on 'Three Internationals with specific reference to the so-called Fourth International'[127] and he later gave a lecture on the situation of the Communist Party of South Africa.[128] Marxist political economy was discussed in lectures such as 'An Introduction to elementary Political Economy' by I. Lewis.[129]

The reasoning behind the programme is made quite clear in Levenberg's already quoted article. 'Our lectures were formerly given on general or scientific problems as well

21/...

as on theme relating to Eastern Europe. Later however, the main weight shifted to lectures acquainting members with the life and struggle of the indigenous Black, Boer and English workers against imperialist enslavement. The JWC also conducts a fierce (ideological-author) struggle against Zionism, national chauvinism and social fascism in the Jewish sphere.[130] Levenberg goes on to note that "...the attendance at lectures and discussions is not steady, is numerically small and not in accord with our actual membership".[131]

This statement reveals a number of things. Firstly that the Club consisted of a small group of political activists who maintained close links with the CP and who were actively involved in political struggle on both local and international fronts. Secondly, that a large number of JWC members came because of the activities offered nightly by the Club. This was recognised by the leadership who saw the Club as a means of recruiting members 'on the Jewish Street' through cultural and social activity into political activity. This assessment was based on the fact that at this historical point there was a significant and relatively large Jewish working class with a background of political consciousness. As we shall see, it is the decline in the working class element among Jewry that contributes to the failure, and demise, of the JWC.

The educational activity of the JWC reveals a feature of left wing organisation and activity since at least 1917, but probably well before that. Educational activity in the form of classes of topical lectures and the establishment of reading centres and libraries, are a constant feature of radical organisation. Undertaken at different times by different groups, lectures, topics and sometimes within a person's lifespan, even speakers are similar. Between 1917 and 1919 the JSB of the ISL is very prominent, and indeed dominant in Johannesburg in the organisation of propagand and education.[132] In 1917 the JSB opens up a library and reading room in the Palmerstone Hotel.[133] Between 1922 and 1923 the Young Communist League seems to take over the activities of the JSB in the educational field.[134] By 1931 the JWC becomes the most reported educational group, and in 1933 the African Gezerd seems to undertake most educational activity. In 1934 the Friends of the Soviet Union, focussing on a different educational aspect, i.e. more directly concerned with the German/Russian conflict, becomes prominent, while the late rO's is dominated by educational activities sponsored by the Left Book Club.

While not advocating this as a firm conclusion at this stage, it does seem as though the nature of radical organisations is such (perhaps this is true of all organisatic demand a formal education and propaganda apparatus. This was, as has been pointed out, undertaken by different groups at different times in South Africa but all

22/...

contributed to the building up of a left wing movement in this country. The JWC merits special mention in this respect.

In keeping with the example set by their predecessors of the JSB, the Jews of the JWC continued to help raise money for various organisations and causes. In October 1933 the Forward acknowledges 'a handsome donation from Mr. G. Weinstock of the JWC[135] In 1934 a meeting is held at the house of a member of the JWC to collect funds for a case against E. Roux who was being tried for incitement.[136] Roux himself testifies that members of the JWC engaged his wife for English lessons in the deliberate effort to support the Roux family in times of financial hardship.[137] Numerous members testified that they collected money for International Red Aid, and for various campaigns such as the Kubishev appeal, launched to help the Russian War effort in . The members of the JWC were also involved in the launching of a 'S.A. Foodship for Spain', sponsored by the Johannesburg Committee of the Friends of the Spanish Republic.[138]

The 1930's reveals an amazing capacity for people on the left to set up organisations in support of the various causes. In addition to the Friends of the Spanish Republic noted above (and it should be noted that a JWC member, Jack Flior, a furniture worker, was one of the few South Africans to fight in Spain as part of the International Brigade[139]), there is the emergence of the Friends of the Soviet Union,[140] the Left Book Club[141], the Co-ordinating Committee on Czechoslovakia, the League for the Maintenance of Democracy, the South African anti-Fascist Movement, the Independent Cultural Society, the Youth Peace Council, the League of Nations Union, the Youth League of South Africa and the Workers Liberty Movement.[142] The JWC participated in the activities of many of these groups.

The JWC seems to have been particularly active in the anti-Fascist struggle both on a local and an international level. By 1933 the JWC is participating in anti-Nazi and anti-war activity. Together with delegates from the Transvaal Leatherworkers Union, the Garment Workers Union, the South African Labour Defence League, the African Gezerd and the Johannesburg Unemployed Councils the JWC was present at a 'United Front Anti-war Conference of Trade Unions and Fraternal Organisations.' A motion passed at this meeting read:[143]

> 'That this conference of delegates from the trade unions and the mass organisations protests strongly against the brutal suppression of the revolutionary movement and mass assassinations of workers and Jews in Germany.'

The perception of Fascism as a class phenomenon is made clear at a speech made by Mr. N. Salmon at a meeting of the African Gezerd in the Alhambra Theatre in Doornfontein.[144]

> 'We cannot accept anti-semitism as an isolated fact in the life of the nation, independent of the general economy of the people, but, and especially in its present acute form, view it as a result of a deliberate policy adopted by a dying capitalism in its last and desperate struggle to maintain its stranglehold over the working class.'

The speaker goes on to unmask the class conflict inherent in the Jewish Identity:[145]

> 'Under the cover of non-interference in the inner affairs of a foreign country, the Jewish bourgeoisie has little to say against Hitler's fascism if he would only leave the Jews alone, but the Jewish masses, the Jewish toilers and small traders ought to be warned from being isolated in their struggle for their rights. It is only with the help of the German working class that Jewish safety will be regained and therefore it is in our own interest to support the German workers and encourage them in their desperate struggle.'

Similar sentiments are expressed at a National Conference against Fascism and War at which the JWC was present in 1935. According to Forward, 30,000 people were represented at the meeting.[146] A meeting organised by the JWC to condemn fascism in South Africa resolves to 'pledge ourselves to assist in organising a mass movement of the workers for the purpose of destroying the Fascist movement of South Africa.[147/148]

It should be remembered that the activities of the left during the 1930's contained a great deal of support that was anti-Nazi and pro-Russia. Much of the support for Russia was both because it was a potential ally in the anti-Nazi movement and because the Bolshevik government had alleviated anti-semitism in Russia. Thus trade union groups, members of the business community, the Jewish Board Deputies, the Jewish Workers Club and members of the clergy could quite happily associate with each other in an anti-Nazi stance. Even those Jews who did not subscribe to the socialist views of the JWC could participate in anti-fascist activities and their various appeals for Red Aid. At that stage links with Russia were stronger than they are today and some Jews worked for the African Russian Oil Products Company. The nature of Jewish suppo for the JWC was shown when the Club suddenly switched its line on Germany, following the Russian German Pact of 1939. Many Jewish workers left the JWC and many Jews joined up to fight against Hitler. It was not until Hitler attacked Russia and the CP/JWC line changed that the JWC (or the CP) was able to regain some of its lost suppo on this issue.

The Jewish communities fears of anti-semitism declined over a period after the war. In addition many of their links with Eastern Europe had been cut by the holocaust, her the personal attachment to Russia died. At the same time stories of anti-semitism

in Russia began to emerge. A former chairman of the JWC told me that at first he wouldn't believe the stories but, as, according to him, they became 'obviously true', he gradually became disenchanted with the socialist solution to the Jewish problem and turned to Zionism.[149] This view was expressed by a number of the members of the JWC whom I interviewed although some stated that evidence had not shown Zionism to contain the answer either.

The final activity that needs to be considered here is the actual involvement of the JWC and some of its prominent members in worker organisation in South Africa. Although there doesn't seem to be any evidence of a decision to get involved in trade union organisation, or the CP, there is evidence of some involvement in both of these.

There were obvious links with the Communist Party. These have already been discussed. Certainly the Leadership of the JWC saw itself as a mass organisation,[150] closely linked to the activities and aims of the CP. It would also seem that many ordinary members, impelled by their history in the left wing movements in Russia, Lithuania and Latvia felt similarly about the CP. Many participants, however, were neither aware of the line, nor felt particularly strongly for it, but came to be with landleit for a pleasant evening and often to be anti-Nazi and in a general way pro-Russian.

There were also links with those trades in which Jews were prominent workers. Although Solly Sachs was regarded as a renegade by the JWC, the Club did interest itself at times in the affairs of the Garment Workers Union where there were a significant number of Jewish Workers. On 28th March 1930 a public trial held under the auspices of the JWC was held. 'The occasion for the event' reported the Forward 'has been found in the widespread story to the effect that the Garment Workers Union (Tvl) was instrumental in inducing the Union Government to pass the quota bill.[151]

Through personalities like Willy Kalk of the Leatherworkers Union, Issy Hayman and M.L. Leitman of the Reef Native Trade Shop Assistants Union, Jack Flior and B. Levenberg of the Furniture Workers Union, Issy Galvin of the Hairdressers Union, Sidney Marks and Issy Glazer of the Bakers Union, and Mrs. Grund and Ray Harmel of the Garment Workers Union, the JWC had some contact and influence with these groups. At times the Shop Assistants Union acknowledged a donation from the JWC.[152]

The relationship between the Shop Assistants Union and the JWC reveals and adds to our knowledge of the social composition of the JWC. One informant suggested that the Shop Assistants were a different group to those in the JWC. Only three members of the JWC, Schochet, Leitman and Haymen, were apparently members of the Shop Assistants Union. The

25/...

shop assistants were classified as 'petty bourgeois types', people who were attempting to work for a while and save sufficient money to open up their own shops in time. The JWC attempted to organise and influence these people through social functions, dances and concerts as well as encourage them to come to lectures. Apparently these efforts met with little success.

Members of the JWC put this failure down to the fact that the shop assistants were of a different class, that they were an aspirant petty bourgeoisie which had little in common with a working class. Leaving aside the validity of this analysis, it does point to the fact that the members of the JWC saw themselves as, and were, manual workers - artisans and tradesmen.

The connection between the JWC and the organised labour movement noted above do not mean that these connections played a large part in either the work of the JWC or in activities of the various unions. It is, however, important to note that these influences were there and that more particularly they represented particular strategic and ideological positions which formed the basis of many a struggle within them. The conflicts over 'reformism' between Ray Harmel and Solly Sachs in the Garment Workers Union, or between Yudke Shochet and Beeny Weinbren in the Shop Assistants Union have still to be documented. In the main they seem to have been over the issues that the Communist Party argued with non-Communist groups as regards the role of the white worki class or the nature of support for Russia. The question of the political role of industrial organisations was also prominent.

It remains to analyse the reasons for the decline and disappearance of the JWC. As far as I can make out the Club reached its height in the middle 30's, was then active from about 1935-1945 in the campaigns of other organisations, and died a somewhat unauspicious death between 1948 and 1950. One of those interviewed has noted that the financial assets of the Club were not dispensed with until the late 1950's, with the money going to the left wing newspaper New Age and Yiddishe Volkshule.

There are a number of reasons for the demise of the Club. In the first place the social group that the Club catered for, disappeared. The Jewish community, or more particularly the immigrant community of Doornfontein became more educated and more integrated. The need for a Yiddish speaking organisation declined as more and more Jews became fluent in English and Afrikaans. 'Yiddish, the glue, disappeared'.[153] In addition the cultural atmosphere and activities of the Yiddish-speaking group declined. The choir and dramatic societies lost their interest for a Jewish community that was increasingly attracted to Anglo-American films, theatre, songs and culture. It should be noted that a Yiddish press, and some Yiddish cultural societies still

exist in Johannesburg, but as a shadow of their former selves, and certainly with no political programmes comparable to those that have been discussed. In the long term, Saron's assessment is correct:[154]

> '....in the long run it was the Anglo Jewish pattern which, at any rate in its externals, prevailed in South Africa, although it underwent important changes in its spirit and inner content. In other words, the basic trend was for the 'Russian' Jews to become acculturated to the older English-speaking section. It was a case of pouring Litvak spirit into the Anglo-Jewish bottles.'

As I hope this paper points out, it was not only in its externals that the Jewish community changed.

A second important trend is that those second generation Jews who were committed to socialism went straight into the S.A.C.P. or a similar socialist organisation. They were interested in directly political organisations, and not in organisations deflected and mediated by cultural activities. Being younger and more acculturated, they were not attracted by the 'Yiddishkeit' of the JWC. Thus no young leadership came into the JWC to continue its organisation.[155]

Thirdly the Nationalist victory in 1948 created many fears in the Jewish community. At that stage the rapproachment between the Jewish community and the Nationalist Party was not as cordial as it is today and the Party in the Transvaal still had a clause forbidding Jewish members. As a result many a bonfire burnt in many a Jewish home, destroying books, pamphlets, leaflets and probably all the records of the JWC.

Another important reason for the demise of the Club lay in the emergence of accounts of anti-semitism in Russia, and Eastern Europe as well as the need to find a homeland for the Jews of Europe. Israel seemed to be the obvious answer to both these problems. Under the impetus of the first Arab Israeli War in 1948, many Club members took the first steps to becoming confirmed Zionists.

Finally, one must look to the changed economic status of the Jews as a group. A recent survey of the socio-economic position of South African Jewry,[156] based on the 1970 census figures found 98.6% of the Jews living in urban areas,[157] with 80% living in the major cities of Johannesburg, Cape Town, Germiston and Durban.[158] In Johannesburg only 1% of Jewry have no education while 55% have a matric, as opposed to 29% of the general white population.[159] As regards the occupations structure of the Jewish population, Cohen and Dubb found that 'whereas the largest proportion of any Jewish male production workers in any city (Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth) was 8% of all economically active males, the smallest proportion of males was 31% (Cape Town and Pretoria)[160]. In a

27/...

comparison of the occupation distribution of Jewish and urban white males for selected areas and for the country as a whole, they found that 'Jews are over represented in the professional, administrative and sales categories and grossly under represented in the blue collar occupations.'[161] In this connection an interesting discrepancy emerges between the foreign-born and the local-born Jews. 'Thus with the exception of Pretoria there are considerably more professionals amongst the local-born Jews than amongst the foreign-born. Foreign-born Jews are seen to predominate in sales (working proprietors and salesmen) and to a lesser extent in administrative, managerial and executive occupations.... There is also a somewhat larger proportion of foreign-born production workers'[162] '...In fact it may be noted that in virtually all sections of the economy there is among Jews, both male and female a higher proportion of employers than in the white population as a whole.'[163]

To put all of this more succintly in the words of one of those interviewed: 'Jewish Workers have become Jewish Capitalists.' While it is true that even in the period under discussion the Jewish working class, seen as productive, blue collar workers, was not large, it is as true that Jewish employers or self employed men and women could in most cases not be called rich or capitalists in the sense of owning the means of production in any significant way. Indeed 'Kafferitnik' store owners moved quite easily with their employees at the JWC, as did apprentice tailors with their masters. If there was class conflict, it was the conflict of paupers.

Again this is not to deny that there were not some major Jewish capitalists. A glance at the Jewish Yearbooks of 1929 and of 1965 indicate the extent of Jewish owners of capital, who include among their number Barney Barnoto, Sammy Marks, and the so-called Mielie King E. Lazarus.[164] But these were mainly Jews of British and German origin. The age of Lithuanian capitalism was yet to come. The description of Jewish poverty given by B. Sachs in the early years of the century were to be true of the 1930's as well.[165] It is not until the war years that the Eastern European Jews as a group move from Doornfontein into Cyrildene, Yeoville and Houghton.

In accounting for the relatively rapid upward occupational mobility of the Jews in South Africa, Cohen and Dubb set forward a number of propositions advocated in a number of American studies.[166] These propositions account for the relatively rapid mobility in terms of (a) the high value which Jews have traditionally placed on education (b) a moderate non-ascetic worldliness, utilitarianism and empiricism, sobrietry, sexual morality and group cohesiveness and (c) a long history of urban experience.[167] Fishman is quoted as stating: "The much touted 'Protestant ethic' has been found to have been preceeded by the Jewish takhlis (yiddish 'purpose', 'goal')

28/...

syndrome'[168] Cohen and Dubb go on to say: that 'although such explanations must always remain with the realm of speculation, since they refer to past attitudes and events, they do seem to fit the data not only in the American Jewish situation but in the South African too.[169]

While not denying aspiration values and the desparate attempt to get out of the ghetto as factors in the upward mobility of South African Jewry, it seems to me that the reason for the rise of Jewish capitalists in this country lie far more in the socio-economic structure within which Jews as artisans, shop assistants and workers found themselves in within this country. A comparison with the structural position of the Jews in Eastern Europe at the turn of the century illustrates the point.

The Pale of settlement was characterised by the fact that in the provinces of Minsk, Vitebsk, Moglieve, Vilna, Grodno and Kovno (i.e. the n.w. region of the then Russian empire) the Jewish element predominated in the urban proletariat.[170] This Jewish proletariat, however, was emerging as an industrial proletariat by the 1900's. No longer was the Jewish apprentice able to 'dream of independence' and at the first opportunity 'leave his master and open his own shop or become a journeyman'[171] Martov, the Jewish Menshevik leader noted that by the 1900's workers in the larger establishments saw that they had little chance of changing their status as workers, while a study of Vilna carpenters after the 1905 Revolution revealed that the carpenters no longer '...regard themselves as future employers; they have become permanently hired labourers.[172]

Thus the industrialisation process at work in Russia during this period produced cleavages between Jewish workers and Jewish employers which confirmed the status of Jewish workers as precisely that. No longer was there any structural possibility of a mass of Jewish workers becoming Jewish employers, even for a brief period. It was in this role organised that in the Bund the Jewish proletariat was to play an important part in the 1905 and the 1917 Revolutions.[173]

This of course was not the case in South Africa. South Africa, as Cohen and Dubb point out in a footnote,[174] did not have the highly differentiated economy which might have confronted the Jews who emigrated to the United States. Here the underdeveloped business and finance sectors enabled Jews with iniative to move out of their disadvantaged immigrant position. In addition many unskilled and semi-skilled jobs were closed to Jews, and whites generally, as these would be taken up in the main by Africans, Indians or Coloureds. The political and economic conditions which created the white labour aristocracy served to ensure that Jewish workers, or 'penny capitalists' (to use the title of Sol Tax's book) who also had the attributes noted by Cohen and Dubb above,

would escape the position of their fellows in Eastern Europe. Thus Jews were able to take advantage of the industrialization of South Africa to escape from the shtetl in one generation, faster perhaps than any similar Jewish immigrant community elsewhere in the world.[175] That they are as successful as the figures produced here show is in part due to the characteristics suggested by Fishman and Cohen and Dubb, but these are secondary to the structural considerations that have been noted.

By 1970 they are indeed one of the most successful ethnic groups to operate as capitalists in South Africa, and as such there is no reason to suppose that their activities as manufacturers, farmers, shop owners and property owners should have been based on factors any different from those which permitted the general development of the South African economy, viz a dependence on, amongst other things, a cheap ~~and docile~~ labour supply, created in the interests of an expanding capitalist formation.[176]

By 1960, and perhaps even by 1950, it is indeed possible to agree with Saron that 'Jews share the attitudes of most (white-author) South Africans. Apart from the few Jews who have been among the militant supporters of the campaign for non-European advancement the majority incline to moderate middle of the road policies which avoid extremes of both the left and of the right.'[177] But to agree with this statement is to understand why this is so, from a historical perspective, and to recall that more than a 'few Jews' were at one stage militantly anti-capitalist, and therefore anti-Zionist. Even if their membership was small, their influence at particular times in South Africa's history, was widespread, significant and important. It was important as part of a general struggle, a struggle which, for the JWC, had its height in the anti-fascist conflicts of the 1930's and the attempts then to permit black South Africans to participate in the governing of their country in its economic and political aspects. It is to these struggles, and to this period of history, that the history of the Jewish Workers Club properly belongs.

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Notes

1) The specific nature of Lithuanian Jewry : Aaron Clarn
it is non-industrial. : doesn't correspond to Mendelssohn
description of Pale of Russia.

NOTES

(1) Saron, Gustav and Hotz, Louis (eds), The Jews in South Africa, Cape Town, OUP 1955,

(2) Ibid, p. xii.

(3) Ibid, p. xvi.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid, p. 36.

6. Ibid p 76 See also Gitlin, Marcia The Vision Amazing, The Story of South African Zionism. Johannesburg, 1950, Part II, Chapter 1, 3, p. 140.

7. The General Jewish Workers Union (Bund) in Russia and Poland (Lithuania was added later) was a Jewish social democratic party founded in Vilna in 1897. For an account of the Bund see Mendelsohn, Ezra. Class Struggle in the Pale Cambridge University Press, 1970.

8. Saron, G., 'Epilogue-1910-1955', in Saron and Hotz op cit p 296

9. See E. Roux, S.P. Bunting, A Political Biography, The African Bookman, 1944, pp. 138-39 and 154 and Eddie and Win Roux, Rebel Pity, Penguin, 1972, p. 125-127.

10. I am thinking here particularly of Roux's political history, Time Longer than Rope, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1966, and H.J. and R.E. Simons, Class and Colour in South Africa 1850-1960, Penguin African Library, 1969.

11. S A Rochlin, in an important article on early Jewish socialist activity notes that Benjamin Norden, an 1820 settler and a founder of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation in 1841 was linked with one of the first worker demonstrations to take place in the Cape during the 1849-50 anti convict agitation. See Rochlin S A. 'They Helped to Shape our Future. An account of Jewish Participation in the early Socialist and Progressive Movements in South Africa.' The South African Jewish Frontier, September,

12. Mendelsohn, op. cit., Chapter 1.

13. Ibid., p. viii.

14. For a description of the conditions under which Jews lived in the first two decades of the century, see B. Sachs, Mists of Memory, London, Vallentine, Mitchell and Co., 1973, Chapter 4.

15. Lea Leibowitz, 'The Early Days of Jewish Settlement in the Transvaal' Jewish Affairs, August 1967, p. 18.

16. Rochlin, op. cit.

17. Ibid.

18. Saron and Hotz, op. cit., p. 35.

19. Rochlin, op. cit.

20. Ibid

21. Cope, Jack, Comrade Bill, Cape Town, n.d., p.192.

22. Hester Cornelius, 'A Rebels Daughter', in E.S.Sachs, Rebels Daughters, MacGibbon and Kee, 1957, p.63-64.

23. Rochlin, op.cit.

24. Ibid. See also Gitlin, op.cit., p.138-40.

25. Herrman, Louis, A History of the Jews in South Africa, Cape Town, 1935.

26. Saron and Hotz, op.cit

27. Rochlin, op.cit

28. See article entitled 'The 18th Zionist Congress'. Proletarishe Shtime, vol.1, nos 5-6, November 1932.

29. Personal interview. Informant wishes to remain anonymous.

30. See Roux, S P Bunting ... on this point. See also Legassick, Martin, Class and Nationalism in South African Protest: The S A Communist Party and the Native Republic 1928-34 Eastern African Studies XU, Syracuse University, July 1973.

31. International. April 24th 1921.

32. See footnote 28 above.

33. Harrison, W.H. Memoirs of a Socialist in South Africa, 1903-48, Cape Town, n.d., p.68.

34. See B.Sachs, Multitude of Dreams, Johannesburg, 1949, Book ii, Chapter 11, for a description of these areas.

35. International, June 8th 1917, p.2.

36. International, September 7th 1917.

37. Interview with S Buirski.

38. For an insight into the relationship between the Communist Party and the mass organisations see Roux, S P Bunting..., p.113.

39. International. September 21st 1917.

40. See V.I.Lenin, 'Does the Jewish Proletariat need an independent political party', Selected Works, Vol.2., Lawrence and Wishart, London 1936.

41. Charles E Woodhouse and Henry J Tobias, 'Primordial Ties and Political Process in pre revolutionary Russia: The Case of the Jewish Bund' Comparative Studies in Society and History 8, April 1965, p.346.

42. See Mendelsohn, op.cit. See also Greenburg, Louis, The Jews in Russia, Yale University Press, 1965 (esp. vol.2, Chapter VI). Henry J.Tobias, 'The Bund and Russia until 1903', Russian Review 20, 4 October 1961. 'Russia, not Palestine', International. February 15th 1918.

43. International, April 1[illegible] 1921.

44. B.Levenburg, 'Three years of the Jewish Workers Club', P.S. 1, 5/6 November/December 1932.

45. International, September 7[illegible] 1917.

46. Ibid., September 12[illegible] 1919.

47. Ibid., May 9[illegible] 1919.

48. Ibid., April 11[illegible] 1919.

49. There was a Jewish Workers Club in Cape Town which was much smaller and played a lesser part than the Johannesburg group in general left wing activity. It will not be considered in this paper.

50. Saron and Hotz, op.cit., p.16.

51. Dubb, Allie, 'Retrospect and Prospect in the Growth of the Jewish Community in the Republic of South Africa', in U.O.Schmelz et al. (eds), Papers in Jewish Demography, Jerusalem, 1973, p.108.

52. Official figures made available to the South African Board of Deputies show that a total of 16 532 Jewish immigrants entered the country from 1927-36. 6 510 (39%) came from Lithuania, 1 593 (10%) from Latvia, and 2 513 (15%) from Poland. Dubb, op.cit. footnote 6, p.107.

53. Dubb, op.cit.

54. The Jewish Pale of Settlement was at first clearly defined in 1835. It consisted of the regions of 'New Russia', the Ukraine, Bellrussia-Lithuania, Polish territories added to the Empire after the Napoleonic Wars and some areas of the Baltic Provinces. See Mendelsohn, op.cit., p.3.

55. 'In 1857 a survey by the Provincial Board of Finance of Minsk of the occupations of the Jewish population of that city established that out of every hundred Jews, 2,3% were merchants, 4,3% engaged in agricultural pursuits, 22,8% were artisans, 48,4% were burghers with definite occupations and 22,4% had no occupation whatsoever. The Russian economist and statistician, Zelensky, ... maintained that a percentage of 22,4 for the unemployed was far from accurate ..... Zelensky contended that one half, if not three quarters of the Jewish population could be described as living a useless and parasitic life as brokers and hucksters. This situation he ascribed not to laziness or indisposition to work but rather to lack of means or opportunity of engaging in productive labour.' Greenburg, Louis, The Jews in Russia, vol.1, Yale University Press, 1944, p.161. Greenberg makes similar observations for the period around the turn of the century, see Greenburg, Vol.2, op.cit., p.142.

56. Greenburg, Vol.2, op.cit., Chapter 11.

57. Ibid., p.138.

58. Mendelsohn, op.cit., p.viii.

59. Ibid, p.146-7 and also p.53.

60 H.Sonnabend, 'Statistical Survey of Johannesburg Jewish Population 1935', mimeo.

61. Sonnabend, Table xix, p.22.

62. Ibid., Table xxii, p.25.

63. In 1926 there were 2 000 shop assistants on the Reef working either in concessions stores on the mines or in the eating houses. Workers in the eating houses worked 70-80 hours a week. Workers in the concessions stores worked similar hours, getting 15 minutes off for breakfast and a half hour for dinner. Many only got a day off every fortnight. See article 'Sweating in Native Stores Along the Reef', Forward, January 8th 1926. See also an article by Adolph Shapiro 'The Greener', The Judean, vol.2, July 1927, which states 'My Dreams are shattered. I work in a kaffir shop for £5 a month, and I am told that I am very lucky.'

64. International, 7th December 1923.

65. Ibid.

66. Mendelsohn, op.cit., p.60.

67. Sonnabend, op.cit., p.25.

68. Ibid., p.24.

69. Ibid., p.27.

70. Labour Zionist, November-December 1946, p.8.

71. Levenberg, op.cit.

72. Personal interviews.

73. Grosman, Michael Pesah A Study of the trends and tendencies of Hebrew and Yiddish Writings in South Africa since their beginnings in the early 90's of the last century to 1930. Ph.d. Thesis Wits University 1973 p.996. thesis

74. Ibid., p.999.

75. According to the 1936 census, 13 823 of the foreign born population gave Yiddish as their home language (p xiii) while in Johannesburg 7 758 people gave Yiddish as their home language (p xiii) (see also table 6, Population Census for 1936). In 1946 the figure for Johannesburg and suburbs was 7 126 (Table 16, Census for 1946) while 1 821 Yiddish speaking people in the Transvaal said they could not speak either English or Afrikaans (Table 17, 1946 Census). In 1951 402 Yiddish speaking people in Johannesburg said they could not speak either English or Afrikaans (Table 15, 1951 Census).

76. See Mendelsohn, op.cit., p.vii, p.36f and p.62. Greenberg, vol.1, op.cit., Chapter II.

77. At a Mayday meeting held under the auspices of the Friends of the Soviet Union the JWC choir gave a 'creditable rendering of the International and We are builders in Yiddish'. Forward, May 10th 1935.

78.

79. Forward, 21st July 1933, p.3.

80. Figure given in a number of interviews.

81. On Thursday 18th September 1934 the JWC was to hold an 'anti-religious meeting' at which 'a full and varied programme will be provided'. Forward, September 14th 1934, p.7.

82. Levenberg, op.cit.

83. For a graphic and illuminating picture of the social atmosphere of the club see Roux.E, 'Rebel Pity', op.cit. pp.125-126.

84. Levenberg, op.cit.

85. Ibid.

86. Grosman, op.cit., p.1, 003-4.

87. P.S., November-December 1932.

88. P.S., 1, 1, May 1932.

89. '18th Zionist Congress' P.S. 2,1, November 1933.

90. Declaration and Platform of the Jewish Workers Club, 15 Upper Ross Street, Doornfontein, found in English and Yiddish.

91. One person interviewed described his amazement at coming into Johannesburg from the platteland to find Jews fighting Jews outside the Plaza Theatre in Jeppe Street. The JWC had apparently sent people to disrupt a meeting being held there at which Jabotinsky was due to speak. This incident took place in 1933. As late as 1942 the JWC was attempting to fight Zionism from within by participating in the Jewish Board of Deputies and putting alternative policies up for consideration. See an article 'Inconsistencies of Jewish Workers Club', Labour Zionist, October 1942.

92. For a detailed discussion of Birobijan see R.K.Cope., 'Birobidjan', Trek, 28th June 1946.

93. Forward, February 3rd 1933.

94. Ibid.

95. See Forward, 2nd March 1934.

96. Forward, 25th May 1934, p.5.

97. Interview with Mr D. Zuckerman, Cape Town, October 1975.

98. Interview with S Buirski.

99. See Legassick, op.cit., Roux, S.P.Bunting, esp. Chapter 10 and passim. Simons and Simons, op.cit., Chapters 17 and 19.

100. Forward, 12th October 1934, p.6.

101. Ibid., 1st February 1935, p.7.

102. Ibid., 2nd October 1936 p.1.

103. Ibid., 27th January 1939, p.5 and August 18th 1939, p.5.

104. P.S., vol.1, no.1, May 1932.

105. S A Rochlin 'The first echoes of class struggle amongst South African Natives' P.S. vol 1 no 1 May 1932

106. Forward May 19th 1933 p 6

107. '(The South African worker) has to take an active interest in that (international) fight and join the fighting campaigns of the International proletariat. Don't let yourselves be lulled by open or disguised bourgeois agents who want to calm you with sweet lullabys that South Africa is an exception. They'll tell you our money is secure - we need to protect ourselves only against the blacks! 'Whites are well renemerated' and other such lying claims'. Editorial P.S. vol 1 no 1 May 1932

108. P.S. 1, 5/6 November-December 1932

109. See Walton D 'The African Proletariat and the National Movement' P.S. 1, 1 May 1932 E Roux 'The Uprising against Imperialism in South West Africa' P.S. 1,3 September 1932 L Bach 'The Reformist Unions and the African Trade Unions' P.S. 1, 4 October 1932

110. See an article on the Second International entitled 'A Convention of Traitors' P.S. 2,1 November 1933

111. Roux S P Bunting ... pp 138-39

112. Roux Rebel Pity p 134

113. P.S. vol 1 nos 5-6 November-December 1932 carries a notice about medical and judicial aid to members 'at reduced rates'. Those involved include Dr M Joffe (doctor), Dr Singer (dentist), Max Ruben (chemist) and H Basner (soliciter).

114. Forward 10th November 1933

115. 'Stalinist Party Split' Workers Voice November-December 1935 p 4-5

116. Interview with Miss Klennerman Confirmed by other club members interviewed.

117. Personal interview. Informant wished to remain anonymous.

118. Same interview.

119. The International Red Aid was a branch of the Berlin based Internazionale Rote Hilfe, which was established to help political prisoners. The South African branch was started by Ray/Alexander in Cape Town in 1930/31. In 1931, at a conference of IRA and other prison aid societies the Ikaka Labsebensi was formed.

120. See an article 'Inkaka Labasebenzi' P.S. 1,1 May 1932

121. Forward 5th October 1935

122. Ibid 17th March 1933

123. Ibid 12th October 1934

124. Ibid 7th June 1935

125. Ibid 31st January 1936

126. Ibid 12th July 1935

127. Ibid 11th October 1935

128. Ibid 25th October 1935

129. Ibid 24th April 1936

130. Levenberg op cit

131. In this article Levenberg notes that membership went from 45 in March 1932 to 207 by May of that year. At the height of its popularity, Club membership seems to have been around 300.

132. See International 8th June 1917; August 24th 1917; November 16th 1917; April 12th 1918; May 3rd 1918; November 14th 1919.

133. International 23rd November 1917

134. For a list of the YCL lectures January-March 1923 see International January 5th 1923

135. Forward October 20th 1933 The Guardian of 23rd April 1942 acknowledges a cheque of £1 000 from the JWC.

136. Forward February 9th 1934

137. Roux Rebel Pity p 155

138. The Forward of 27th January 1939 announces the launching of the fund . The involvement of the JWC was noted by many of those interviewed.

139. Forward 24th February 1939 Flior was not the only JWC member to go to Spain. Another was Sam Epstein.

140. Umsebenzi 30th October 1931

141. Forward 30th September 1938

142. These organisations are noted in Forward 30th September 1938

143. Forward 31st March 1933

144. Ibid 12th May 1933

145 Ibid

146. Ibid May 3rd 1935

147. Ibid 5th June 1936

148. The anti-fascist struggle within South Africa during the 1930's is a very under researched topic. I have not been able to sort out conflicting claims by various groups as to who was active and who was not in this period. Certainly there is a lot of animosity between the former JWC members and the Board of Deputies on this issue. In addition one would like to know more about the role of the trade unions in this particular struggle.

149. Personal interview. Informer wished to remain anonymous.

150. See footnote 38.

151. Forward 28th March 1930 p 4

152. Ibid 5th October 1934

153. Personal interview with Mr Y Shochet.

154. G Saron 'The making of South African Jewry' in L Feldman (ed) 'South African Jewry' Johannesburg 1965 p 17

155. By 1970 76,2% of South African Jews had been born locally, and only 11,2% in eastern Europe. Dubb op cit p 5

156. Mervyn Cohen and Allie A Dubb 'Some Socio Economic aspects of the South African Jewish Population according to the official census of 1970' Paper delivered to the World Congress of Jewish Studies August 1973 (forthcoming)

157. Ibid p 2

158. Ibid p 3

159. Ibid p 6

160. Ibid p 10

161 Ibid

162. Ibid p 10/11

163. Ibid p 13

164. See S A Jewish Yearbook 1929 and Louis Hotz "Jewish Contributions to South Africa's Economic development" in L Feldman (ed) op cit

165. See footnote 34.

166. Joshua A Fishman 'The emerging picture of Modern American Jewry' Journal of Jewish Communal Service 37, 1 1960-61
Sklare, Marshall The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group Free Press Glencoe 1958 Goldstein S and Goldschneider C Jewish Americans Prentice Hall 1968

167. Cohen and Dubb op cit p 11

168. Fishman op cit p 27 quoted in Cohen and Dubb op cit p 11

169. Cohen and Dubb op cit p 11

170. Mendelsohn op cit

171. Ab Cahan 'Bildung un sotsialistishe propanganda bay yidishe bale melokhes in di litvishe 'Historishe shriftn (Vilna-Paris 1939 III, 397) Quoted in Mendelsohn op cit p 9

172. Quoted in Mendelsohn p 10

173. See Mendelsohn op cit and Greenberg op cit

174. Cohen and Dubb op cit footnote 16

175. Ibid

176. See M Legassick "South Africa. Capital Accumulation and Violence" Economy and Society 3, 3 August 1974

177. Saron G in Saron and Hotz op cit p 375

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

A F R I C A N S T U D I E S I N S T I T U T E

African Studies Seminar Paper
to be presented in RW 7003 (7th floor) at
4.00p.m. MONDAY 10TH AUGUST 1992

Title: African Trade Unions and the South African State, 1937-47: The Recognition Debate Reassessed.

by: Peter Alexander

No. 320

AFRICAN TRADE UNIONS AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN STATE, 1937-47: THE RECOGNITION DEBATE REASSESSED

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In April 1942, the Prime Minister, General Smuts, decided that African trade unions should be granted full legal recognition under the Industrial Conciliation Act. The Act - which had been introduced, in 1924, by the first Smuts administration - used a definition of 'employee' which excluded all pass-bearing Africans (ie. most African men). Under the Act, trade unions composed of 'employees' could be registered, and these registered unions were provided with access to the various institutions for conflict resolution established by the Act; African men were generally excluded from these registered trade unions. The racial division of the working class and the subordinate status of African workers were thereby reinforced and institutionalised. If, in 1942, Africans had been included within the definition of 'employee', the subsequent history of South Africa would have been very different. However, early in the December of that year, the cabinet decided not to proceed with a change to the law, and, indeed, it was not until 1979 that African unions received legal recognition. Why did Smuts agree to redefine 'employee'? And why did he change his mind? These are the principal questions which this paper seeks to address.

Hitherto, the most detailed consideration of the recognition debate was that presented recently by David Duncan.[1] However, Duncan's focus was a rather narrow one, the state bureaucracy, and he tended to exaggerate the role of senior civil servants and to downplay the significance of conflicting class interests and the pivotal position of Smuts. In an earlier paper on the subject, Dave Lewis correctly identified this weakness as a form of 'idealism'.[2] However, Lewis did not make use of archival sources and his own account now looks rather dated. Both Lewis and Duncan were influenced by a Poulantzasist view of the state which, although it has some merits, tends to underestimate the dynamic interplay between the state and wider social forces. I have sought to avoid this weakness, and hope that the resulting analysis sheds some new light on the character of the state and on the politics of different classes in this important period.

Although the main drama of the recognition debate took place in 1941 and 1944, there was an opening act, which occurred in between 1938 and 1940, and a finalé, which took place between 1945 and 1947. It will be necessary to consider both of these subsidiary episodes, but especially the former, because positions which were adopted in this earlier period helped to shape later events.

The Departments

The South African economy experienced rapid expansion in the period 1933-39, and this was particularly marked in private manufacturing, where the total employed increased by 94 percent. This process continued during the war years, when total employment in this sector increased by a further 45 percent, to reach 399,111. By the time of the 1946 census, there were more people employed in manufacturing and construction than in mining. Between 1932-3 and 1944-5, the proportion of Africans employed in private manufacturing increased from 39 to 52 percent (compared to a decline in the proportion of whites from 41 percent to 30 percent).[3] An important feature of the war years, was the expansion of semi-skilled employment, owing to mechanisation, and, although there is no accurate data on this development, it is safe to assume that an increased proportion of these positions were held by Africans.

These trends were important for two reasons. First, alongside the recovery of the economy and the increased size of the African labour force, there was a growth in the number and size of African trade unions (most of which were located in Johannesburg). Secondly, there was an increase in the level of official concern about the impact of settled African communities at the heart of South Africa's cities. This was reflected in various government commissions and in some changes to the law. From the perspective of this account, the most important change was the introduction of 1937 Wage Act, which enabled the Wage Board to make wage determinations covering unskilled workers (mostly Africans). This, in turn, provided some added scope for the development of African unions, and brought these unions into greater contact with the Department of Labour (DL), which was responsible for administering the Wage Act (as well as the Industrial Conciliation Act).

In late 1937, Tommy Freestone, a senior officer of the Department of Labour (DL), reported that there were eight unions which were known to cater mainly for African workers.[4] These unions came to be grouped into two federations: the Joint Committee of African Trade Unions, whose secretary was Max Gordon, a white Trotskyist, and the Co-ordinating Committee of Non-European Trade Unions, with Gana Makebeni, an ex-Communist Party member, as its general secretary.[5] The Joint Committee was the larger of the two, and, at the end of 1938, the DL's Johannesburg District Inspector, Col. F. L. A. Buchanan, noted that: 'Mr. Gordon had almost a monopoly of the control [of African unions]'.[6] Freestone, in his report, commented that:

> ...the officials [of the African unions] stress the danger of politics within the Unions. The whole environment, however, is already silently communistic. Communistic posters and pictures and mottoes are prominent features of these meeting places. In some instances the Secretary is a Communist, at least in words, and there is no

doubt that the "silent" propaganda will bear fruit in time.[7]

Following Freestone's report, the Registrar of Trade Unions drew up a memorandum which concluded: 'The time has arrived to consider the question of giving a measure of recognition to native "trade unions", which are springing up in the larger industrial areas, with a view to exercising a definite degree of *control* over them'.[8] The question of 'control' became more pressing as a result of the *modus operandi* developed by Gordon and the Joint Committee unions. They 'policed' wage board agreements and collected arrear wages, either via the DL or directly from employers. In order to escape prosecution, many employers preferred to deal directly with the unions (which, for the workers, was the quicker solution). This led to the District Inspector's office being by-passed and to the strengthening of the unions, and Buchanan complained bitterly about Gordon's 'interference', which he regarded as 'undesirable'.[9]

In June 1938, Ivan Walker, the Secretary for Labour, enclosed the Registrar's memorandum in a letter to Douglas Smit, his opposite number at the Department of Native Affairs (DNA).[10] Walker had roots in the trade union movement, having been General Secretary of the Typographical Union. During the war, Smuts appointed him to the powerful position of Controller of Manpower (whilst retaining him as Secretary for Labour), thereby providing Walker with direct access to the Prime Minister. Smit, who later became a United Party MP, was also highly regarded by Smuts. He was an energetic and able administrator, and, having undertaken his own enquiries, he came to a similar conclusion to that of the DL. In his opinion: 'The growth of these organisations is inevitable and it is wiser from our point of view to recognise them now rather than that we should be forced to do so later on'.[11]

The DL and the DNA, the two Departments which had direct contact with African trade unions, both favoured some form of official recognition. The DNA, however, favoured non-statutory recognition for African unions, and they felt that they, rather than the DL, should have the prime responsibility for administering the recognition procedures. This was probably more than mere 'empire building'; it was the logic of Hertzog's policy of segregation. The then Minister of Labour, Harry Lawrence, a United Party member, sympathised with this policy. In October, he told the Annual Convention of the South African Federated Chamber of Industries (SAFCI) that the government was considering some form of recognition, arguing that without 'control' there was a danger of African unions falling into the hands of 'undesirable' organisers. 'The average native', he was reported as saying, 'did not possess that high degree of responsibility which trade unionism required'. 'The salvation of the native', he concluded, 'did not lie along the lines of orthodox trade

unionism, but along lines defined for him by the Native Affairs Department in consultation with the Department of Labour'.[12]

By the end of 1938, the DL and DNA had drawn up a set of possible rules for the recognition of African unions.[13] In order to obtain recognition an organisation (the word 'union' was avoided) would have to provide the names of office bearers and officials, a copy of its constitution, and information about membership and finances. Recognition could have been withdrawn if the union had supported strike action or if it had failed to co-operate with the DL's Divisional Inspectors. This emphasis on 'co-operation' was probably included so as to deal with Gordon's activities. Finally, only one organisation would have been regarded as representative of Africans employed in a particular industry.[14]

African Opinion

A good example of the African Unions' case was the submission presented, a little later, to Smit's Interdepartmental Committee, by Daniel Koza, Secretary of the African Commercial and Distributive Workers' Union (ACDWU), the Joint Committee's biggest affiliate. Koza's starting point was the need for African workers to secure higher wages, an issue which also concerned the government. He argued that the existing industrial relations machinery had failed to improve their pay. This failure had occurred because African workers could not be directly represented on Industrial Councils, or obtain the benefits of conciliation and arbitration, or obtain legal enforcement of agreements made with individual employers. Wage levels, he said, were higher in those industries where unions existed, but, he added, because of the legal situation, it was sometimes necessary to go on strike, and when this happened workers were needlessly turned into criminals. He added: 'The fact that African workers have become industrialised, and that the severed ties with tribalism cannot now be restored goes without saying, and this new proletariat must be accorded complete industrial citizenship, so as not to suffer the economic and social depressions of a changing South Africa'.[63] Thus, Koza's was an appeal, on behalf of the 'new proletariat', which linked a widespread concern about poverty to the need for political, or at least industrial, equality.[15]

At the 1939 Conference of the South African Trades and Labour Council (SATLC), Makabeni and Gordon joined forces to move a resolution rejecting 'any attempt to place native trade unions under jurisdiction or control of the Native Affairs Department'. Makabeni said that the officials of this department 'adopted very bullying tactics' when dealing with African workers. Smit noted: 'the Unions regard the Department as an instrument of oppression used by the Government for the enforcement of oppressive laws like the Pass and Native Tax Laws'.[16] The SATLC resolution also called for 'registration on the same basis as other workers' organisations'. The great majority of the delegates was white, but the SATLC had always called for the inclusion of Africans

under the Industrial Conciliation Act, and the Conference passed the resolution without dissent.[17]

However, there was a tactical division between the two groups of African unions. In mid-August 1939, two consultation meetings were held, involving, besides officials from the two Departments, Mrs. Ballinger, one of the Africans' parliamentary representatives, Makabeni and Koza. At the second meeting Mrs. Ballinger presented a memorandum based, she said, on consultations with those she represented. It included a call for recognition under the IC Act, but accepted the idea of a 'half-way-house', based on an amended version of the rules, which, among other matters, stated that the main point of contact with the government should be, as it had been in practice, the DL's Divisional Inspectors, not the DNA.[18] It would appear that she was representing the views of the Co-ordinating Committee, but not the Joint Committee. Walker was informed that, prior to the second of the two meetings, 'Gordon's Union held a meeting and decided unanimously that they want full statutory recognition'.[19]

Following the onset of war and the fall of the Hertzog administration, Walter Madeley, the Labour Party leader, was appointed Minister of Labour, and Walker immediately redrafted the proposed rules so as to incorporate the criticisms made by Mrs. Ballinger and those she represented.[20] Smit seems to have been happy with the redraft, and, after a brief delay, his new minister, Deneys Reitz, approved the new rules.[21] At this stage Walker and Smit must have felt confident about the possibilities of pushing through their proposals for administrative recognition. There was, however, one problem. ...

Mining Interests

In August 1939, the Chamber of Mines had entered the fray with a blunt but powerful letter to the Director of Native Labour. They opposed the proposed rules, even though they excluded the mines. They were concerned that recognition would stimulate the growth of African unions generally, and that the mines would eventually be affected. They also argued that, 'the Native is not yet sufficiently advanced to control and manage ... a labour union', and that, therefore, such unions 'would inevitably fall into the hands of the European communistic movement'. Their alternative was simple:

> The Mining Industry has had experience of Native trade unions through the activities of the Industrial Commercial Workers' Union ... The aims of this organisation were extreme, with a marked tendency towards strikes, which, in the Native mind, connote "war" and are therefore nearly always accompanied by violence and bloodshed. The policy adopted by the Mining Industry towards the I.C.U. was non-recognition and determined opposition. In a year or two the large membership of this formidable body dwindled to negligible

> proportions, and the Unions ceased to be an influence amongst Native mine workers.[22]

As a result of this intervention, Hertzog's cabinet had decided not to proceed with the proposed rules. Then, in 1940, when the new Smuts administration came to reconsider the matter, they were met with forceful opposition from the Department of Mines. In a letter to Walker, the Secretary for Mines enclosed a restatement of the Chamber's position, and he added a further argument of his own:

> The Witwatersrand is a low grade goldfield, and in order to ensure the continuance of operations for the longer period, it is in the interest of the State that mining costs should be kept as low as possible. In the event of the native labour employed by the mining industry becoming organised on Trade Union lines, a probable result would be a substantial increase in wages, which would ... shorten the period during which mining could economically be continued.[23]

The DL and the DNA had co-operated in producing moderate proposals for the recognition and control of African unions. They had secured the support of some of the African unions and the Africans' parliamentary representatives, and also the SATLC. But they were blocked by the power of mining capital. Smit was quite definite about this: 'As a result of objections raised by the Chamber of Mines, nothing was done'.[24]

The Upsurge

Between mid-1940 and mid-1941, there was a lull in the debate. This probably reflected a lull in the level of African trade union activity. Although the cabinet had rejected official recognition, unofficially the DL and the DNA recognised African unions by considering their complaints and responding to their correspondence, and this continued to be the case.

In May 1941, Africans employed at five Johannesburg coal yards had struck work. Despite the arrest of the strikers (all 366 of them) and despite the use of convicts as scab labour, the strikers and their union, the ACDWU, won their demand for a wage increase.[25] As a result of the strike, Mrs. Ballinger and others, who had been involved in bringing about a settlement, secured a special meeting with Walker and Smit. This meeting, which was held on 6 June, considered the wider implications of the dispute, and it resulted in a number of important decisions, including an agreement that Walker would raise again the matter of African trade union recognition. This was the origin of renewed interest in the matter within government circles.[26]

The circumstances under which the issue was reconsidered, in 1941 and particularly in 1942, were very different to those

prevailing in 1938-40. To start with, in the years 1938, 1939 and 1940 there had been a low level of strike action, but in 1941 and, particularly, in 1942 there was a marked increase in the level of militancy.[27] Associated with this rising level of struggle, there was a rapid growth in the number and membership of black trade unions. In November 1941, the Joint Committee and the Co-ordinating Committee merged to form the Council of Non-European Trade Unions (CNETU). The new body was launched at a conference attended by 93 delegates from 32 African and 'coloured' unions. It passed a number of resolutions, including a 'strong request' that the government immediately amend the definition of the term 'employee'.[28] David Gosani, who had replaced Gordon as Secretary of the Joint Committee, was elected as Secretary of the new body, and Makabeni was elected as its President; Koza became an Executive Committee member. An official of the DNA reported that these three men, 'are able and intelligent persons and I should say the leading lights in the Native Trade Union movement'.[29]

Running parallel to these advances in African trade unionism, there was a modest, but significant, shift to the left in the ANC. This shift can be dated back to December 1940, when Dr. A. B. Xuma took over as the ANC's President-General.[30] Baruch Hirson is very probably correct to argue that the leadership of the ANC 'had little sympathy with direct working-class action',[31] but Xuma and CNETU did co-operate with each other, and the ANC did take up the recognition question. In March 1942, when the Deputy Prime Minister received an ANC initiated deputation, recognition was on the agenda, and Gosani, representing CNETU, was a member of the deputation.[32] Then, in July, Xuma informed Madeley that 'all Africans are opposed to any 'halfway house' recognition ... that is, anything short of recognition under the Industrial Conciliation Act'.[33]

During this period, the ANC developed a closer relationship with the Natives Representative Council (NRC). Four members of the NRC joined the March deputation, and Xuma told Smit: 'We are together. Our case is one. I am their national leader'.[34] Following the 1942 NRC elections, at least seven of the 16 NRC members identified with the ANC; they included Z. K. Matthews, who began to function as leader of the NRC caucus.[35] In December 1942, the NRC backed a resolution calling for IC Act recognition for all African unions, including the African Mine Workers'.[36] This continued to be the position of the NRC, and when, in 1946, the NRC refused to assemble, as a protest against being treated like a 'toy telephone', their most urgent demand was for the recognition of African unions.[37]

This process of radicalisation was summarised in a long letter which Smit received from his subordinate, Mr. Lowe, the Director of Native Labour, in August 1941. The letter provides a good description of the mood then prevailing among Africans, particularly on the Rand:

> The old reverence of the European has long gone by

> the board. It has been replaced by a Bantu nationalism, founded in a determination to secure by and for themselves, what they feel European Authorities have refused to the Natives. ...
>
> It is, however, in the industrial and labour world that Native activities are becoming so pronounced and impressive. Native leaders have learnt the power of organisation and of organised labour. Native labourers are rapidly being taught and learning the same thing. The Government's refusal to give recognition to Native Trade Unions means nothing. ... A position is created where, willy nilly, employers have to recognise the Unions as the only practicable way of preventing serious stoppage of work. ...
>
> The wholly unsatisfactory economic position of the Native wage earner in towns, the stress of hunger and of malnutrition ... these are the very conditions to encourage the organisation of labour ...[38]

The 'Great Change'

It is unlikely that Smit would have been surprised or annoyed by Lowe's remarks. One week earlier he had been appointed, by the Prime Minister, to chair the Interdepartmental Committee on Social, Health and Economic Conditions of Urban Natives.[39] Two weeks before this event, Smuts had confided that wage increases for 'non-Europeans and unskilled Europeans are fully justified', and he had added: 'I am anxious to keep our workers in good temper'.[40] It was probably an initiative from Smit, with the authority and experience he had gained from the Interdepartmental Committee, that very nearly led to the full recognition of African trade unions.

The final Smit Report, which appeared at the end of 1942, recommended, as an *'interim measure'*, the immediate administrative recognition of African trade unions in accordance with the rules which had already been agreed.[41] However, prior to this, in January 1942, he produced a memorandum for ministerial discussion which must have taken the argument a good deal further,[42] because, on 10 April, he informed Walker that:

> *the Government has undertaken to introduce during the next Session of Parliament an amendment of the Industrial Conciliation Act, no. 36 of 1937, deleting those words in the definition of an "Employee" which have the effect of excluding ordinary Native workers from the definition.*

The decision had been taken by Smuts, together with Madeley and Reitz. We cannot be certain about their reasons, but we can surmise a number of factors: concern about poverty among Africans and a feeling that the growth of African unions was inevitable (these were both mentioned in the Smit Report), coupled with a

desire to exert some control over African unions so as to discourage 'undesirable' behaviour, such as striking (as evidenced by departmental memoranda and the minutes of the post-coal strike meeting). The Mines and Railways and Harbours were to be excluded from the amendment. Furthermore, according to Smit, 'The question whether Native Employees are to be represented on Industrial Councils by natives if they so desire, or whether it would be more expedient for them to be represented by Europeans, on the the analogy of their representation in Parliament, remains open for the present, but should be kept in view when amendments of the law are under consideration'.[43] Nevertheless, the government had made a definite decision to introduce recognition under the IC Act.[44]

Reitz wrote to Madeley informing him that, on behalf of the government, he had given an assurance to the Africans' parliamentary representatives, that the government had undertaken to introduce, in the next session of parliament, an amendment to the IC Act, so as to include Africans within the definition of 'employees'.[45] The letter was signed by Reitz, but it would appear that it was never sent. However, Madeley announced the government's intention to the press, and this was reported on 28 May. Prior to this, on 12 May, at a meeting of the SATLC National Executive Committee, he had provided a similar undertaking to that given by Reitz. According to one report, Madeley said that:

> He had been able to show the Cabinet that the organising spirit among unskilled workers has become very great, particularly among Africans, and it is a matter for gratification that the Government would now recognise the trade unions catering for natives. In effect, it would give all workers the same rights to collective bargaining under the Act.[46]

However, on 22 July, Madeley's private secretary informed Gosani: 'the question of the recognition of African Trade Unions is under consideration of the Cabinet'.[47] On 23 October, Madeley's private secretary told Mike Muller, Secretary of the Pretoria Joint Council of Non-European Trade Unions that: 'in present circumstances it is very unlikely that such amendment [to the IC Act] will be found possible during the next Session of Parliament'.[48] On 28 November, when Madeley opened the first annual conference of CNETU (which was claiming 25 affiliated unions representing 37,000 members), he asked delegates to be 'patient'. 'Many difficulties stood in the way' of recognition, he said, but he was 'reasonably certain that fruition would result'.[49] In early December, Madeley announced that the Government would not be proceeding with an amendment in the next session, as previously announced.[50]

On 19 December, the government announced the promulgation of War Measure 145, which introduced new penalties for Africans who went on strike. Some writers have argued that this War Measure

had an important positive aspect: that it allowed for arbitration linked to consultation with African unions.[51] However, the measure did not provide the unions with a *right* to arbitration, and during 1943 and 1944, the DL only referred six disputes to the arbitrators. Principally, War Measure 145 was a punitive and discriminatory measure, which is why, at the time, it was widely condemned. Some established trade unionists even described it as 'fascist'.[52] In December 1942, African trade union leaders had hoped for recognition, but the government had responded with renewed repression.

Explanations

Why had the government moved from a position, in April, of supporting full recognition in the next session, via a period of vacillation, to a new position, by early December, of opposing such recognition? Initially, there was some delay because Reitz, who was supposed to communicate the April decision to Col. Stallard, the Minister for Mines, failed to make contact with him (perhaps because he, Reitz, was unwell). This explains why Reitz's letter to Madeley, which had been signed, was never sent.[53] Probably, when Stallard heard of the decision he insisted on a cabinet discussion. However, at this stage, the arguments against recognition would have been the old ones put forward, in particular, by mining interests (in February 1942, the Chamber had written another letter opposing recognition).[54] It is unlikely that these arguments were decisive. ...

The second half of 1942 witnessed a wave of strike action. In Durban, these strikes included a major stoppage of African dock workers and, from 8 December, a strike at the Dunlop factory, which united African and Indian workers. In September, African miners at the Northfield colliery in Natal set fire to the company's buildings. In Johannesburg, during September and October, there was a month long strike in the sweet industry which involved black and white workers, mainly women. In December, there were a series of strikes on the Witwatersrand, mostly associated with a wage determination for unskilled workers; these included particularly militant strikes involving dairy and meat workers. Then, on December 28, in Pretoria, there was a demonstration of municipal workers which was attacked by troops, and ended with the deaths of 16 Africans and one white.[54a]

The shift in policy was almost certainly connected with these strikes. When, on 13 January 1943, Smuts met a deputation from the Christian Council (which included the Archbishop of Cape Town), his response to their question about recognition began with the words: 'Things are inconvenient now; there is a wave of unrest in this country'.[55] Similarly, in March 1943, Madeley told the Senate: 'the ... increase in native strikes, has created an unfavourable atmosphere for consideration of the recognition of native trade unions'.[56] When, on 25 January, Madeley met a deputation of Africans' parliamentary representatives, he said that he was particularly worried about 'the position in Durban',

where, he said, 'the Indians and the natives are working together, and the prejudice against this combination is growing'. At the same meeting, Major van der Byl (who had replaced Reitz as Minister of Native Affairs) said that he 'feared ... that if the European Trades Unions want something and they have control of the Natives in their Trades Unions, they might use the whole force of Native labour to create a strike to gain their [the Europeans] interests'.[57] It seems most likely that the government was opposed to conceding recognition at a time when workers, particularly African workers, were on the offensive. It would have looked as if they were giving into pressure, and they would have been worried that this might encourage further militancy. It is also possible that they were disturbed by the spectre of workers of different 'races' uniting in action, which might have become more likely if 'employee' had been redefined.

In March 1943, Sen. Hyman Basner, one of the Africans' parliamentary representatives, presented three reasons why 'a great change' had come over Madeley. First, 'the unfortunate experiences on the Rand ... a number of strikes'. Secondly, and most importantly, 'the European trade unions are beginning to look on the recognition of the Native trade unions as a threat'. This was an important suggestion, to which I shall return at some length. However, between April and December, none of the mainly-white trade union bodies amended their policies of support for recognition, and it would seem unlikely that it was a key element in the 'great change'. Thirdly, 'the Communist elements have entered into the trade unions to ... an undesirable extent'.[58] Here, Basner was echoing remarks made the Prime Minister. At his meeting with the Christian Council, Smuts had continued his statement with: 'Communistic influence is at work in our land on a fairly large scale'. Smuts may have thought that the anti-Communist argument would have been particularly appealing to Christian leaders, but if so he was wrong. Soon after, the Council, on the Archbishop's recommendation, carried a resolution calling for recognition of African unions by an immediate change in the law.[59]

Whilst the Communist Party did support strikes once they occurred, they tended to use their influence to discourage such action. For instance, in December 1942, Michael Harmel, Secretary of the Party's Johannesburg District Committee, told readers of *The Star*: 'My party is strongly in favour of a policy of avoiding stoppages of work ... as being prejudicial both to the workers' just demands for higher wages and to the higher aim of securing victory in the war ...'.[60] There was a growth in support for the Party amongst African workers, but this was a product of the new mood of assertiveness, not its cause. It is likely, however, that Smuts was working with a broader definition of 'communist' implied by the term 'communistic', and closely associated with 'undesirable'. If so, according to Smuts, anyone identified with supporting strike action should be regarded as a 'communist', and the unrest was, by definition, 'communistic'; but then we are left with the first explanation as the main cause of the change in direction. Consciously or unconsciously, Smuts

used a fear of communism to justify the new, repressive policy; but it was a justification rather than an explanation.

Dunbar Moodie has pointed to the importance of the ideology of anti-Communism in the suppression of the 1946 miners' strike (with implications for subsequent repression under the Nationalists). He identified this ideology with the influence of the Chamber of Mines, and traces it back to 1943[61] (in September 1943 the Chamber had complained to the Minister of Native Affairs about Communist activity)[62]. Whilst I agree with Moodie that anti-communism strengthened the Chamber's case against African unions, the origin of the anti-communist campaign is to be found elsewhere and at an earlier date. As we have seen, state officials were complaining of 'communistic' influence amongst Africans at least as far back as 1937, but it was Smuts, in early 1943 who provided the real boost to the movement.

P. Walshe has argued that: 'industrial unrest and the impending general election had led to a change in atmosphere'.[63] Whilst he may be correct about the impending general election, he does not produce any evidence and I am not aware that there is any. If winning elections was Smuts' prime concern, then surely, in April 1942, he would have been aware that the introduction of the amendment would occur immediately before a 1943 election. It might be argued that Smuts was responding to the electorate's heightened awareness of 'native problems' brought about by the unrest.[64] If so, it is even clearer that it was, principally, the 'unrest' that led to the 'change in atmosphere'.

Another argument for the 'great change' is that advanced by Eddie Roux and expanded by Baruch Hirson. The Roux-Hirson thesis is that, to quote Hirson: 'Only at the end of 1942, when the tide of war had turned, and the government regained its confidence, were measures taken to curb the unions'.[65] I am uneasy about this argument because it smacks of conspiracy theory (which, however, can never be ruled out) and because, once again, there is no evidence to demonstrate its validity.

In reading through Smuts' weekly diary-letters to Margaret and Arthur Gillett, his friends in Britain, one can detect a degree of correlation between his feelings on the war and the 'change': for most of the year he was fairly gloomy, but from late November, he was more optimistic. But correlation should never be taken to imply a causal relationship. His most important letter, in this regard, is that dated 13 January 1943. He mentions that there will probably be a general election later in the year and that he is waiting to see how the war goes, but he is still lacking confidence, because he adds: 'who knows what may happen in 6 months' time?' Elsewhere in the same letter he says: 'We are having a very difficult time with the Natives who are getting infected with the virus of change and unrest, and have moreover fallen into the hands of our communists'. However, he makes no connection between this passage and the previous one. Unrest is linked to communists, but not to the war (or the pending election).[66]

We are left with a paradox: it was, in particular, industrial unrest that encouraged the government to reconsider the recognition question and it was mainly industrial unrest that led them to reject recognition, at least temporarily. However, this apparent contradiction reflected a contradiction in reality: between, on the one hand, capital's long term interest in the development of a mutually beneficial relationship with African union leaders and, on the other hand, a short term concern not to appear to be backing down in the face of an increasingly confident working class (as a correspondent to *The Star* put it: 'To give a big present is a sign of fear').[67] This short term concern combined with the conservative pressure applied by the Chamber of Mines, to ensure the defeat of the recognition proposal.

Madeley's Conference

When the cabinet decided not to proceed with the amendment they were reacting to events and they did not have a clear alternative for dealing with African unions. The only conclusion which had been reached was a negative one, which probably emanated from Smuts himself, that, in relation to industrial relations legislation, Africans and non-Africans should be treated differently.[68] In March, this reinforcement of the divisions within the working class was justified by Madeley as follows.

> Such action [the redefinition of 'employee'] would ... endanger our industrial council system, as in some industries where native trade unions are well organized, these bodies, consisting entirely of unskilled workers, would become the sole or principal representatives of the employees, to the exclusion of some of the existing artisans' trade unions. Whatever views individuals may hold as to the rights or wrongs of such a state of affairs, no one can doubt that it would break up the industrial councils concerned and lead to industrial chaos.[69]

The cabinet wanted to delay consideration of what had become a very thorny problem, but they could not entirely remove it from their agenda. As Madeley put it: 'Native trade unions continue to multiply, and it is feared that many of them are of mushroom growth'.[70] This created two secondary problems for the government. First, the African unions had developed a number of important allies: the ANC and NRC, the Africans' parliamentary representatives, the Institute of Race Relations and the Friends of Africa, and the SATLC. The government could not afford to lose the confidence of this weighty informal alliance, certainly not in the middle of a war which had been condemned by the Nationalists. At the end of March, Madeley announced that he would be convening a conference of interested parties to 'try to hammer out something' with regard to African trade unions.[71] The conference, which was eventually held in October 1943, was probably a concession to, in particular, the parliamentary

representatives, but it was also a useful delaying tactic for a government facing an election and uncertain of its position.

Secondly, government officials, particularly the District Inspectors, and employers (to whom I shall return) still had to deal with the practical problems created by African unions. The Acting District Inspector for Johannesburg expressed himself thus:

> These unions by virtue of the fact that their members comprise persons who are excluded from the definition of employee in the Industrial Conciliation Act are not subject to the control which this Act provides for European trade unions.
> ... I have been asked by employers in several instances recently whether ... [they] should grant the union facilities to organise. I have also been asked which of two apparently overlapping unions should be recognised.[72]

The initial proposal was for a conference on African trade unions which would have been overwhelmingly white. However, Smit asked that four members of the NRC (one from each province) be invited, and this was accepted; subsequently the ANC were also asked to send a delegate. After protests from CNETU, the *Institute of Race Relations and Basner, CNETU was invited to send* two delegates. This encouraged further protests on the grounds that CNETU was not a national organisation of African unions. The DL consequently invited the Cape Federation of Labour and Durban Trades Council to nominate two African delegates each, both Port Elizabeth and East London Trades Councils to nominate one, the Pretoria Joint Council of Non-European Trade Unions to nominate two, and CNETU to nominate another two. Thus, the conference became a much larger and 'blacker' affair.[73] It reflected the growth of trade unionism among Africans, which, by 1943, had spread well beyond the Southern Transvaal.

In the course of 1943, African unions and the left, inspired by the CPSA, organised two kinds of events in support of the campaign for IC Act recognition. The first were general mobilising activities, aimed at demonstrating that African workers backed the demand for recognition under the IC Act. According to reports in the *Guardian*: 800 Africans marched through the centre of Pretoria, Port Elizabeth CNETU held a mass rally attended by over 2,500 people, 1,200 workers went to a mass meeting called by the Durban Communist Party, and 2,000 attended a CNETU rally in Johannesburg. Today, these protests may seem rather small, but the Port Elizabeth gathering was said to be the largest political meeting in the City's history.[74]

Secondly, in October, two conferences, one in Johannesburg and one in Durban, backed well written memoranda spelling out their arguments.[75] They were especially concerned to deal with the issue which Madeley had raised in parliament: the practical implications of recognition for the industrial councils. The

Durban memorandum stated: 'We regard this as a question for the Trade Unions to solve on their own, to the mutual satisfaction of European and African workers, without any official interference'. According to the Johannesburg document, the African unions supported the principle of, to quote a COSATU slogan, 'one industry one union', and by extension, to quote the document, 'complete unity between African and European workers'. However, if negotiations between an existing registered union and an African union were unsatisfactory, the African union should still be registered. Industrial Council representation would then be a 'matter for agreement between it and the European Unions on the one hand and the employers on the other'. If necessary, continued the Johannesburg submission, provision could be made for 'a separate Industrial Council to be established on which the employers and the African workers will sit'.

And so, to the conference. Overwhelmingly, the delegates spoke the language of democracy. They spoke with different accents, but the message was the same.[76] Every black person that spoke, and most of the whites, argued in favour of IC Act recognition. C. K. Sakwe of the NRC said that he came from a rural area, from the Transkei, and there, he said, 'the demand for such recognition is fully supported'. Prof. Matthews argued that there had been a 'vast change' since the Act was first passed, and warned that there was no chance of industrial peace if Africans were excluded from the Act.

There were, however, three dissenters: the white delegates from the SATLC. The General Secretary, Willie De Vries, told the conference that the SATLC backed the request to amend the definition of 'employer', but, he added: 'it was doubtful whether natives were sufficiently developed to take a full share of responsibility in the administration of Industrial Councils and agreements'. The SATLC President, A. J. Downes, who, like De Vries, had once worked with Walker in the Government Printing Works,[77] added that:

> Although the Trades and Labour Council has on several occasions passed resolutions for the removal of the restrictions imposed by the Act he did not think that the implications were appreciated ... Whether it is accepted or not there is a race and colour prejudice in this country. ... The European Trade Union movement agrees that the African workers should have the right to organise and express their views, but this should be done through European representatives if there is likely to be any difficulty as a result of direct representation.

Makabeni protested that the argument about 'insufficient development' was 'without foundation'. 'Africans', he said, 'have proved their capability to organise workers and conduct trade unions', and he added that, 'European trade union leaders have not organised employees under similar circumstances'. Lucas

Phillips, one of the delegates whose level of development had been called into question, commented, tongue in cheek: 'it is curious to learn from the Council's delegates that the implications ... were not appreciated'. He added that, 'the African representatives ask for an amendment with a full understanding of all the implications'. Then, he dealt with the possibility, which Smit had raised in the meeting, of whites being 'ousted from industrial councils':

> There are unions in the Cape which consist predominantly of Africans but they serve under Europeans and there has been no complaint of unfair domination. There are also unions consisting chiefly of Coloureds but with Africans as secretaries and here also there has been no complaint ... The Brick and Tile Workers' Union consists mainly of Africans, with some coloureds and only a few Europeans. The question arises whether the few Europeans could form their own union and influence the employers. In his opinion the answer is negative. The Africans have acted on behalf of the Europeans in connection with representations to the Wage Board. There exists no racial division.
>
> The Europeans and Africans are all *workers*. They have a common struggle against the employers who are not concerned with race distinctions but are influenced by cheap labour.

No matter how well the majority expressed themselves, they could not alter the speeches made by the SATLC leadership. Forty-nine years later, Ray Alexander, who was a delegate from CFL, recalled how 'disgusted' she felt. She said that in the course of the conference she went up to one of the SATLC delegates and said: 'You are traitors. You are traitors not only to the present generation, but to future generations of workers.'[75] But, was the intervention of the 'gang of three' the 'decisive' blow against the campaign for IC Act recognition, as suggested by Simons and Simons?[77]

In a DL memorandum, drawn up after the conference, there was no mention of the position adopted by the SATLC delegates. Rather, it was stated that: 'It was made very clear during discussions that the natives, supported by the majority of the trade union representatives, would be satisfied with nothing less than the complete recognition of Native trade unions under the Industrial Conciliation Act'.[80] The memorandum continued: 'The question whether this demand - and it is now generally put forward by its protagonists in the shape of a 'demand' - should be acceded to *is a matter of Government policy*'. That is, the government had, prior to Madeley's conference, already rejected the possibility of simply amending the definition of 'employee'. Thus, Madeley had allowed the delegates to proceed under a misapprehension. Perhaps he had hoped that there would be greater support for a 'half-way-house' solution; probably he was

just carrying out his promise to parliament. So, at least in immediate terms, Simons and Simons were mistaken. The archival evidence indicates that the decisive blow had occurred in the latter half of 1942.

After the conference, Madeley established a small committee to consider the form of recognition which should be extended to African trade unions. The committee consisted of Walker, Smit and the Secretary for Mines (who was opposed to any form of recognition). This committee produced a memorandum which concluded that, two years earlier statutory recognition 'might have been acceptable to the natives', but this was no longer the case. It proposed an amendment to the IC Act which would allow for the registration of African unions, but prohibit Africans from joining non-African unions. Also, in opposition to Walker, the majority argued that these provisions should not apply to the mines.[61] It was intended that these proposals should be considered by the cabinet, but this never happened. The memorandum was dated 8 January 1944, and on 6 January the cabinet decided not to introduce any legislation aimed at recognising African trade unions.[62] It is not clear how or why Madeley's preparation for a cabinet discusion was pre-empted, but it would seem that he was out-manoeuvred by the Minister of Mines. In effect, it was decided to bury the issue until after the war.

The African Unions had made it clear that they would reject minor concessions which stopped short of equality under the IC Act. At the same time, nothing had shifted the government from its determination to reinforce the division between African and non-African workers. Indeed, probably as a result of pressure from mining interests, the government had, for the time being at least, decided against any form of recognition other than the *de facto* recognition which already existed.

The SATLC and White Workers

Should the behaviour of Downes and co. be interpreted as the white working class deserting their African brothers and sisters? I think not. First, it is worth recalling that, at the conference, the CFL delegates rejected the arguments of the SATLC delegates, and the CFL subsequently backed a CPSA initiated campaign for IC Act recognition.[63] One of the CFL delegates was Raymound Budd, an office bearer in the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU).[64] He argued that, as far as the Cape was concerned, 'the race prejudice issue is practically a dead letter'. 'Race prejudice' was certainly more of an issue in the Transvaal, but even there many white trade unionists were willing to accept the proposal to redefine 'employee'. For example, on 29 October, nine leading white trade unionists from Pretoria signed a memorandum which contained arguments similar to those in the Johannesburg memorandum. The nine included: the Branch Secretary of the Iron Moulders Society, the Secretary of the Trades and Labour Committee, the General Secretary of the Mint Employees Union and the Branch Chair of the Tailoring Workers' Union.[65]

Thus, to the extent that the white working class had an opinion on the matter, it was divided.

The reality, however, was more complex than a simple regional or political polarisation. For example, the SATLC National Executive, dominated by the right wing, elected Koza as its fourth delegate to Madeley's conference; he was the first (and probably the last) African to represent the SATLC. A discussion at the 1941 SATLC provides a clue to the dichotomy. That year, Koza and Alexander moved a motion which called for the IC Act to be amended so that 'all non-European workers can be represented directly by members of their own unions on the various industrial councils'. This motion was rejected by the conference (28 votes to 34). Thus, the SATLC held contradictory positions: for regarding Africans as equal before the law, but against regarding them as equal before the industrial councils. In part, this reflected a contradiction between an identification with broad class interests and an identification with narrower sectional concerns.

In the course of the 1941 discussion, Downes argued: 'Given time ... the native would be given a member to represent his union directly, but for the time [being] the European had to hold the trusteeship of the native worker in industry'.[86] If anybody in South Africa could be described as a 'labour aristocrat' it was Downes, the representative of the Typographical Union (SATU). His argument not only reflected the immediate interests of his members, it also reflected the immediate reality of their industry, where there was a huge cultural gap between the highly skilled artisans, who were nearly all white, and the labourers, who were mostly African. This was appreciated by Koza when, at Madeley's conference, he argued that: 'The real difficulty is that most [registered] unions are craft unions which are hostile towards the unskilled and semi-skilled groups which include Europeans'. He added, 'The objection is, therefore, not directed against employees of a certain race but a certain class of worker'.

There was also evidence of racism among less skilled whites, and where it occurred, as amongst the Garment Workers, it was usually more virulent in character than the paternalism of Downes. However, among the less skilled there were also common interests between black and white workers, and sometimes common action. The best examples involved white women workers, where the skill/'race' divide was generally less marked. For example, at the end of 1943, there was a national shop workers' strike which, at least in Johannesburg, united members of the National Union of Distributive Workers (NUDW) and members of the ACDWU. Significantly, the one registered union which, in this period, sent a pro-recognition resolution to Madeley, was the Johannesburg branch of the NUDW.[87]

At the 1944 SATLC Conference Koza moved a motion which called for 'the deletion of the restrictive provisions of the definition "employee"'. The resolution was lost on a card vote

(17,198 to 14,859). The card vote was recorded, and it makes interesting reading. The organisations voting with Koza amounted to 44 industrial unions (mostly small, but including the Garment Workers' and the NUDW) and only three artisan/supervisory/clerical unions (including the Building Workers'). Among the bodies voting against the resolution were eleven artisan/supervisory/clerical unions, including the three largest unions (the Mine Workers', the AEU and the Municipal Employees), but only seven industrial unions (all small).[88] Skill was not the only factor at work - the politics of the leadership was another - but skill-level was certainly important in shaping workers' attitudes.

One way of handling the contradiction between class interests and sectional concerns, between what you think you ought to do and what you feel is advantageous, was to try to ignore the problem. This was probably widespread. Its not that that the white unions were racist, more that they did not care. For instance, during the six years of the war, the AEU's *Monthly Report* carried only one article about racism or Africans.[89] However, these issues could not be ignored for ever. The July 1944 edition contained a complaint from Budd, who was a delegate to the SATLC Conference, that the AEU delegation had voted contrary to their union's constitution (which, in that it provided for an open membership, was unusual for an artisan union,).[90] Significantly, the AEU had voted with Koza in 1941, but against him in 1944.[91]

Jon Lewis has demonstrated that the shift in racial thinking within 'white' unions, which occurred during the war years, was related to changes in the labour process, and, in particular, to the development of mechanisation in engineering.[92] With the increased proportion of Africans in industry, and, in particular, with some Africans beginning to be employed in semi-skilled positions, there was a growing unease among many of the whites. It was one thing to agree to equality under he IC Act when Africans were the minority and disorganised; it was altogether different if Africans were the majority and well organised. Most white workers, certainly the artisans, were, in relation to most African workers, well off. They were caught between, on the one hand, wanting to look-after the 'under-privileged', and on the other hand, feeling threatened by them. This attitude was not dissimilar to the paternalism of Smuts (who was, however, much closer to the Chamber, and sometimes hostile to the artisans). The conclusion seems to have been: help the Africans when they are weak (but not too much), back-off when they start organising. There was, as Basner had noted, a shift in attitudes sometime around 1942.

One further point should be made. Madeley was a Labour leader and a member and a member of the cabinet; he had ties to the right-wing of the SATLC, most of whom were Labour Party members, and he had ties to Smuts. Who better than Madeley to convince the SATLC of the need for a new approach. He not only knew what to justify, but, given the uneasiness of many white

workers, how to justify it. In February 1944, the caucus of Labour MPs and Senators voted not to support the CFL's campaign for IC Act recognition (which had been Labour Party policy), and they thereby firmed-up the shift in attitude within the dominant right-wing of the white labour movement.[93]

Although the shift in attitude among white workers was not the cause of the change in government policy, it made it easier to sustain that change. Moreover the behaviour of the 'gang of three', which underlined that shift, probably damaged the morale of those African trade unionists who had been campaigning to change the law. Thus, although, in the short term, the actions of the SATLC leadership was not decisive, taking a longer view, it was an important factor undermining the possibility of securing equality for African workers.

Industrial Employers

The South African Federated Chamber of Industries (SAFCI) was the most representative voice of manufacturing capital, and in 1944 it claimed to be backed by approximately 89 percent of the country's secondary industry.[94] However, although some individual engineering companies were affiliated, the South African Federation of Engineering and Metallurgic Associations (SEIFSA's predecessor), along with the associations of some other industries (including building), remained outside the 'ambit of the Chambers activities'.[95] Furthermore, the SAFCI was dominated by the bigger capitalists, although domestic and foreign capital were both represented on its Executive Council.[96]

Although, from 1943, the contribution which manufacturing made to the national economy outstripped that of mining, the SAFCI was much less influential than the Chamber of Mines. Indeed, during the war years, it is probable that the government placed greater weight on the opinions of the SATLC than those of the SAFCI. For instance, the SATLC had provided an advisory committee for the Prime Minister from mid-1942, but a similar employers' advisory committee was not established until after mid-1944.[97] The greater influence of the Chamber was mainly a product of economic factors (particularly the mining industry's contribution to government and export revenue), but arose partly from the organisational weakness of the SAFCI. The SAFCI was brought into being, in 1917, through the federation of seven regional Chambers of Industries, and these Chambers, and the affiliated organisations representing particular industries, retained considerable authority.

On the issue of African union recognition, the SAFCI moved slowly and uncertainly. During 1939, the General Secretary informed the Executive Council that the government was 'instituting an inquiry into the desirability of natives forming themselves into trade unions', but the Council resolved: 'that no further action be taken unless the Chamber received a direct request from the Government for an expression of opinion'.[98] In 1942, the Transvaal Chamber of Industries (TCI) made a submission

to the Smit Committee, but the SAFCI limited itself to asking its constituent organisations for their opinions; the only one that responded was the Natal Chamber (NCI), which supported the TCI.[99]

The TCI's submission to the Smit Committee was, however, of some interest. According to Dave Lewis, they argued that the growth of unions among Africans was 'inevitable', and that, 'it would be unjust to refuse recognition to workers of one race when those of all other races have been statutorily recognised'.[100] However, the Executive Council of the TCI added that: 'this chamber is in favour of the establishment of native trade unions provided that they, and more particularly their secretariat, are under the guidance and control of the Native Affairs Department'.[101] That is, the TCI's position was far from progressive: they desired a form of recognition which had already been firmly rejected by black organisations, established trade unions, and the DL and DNA. This is rather different from the impression provided by Lewis.

The 1942 unrest left its mark on the SAFCI. In January 1943, its Executive Council debated 'Labour Disputes and Agitators'. Mr. A. G. Tainton, of Pretoria Portland Cement, argued that: 'industrialists were up against a national crisis as concerned the labour question ...'. Mr. A. H. Burmeister, of the Soap and Candle Manufacturers' Association, said that: 'This question of labour was one that had developed seriously within the past three or four months.'[102] At this meeting the NCI, proposed the creation of an 'Employers' Confederation' separate from the SAFCI. They wanted a new national organisation (with local sections) which, because it would be purely concerned with labour questions, could secure a broader base of members. They further proposed that: 'All labour disputes would be referred to this body and there would be no piece-meal settlement with individual firms'. They also recommended summary action against labour agitators.[103] Natal's proposal for an 'Employers' Confederation' was rejected by the SAFCI, but, on 1 April 1943, the NCI went ahead and established the desired body, calling it the Industrial Employers' Association (Natal Section) (IEA).[104]

At the end of 1943, the SAFCI's Executive Council agreed that: 'if possible, propaganda be made for the acceptance by the Government of the recommendation of the Interdepartmental [Smit] Committee'.[105] Meanwhile, the IEA was developing its own policy. Like the SAFCI, the IEA represented the bigger capitalists, both domestic and foreign; indeed, some companies that were represented on the SAFCI's Executive Council were also represented on the IEA's much smaller General Council.[106] It is not surprising, therefore, that the IEA adopted a position similar to that of the SAFCI. In November 1943, the IEA informed the Secretary for Native Affairs that they 'in no way opposed' to the recognition of African unions as recommended in the Smit Report.[107] So, neither the SAFCI nor the IEA were willing to recommend anything more than the Smit Committee's proposal for 'administrative recognition', which Smit himself had by then rejected (because it would not be accepted by Africans).[108]

However, there was a 'harder' edge to the IEA's policy, perhaps reflecting the different experiences of industrialists in Natal. Thus Windsor added: 'the appointment of Officials of such Unions should be subject to the approval of some Government Authority, with a view to the exclusion of persons of the labour agitator class'. However, in February 1945, following a meeting with the Durban Local Committee of the SATLC and others (including a representative of the DL), the IEA modified its position slightly. They now envisaged some change in the law. They proposed: 'that a board of Authority be set up by the Government to supervise and guide the activities of all African Trade Unions and to approve all applications by such Unions for recognition and/or registration'. However, they also argued: 'once recognition and/or registration of a union has been granted ... it shall be the duty of every Industrial Council, Employers' Organisation or Association and every employer in the Trade or Industry concerned to recognise and negotiate wit such union'.[109]

The new resolution was forwarded to the government with the support of the IEA, the NCI and the Natal Chamber of Commerce, but, in April 1945, the SAFCI, at its half-yearly meeting, agreed to give its backing to the policy.[110] For the first time, manufacturing capital was fully united in its response to the recognition question. They desired the registration of African trade unions, but under strict controls, and certainly not on the basis of equality with other trade unions.

Subsequently the SAFCI appointed a high-powered committee on industrial legislation. The majority, including former Wage Board Chairman, Frank McGregor, recommended full recognition under the Act, but the IEA's General Secretary, W. H. Windsor, submitted a minority report. The difference between them is instructive. The majority saw their proposal as the only practical form of recognition, since they doubted whether any other would be acceptable to the 'Natives'. Windsor rejected this on the grounds that: 'Industries in Natal are in a very similar position to the Mines as the greater part of the Native Labour employed is comprised of Tribal Natives from the Reserves'.[111] There may have been other reasons for not backing the majority position. Thus, at a 1945 SAFCI Executive Council, Louis Marks (TCI) mentioned the concerns of the mining industry, and Mr. Begley (NCI) added that 'secondary industry could not afford to antagonise' the mining industry.[112] The SAFCI 1946 Convention refused to make a decision on the report, and McGregor resigned from the committee 'due to pressure of work'.[113] It is not clear what happened next, but, by 1951, 'the call from industry for recognition had become less urgent, and concentrated on the need for regulatory machinery'.[114]

'These Things are Insoluble'

Early in 1945, Smuts, referring 'to our Native problem', told a small lunch party: 'these things are insoluble'. Recognition of African unions was probably the Government's most pressing

'Native problem', it was certainly their most difficult, and it did indeed prove to be 'insoluble'.[115]

In the course of 1945, the DL began to draft legislation which eventually acquired the title Industrial Conciliation (Native) Bill. The main features of this bill were five fold. First, a ban on Africans being members of any unions other than those registered under the proposed Act. Secondly, strict criteria to be applied before an African union could be recognised. Thirdly, disputes to be resolved by a 'Central Mediation Board', which would have the power to enforce its decisions; this board would consist of a chairman appointed by the Governor-General, a parliamentary representative of Africans, and one person appointed by each of the Ministers of Labour, Native Affairs and Commerce. Fourthly, a ban on strikes. Fifthly, African mine workers were excluded from the provisions.[116]

The guiding principle of the Bill was that there should be separate legislation for African and non-African workers. It was Smuts who insisted that this should be the case, and later, in 1947, he told Parliament that African unions should be recognised 'on a basis of apartheid so that unnecessary difficulties will not arise'.[117] This was an attempt to appease potential opposition from the Chamber of Mines, the South African Agricultural Union and the Nationalists. However, these powerful forces continued to stand by their position of opposing any recognition of African union.[118]

In October 1945, before the Bill had been completed, Ivan Walker let it be known that the Government was intending to introduce legislation which would not provide Africans with equal rights under the IC Act. This brought forth a barrage of protests from African unions and their usual supporters.[119] The SATLC was, in some measure, divided. Downes informed the government's Advisory Council of Labour that: 'inclusion of Natives in [the] present [IC] Act would create uproar in the unions'.[120] However, on behalf of the SATLC, De Vries wrote: 'We contend *all* workers, irrespective of sex, race or colour should be governed by the same legislation and the activities of all workers' organisations should be the concern of only one State Department, viz Department of Labour.'[121] However, the SATLC united in opposing the Bill, partly because it prevented the registered unions from recruiting Africans (some of the older unions, such as SATU, had been persuaded of the value of organising parallel unions for Africans).[122]

The Government, having failed to secure 'sufficient consensus' for the Bill, announced that they would not be proceeding with it in the 1946 session. Although, it was subsequently published, later, following the 1948 election, it was withdrawn by the Nationalists, who then appointed an Industrial Legislation Commission of Inquiry (the Botha Commission). The new government eventually passed the Native

Labour Act of 1953, but until then War Measure 145 remained in force.

Conclusion

Merle Lipton has presented the following contrast between the attitudes of white labour and white business:

> Only the Cape Federation supported the 1943 proposal to recognise African unions (as the FCI and Assocom urged). The TLC argued that Africans had 'not yet reached a stage of mental and cultural development in which they can be entrusted with the rights and duties involved in recognition of their unions'. The 1951 Industrial Legislation Commission gave a more candid explanation, acknowledging that many African unions were well run and that many Africans were able and ambitious and, if allowed to secure parity of bargaining power, 'could not be restricted indefinitely to unskilled or even semi-skilled work, but would get an increasing hold on skilled occupations' - one of the reasons why *there was more support for African unions from white capital than from white labour.*[123]

Without doubt, Lipton is wrong. In 1943, the SATLC supported full IC Act recognition, as demanded by the African unions. By contrast, the SAFCI supported nothing more than the 'administrative recognition' that Smit appreciated was unacceptable to those unions. It is absurd to suggest that 'there was more support for African unions from white capital than from white labour'. The representatives of industrial capital considered that African trade unions were inevitable, but that they should be more adequately controlled by whites. The most powerful section of 'white capital', mining capital, was totally opposed to African unions. Whilst I have no desire to condone the SATLC, the position of white workers was more complex than Lipton suggests, and even the Industrial Legislation Commission noted that: 'some witnesses, who represented the orthodox trade-union view, stressed that all workers should have the right to be regarded as employees to ensure the solidarity of the working class'. When African workers went on strike they were generally supported by white labour, but they were always opposed by 'white capital'.[124]

The two main protagonists - both of which adopted a more or less consistent line throughout the period - were black labour (supported by the ANC and NRC) and mining capital. Neither white labour nor industrial capital were homogeneous; both were subject to contradictory pressures. However, white labour tended to identify more closely with black labour than with mining capital, whilst, for industrial capital, the reverse was true. This was reflected in use of language. The SATLC generally used the term 'Africans', a practice which was deplored by the SAFCI, who

insisted on 'Natives';[125] the SATLC usually spoke of 'recognition', whilst the SAFCI was concerned with 'control'.

The Government's main aim was to limit the militancy of the African unions. In mid-1942 they decided that in order to achieve this, they would have to recognise African unions under the IC Act. However, they were unwilling to introduce this change at a highpoint of militancy. Rather, as a result of the unrest and the increasing unity between Africans and non-Africans, the government decided to reinforce existing racial divisions among workers. Under pressure from mining capital, and without strong pressure from white labour, they searched for some means of exercising 'control' without acceding to equality, but, lacking significant support from the African unions, this was futile.

The refusal to grant recognition at a highpoint of militancy had similarities with the pattern of events in the 1920s and the 1970s. The original IC Act was introduced after the *defeat* of 1922; the extension of the Act to include Africans did not occur at the peak of militancy, in 1973, or even in 1974, but in 1979, when the level of strike action was very much lower.[126] In 1924 and in 1979, recognition was agreed as a result of class struggle and in order, in the long term, to reduce that struggle, but it was not conceded at a peak point in the struggle. Whilst there are similarities between 1924 and 1979 the circumstances were not the same, and nor was the outcome. In particular, 1979 was not followed by decades of quiescence. This was probably related to the inability of capitalism to concede significant material improvements to black workers and to its failure, at least initially, to concede equal political rights. Indeed, whilst the post-Wiehahn industrial legislation might be in the long term interests of capitalism, in the shorter term, it provided workers with greater opportunities for legal organisation, and those opportunities were grasped to secure political as well as economic improvements. It is possible, although there is no evidence for this, that one reason why Smuts was unwilling to concede IC Act equality is that it would have had inevitable further consequences: if there was industrial equality, why not political equality too?

It is not difficult to explain why Smuts should concede recognition to non-Africans in 1924 but refuse it to Africans in 1942. On both occasions, he appreciated the benefits of reinforcing racial divisions. But why was recognition conceded to African trade unions in the 1970s but not in the 1940s? Some answers could be suggested as possibilities. First, the level of strike action in 1973 was rather higher than in 1942. I recently interviewed Jaap Cilliers, who was an industrial inspector in the war years and the Director General of Manpower at the time of the Wiehahn Commission, and I asked why the Government introduced recognition in the late-70's and not in the mid-40's. He answered: 'International pressure and the militancy of the black movement'.[127] Thus, once the level of struggle had peaked, there might have been a greater underlying pressure in the 1970s. One

should add, however, that the level of trade union membership among Africans was almost certainly higher in the mid-1940s than it was in the mid-1970s.[126] Perhaps more significantly, by the mid-'70s, mining capital was divided on the issue of recognition, with Anglo-American and JCI calling for trade union rights for Africans.[127]

In all the main events of this recognition drama, Smuts played a prominent part. Although he was a powerful figure, he was incapable of reconciling the conflict between the immediate interests of mining capital and the desire for long term stability. It is only possible to understand the recognition question if we situate the state within the context of class conflict; only if we do this accurately, can we glimpse a solution.

Notes

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1. Duncan, D., '"The Mills of God": State Bureaucracy and African Labour in South Africa, 1918-1948' (PhD thesis, Queen's University, Kingston, 1990), pp 348-70.
2. Lewis, D., 'The South African State and African Trade Unions: 1947-53', *Africa Perspective 18* (1981).
3. Bureau of Census and Statistics, *Union Statistics for Fifty Years, 1910-1960* (Pretoria, 1960), G-4, G-7, G-2.
4. T. Freestone to Chief Clerk 'C', n.d. enclosed with letter dated 21/10/1937), ARB 1103 pt 3.
5. Hirson, B., *Yours for the Union* (Zed, London, 1989), p 44.
6. DL, 'Minutes of a Conference of Divisional Inspectors held ... on 14 to 16 November, 1938', ARB A181 pt 2.
7. T. Freestone to Chief Clerk 'C', n.d. (enclosed with letter dated 21/10/1937), ARB 1103 pt 3.
8. My emphasis. DL, 'Recognition of Native Workers' Organisations', n.d. (1938?), NTS 35/362/1 pt 1.
9. Chief Clerk 'C' to Secretary for Labour (hereafter SL), 23/08/1939, Industrial Manpower Papers. The Industrial Manpower Papers, which are held in the UCT Library are marked 'provenence unknown'. In my view, it is likely that these papers were collected by the historians responsible for the official civil history of the war (unpublished). Gordon's relationship with the DL was not nearly so amicable as it is sometimes portrayed, and Buchanan's complaints may have been partly responsible for Gordon's detention in June 1940; various documents in ARB C1058 including F. L. A. Buchanan to SL, confidential, 22/12/1939.
10. Walker to Smit, 21/06/38, NTS 35/362/1 pt 1.
11. DS[mit], 'Note of Interview with Mr. Martin re. Native Trade Unions', Cape Town, 05/08/38, NTS 35/362/1 pt 1.
12. *Daily News*, 10/10/1938 (SACOB archives). The SACOB archives are unsorted papers held at that organisations main office.

13. DL, 'Minutes of a Conference of Divisional Inspectors held ... on 14 to 16 November, 1938', ARB A181 pt 2.
14. DL, *Annual Report, 1939* (UG 36-1940), pp 34, 44.
15. 'Memorandum submitted by the Joint Committee of African Trade Unions, to the Committee of Inquiry on the Economic, Social, Health and Educational Conditions of Natives', October 1941, ABX 411031b.
16. Smit to Minister of Native Affairs, 02/11/1939, NTS 35/362/1 pt 1.
17. SATLC, 'Minutes of the Ninth Annual Conference, 10 to 14 April, 1939', TUCSA Da1.9.
18. DNA, 'Minutes of Meeting Held to Discuss Recognition of Native Workers', 09/08/1939, and 'Minutes of Meeting Held to Discuss Recognition of Native Workers', 17/08/1939, NTS 35/362/1 pt 1. Dunbar Moodie is mistaken when he asserts: 'there were no black unionists involved in the negotiations at this stage'; Moodie, T. D., 'The South African State and Industrial Conflict in the 1940s', *International Journal of Historical Studies 21:1* (1988), p 23.
19. Chief Clerk 'C' to SL, 23/08/1939, Industrial Manpower Papers. At the 1940 SATLC Conference, when Koza moved that, 'the only form of recognition which can be accepted is ... the legal right of negotiating directly with employers', he was backed by Bill Andrews, Chairman of the CPSA, but not by Makabeni; SATLC, 'Minutes of the Tenth Annual Conference, 25 to 29 March, 1940', TUCSA Da1.10. Duncan was mistaken in arguing, op cit, p 352, that: 'the organisations then in existence would have accepted the rules as a starting point ...'.
20. Amended set of rules suggested by the SL, 26/09/1939, NTS 35/362/1 pt 1.
21. Smit to SL, 06/07/1940, NTS 35/362/1 pt 1. In November 1939, Piet van der Byl was Acting Minister of Native Affairs. Smit presented him with the papers on recognition, but he was most unhappy with the idea; Note by Major van der Byl, 06/11/1939, NTS 35/362/1 pt 1.
22. A. J. Limebeer, Secretary, Transvaal Chamber of Mines to Director of Native Labour, 02/08/1939, NTS 35/362/1 pt 1.
23. Secretary for Mines to SL, 08/08/40, NTS 35/362/1 pt 1.
24. Smit to Minister of Native Affairs, 06/12/1941, NTS 35/362/1 pt 1.
25. Hirson, op cit, pp 95-97; *Guardian*, 21/05/1941; *Race Relations News*, June 1941.
26. Memorandum, 'Meeting with Secretary for Labour Regarding Native Coal Distributors Strike', 12/06/1941, ARB 1103 pt 3.
27. The official statistics, which understate the level of strike action, can only be regarded as approximations, but they give the following figures for numbers of black strikers: 1937 - 4,849, 1938 - 3,706, 1939 - 4,839, 1940 - 730, 1941 - 4,765, 1942 - 12,794. Bureau of Census and Statistics, *Union Statistics for Fifty Years*, op cit. The increased militancy was very probably a response to rising inflation; 'Official Union and Foreign Statistics', *South African Journal of Economics* (1943).
28. Gosani, Hon. Secretary, CNETU to Minister of Labour,

29/12/1941, ARB 1103 pt 3.

29. J. M. Brink to Mr. Lowe, 16/02/1942, NTS 35/362/1 pt 2.
30. Walshe, P., *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa: the ANC, 1912-52* (University of California, Berkeley, 1971), pp 264-8.
31. Hirson, op cit, p 88. Xuma's papers contain a number of appeals from trade unions which he appears to have ignored, and, with regard to a slightly later period, J. B. Marks, President of the African Mine Workers Union, said that Xuma 'didn't show any interest' in the 1946 strike. ABX 420530a, ABX 421020a, ABX 420911a, ABX 430920a; Hirson, ibid, p 187.
32. Xuma to Gosani, 17/03/1942, ABX 420217a. For Gosani's contribution to the discussion see Simons, J. and Simons, R., *Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950* (IDAF, London, 1983), p 555.
33. Xuma to Madeley, 11/07/1942, ABX 420711a.
34. Roth, M., 'The Natives Representative Council, 1937-51 (PhD thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1987), p 224.
35. Walshe, op cit, p 271.
36. Union of South Africa, *Verbatim Report of the Proceedings of the NRC (Sixth Session) Volume 2*, p 214.
37. It was the demand mentioned most frequently by Prof. Matthews when he met Smit to discuss the NRC crisis in 1946; 'Notes of Interviews with Prof. Matthews at Alice on Tuesday 22 October, 1946', Smit Papers 34/46. See also Paul Mosaka's summary of the NRC's attitude immediately prior to its adjournment; Roth, op cit, p 459.
38. Director of Native Labour to Secretary for Native Affairs (hereafter SNA), 15/08/1941, NTS 35/362/1 pt 2.
39. *Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on the Social, Health and Economic Conditions of Urban Natives* (herafter *Smit Report*) (GPS 76272-1942), p 1. Duncan, op cit, p 354, is probably wrong when he argues that, 'Lowe was clearly out of step with his immediate superior, Douglas Smit'.
40. Smuts to M. C. Gillett, 24/07/1941, Smuts Private Papers.
41. *Smit Report*, op cit, p 3.
42. Secretary for Native Affairs to Secretary for Mines, 26/01/1942, NTS 35/362/1 pt 2.
43. My emphasis. SNA to SL, 10/04/1942, NTS 35/362/1 pt 2.
44. Thus, Dave Lewis had misread the situation when he argued, op cit, p 48, that there was clearly no intention to amend the IC Act.
45. Reitz to Minister of Labour, marked 'not to be sent', n.d. (17/04/1942?), NTS 35/362/1 pt 2. Margaret Ballinger et al later wrote to Smuts reminding him of his promise, conveyed by Reitz, to 'amend the Industrial Conciliation Act next session'; Friends of Africa to Smuts, 05/01/1943, Smuts Private Papers. This promiss was not denied in the reply which followed.
46. Chief Clerk 'C' to SL, ARB 1103 pt 3; see also SATLC NEC Minutes, 12/05/42, TUCSA Da 2.12.
47. Minister of Labour's Private Secretary to Secretary, CNETU, 22/07/1942, ABX 420724.
48. Minister of Labour's Private Secretary to Secretary, Pretoria Joint Council of Non-European Trade Unions,

23/10/1942, ARB 1103 pt 3. This letter was in response to a resolution which was also sent to the Minister of Native Affairs. Smit sent the DNA's copy of the resolution to Walker, together with a note which said: 'In view of the peremptory tone of the resolution ... I have not sent any acknowledegment'. Smit was no 'softy', and this response was characteristic of the man.

49. Lewin, J., 'Recognition of African Trade Unions', *Race Relations 9:2* (1942), p 112; *Guardian*, 03/12/1942; *Rand Daily Mail*, 30/11/1942; Simons and Simons, op cit, p 556. Hirson, op cit, p 105, criticises this latter account for mistaking the date of Madeley's speech (it was made a year earlier according to Hirson); on this point, however, Simons and Simons are correct.
50. Referred to in Ballinger and Molteno to Minister of Native Affairs, telegram, 09/12/1942, Molteno Papers B4.54.
51. Lewis, op cit, p 48; Lewis, J., *Industrialisation and Trade Union Organisation in South Africa, 1924-55* (CUP, Cambridge, 1984), p 160. This was Madeley's justification for the War Measure; *Senate Debates*, 18/03/1943, columns 616-7.
52. Margaret Ballinger and Molteno to Reitz, 22/12/1942, NTS 35/362/1 pt 2; Smuts to Madeley, 24/12/1942, Smuts Private Papers; SATLC, *Report of the Thirteenth Annual Conference held on 27 to 30 April, 1943*, pp 84-85, TUCSA Da 1.13; Guardian, 31/12/1942 . Simons and Simons are wrong when they assert, op cit, p 557, that the SATLC 'withheld its protest in the interests of national unity'.
53. Smit to Under Secretary, DNA, 17/04/1942, NTS 35/362/1 pt 2.
54. Limebeer to SNA, 24/02/1942, NTS 35/362/1 pt 2.
54a. Walshe, op cit, pp 270, 279, suggests, without citing any evidence, that the Northfield dispute was particularly important in shifting government opinion. My impression is that they were particularly disturbed by the meat and dairy workers' strikes; Smit to Sen. Brookes, 23/12/1942, ARB 1183/12; DL, 'Recognition of Native Trade Unions, n.d. (before 19/09/1945), ARB 1060/23 pt 1. Probably they were effected, to some degree, by all these major disputes.
55. *South African Outlook*, 01/02/1943.
56. *Senate Debates*, 18/03/1943, column 617.
57. Unsigned (probably Smit), 'Native Trade Unions', 26/01/1943, NTS 35/362/1 pt 2.
58. *Senate Debates*, 18/03/1943, column 641.
59. *The Cape Argus*, 01/03/1942.
60. *The Star*, 19/12/1942 (letters page).
61. Moodie, op cit, pp 56-61.
62. Transvaal Chamber of Mines to Minister of Native Affairs, 18/10/1943, NTS 35/262/1 pt 3.
63. Walshe, op cit, p 310.
64. There may have been some heightened awareness but it should not be exaggerated: between 1 and 19 December, *The Star* only carried two letters complaing about 'native strikes'.
65. Hirson, op cit, p 96; Roux, E., *Time Longer than Rope* (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1964), p 331.
66. Smuts' correspondence to M. C. and A. Gillett, 17/01/1942 to 27/02/1943, Smuts Private Papers.

67. E. Bruyns, *The Star*, 17/12/1942. He claimed that this was 'an old native saying'.
68. Correspondence between SAIRR and Walker, April 1943, ARB 1042 pt 4.
69. *Senate Debates*, 18/03/1943, column 617.
70. Ibid, column 616.
71. *House of Assembly Debates*, 31/03/1943, column 4496.
72. Acting Divisional Inspector, Johannesburg to SL, 'Control of Native Trade Unions', 08/04/1943, ARB 1103 pt 3.
73. Various documents, 15/09/1942 to 21/10/1942, ARB 1103 pt 3.
74. *Guardian*, 22/04/1943, 13/04/1943, 28/10/1943, 14/10/1943.
75. CNETU, 'Memorandum on the Result of the Conference on Recognition of African Trade Unions' (Held on October 10 1943)', ABX 431010; Representatives of 19 trade unions, 'Memorandum on the Recognition of African Trade Unions ...', adopted by a conference held in Durban on 23/10/1943, ARB 1103 pt 3. These memoranda reflected the line of the CPSA; CPSA, Johannesburg District Committee, 'Memorandum on Recognition of African Trade Unions', 05/10/1943, Molteno Papers B4.62.
76. All the quotations which follow are from DL, 'Recognition of Native Trade Unions, Conference Held in Pretoria on 27 October 1943', ARB 1103 pt 3. It would appear that, with two exceptions, the discourse was conducted in English. The exceptions were the contributions from Naboth Mokgatle, a Pretoria delegate and Lucas Philips, who were both members of the Communist Party. Ray Alexander informed me, in an interview in Cape Town on 17/06/1992, that these two had spoken in the vernacular as a result of a tactical decision. They had wanted at least one contribution in Xhosa, in order that their arguments would be understood by Sakwe from the Transkei, although as it turned out this was unnecessary. Apparently Mokgatle and Philips both spoke English very well, and Mokgatle later wrote his autobiography in the language.
77. The third white SATLC delegate was Thomas Rutherford. He was an official of SATU, and like Downes and De Vries he had been employed at the Government Printing Works, albeit after Walker had left. Walker, I. L. and Weinbren, B., *2000 Casualties* (SATUC, Johannesburg, 1961), pp 314, 309.
78. Ray Alexander, interview, Cape Town, 17/06/1992.
79. Simons and Simons, op cit, p 559.
80. DL, 'Memorandum re Receognition of Native Trade Unions', n.d. (after 27/10/1943, before 06/01/1944), ARB 1103 pt 3.
81. Walker, Muller and Smit to Minister of Labour, 'Recognition of Native Trade Unions', 08/01/1944, ARB 1103 pt 3.
82. IW[alker], note, 24/01/1944, ARB 1103 pt 3; Smit to Mears, note, 24/11/1943, NTS 35/362/1 pt 3; Piet van der Byl to SNA, note, 06/01/1944, NTS 35/362/1 pt 3;
83. CFL, *Official Organ*, 7:2 (May 1943), p 3 (Molteno Papers); CFL to Sen. Brookes, 24/02/1944, Molteno Papers C3.59; CPSA, 'Recognition of African Trade Unions', Cape Town, 18/11/1943, Molteno Papers B4.71.
84. CFL to SL, 02/10/1943, ARB 1103 pt 3.
85. Pretoria Joint Council of Non-European Trade Unions to

Minister of Labour, 29/10/1943, ARB 1103 pt 3.

86. SATLC, *Report of ... the Eleventh Annual Conference'*, op cit, pp 82-85. The Guardian's potted history of the SATLC's attitude to African union recognition presents a false impression of this conference; *Guardian*, 21/10/1943.
87. NUDW to Minister for Labour, 12/12/1943, ARB 1103 pt 3.
88. SATLC, *Report of Fourteenth Annual Conference, 10 to 14 April 1944*, pp 45-47. For definitions of industrial, artisan etc. see Lewis, J., op cit. Rather curiously SATU refused to vote.
89. *AEU Monthly Report*, February 1943, p 130.
90. *AEU Monthly Report*, July 1944, p 119. On the AEU's position see Lewis, J., op cit, p 109.
91. *AEU Monthly Report*, July 1941, p 8.
92. Lewis, J., op cit.
93. *Guardian*, 17/02/1944.
94. SAFCI, Executive Council Minutes, 25/01/1944, Minutes 1944, SACOB archive.
95. Unsigned, 'Memorandum on the Suggested Re-Organisation of Chambers of Industry in South Africa', 31/08/1942, Minutes 1942, SACOB archive.
96. In 1943-44 the Executive Council included officials from the following companies: General Motors, Cape Portland Cement, Haggie and Son, Firestone, Lewis Berger, Bakers Ltd., AECI, S. A. Slippers, Lever Bros., and Premier Milling; SAFCI, 'List of Principals and Alternatives on the Executive Council, 1943-44', Minutes 1944, SACOB archive.
97. SATLC, NEC Minutes, 14/07/1942, TUCSA Da2.12; SAFCI, Executive Council Minutes, 22/07/1944, 1944 Minutes, SACOB archive.
98. SAFCI, Executive Council Minutes, 25/08/1939, 1939 Minutes, SACOB archive.
99. SAFCI, Executive Council Minutes, 25/03/1942, 1942 Minutes, SACOB archive; NCI to SAFCI, 13/05/1942, 1942 Minutes, SACOB archive.
100. Lewis, D., op cit, p 49. Lewis cites the TCI's 1943 Annual Report (which I have not seen).
101. Letter from TCI, quoted in SAFCI, Executive Council Minutes, 1942 Minutes, 25/03/1942. SACOB archive.
102. SAFCI, Executive Council Minutes, 26/01/1943, 1943 Minutes, SACOB archives.
103. Deacon, NCI to SAFCI, n.d. (c. 13/01/1943), 1943 Minutes, SACOB archive. This letter was made available to members of the SAFCI Exceutive Council for their meeting of 26/01/1943.
104. IEA, First Annual Report of the General Council, 1943-44 (NTS 35/362/1 pt 3).
105. Burger, 'Native Trade Unions', 27/11/1943, 1943 Minutes, SACOB archive. SAFCI, Executive Council Minutes, 07/12/1943, 1943 Minutes, SACOB archive.
106. Their General Council included officials from: AECI, Coedmore Quarries, Lever Bros., Bakers Ltd., S. A. Slippers, Lewis Berger, Natal Sugar Millers Association, Durban Stevedores Association, and Dunlop; IEA, First Annual Report of the General Council, 1943-44 (NTS 35/362/1 pt 3).
107. Windsor to Secretary fo Native Labour, 24/11/1943, ARB 1103

pt 3.

108. It is not clear whether the views of the SAFCI and/or the IEA had any impact on the cabinet's decision not to proceed with a change in the law.
109. IEA, 'Minutes of a Meeting of Representatives ... on 30 January 1945 ...', ARB 1103 pt 3.
110. SAFCI to Minister of Native Affairs, 23/04/1945; NTS 35/362/1 pt 3.
111. SAFCI, 'Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Industrial Legislation, Part Three', 05/10/1946, Molteno Papers B7.34.
112. SAFCI, Executive Council Minutes, 26/06/1945, Minutes 1945, SACOB archive.
113. SAFCI, Minutes of the Annual Convention, 1946, Minutes 1946, SACOB archive; SAFCI, Executive Council Minutes, 26/11/1946, Minutes 1946, SACOB archive.
114. Lewis, J., op cit, p 126.
115. Smit, diary entry, 03/03/1945, Smit Papers.
116. Native (Industrial) Bill, ARB 1060/23 pt 1; Hirson, op cit, p 179; Lewis, D., op cit, p 51-52.
117. Chief Clerk 'C' to SL, 11/12/1945, ARB 1060/23; Simons and Simons, op cit, p 560.
118. New Era, 24/05/1945 (NTS 35/362/1 pt 3); *Report of Industrial Legislation Commission of Enquiry* (hereafter *Botha Commission*) (UG 62-1951), p 214.
119. Various documents, ARB 1060/23 pt 1. With a few exceptions, the African unions continued to oppose the Bill; Hirson, op cit, p 191.
120. Unsigned, notes on meeting of Advisory Council of Labour, 28/02/1946 (?), ARB 1060/23 pt 1.
121. Original emphasis. De Vries to Minister of Labour's Private Secretary, 05/01/1946, ARB 1060/23 pt 1.
122. Lewis, J., op cit, p167; Lewis, D., op cit, p 51.
123. My emphasis. Lipton, M., *Capitalism and Apartheid* (Wildwood House, Aldershot, 1986), p 194.
124. *Botha Commission*, op cit, p 212. Lipton has misread Simons and Simons, p 558, who she cites as the source of the TLC's quoted position. Simons and Simons say that the statement was made by one individual, De Vries, and that he was speaking against the policy of the TLC.
125. SAFCI, 1946 Annual Convention Resolutions, Cape Chamber of Industries Papers.
126. According to official statistics, in 1973 there were 370 strikes, 98,378 strikers, and 246,071 'days lost', but for 1979 the figures were 101, 23,064 and 70,542; Central Statistical Service, *South African Statistics*.
127. E. A. Cilliers, interview, Port Elizabeth, 04/03/1992.
128. Even if one is highly sceptical about the oft quoted figure of 158,000 members of black unions in 1945, the level of membership was almost certainly higher than the 100,000 members of African unions in 1977; Lipton, ibid, p 341.
129. Lipton, ibid, p 132.