

3.1.9(B)

**MEDU**

**SPECIAL  
EDITION**

**Art Ensemble**

**NO TO THE WHITE  
REPUBLIC**



**YES TO THE  
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC**

**Collection Name: MEDU ON-LINE**

***PUBLISHER:***

*Publisher:* Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand

*Location:* Johannesburg

©2022

***LEGAL NOTICES:***

**Copyright Notice:**

All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

**Disclaimer and Terms of Use:**

Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of the Historical Papers Research Archive, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document is part of the MEDU Art Ensemble Consolidation Project, Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

E D I T O R I A L

P.W. Botha's regime is calling the people of South Africa to celebrate the Apartheid Republic. The celebrations will be through a variety of festivals throughout the country. The motto for the festivals is: "Unity in Diversity", a slogan attempting to popularise racism and the policy of "separate development". Of course, these celebrations are P.W.'s attempt at seeking a mandate from the people of South Africa, for his regime to continue with its fascist rule and to perpetrate acts of aggression against neighbouring states like Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Swaziland and Lesotho.

The majority of people in South Africa have registered their clear and determined NO! This is not the first time. Again, even more forcefully, through church, student, civic, professional, cultural etc. bodies; and this by Africans, coloureds, Indians and some whites; the people of South Africa have come out in 1981, the twentieth anniversary of the racist Republic, to say No to the celebrations! No to Apartheid! No to fascism!

Through a special edition: "STOP THE REPUBLIC DAY FESTIVAL" Medu Art Ensemble joins the majority of the people of South Africa to say no to P.W.; boycott the Republic Day Festivals, no to fascism!

**FORWARD TO A PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC!**

MONGANE SEROTE

THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
EVER BLOOD-THIRSTY REPUBLIC

Historical Background

The oppressed people of South Africa were just fresh from witnessing a most blatant episode - the merciless massacre of the blacks at Sharpeville and elsewhere on 21 March 1960, followed by the total ban on the two liberation movements, the legal platforms whereupon the black people voiced their grievances - when on the 31st May 1961, in spite of national and international protests, the genocidal apartheid regime declared the Republic of South Africa, for the maintenance of white minority rule. It is no accident that the black people, the Indians and 'coloureds' were once more like the 1910 Union of South Africa, left in the lurch.

This notorious republic, a historical misfortune in the face of mankind, has since then been implemented by force of guns and cemented with the blood of the oppressed. Hardly a year later the racist-apartheid stalwarts Hendrik Verwoerd, Balthazar Vorster and other political bandits, repeatedly mistaken for cabinet ministers, went on rampage to strengthen their draconian laws for the 'maintenance of law and order'. The Terrorism Act, Group Areas Act, Communism Act and all the racist laws became fashionable in the statutes and the government gazettes. The black families were robbed of fathers and bread winners, people were misplaced, some were reported to have got lost through enforced removals.

In 1962, when the oppressed majority were still nursing fresh wounds as a result of naked brutalities, tortures, super exploitation and constant harrassments, the fascist regime, the twin-brother to Hitler's nazism made a nationwide clampdown on people's leaders like Nelson Mandela,

Govan Mbeki, Walter Sisulu, Ahmed Kathrada and many others. Most of our fathers had to choose between long-term imprisonment or exile. Many opted for the latter, thereby leaving their children and wives (some pregnant by then) behind. Nelson Mandela and others were subjected to a racist procedure in racists courts, before a racist judge and were punished with racist laws, which were not of their making. The Rivonia Trial is today remembered by the international community as one of the most fraudulent trials in history. Mandela and other Rivonia trialists have been sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island and all the national and international calls for their release have fallen on deaf ears. To rub more salt on the wound the Pretoria regime, in 1964, assassinated leaders of the exploited working class, Vuyisile Mini, Wilton Khanyinga and Zinakile Mkaba by a hangman's noose.

The years that followed saw cowardly and criminal acts against the oppressed majority. The people were banished, banned, restricted, jailed and others 'committed suicide' in the oppressors dungeons. The covert and overt political presence was uprooted and mercilessly crushed. Indeed the enemy of the people of South Africa, the enemy of the Africa continent and the arch-rival of progress never runs short of diabolical intentions. In 1971 the Pretoria gestapo had the audacity to organise without shame free picnics, festivals etc., to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the terrorist republic! This is without doubt an arrogant and satanic exercise to assess how much hardships the people have absorbed, and how much intimidation the people have surrendered to!

The Pretoria clique neither compromises with legal and non-violent students organisations. In 1974 the South African Students Organisation (SASO) and the Black People's Convention (BPC) called students to pledge solidarity and celebrate with the people of victorious

Mozambique after the latter's arduous and long struggle against Portuguese colonialism. The occasion, VIVA FRELIMO rally, was organised in Durban. The Pretoria gang rounded up the student-leaders, Pandeleni Nefholovhudwe, Nkwenkwe Nkomo, Aubrey Mokwape and six others - trialed them and hauled them to Robben Island for six year term each. Many students fled into exile.

The twenty years of the satanic republic has also been the years to keep South Africa white and 'clean'. The black people have been banished or crowded into islands of poverty, notoriously known as homelands - where malnutrition, infectious diseases, inadequate transport facilities, lack of basic necessities, water, etc. are highly fashionable. The first to be banished were the Xhosa-speaking people of Transkei in 1976, followed by Bophutatswana in 1977, then Vendaland in 1979 and Ciskei possibly this year 1981. The exploitation in these labour-compounds are appalling and extremely dehumanising. The whites in turn are pompously occupying 87% of South Africa.

In June 1976, the blood-suckers of our country put on show their military might, their cannibalism, their fascist practices and their ignorance to the world-wide call to rid the world of apartheid when they mowed down little Hector Petersons in a peaceful demonstration of schoolkids. The schoolkids were justifiably demonstrating against Afrikaans as a medium of instructions at school. This cold-blooded mass murder, equivalent to Adolf Hitler's extermination of the Jews in Nazi Germany reduced the Sharpeville shootings to an ordinary garden party! Even the official figures of 500 dead were censored disgustingly. Whilst the people were shocked in total disbelief by such atrocities, leaders like Steve Biko, Mapetla Mohapi, Joseph Mdluli, Imam Haron, to name but a few, were dragged into racist slaughter-houses and like many others, were later certified dead by 'committing suicide'. Since June

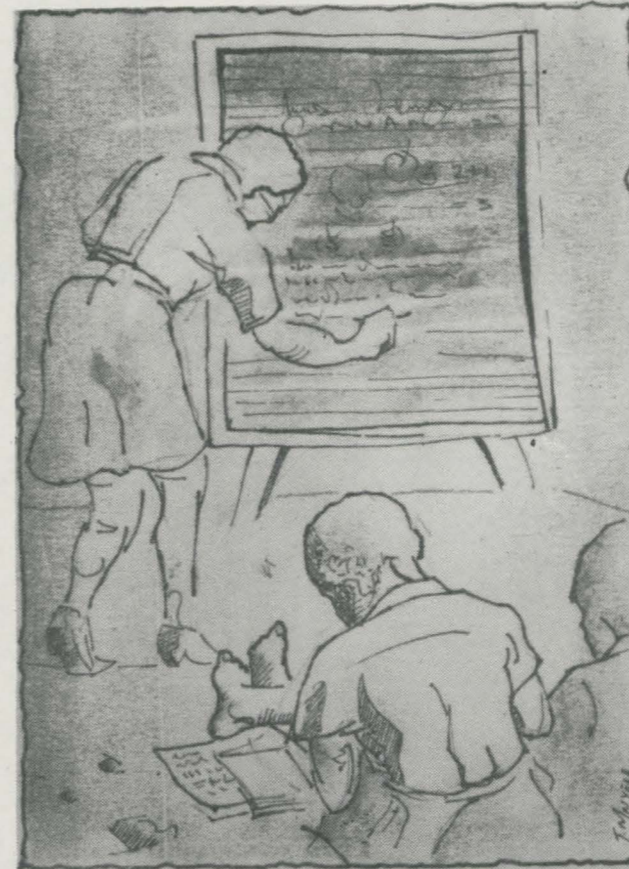
# fragments: a brief comment on black lives in South Africa



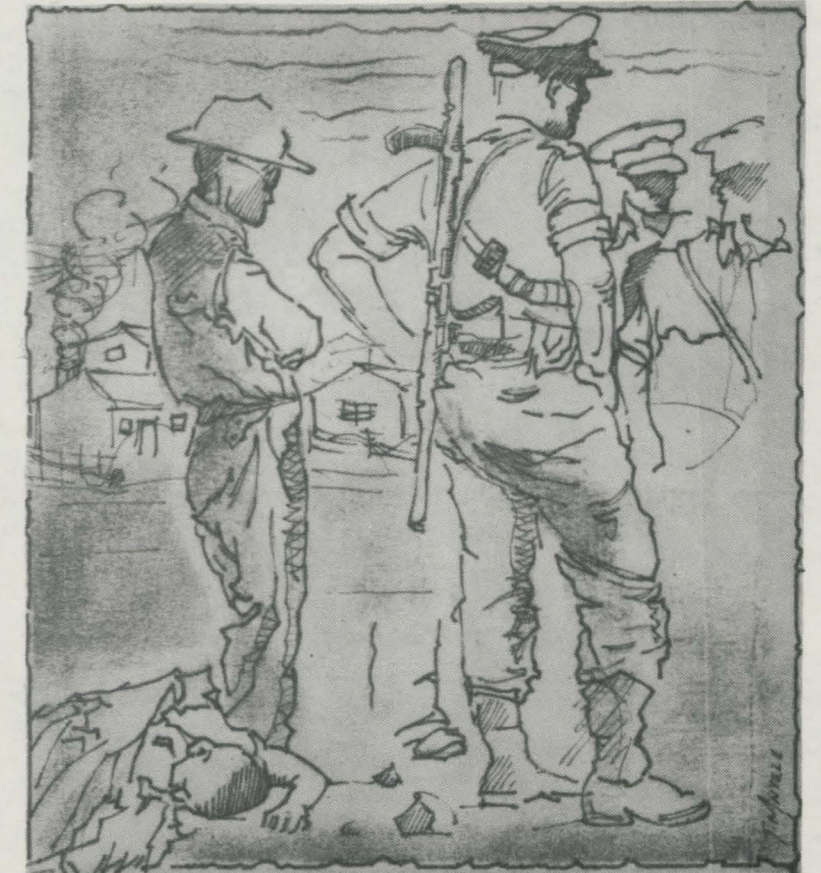
ILLUSTRATION by Thamsanqa kaMnye



VICTORY LIES IN THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE



Inferior education and extremely poor school facilities . . . subjects taught in an unpopular language . . . high fees and extremely under-paid parents — These are the roots of student revolts of the 70s . . . roots of death and exile!



South Africa was conquered by force and is today ruled by force . . . Remember Sharpville, the Treason Trial and numerous others . . . death or exile.

1976 the fascist order has maintained its climax of open murder and more repressive forms to exterminate the black people.

In October 19, 1977, the apartheid devils silenced the black voices by banning black newspapers, legal black organisations, journalists, leaders, etc. so that the black people must suffer peacefully. The youths are leaving the country of their birth in thousands, families are broken, the people have been misplaced, children have vanished and others cannot be traced. Blood has been and still is flowing in our country. The regime has, indeed, become more repressive.

#### The Southern African States

The black states neighbouring South Africa have genuinely gained their independence in the exception of Namibia. But still, the republic regime is not prepared to recognise and respect their sovereignty. Every week the villages in the People's Republic of Angola are bombed and thousands of people lose their lives. Early this year 1981, the exiles in Matola, Mozambique have been killed by the Pretoria gangsters. The South African nazi clique is deliberately violating the territorial integrity of independent Botswana, Lesotho, Zambia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe in total disregard of the international law. The cross-border attacks by the Hitlerite regime into neighbouring states are an open exhibition of South Africa's military and economic monsterism. The militarisation of the economy, the social and political sectors are not only a constant threat to the African continent but a fertile launching for imperialist aggression against the world. Not only a challenge to the people of South Africa, but a threat to world peace.



Our Organised Efforts

Now this year 1981, the republic regime is attempting to hypnotise and flatter us with free picnics, country-wide festivals and celebrations to mark in jubilation twenty blood-spilt years. The Bothas, Vorsters, Malans and other apartheid veterans would appreciate us celebrating the deaths of our children, the detentions - without trial, the life sentences imposed on Mandelas, the assassinations of Steve Bikos, the terrorism acts, pass laws, banishments, banning orders, criminal murders, etc.

The enemies of peace and progress are indeed attempting to undermine our united and organised efforts against national oppression and super-exploitation; the efforts we have been maintaining ever since the colonial invasion of the subcontinent.

The Botha regime is gearing itself into elections this year to seek a mandate from the white minority voters to suppress, oppress and exterminate the people of South Africa. In the meantime Johnson Lubisi, Petrus Mashigo and Naphtalie Manana stand in danger of being assassinated by the regime, in the same fashion it did with Solomon Mahlangu.

WE SAY, ENOUGH!

NO MORE!

NO TO WHITE REPUBLIC!

YES TO PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC!

BACHANA MOKWENA

## FORGET NOT OUR MOTHERS

Forget not our mothers  
awaiting us with an assured patience

Forget not our fathers  
languishing in jails  
toiling in mines

Forget not our children  
lying dead  
dying in the streets.

Fists of fury reach out  
as we re-affirm:  
Africa shall be free!  
We shall free her!



Poem by ILVA MACKAY — illustrated by Judy Seidman

# ... scourge of the 'bantustans'... kwashiorkor

The elderly are dying of starvation and neglect disguised as old age; the children die of kwashiorkor (protein deficiencies) or under the disguise of gastro-enteritis or some other disease. The deadly South African white government does not publish figures for infant mortality in the African population, but studies have shown that in some areas a third to two-thirds of all children born die before they are three. Kwashiorkor is a curse of the 'bantustan' policy, by the white South African government.

ILLUSTRATION by Thamsanqa kaMnyele



CULTURE AND RESISTANCE

"Even in times of darkest confusion the thin flame of hope - hope of eventual happiness - is never extinguished in the hearts of men. The light of this flame plays on the faces of the heroes of legends, tales, sagas, poems and novels ..... We may say without exaggeration: generation after generation has lived only with this hope, while the duty of literature and of the arts was to sustain this hope in every way, because mankind, losing hope, loses its human face".

GRIGORI OGANOV

In the quote above, Oganov touches on what seems a truism of human culture. All forms of literature and the arts - from the magic of theatrical performances to the wizardry of passionate music, possess the amazing and mighty power of influencing people. At one time they seemed a mystic power and poets were equated with priests. Even stripping away this mysticism does not decrease this power, but rather increases it. In living nature that is forever renewing itself, in the seething cauldron of life, in the contrasts of light and shade, in the conflict of good and evil, in the social battles of the era which are changing the world, lie the sources of these arts. And they can never be divorced from life; they can never stand aside from the problems of human existence.

All this is easy to say, easy to write down, easy to type in black on white paper, perhaps even easy to believe in. Art is most certainly a weapon, no matter how you look at it - but how is this weapon wielded? How is this power, even in the context of our apartheid-ridden society, to be harnessed? Another quotation from Oganov's "Genuine Culture and False Substitutes" poses the dilemma:-

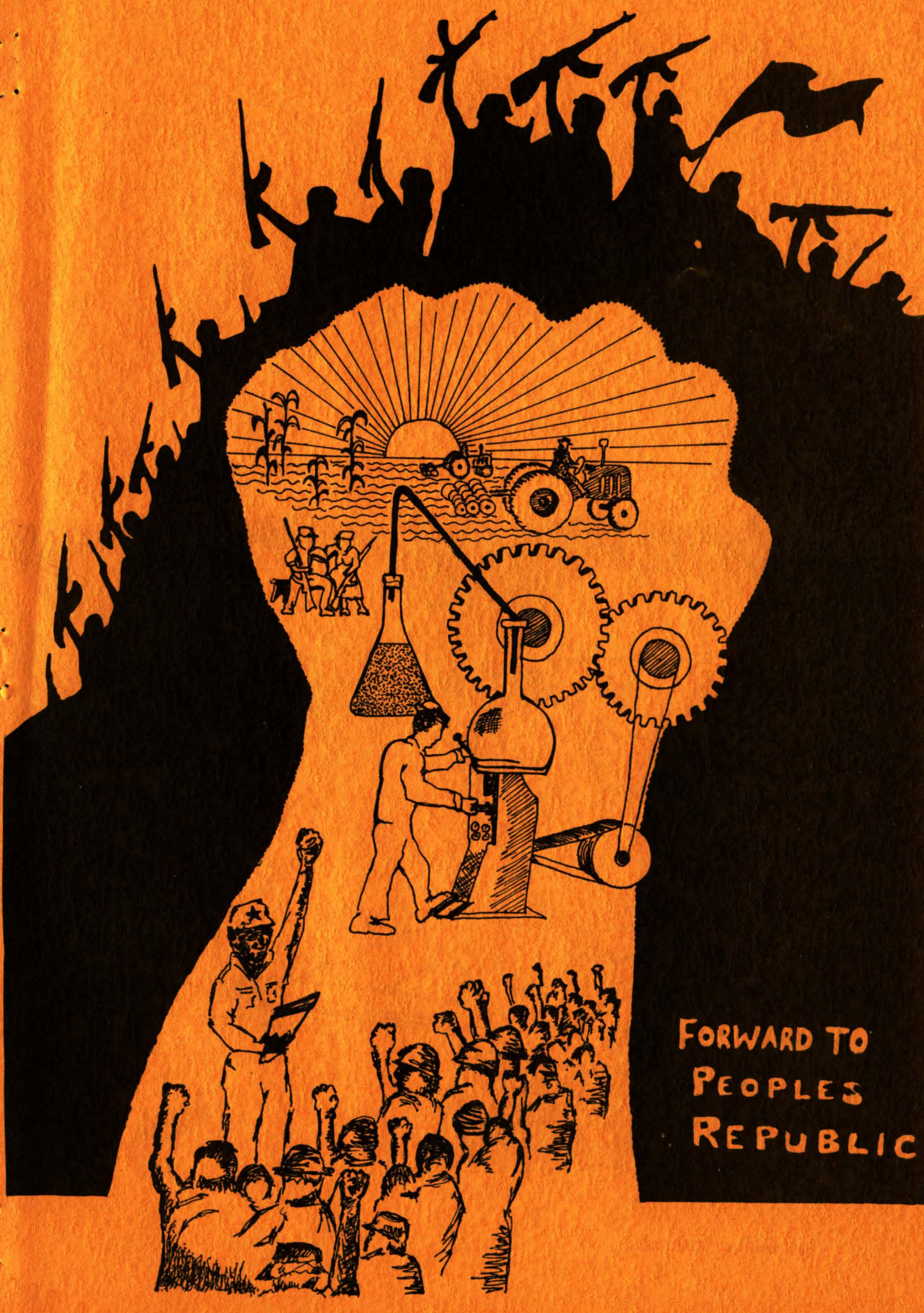
"But the pitiless reality, the bitter antagonisms of social history and the blind hatred of a hostility fostered for centuries made the flame fade, and at times in almost pitch-black darkness, it seemed impossible to conquer ill on earth, impossible to feed all the hungry, to console all the suffering people, and to build a sensible and just life worthy of man".

Yet the flame of hope is formed by the prospect of a people culturally armed against oppression; culturally prepared to face fascism and terror. Only the identity of the creative artists and of the progressive trends of growth; only the unity of the cultural worker with the community from which he/she draws strength can raise the flame of cultural resistance into a mighty light-giving source of revolutionary energy.

#### Art and Bondage

There are many of us who believe that South African art, that has its implicit origins in the socio-political context of this country, has a comprehensive and functional role in the process of liberation. This dream is perhaps not as real as one might wish it to be.

We know right from the beginning that no amount of artistic production, no matter how eloquent, can put food in the mouths of the hungry, give jobs to the unemployed, put roofs over the heads of the homeless, or provide equality before the law. However, within that part of society that yearns for political liberation, art and culture serve to propagandize, politicize and spread awareness of the situation. Often, as well, artistic production provides for some sort of intellectual and emotional release from the shackles of oppression.



FORWARD TO  
PEOPLES  
REPUBLIC



ILLUSTRATION by Judy Seidman

It is absolutely vital that in the process of bringing about this intellectual/emotional release a certain illusion is not fostered. This is the illusion of "present Bondage and future liberation" which can provide a temporary and superficial relief from the South African reality. This is the illusion whereby "present Bondage and future liberation" is expressed in such a "spiritualized" and "idealized" form that the concepts have no relevance to the real concerns of our communities. The products a mutually admiring intellectual elite will never move the people to action - romantic bluster and pseudo-mysticism may go down well with the middle-class cultural audience in Europe and North America but will end up cutting no ice in our own struggle.

Let the South African artist - bondage and liberation conscious - learn from the community. Let the South African cultural worker find out the facts requiring attention, the wishes and concerns of our people. Enough glorification of suffering - enough empty romanticization about liberation: let us all face the thousand cultural issues at hand and go forward to a genuinely popular culture!

"Listen and speak.

Retain and hand on the hundred ways of saying no,  
Each useful in a hundred different situations.  
Say no by doing what you are told to do.  
Say no by doing what you are told not to do.  
Say no by arguing carefully your interest and my interest.

Say no, shouting in anger.

Say no, laughing aloud at the pompous ass appointed above you.  
Say no by organizing a union and strikes and sit-ins.  
Say no, when the time has come, by deeds.



Ask who eats our meal  
who fills his plate  
with our future

Ask insistently, for all to hear.

Ask and make public the answer.

And remember:

Apart from this planet we have no other.

Apart from this life we have no other.

So what are we waiting for?

It is time to build houses to live in.

It is time to sew clothes to wear.

It is time to bake bread to be eaten".

### Culture and Society

Culture, as Cabral notes, reflects at every moment the material and spiritual changes and continuities within society. Strong and reciprocal relationships exist between cultural, political and socio-economic factors. In fact cultural and artistic forms make up a part of human activity heavily saturated by lived experience and are thus important vehicles for all kinds of values, ideas and images.

In South Africa the state has not managed to "sell" its doctrine apartheid - the vast majority of South Africans do not support this racial ideology. This means that the struggle for power between different ideological viewpoints is very noticeable as class and group interests compete. These competing groups use art/culture to mobilize support among the people for their conflicting goals and political programmes. Because the State has exerted control through directly violent and oppressive ways in the past, rather than more subtle ideological ways, there is some room at the moment for groups to use

a cultural platform for the spreading of progressive ideas. This means that cultural and artistic activities have become significant areas of popular struggle.

It should be noted however that the South African state is now trying to take more overt control of thought and communication (under the heading of "Total Strategy"). This means that it has become a great deal more important to counter the ideological input of the State, and to have powerful and adequate responses to State manipulation.

If our response to apartheid, fascism and exploitation is to carry weight then we must, without doubt, be in cultural contact with the masses. If cultural workers can achieve this proper relationship to their society then our cultural production will help pull the fiercer and fiercer struggles our people are waging against a corrupt and intellectually bankrupt regime. As Ernst Fisher says in his book, "The Necessity of Art":-

"The artist has the responsibility to arouse and stimulate understanding - to emphasize social responsibility. It means that, instead of working in a vacuum, he recognizes that he is ultimately commissioned by Society. When he discovers new aspects of reality, he does not do so for himself alone. He does it for others as well, for all those who are discovering what sort of world they are living in, where they come from, and where they are going. He produces for a community".

JOHN DONNE