



GLOBALISATION, MARGINALISATION & NEW SOCIAL
MOVEMENTS IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

A joint project between the Centre for Civil Society and the
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Queries: Richard Ballard (Project Manager) • School of
Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban,
4041 ballardr@ukzn.ac.za • Tel 031 2602266 • Fax 031 2602359



The Anti-Privatisation Forum: A Profile of a Post-Apartheid Social Movement

Sakhela Buhlungu
University of the Witwatersrand
Johannesburg
buhlungus@social.wits.ac.za

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UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

The Anti-Privatisation Forumⁱ: A Profile of a Post-Apartheid Social Movement

Sakhela Buhlungu

1. Introduction

The advent of democracy has resulted in a proliferation of movements representing a wide range of constituencies and interests in South Africa. Many of these movements were formed or operate outside the auspices of the former liberation movements and other civil society organisations that were part of the anti-apartheid struggle. For this reason, some observers and activists leading these new forces have styled them ‘new social movements’ to underline the fact that they represent new constituencies facing new issues in post-apartheid South Africa. One of these ‘new’ social movements is the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF), an umbrella organisation that has gained prominence since its formation in 2000. This report aims to present a profile of the APF by focusing on the following:

- Tracing the origins of the movement,
- Identifying the basic characteristics of the movement as well as the social characteristics of its members and leadership,
- Considering the relationship between the origins of the APF and the structural transformation of South Africa’s economic and political system,
- Examining the relationship between the South African transition and neo-liberal globalisation.

In examining the above issues, the report will explore whether the APF can be characterised as a counter-hegemonic movement struggling for fundamental change, or one that is struggling for more limited or short term relief from the marginalisation of its social base. In exploring the above issues, the paper also considers the relationship between the APF and traditional struggle organisations in South Africa, particularly those that constitute the Tripartite Alliance of the African National Congress (ANC), the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). This report argues that it is not possible to grasp the origins, politics, strategies and campaigns of new social movements such as the APF without reference to the organisations that led the anti-apartheid struggle, particularly from the 1970s to the 1990s.

The material for this report was gathered from various sources including interviews with activists of the APF and leaders of various organisations, including the main trade union federations. In addition, primary documents, such as minutes, reports and pamphlets were collected from the APF office in Braamfontein.ⁱⁱ Other documents were accessed through the websites of the APF and various other organisations, many of which have links with the new social movements. Other information and insights were gained through attendance of meetings and workshops of the APF or its affiliates and attending seminars addressed by APF leaders, some of which took place before the existence of the APF and its affiliates. The first of these is a workshop focusing on the theme, ‘South Africa: Consolidation, contradictions and continuing struggles’ held at

the University of the Witwatersrand on the 9 June 2000, a few weeks before the formation of the APF. Among the speakers at the workshop were Andile Mngxitama of the National Land Commission, Trevor Ngwane, then recently expelled from the ANC, and Dinga Sikwebu of the National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA).

The APF and all the other new social movements have attracted considerable attention from the media, researchers, the government and other more traditional organisations, such as political parties and trade unions. Indeed, because of their unconventional brand of politics and actions, these movements are often labelled as ‘ultra-left’ by representatives of the ruling alliance comprising the ANC, the SACP and COSATU. But little is known about the origins, structures, strategies and campaigns of these movements, and thus some of the media coverage and labelling by their detractors is often based on a limited understanding of these movements. This report hopes to contribute by providing information that could help inform the debates about the new social movements in general, and the APF in particular.

2. Born at the right place at the right time?

In 1998, the International Labour Research and Information Group (ILRIG), a Cape Town-based labour support organisation, published a booklet on globalisation and how workers could respond to it. The book concluded with an exhortation to workers:

At ILRIG we argue that it is necessary to act at all levels: local, national and international to resist globalisation and build an alternative. If you have not already, we hope that you will join in the struggle against globalisation. (ILRIG, 1998:39)

At the time many still pinned their hopes on unions as the force that constituted the cutting edge of the movement that would lead the onslaught against neo-liberal globalisation. Of course, labour in South Africa and elsewhere were slow in responding to challenge. According to Willie Madisha, COSATU president, COSATU has been weak since the unveiling of GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution) in 1996 and only recently did it start opening its eyes (Interview, Madisha, 14.08.2003). Given this background, it is important to map the national and global political context within which the APF emerged.

The APF was established on the 6 July 2000 at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, but the founding conference was held on the 10th floor of COSATU House in September of that year. The formation of the movement followed a chain of events that unfolded out of the ‘Urban Futures’ conference held at the University of the Witwatersrand in July of that year. Up to that point, leftwing activists outside of the Tripartite Alliance were uncertain about how to proceed and were thus searching for political relevance in a context where leftwing ideas were no longer fashionable. Those inside Alliance organisations were facing greater marginalisation. Although the Treatment Action Campaign was formed in December 1998, its leaders and activists did not present it as a left organisation. Thus GEAR did not immediately give rise to militant social movement politics.

A crucial impetus for social movements in South Africa that provided coherence to left activists and social movements was the emergence of the so-called ‘anti-globalisation

movement', first in Seattle in 1999, and later in other major cities in North America and Western Europe. Activist circles across the world, including those in South Africa, that were feeling rather rudderless, were buoyed by these events and found them convenient as reference points in the anti-globalisation struggle (see, for example, Wainwright, 2003). At about the same time, the deleterious effects of economic restructuring were beginning to be felt by a growing section of the working class throughout South Africa. Managerial and government strategies of *cost-cutting* and *retrenchment* were proceeding unabated and the effects were particularly severe for growing numbers of the working class. In Johannesburg two developments, namely, the Johannesburg City Council's Egoli 2002 plan and Wits University's Wits 2001, were seen by activists as a manifestation of the cost-cutting economic regime that was unfolding since the adoption of the GEAR macro-economic plan in 1996. In addition, the Egoli 2002 plan represented the introduction of *cost-recovery* in municipal service provision. McDonald has defined cost recovery as:

(T)he recovery of all, or most, of the cost associated with providing a particular service by a service provider. For publicly owned service providers, this may not include a surplus above and beyond the cost production, whereas for private-sector providers it necessarily includes a surplus (i.e. profit). In either case, the objective is to recoup the full cost of production. (McDonald, 2002:18)

By 2000, a year after the second democratic election, the ANC's strategy of using patronage for political management and co-option of COSATU and SACP leaders was proving extremely effective. Despite protestations by COSATU leadership that the ANC was shifting to the right and that the union movement had become marginal in shaping policy formulation and implementation (COSATU, 1996), in 1999, yet another crop of union leaders was drawn into political and other career opportunities controlled by the ruling party. In addition, the ANC had succeeded in building political aspiration among unionists at various levels. As John Appolis, former regional secretary of the Chemical, Energy, Paper, Printing, Wood and Allied Workers' Union (CEPPWAWU)ⁱⁱⁱ has argued, there has emerged a 'symbiotic relationship between the trade union bureaucracy and the ANC leadership which has nothing to do with politics but is related to self-preservation by the elite' (Appolis, talk to 2nd year Sociology students, Wits University, 16 October 2003). This view is held widely in APF circles and the movement's official documents and leaflets harp on the theme of organised labour, specifically COSATU, being 'firmly in the pocket of the ruling elite based on past loyalties' (APF Gauteng, 2004a).

In this context, the formation of the APF was the result of co-operation by three broad but not homogeneous groupings of the left. First there were *left activists within the ANC/SACP/COSATU alliance* who felt a sense of frustration, particularly after the adoption of GEAR by the ruling party. However, in most cases this did not translate into a challenge of the increasingly hegemonic political and economic positions of the ruling party. Indeed, where there was an attempt to do this, such as in ANC councillor Trevor Ngwane's criticism of the cost-recovery model in local government (Ngwane, 2003), or the SACP's Dale McKinley's criticism of the leadership, such expression of dissent was dealt with ruthlessly. Trevor Ngwane was expelled from the party and therefore lost his position as an ANC local government councillor for Pimville in Soweto. McKinley was expelled from the SACP. It is worth mentioning at this point that virtually all the activists in this group were marginal players in the Alliance and

none were from the struggle pedigree of activists who had served long spells in detention, prison or exile. For example, Trevor Ngwane's activism began in 1990 when he joined the ANC. Then in 1991 he was employed by the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) as an education officer. Thus it has been easy for the ANC to dismiss these activists as 'peace-time revolutionaries'.

At the same time, many *left activists outside the Alliance*, mostly young, were also searching for relevance, particularly in light of developments in the anti-globalisation movement elsewhere in the world. Many of these were student or youth activists while others worked in various non-governmental organisations. Some belonged to remnants of socialist groups such as the Marxist Workers' Tendency which had faded out of the political scene following the 1994 elections. Some in this group had direct or electronic links with activists in other parts of the world and were able to exchange views about the state of the burgeoning anti-globalisation movements.

The third grouping comprised working class activists drawn from communities that were looking for answers in a context where retrenchments and cost-recovery had combined to destroy their livelihoods and limit their access to basic goods and services. An example is the membership of the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC), an affiliate of the APF. As Ngwane explains, the membership of the SECC is made up of residents who are 'working class residents or unemployed, with lots of grannies as heads of households' (Ngwane, 2003).

3. A profile of the APF

Although we hear and read a lot about the APF, little is known about its history, structures, social base and where it operates. This section of the report provides a profile of the organisation. The first important fact about the APF is that it is a forum, not an organisation or a front. This means it is very loosely structured and allows for flexibility and autonomy for the constituent organisations and groups. But this is also a weakness as it limits the ability of the Forum to be decisive (e.g. its position on the April elections in 2004). These structural issues can be traced back to its formation in 2000. The organisations that constituted the backbone of the APF when it was formed were the South African Student's Congress (SASCO), the South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU), the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU), the COSATU Wits Region, the Pimville community (mostly represented by Trevor Ngwane), 'left wing' individuals and groupings such as Keep Left and the Democratic Socialist Movement, and the Johannesburg district of the SACP. The Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union (IMATU) also played an important role in the early years.

A protest by these members of these organisations and other unaffiliated individuals at the Urban Futures conference at the University of the Witwatersrand triggered a chain of events that resulted in the formation of the APF. The conference was a joint activity organised by the University and the Johannesburg City Council. Significantly, the plenary session that drew the protest was to be addressed by leading figures in both institutions, including then Vice-Chancellor, Professor Colin Bundy, Professor Lindsay Bremner of the School of Town and Regional Planning, Kenny Fihla, then a councillor responsible for finances and the Egoli 2002 programme, and Dr Xolela Mangcu, then an independent town and regional planning analyst. The protest started as a picket by a

small group of activists and NEHAWU members at Wits facing retrenchments as a result of the University's Wits 2001 restructuring programme. Just as the session was due to start, a section of the protesters found an open door and entered the great hall singing and chanting slogans. The speakers vacated their positions on the platform and some of the audience left. John Appolis grabbed the microphone and acted as chairperson and the protesters then took over the platform and made speeches, making reference to the similarities of the two institutions' restructuring programmes and their negative impacts on workers and communities.

That protest, although it did not attract large numbers of protesters, became the 'baptism of fire' for the APF (Interview, Dieltiens, 12.05.2004). Its significance to the APF can be likened to the significance of Seattle to the anti-globalisation movement. It gave coherence to the cause of disparate groupings of the left who had been cast aside by the ANC/SACP/COSATU juggernaut and to communities who, up to then, had not found a voice loud enough to publicise their plight.

At the founding conference Sibongile Radebe (SASCO) and John Appolis (COSATU Wits Region) were elected co-chairs of the new Forum. This choice underlined the important role that students played in the early years of the APF. But in 2001 the COSATU Regional Executive Committee (REC) took a decision to withdraw from the Forum and so Appolis' role changed to that of a 'community activist'. From around that time several other organisations and their representatives 'faded out' of the APF without making a formal announcement (Interview, Appolis, 05.05.2004). Apart from IMATU, most of these were Tripartite Alliance organisations. In the case of NEHAWU and SAMWU, this happened after their struggles, against Wits 2001 and Egoli 2002 respectively, had been lost. According to Appolis, who was chairperson at the time, the forum never followed up to ask why these organisations had withdrawn.

Despite the presence of formal organisational representation, from the early years the APF and its activities were driven by individual activists, particularly those that media and information officer Dale McKinley calls the 'core activist group'. This was particularly the case in 2000 and 2001 when the Activist Forum emerged as an 'activist vanguard' driven by the 'suburban left' (Interview, Hlatshwayo, 27.05.2004). What made matters worse was the withdrawal of several organisations and the fact that meetings of the Forum were held in the evenings and most representatives of communities (mostly based in townships) could not attend because of transport and other problems.

From early 2002 those with a background in mass-based organisations began to argue against the Activist Forum and in favour of a more structured and grassroots model of organisation. Later that year the Forum was disbanded and the co-ordinating committee of the APF was revived as a key structure of the organisation. This restructuring was aimed at reprioritising communities, and the membership model that was adopted reflected this. Three categories of membership were identified, namely, community groups such as the SECC, the Johannesburg Inner City Forum and the Katlehong Concerned Residents, political groups such as Keep Left, Bikisha and the Socialist Group, and individual members. (See **Appendix 1** for a list of affiliates and **Appendix 2** for APF structures).

Today the APF has 21 organisational affiliates and four political groups, which works out to a 'support base' of about 10 000 individuals. McKinley argues that the APF can only talk of a 'support base' as it does not use the card-carrying membership model because most of their members cannot afford to pay subscriptions to the organisation. Several hundreds of these are 'core activists' (Interview, McKinley, 13.10.2004). Most of the members and affiliates are based in Gauteng Province, and a few are in Northwest Province. According to McKinley, some communities in some Free State towns where there was resistance to local government corruption and ineptitude in 2004, have been trying to make contact with the Forum. But APF activists emphasise that organisational affiliates tend to be extremely uneven in terms of size and effectiveness. The Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee is by far the largest, with a claimed membership of between 7 000 and 8 000. Nevertheless, the bias in favour of community groups is aimed at strengthening the grassroots character of the Forum and restricting the role of individuals. This also means that individual activist members can speak in meetings but do not have the right to vote. The presence of community groups has also made the Forum aware of the need to communicate effectively and to ensure that every member can participate freely in deliberations. Members are free to speak any language of their choice and when English is used, translation is provided. Trevor Ngwane often plays this role when he is not occupied with other tasks.

Some general remarks about the social characteristics of APF members and activists are relevant at this juncture. In terms of the membership the following characteristics can be highlighted. Firstly, the members of APF affiliates generally come from marginal and vulnerable sections of society. In particular, they are drawn from the unemployed and pensioners as well as some at the bottom end of those in employment, and the APF is one of the few organisations available that offer these people a voice and a sense of solidarity. The APF and its affiliates do not seem to have made serious inroads in terms of organising casual and full-time employed workers (Interviews, Mashota, 13.10.2004 and Dale McKinley, 13.10.2004).

Secondly, there is a significant presence of older members and pensioners (Trevor Ngwane affectionately calls them 'the grannies of Soweto') and young (teenage and early 20s) people who are still at school or have left school and are now unemployed. For SECC chairperson, Tebogo Mashota, it is easy to understand why the grannies (pensioners) constitute a significant proportion of APF membership. 'They are the ones who pay the bills', she says. As recipients of the government's old age pension, they are often the sole breadwinners and leaders of their households. Both categories are the ones who bear the brunt of job loss and cost-recovery policies of the local state.

Thirdly, the majority of APF members are women. Free market policies tend to shift the burden of providing for families and caring for the weak onto women. Hence women are among the first to feel the pinch when these policies are implemented. This issue is explored in detail in a study of the SECC, a leading affiliate of the APF (see Egan and Wafer, 2004). Finally, the APF draws its community group membership exclusively from black townships, informal settlements and run-down sections of the inner cities in Gauteng.

Most leaders and key activists, by contrast, do not come from the same social backgrounds as most of the members. Most are articulate young and middle-aged men and women with relatively high levels of formal education. Several of them have

university degrees or equivalent qualifications and possess a range of scarce skills. They are predominantly male and there is a significant representation of racial groups other than black among them. These activists and leaders are drawn from different generations, with some being relatively recent activists while others have a longer record of political involvement. But an important point is that both generations come from outside the mass democratic movement (MDM)/Alliance fold or were inside but marginal.

4. Repertoires of resistance

Although the APF has been in existence for nearly five years now, there remains considerable ambiguity regarding the identity of the movement and its members. Many members are still ANC (and to a lesser extent COSATU) members and thus distinctions between ‘them’ and ‘us’ are not always clear. A fascinating example is the 2002 picture of an APF woman protester standing behind a police truck, presumably showing her opposition to police action against APF members. The woman is wearing the trademark red and yellow APF T-shirt and a skirt with Nelson Mandela’s face and the words ‘President Nelson Mandela’ underneath (picture in *Khanya: A journal for activists*, 2, p. 52). This is in contrast to the struggle period when clear-cut boundaries existed between pro-democracy movements on the one hand, and organs and sympathisers of the apartheid regime on the other. Then it was inconceivable that a member of a liberation movement, for example, could be a well-known member of the ruling National Party. Today this is possible. This is important because it raises questions not only about the ‘newness’ of formations such as the APF, but it also alerts us to the fact that the Forum is not as homogeneous as it is often made out to be.

The Forum uses a wide range of methods of struggle to try and achieve its objectives. The organisational report of the APF that reviews its activities for 2003 identifies three different clusters of activities, namely,

- Mass activities (actions): marches, pickets, demonstrations,
- Raising public awareness and influencing public opinion: media statements, interviews, submissions, cultural expression,
- Building organisation: meetings, education and solidarity activities (APF Gauteng, 2004a).

The campaigns and struggles of the APF and its affiliates are driven by a focus on basic needs, principally water, electricity, housing and education (APF Gauteng, 2004b). This focus is the basis for the cohesion and solidarity that the movement has maintained since its inception. Also, focusing on these needs provides the movement with perhaps the most powerful weapon against the ANC as it enables movement activists to expose the failures of the government on issues that are closest to people’s hearts.

The basic needs approach also tells us something more fundamental about the APF and its affiliates. Not only is the movement trying to model itself on the emerging unions of the early 1970s (by focusing on bread and butter issues to mobilise), it has also been trying to position itself as the custodian of the struggle tradition and to appropriate the symbolism of the militant struggles of the 1970s and 1980s. ‘Are we on the eve of a new 1973 – 1976, which ushered in a new phase of more sustained mass struggles?’,

asked John Appolis rhetorically in a recent assessment of the state of the new social movements (Appolis, 2004). Another variant of the same theme is to project the APF and other movements as the 'radical' or 'militant' alternative to the 'sell-out' leadership of the Alliance.

COSATU's failure to provide leadership, consistent resistance to neo-liberalism and a coherent alternative to capitalism has left working class communities to fight water and electricity cuts and evictions on their own. As a result of COSATU's paralysis, its own membership and structures have, with few exceptions, failed to throw their weight behind working class community resistance. A vacuum has resulted that is partially being filled by the Anti-Privatisation Forum (Hamilton, 2002: 17).

The APF's frequent resort to militant mobilisation or direct action is another indication of the movement's desire to inherit the mantle of militancy that was once worn by other movements, including those in the Tripartite Alliance, during the struggle against apartheid. Some of the more spectacular examples of direct action include several instances of the destruction of prepaid water meters and water and electricity reconnections, the march on mayor Masondo's house in 2002 and the march on Constitutional Court in 2003. But the biggest protest action for the APF and its fraternal organisations under the banner of the Social Movement Indaba was the 31 August 2002 march during the World Summit on Sustainable Development. This march, which is held up by the movements as a watershed event in post-apartheid South Africa overshadowed the official Tripartite Alliance and proved politically embarrassing for its leaders. COSATU president, Madisha acknowledges this embarrassment and argues that the new social movements such as the APF have real grievances, particularly around those areas where the ANC government has not been successful. 'The reality is that these movements are growing in South Africa and around the world', he says (Interview, Madisha, 14.08.2003).

The boycott of government institutions and the use of militant action to achieve its objectives is an influential approach within the APF. But as the range of activities listed above show, the Forum also uses other more conventional methods such as making submissions to state institutions and using the media to publicise their cause. Sometimes the use of militant rhetoric and direct action simultaneously with more conventional methods of achieving its aims creates the impression that the APF is ambivalent towards the democratic order and its institutions. Thus while there are some who question the legitimacy of the new state because of its bourgeois underpinnings, there is also a strong lobby favouring participation in the system. This ambivalence came to the fore in the run-up to the national elections in April 2004. Eventually the movement resolved not to oppose national elections in principle, but decided not to participate in 2004. In addition, it urged those members and affiliates who wanted to vote not to vote for the ANC and other bourgeois parties (APF Gauteng, 2004b).

However, it would appear that the movement is more favourably disposed towards participating in local government elections. During a public discussion at the May Day celebration in 2003, many APF members argued that the best way of defeating neo-liberalism was for the APF to contest the municipal elections under its own name. According to McKinley the current position is that the APF will not contest the 2005 municipal elections but that each community organisation is autonomous and therefore

free to contest if it so decides. The SECC has already taken a decision to contest the elections in Soweto. But Mashota says the organisation is making elaborate plans to ensure that there is no jockeying for positions and that there are built-in mechanisms for accountability and recall in the nomination process. Candidates will be nominated at community assemblies and each candidate will sign a pledge accepting the SECC's right to recall him or her and undertaking to stick to mandates and to report back. In addition, the salaries of successful candidates will be paid into an SECC fund and the SECC will then pay councillors a modest amount (Interview, Mashota, 13.10.2004). Notwithstanding these plans, the movement will have to contend with new contradictions within its ranks as only a few of the community groups are strong enough to win seats. Will this cause new fault-lines within the movement, say, between those who manage to find a foothold inside the system and those who don't? Also, will this force the leadership to moderate their rhetoric about state participation in state institutions? What will happen to some of the political activist groupings which, according to McKinley, are often strong adherents of the thesis of non-collaboration with bourgeois state institutions (Interview, McKinley, 13.10.2004)?

5. Relations with other organisations and movements

APF activists argue that many of the members of the new social movements have a history of activism or membership in the 'traditional struggle organisations' such as the ANC, COSATU, the SACP and the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO). Their decision to join to these new movements was a response to the government's policy of economic liberalisation, commodification of basic needs and services and cost recovery in a context of massive job losses and absence of social protection. It was thus inevitable that by projecting themselves as 'anti-privatisation' and 'anti-globalisation', these movements would come into open conflict with a ruling party committed to economic liberalisation, privatisation and cost-recovery. From the beginning the approach of the new movements towards the ANC government was militant condemnation and opposition. Ngwane's and McKinley's expulsion from the ANC and the SACP respectively was triggered by their vocal opposition to ANC economic policies.

More difficult to explain are the hostile relations that have existed between the APF and the SACP and COSATU, both allies of the ANC who are highly critical of its embrace of the market. Equally puzzling is the failure of other organisations of the working class (such as SANCO, the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) and the Federation of Unions of South Africa (FEDUSA)) to find common cause with the APF and other new movements.

As shown above, when the APF was formed various organisations participated in its activities and organised joint protest events with it. The emergence and subsequent widening of the rift between the APF and these other organisations is a complex process. President of the SAMWU, Petrus Mashishi, argues that SAMWU initiated the APF and COSATU launched it, but the problem is that the Forum was 'highjacked' by others. Then it started acting like a political party and opposing the government. This created problems within the union as some leaders were accused of forming a party under the guise of the APF. For the reason the union's anti-Egoli 2002 campaign collapsed and the leadership decided to sort out the internal problems rather than

pursue the campaign. Mashishi says that the union is now doing research to see if the Egoli 2002 plan has delivered the promised benefits. If not, the union will revive the campaign (Interview, Mashishi, 19.05.2004).

Others in the Tripartite Alliance often use the 'hijack' thesis to support the argument that the APF is now in the hands of anti-ANC and anti-government elements that are determined to sow chaos and subvert the national democratic revolution. Explaining the federation's position, a 2002 COSATU political discussion paper made a distinction between 'ultra-left groups' on the one hand, and 'the rest of civil society', on the other.

We cannot work closely with the ultra-left groups because we differ on basic principles. Still, as they have requested, we should meet with them and explain our position. At the same time, COSATU should consider developing broader and more structured relationships with the rest of civil society, especially the churches, youth, student groups, TAC, women's groups and many of the civil society formations in SANGOCO (COSATU, 2002).

ANC researcher, Michael Sachs argues that the 'discourse in some social movements which consciously poses itself as the adversary of representative democracy' is the work of 'demagogues' in movements such as the APF and the Landless People's Movement (LPM) who enjoy negligible political support (Sachs, 2003:23). But there is a different way of explaining the political fallout between the APF and organisations associated with the Tripartite Alliance that avoids identifying agitators and conspiracies. Firstly, the ANC and its Alliance partners are intolerant of new centres of popular mobilisation because they have the potential of exposing its weaknesses and undermining its support. Thus one of its approaches to movements that operate outside its compass is to marginalize and demonise them. In the case of the APF pressure was brought to bear on Alliance activists to distance themselves from the movement. Then those that remained in the movement were labelled as 'the ultra-left'. Historically, the ANC has proved itself capable of deploying enormous amounts of resources and personnel towards this role – whether it is in producing adverts and booklets denouncing Bantu Holomisa as a 'homeland leader', producing at least two lengthy discussion papers identifying and demonising the 'ultra left' or even devoting similar resources to denouncing the 'ultra left' within COSATU! (see ANC, 2001; Moleketi, and Jele, 2002; Cronin, 2002).

Secondly, the rift also widened because of a combination of naiveté, arrogance and poor political judgement on the part of some of the leading activists in the APF. There was, and still is, a notion that because their cause was a just one, then the masses would come by their thousands to join the ranks of the APF and other movements. This was particularly the case because some shared the view that patterns of spectacular mass mobilisation and resistance that were emerging in the emerging anti-globalisation movement would soon be reproduced in South Africa, thus hastening the loss of credibility by the ANC government. The WSSD moment in 2002 reinforced this view and created the false notion among some that a small following at the Alliance march amounted to a vote of no-confidence in the ANC government. Thus meaningful and sustainable alliance building was neglected as APF activists often made public pronouncements that antagonised not only the leadership of the Tripartite

Alliance, but the entire membership as well. This is a mistake that has been acknowledged by some in the APF (see Hamilton, 2002).

Thirdly, the history of the relationship of the APF and COSATU is an interesting one. Apart from COSATU being part of the Alliance, there is another reason why contradictions have emerged between it and the APF. Since its inception the union federation has been the main actor in civil society, often claiming to speak on behalf of not only their members but also working class communities in general. The emergence of the APF was threatening to the 'big brother' role of COSATU in that the Forum was better placed to claim to be speaking of behalf of communities. Also, the Forum had the potential to usurp COSATU's role as the leading organisation fighting against privatisation and expose its vacillation in its dealings with the ANC government. APF Chairperson, John Appolis argues that the problem with COSATU is that when its leaders talk about working with social movements, they are talking about 'giving social movements direction. In other words, social movements must get subordinated to the positions that they [COSATU] hold. There is no genuine attempt to listen and learn' (Interview, Appolis, 05.05.2004).

Finally, the approach and the rhetoric of the APF were too radical for some within the Alliance who had their sights set on positions of power and privilege in the politics and business. For some in the alliance organisations such as the APF were used to prove that they are reasonable, realistic and therefore politically constructive. A good example is that in 2002 the SACP had cut ties with the APF and expelled McKinley. But the ANC's 'Briefing Notes' document cast some doubt on the sincerity of some in COSATU and the SACP. Both COSATU and the SACP reject the 'ultra-left' label when it is used against them as a 'blatantly sectarian intervention', but have no qualms about using the term to describe many of the new social movements (see for example African Communist, 2002; COSATU, 2002).

The APF blames the Tripartite Alliance for the lack of co-operation between itself and COSATU (see Mantashe and Ngwane, 2004). But the Forum and its leadership have not given up trying to reach out to COSATU members, encouraging them to engage in joint action with the APF. One attempt was made in undated pamphlet entitled 'Anti-Privatisation Forum Supports COSATU's struggle Against Privatisation' which ended with a call for united action,

Workers and shop stewards – encourage your federation and trade unions to link with community struggles against privatisation. Our struggle is littered with examples of alliances between trade unions and community organisations, against a common enemy – the privatisation plans of the ANC government. (APF, n.d.)

This view in the APF is based on three assumptions about the present and the future of working class organisation and struggle and all these assumptions are captured in a recent article by Trevor Ngwane, national organiser of the APF. Firstly, many in the APF believe that, Ngwane's poetic terms, 'The leadership [of COSATU] has captured the bodies of the workers but their souls are wondering around. One day they will connect with other bodies'. Secondly, many acknowledge that the political role of the new social movements will always be limited because of their small membership and their dependence on donor funding. Finally, all APF activists accept that the organised

working class remains a key component of any alternative left strategy (Ngwane, 2003).

What is intriguing is that the APF does not have relations with the two politically non-aligned union federations, namely FEDUSA and NACTU. One would have thought that a relationship with NACTU, which has a blue-collar membership and is therefore closer to the APF in class terms, would have been an attractive proposition to the Forum. But the Forum has not made any moves in this regard. On its part NACTU does not appear to be interested in working with the new social movements either. Former NACTU general secretary, Cunningham Ngcukana is contemptuous of APF leaders and some of the intellectuals associated with them. 'How can you listen to Trevor Ngwane about international financial institutions when he does not know how the system works?', he asks (Interview, Ngcukana, 14.08.2003).

But the APF has good relations with most of the 'new social movements'. It has worked well with them in the past, particularly through the Social Movement Indaba, a broader forum that brings together most of the new social movements to co-ordinate joint action. But its relations with the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), which has warm relations with COSATU, seem to be cordial but aloof. A key difference between the two is the fact that the TAC has a critical, but engaged relationship with the ANC government. Many of the TAC members are still active members of the ANC.

It is also important to reflect on the relationship of the APF to the media. A recent assessment of APF activities in 2003 argues that the voice of the new social movements has 'reverberated throughout South Africa like the voice of the prophets'. The report then goes on to assert that the mass media and communities often treat these movements as the 'conscience of the nation' (APF Gauteng, 2004b). With reference to the media this is a rather charitable interpretation that is not always borne out by media coverage in practice. While it is true that the media covers some of the more spectacular activities of the movements, they often do so in a way that reinforces the notion of these movements as the mindless 'ultra-left'. Too often the nuances of APF positions are left out in media accounts of the organisation and only the sensational aspects come through. Furthermore, the more constructive and sophisticated activities and policy positions are left out of the narrative. In 2003 the APF held a May Day rally at the Johannesburg City Hall, about a kilometre from the Mary Fitzgerald Square where the official rally of the Gauteng government, COSATU, FEDUSA and NACTU was held. More or less the same number of people attended each rally. But the media reported extensively on the official rally, including the fact that the tent on the podium collapsed seconds before the president arrived, while there was a total news blackout on the APF rally. Not even the *South African Labour Bulletin* bothered to send a writer to cover it!

Even those individual members and activists of the traditional struggle organisations that are on the left of the political spectrum are wary of associating with the new social movements, including the APF. By 2001 most of these organisations had taken formal resolutions to distance themselves and their activists from the APF and its affiliates. But in July 2001 an item on the agenda of an APF meeting generated a huge debate in the Forum. Winnie Madikizela-Mandela wanted to join the SECC and the SECC raised the matter at the APF meeting for a decision. Two positions emerged and 'after a lot of debate for and against this' the matter was left to the SECC to decide upon (APF,

Minutes of meeting of 30 July 2001). At about that time the populist Madikizela-Mandela, who has been associated with SANCO in the past and is often called upon by informal settlement communities in distress to assist, was going through a difficult time. Her political career as a leading figure in the ANC and as that party's Member of Parliament seemed to be in jeopardy following allegations of fraud against her.

6. Relations with state institutions

Reference has already been made to the attitude of APF activists towards the new social order. There is a degree of ambivalence towards state institutions as shown by the different positions towards engagement in electoral politics and the position taken around the time of the march to the constitutional court. In broad outline, there are two extreme positions in this debate, with several others taking more middle-of-the-road positions. On the one extreme, there are those who see the state as a set of bourgeois institutions which cannot provide relief to an oppressed and exploited working class. The solution is an intensification of the struggle for socialism. On the other extreme, there are those who see the present state as a legitimate one. The only problem is seen to be the policies of the present ruling party. The solution is seen to be contesting elections and electing left candidates. The political groupings tend to hold the former positions while community groups and activists tend to hold the latter. Of course in reality there are many other complex positions which do not fit neatly into this characterisation.

The question of whether or not South Africa is a repressive state has come up often in APF debates. Some tend to see this as part of the logic that flows from embracing neo-liberal economic policies, but this is a debatable point. Those who hold this view point to the arrest of protesters to prove their point. The APF organisational report for 2003 makes reference to the 'intimidation of individuals and activists', the 'surveillance of members' by the NIA, the 'regular "banning"' of marches and demonstrations, the detention of APF activists in Mbeki's overcrowded and filthy jails' and to 'state repression' (APF Gauteng, 2004a). Some of the language used by APF activists to describe the actions and attitude of the state towards the organisation is a carry-over from the apartheid era, and in some instances its use is still appropriate today. However the one debatable question is whether South Africa can be characterised as a repressive state. That debate will most probably remain unresolved within the APF itself.

For their part, most state institutions have adopted a discourse that demonises the 'ultra left' and seek to close down spaces for the existence of radical political formations such as the APF. The NIA is indeed concerned about the APF and they have been upgrading their knowledge and expertise in this area. But the danger is that an agency such as the NIA is likely to conceive of social movements as only a security problem that can be resolved by the use of repressive methods. If there is any substance to the recent allegations of torture of LPM activists by the NIA, then the fears of repression expressed by movements such as the APF are justified.

APF activists have pointed to two other instances, in 2003 and 2004, to support their argument that the state and the Alliance organisations are determined to close down political spaces for social movements. The one was the eviction in July 2003 of the APF from the COSATU House offices it had inherited from the AIDC. Activists argue

that, although there may have been problems of rent arrears owed by the APF, the fact is that COSATU technically is not the landlord of the building and therefore had no right to evict the APF. So the eviction was politically motivated as the union federation 'bowed down to pressure from its Alliance partners to get rid of the APF' (APF Gauteng, 2004a). The other incident, which has not been resolved, is the decision by the Johannesburg City Council to evict the Workers' Library and Museum and Khanya College from the old municipal compound in Newtown. The response of APF activists to this was to organise a march and a picket outside the offices of the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA) (a company owned by the city council) in July 2004. What incensed these activists further was the fact that, while it was evicting these two organisations which have a cordial working relationship with the APF, the JDA was inviting some COSATU unions and COSATU-aligned labour-supporting organisations to occupy the premises as new tenants.

Another state institution, Metro-Rail, the commuter train company owned by the transport parastatal, Transnet, has also felt the presence of the new social movements. Metro-Rail's directorate of marketing and communication, whose portfolio includes building community relations, has been grappling with the fact that the new social movements are growing in support and influence. Furthermore, these movements draw their support from Metro-Rail's customer base, the townships around Johannesburg. Any confrontation with the movements would be bad for business and also holds the risk of trains being torched in the townships.

In October 2003 the company faced a dilemma when members of the Landless People's Movement (LPM) and allied movements came to Johannesburg Station (Park Station) and demanded a free ride on trains so they could get to a demonstration. The problem was that Metro-Rail could not turn the hundreds of militant demonstrators away as that would have caused a stampede and possibly a confrontation with their security guards similar to the one in Thembisa in 1999. Besides, the company did not deem it wise to go into a confrontation with the movements because, as an official put it, 'We are not the target, but we are the means to the target' (anonymous informal discussion, 21 April 2004). Fearing that similar incidents might increase in frequency, Metro-Rail began gathering information to help devise an amicable solution. The company has now approved a strategy of engaging the social movements in a proactive fashion on this issue. They have been in discussions with the LPM and have asked the movement to engage in talks rather than confrontation. In addition, they have offered to discuss special discounted fares for social movement members if such a request is made in time for arrangements to be made.

In general, relations between the APF and state institutions are adversarial or hostile. Furthermore, APF has no relations with unions that organise workers in these institutions, such as the police force, the civil service, metro police services and even private security companies which are often used against APF protesters.

7. Financial, intellectual and organisational resources

Finance is the lifeblood of any organisation and the APF and its affiliates are no exception. Given that the Forum is not a subscription-based organisation as the majority of its members are pensioners or are unemployed, questions of financial

sustainability remain crucial for its long-term survival. At the moment, neither the APF nor any of its affiliates are financially self-sufficient. In other words the APF depends on donations from others and patterns of funding have not changed much over the last four years. A portion of the APF's financial and material resources came, and continues to come, from individual members of the core activist group that formed the organisation. These are in the form of cash or the use of personal phones, cars, computers and other resources that these activists possess. A similar phenomenon occurred in the early years of the unions formed after the 1973 strikes when young middle-class activists contributed resources to the struggling unions. The difference is that in the case of the unions, the members were earning wages and the problem was the collection and management of their membership subscriptions.

In some cases activists employed by better-resourced organisations often use such resources (such as photocopiers, e-mail, telephones, computers and printers) for the benefit of the APF.

However, the bulk of the organisation's funding comes from the main sponsor, the United Kingdom based War on Want, as well as other organisations such as Oxfam (Canada), the South Africa Development Fund, the Polaris Institute and the Public Citizen which have provided once-off financial support. Others such as the Education Rights Project have made contributions in kind, in this case material support for the APF's education campaign. The War on Want funding has been on the basis of a three year cycle (ending in 2004) and in the 2003/4 financial year this donation was R638 739 (APF Gauteng, 2004a). The Forum is proud of the fact that it 'enjoys a very good relationship' with War on Want, their main funder. This core funding has enabled the Forum to run meetings, education and training workshops, and campaigns and to set up an administrative infrastructure for the organisation. The APF is now being evaluated by an independent reviewer whose report will be used to motivate for more funding from War on Want. But the movement is concerned about 'a definite attempt by the powers that be to starve the social movements such as the APF and the LPM of external donor funding' (APF Gauteng, 2004a).

Some of the core activists and leaders of the APF perform an intellectual role. There is a distinct group of activists within the APF and its affiliates who are regarded as 'intellectuals'. Dale McKinley argues that in any organisation the role of intellectuals is often out of proportion to their actual numbers because they have skills, and the APF is no exception. But the organisation has now restructured itself and things are getting to a point where these intellectuals can only play a 'background supportive role' (Interview, McKinley, 13.10.2004). Virginia Magwaza, a member of the SECC and an APF activist, also acknowledges that intellectuals have an important role to play and have built the APF by opening up spaces and contributing resources. Her concern is that communities tend to depend on intellectuals instead of using their presence as an opportunity to learn so that they are able to assume leadership positions themselves (Interview, Magwaza, 15.10.2004).

But other activists, who prefer to remain anonymous, are more critical of the role played by the intellectual core. One compares the APF to the black consciousness movement in the 1970s, and argues that in its five years of existence the APF has not produced organic intellectuals, has not developed a coherent ideology and has no intellectual platform, such as a newspaper, to convey its position. This is blamed on the

existing intellectual core in the movement. As things stand at the moment, the activist argues, there is an unchanging intellectual division of labour within the APF and the new social movements in general. Another activist criticises the intellectuals for being out of touch with communities. Some live in the suburbs and never make an effort to come to the communities they claim to represent. 'Of course some come to the communities, but others simply want to lead and appear before cameras', the activist said.

In addition, organisations such as the Municipal Services Project, the AIDC, the Freedom of Expression Institute, the Workers' Library and Museum and Khanya College have, from time to time, provided intellectual, moral and material support to the APF and its affiliates. Khanya College (which is not affiliated) provides education and training for APF affiliates and communities where they are active. Khanya College Programme Co-ordinator, Oupa Lehulere, argues that his organisation has been 'at the coalface of the formation of all the new social movements' (Interview, Lehulere, 19.05.2004). Khanya's work with the movements includes providing a printing service for most of the movements and working with community organisations by providing infrastructure support and education. Khanya also produces a regular journal which tracks the history of the movements, publishes official documents and has a regular section called the 'barometer of resistance' where movement struggles are recorded. Khanya sees itself not as a movement but as an NGO performing a role similar to the 'classic labour support organisation' role of NGO's in the 1980s (Interview, Lehulere, 19.05.2004).

Some within the APF also have intellectual contact with groups outside the country. Some of this contact takes place through e-mail and the internet and is in the form of discussion groups, exchange of documents and information about struggles in the broad anti-globalisation movement.

One of the outcomes of these various processes of intellectual exchange is that there is continual learning and refining of strategies in the APF. The different methods of struggle used by the movement are a combination of methods used at different historical moments by different movements in South Africa and globally. Some of the methods of organising and mobilisation are drawn from struggles the young union movement waged in the 1970s and 1980s. Then there is a similarly strong influence of the militant civic movement in the 1980s. Some also aspire to achieve some kind of ungovernability as it prevailed in the 1980s, while others seek to achieve Seattle-type modes of protest. An example of the latter a resolution taken by the APF in preparation for the United Nations World Conference against Racism held in Durban in late August 2001.

The APF will send busloads of comrades to Durban, SANGOCO funds permitting, with the aim of disrupting the main conference in the spirit and practice of Seattle...There must be liaison with other organisations in particular the Concerned Citizens Forum in Durban and our international comrades. (APF, minutes of meeting of 30 July 2001)

Furthermore, the APF and its affiliates draw on notions of resistance that are held by their members. Some of these notions are based on previous experience while others

are based on intellectual reconstruction of what exists in the collective memory of movement activists.

8. Global links

The APF regards itself as part of a global anti-globalisation movement fighting against the dominant discourse and practise of neo-liberalism. For this reason it has endeavoured to maintain links with like-minded activists and organisations from other parts of the world. For example, in 2001 Dale McKinley informed an APF meeting that some activists in Zimbabwe were trying to set up an anti-privatisation forum. The matter was held over pending further details from McKinley (APF, minutes of meeting of 30 July 2001). But nothing concrete resulted from this contact.

APF activists have attended seminars, conferences and other gatherings in various parts of the world organised by its fraternal organisations. In addition, the Forum participates actively in the activities of other international forums, such as the African Social Forum and the World Social Forum. It is worth noting also that all international links of affiliates are done through the APF.

A considerable number of these global links are mediated by the individual members as well as members of the political groups in the APF, both of whom tend to have more extensive international contacts than community activists. For a variety of reasons, including the background of these globally-connected activists, these links tend to be oriented, in the first instance, towards developed countries, particularly those in Western Europe and North America. There are several reasons for this orientation. Firstly, most of the more spectacular actions of the anti-globalisation movement, such as Seattle and Genoa, took place in these countries. Secondly, most international travel and intellectual exchanges by activists are also linked to Western Europe and North America. Thirdly, these two regions of the world are the main source of donor funding for NGOs and social movements in developing countries. Some intellectuals are said to be useful to the APF because of their ability to facilitate funding for certain activities. An example that is often cited is that of Professor Patrick Bond, formerly of the University of the Witwatersrand and now based at University of KwaZulu-Natal, who has organised funding for the APF, particularly in its early years.

If the political activists in the APF are the main point of international contact for the organisation, then electronic communications are the main vehicle for such links. In this case, e-mail and the internet play a major role in linking APF activists to activists in other parts of the world. Inevitably, these links are conducted by and among those activists with access to computers, e-mail and the internet, who have the skills to operate the technology and can read and write English, the language through which South Africans conduct most of their global links. In this regard, the vast majority of APF members are disadvantaged and therefore remain dependent on those with the access, skills and language.

9. Conclusion

At this point it is appropriate to consider whether or not the APF is a passing phenomenon. This is related to a similar question that has been raised by activists and observers of the new social movements, namely, have these movements ‘achieved a “permanent” presence on the political map of South Africa’ (Appolis, 2004) and are their struggles leading to a new phase of sustained mass struggles? Although APF activists are optimistic about the future, the movement remains extremely small and fragile. Let us consider the reasons for this.

The political hegemony of the ANC/SACP/COSATU alliance remains unchallenged and the APF does not seem to have made significant progress in eroding the support of this political current. Even the APF is aware of this, as their organisational report shows:

It is not too difficult for the ANC government to influence and mislead public opinion given its anti-apartheid struggle credentials and its great store of political capital in the person of Nelson Mandela and other struggle luminaries in South Africa. More important is the ANC’s virtual control of the trade union, civic and communist leadership through the ANC-SACP-COSATU-SANCO alliance. (APF Gauteng, 2004a)

By contrast, the APF does not have in its ranks any of the ‘struggle luminaries’ and has been extremely ineffective in re-appropriating some of the political capital and symbolism of the anti-apartheid struggle. The experience of oppositional movements and parties of various kinds in post-colonial societies shows that the justness of a cause, on its own, is not a sufficient requirement for attracting political support, particularly in a context where the ruling party is still able to make some symbolic or real concession to subordinate classes. To stand a chance of attracting support away from the ruling ‘liberation movement’, an oppositional movement needs to contest and appropriate the political capital and symbolism of the liberation struggle. In other words, building a successful movement entails not simply exposing the faults and hypocrisy of the ruling party, it also entails attracting some of that party’s credible leaders onto the side of the opposition.

Meanwhile, the perception among sections of the organised working class is that the ANC government is ‘delivering’ in certain areas. They are therefore willing to give it more time to deliver on those areas where it is weak.^{iv}

The above is related to another important finding of this research, namely that not only is the APF failing to attract unionised workers and others in the formal sector of the economy, they also have not made any inroads in organising workers in precarious forms of employment (casual, subcontracting, etc), the self-employed and those in the informal sector. As has been shown above, the bulk of their membership is drawn from pensioners, the unemployed and the youth. From the viewpoint of the APF, it would appear that organising workers in insecure employment and those in the self-employment and the informal sector makes more strategic sense. These sections of the working class remain poorly organised in South Africa today, and the fact that they have (meagre) incomes means that they could also be persuaded to make modest financial contributions to the movement. Up to now the APF and its constituent organisations have relied on the goodwill of individual activists as well as larger donor organisations. However, long-term sustainability depends on the existence of an

independent financial base. Donations alone cannot be relied upon to sustain an organisation.

The APF has been trying to model itself on the union movement that emerged in the wake of the 1973 Durban strikes. A pamphlet distributed before and during the 2003 APF May Day rally in Johannesburg urged workers, the unemployed and community organisations to join it to celebrate May Day and argued that by so doing they would be 'reclaiming the militant traditions of May Day and the Durban strikes of 1973' (APF May Day pamphlet, 1 May 2003). The movement also tends to use the same language to identify who their friends and their enemies are. But the existence of democratic, legitimate institutions today makes the context very different from the one in the 1970s. Not only does democracy create an expectation that all individuals should process their grievances through these institutions, but also the use of political identity frames such as 'enemy' or 'sell-out' against an elected government and its officials is not sufficient to convince potential supporters that the movement is 'anti-democratic' (see for example Sachs, 2003).

Furthermore, unlike movements in the 1970s and 1980s, new movements in the democratic environment can no longer take public sympathy or support for granted. They have to earn it, sometimes by engaging in activities that are not conventional in APF circles. One APF activist, reflecting on the difficulties of attracting the youth into the movement, even suggested that arranging 'political bashes' (parties or festivals) for youth may assist in bringing them closer to the movement. She argued for creative ways of attracting the youth because today 'for youth politics is a dirty game and all politicians are liars' (Interview, Mashota, 13.10.2004).

The end of apartheid has created opportunities as well as difficulties for movement organisers. On the one hand, the environment is more conducive for movements to emerge and operate freely. On the other hand, democracy has created opportunities for upward mobility for a few, particularly for those who are young and skilled, and an illusion that upward social mobility is available to everybody who takes advantage of the available opportunities. This illusion is encouraged by consumerist culture, particularly among young people. This is one of the obstacles facing social movements such as the APF today.

A related challenge for movements such as the APF is the urgent need to build a critical mass of organic intellectuals who are more rooted in the communities that these movements organise. As happens with every movement, the emergence of a layer of organic intellectuals will force the APF to re-orient its strategies and reflect more accurately the mood in the communities where their membership comes from.

It would appear that if the movement is going to survive into the future, it has to actively seek ways to bridge the divide between some of the non-collaborationist political organisations on the one hand, and more pragmatic community organisational needs on the other. In the past, some of the most heated debates in the APF reflected this chasm between these two strategic and political currents. The recent debate about the 2004 national elections and the 2005 municipal elections is a case in point. With reference to the 2005 elections, most of the political groupings favoured non-participation, while some the community organisations, such as the SECC, opted for participation.

The emergence of new social movements in South Africa is linked to the emergence of a neo-liberal hegemony throughout the world. Thus, while the origins of some of these movements can be traced back to very specific local conditions and struggles, it is also true that the formation of these movements was inspired by global events during the late 1990s. As a result, movements such as the APF claim legitimacy, not only because they are fighting just struggles within their local areas and countries, but also because they are part of a global movement for justice in a world dominated by neo-liberal ideas. The shift from social regulation characterised by state welfarist policies towards the market regulation of social life has left large numbers of people in all societies vulnerable.

Most parties that come into power today, including those that get into power on the back of grassroots mobilisation and support, such as the ANC, find it hard to resist neo-liberalism (see Buhlungu, 2003 and Murillo, 2001). Once in power, these parties limit spaces for internal dissent within their ranks. Significantly, some of the APF's leading activists were expelled from the Tripartite Alliance for expressing dissent and voicing opposition to the policy positions of the ANC government. Trevor Ngwane is a former ANC councillor who was expelled in 2000 after criticising the ANC's cost-recovery approach to municipal service delivery. Dale McKinley was expelled by the SACP for criticising neo-liberal tendencies among Alliance leaders. John Appolis was expelled by the COSATU affiliated CEPPWAWU for proposing a workers' referendum on the Tripartite Alliance.

For these and many other activists, the only scope for meaningful political contestation of the ideas of the ruling party is available outside the ruling Alliance, hence the emergence of the APF. The political difficulty for the APF (and this in part explains the ambiguity of some of its positions) is the fact that neo-liberalism comes dressed up in *democratic* clothes, that is, it is driven by a democratically elected government operating within structures which allow for political contestation. Can a movement such as the APF oppose neo-liberalism while at the same time engaging the government through existing democratic institutions? In other words, does a rejection of neo-liberalism mean a rejection of democratic institutions?

There is no doubt that the APF has become radicalised over the last few years since its formation. Part of this is explained by the balance of forces between the 'non-collaborationists' and the 'pragmatists' within the movement. In 2003 the movement also adopted socialism as a goal. This radicalisation is to a large extent a function of the movement operating outside the established institutions. However, this is likely to change if some of its affiliates win seats in the municipal elections in 2005. If this happens, this could also reverse the existing balance of forces within the APF and give the pragmatists more influence over the policy direction of the movement.

The APF and its affiliates remain extremely small and fragile. However, they give us an idea of what Karl Polanyi (1957) had in mind when he spoke about a 'double movement'. If the emergence of neo-liberalism represented the move of the pendulum towards the right, then the formation of the APF and other 'new social movements' suggests that the pendulum could be swinging in the opposite direction and a new counter-hegemony may be emerging. But, as the APF is discovering, the task of building a movement from scratch in a post-colonial society is not an easy one.

Building a counter-hegemonic movement entails more than pointing out the shortcomings of the existing social order. It also implies that the emerging movement (or set of movements) should be able to turn dissatisfaction with the existing order into a more-or-less coherent programme for an alternative social order. It is too early to say if the APF will survive, let alone present an alternative to the existing social order.

As we have shown in this report, the history of the APF is intertwined with that of the Tripartite Alliance. At this point we should add that their future will also be determined by their engagement (or lack thereof) with the Alliance organisations. On the one hand, the APF stands to gain support by exposing the limitations and contradictions of the strategies and policies of the ruling Alliance. On the other hand, it has remained incapable of attracting significant support except some from the most vulnerable sections of the working class. ANC activist Trevor Ngwane has grasped the predicament faced by the APF and other new social movements by observing that the future of these movements lies in working together with organised labour (Ngwane, 2003). What is not clear is how meaningful co-operation can be forged at grassroots level without a thoroughgoing reconfiguration of alliance politics among working class organisations in South Africa.

Appendix 1

THE ANTI-PRIVATISATION FORUM (APF)

List of Affiliates, 2004

A: COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Vaal region:

1. Bophelong Community Development Forum
2. Evaton West Community Crisis Committee
3. Samancor Retrenched Workers Crisis Committee
4. Vaal Community Forum
5. Small Farm Community Crisis Committee
6. Kanana Community Crisis Committee
7. Vaal Learners Representative Forum

East Rand region:

8. Daveyton Community Peace Civic
9. Tsakane Concerned Residents
10. Kathorus Concerned Residents
11. Tembisa Concerned Residents Committee

Pretoria region:

12. Atteridgeville Concerned Residents Committee
13. Soshanguve Concerned Residents Committee
14. Ikageng Community Crisis Committee

Johannesburg region:

15. Alexandra Vukuzenzele Community Forum.
16. Orange Farm Water Crisis Committee
17. Thembelihle Crisis Committee
18. Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee
19. Inner City Forum
20. Mandela Village (DRD) Crisis Committee
21. Motsoaledi Concerned Residents

B: POLITICAL AFFILIATES:

22. Keep Left
23. African Peoples Democratic Union of South Africa (APDUSA)
24. Socialist Group
25. Bikisha Media Collective

Appendix 2. APF STRUCTURES (2004)

1. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

- Meets once a year

2. CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

- 5 delegates per community organisation
- 3 delegates per political organisation
- 1 or 2 per committee
- Meets once a month
- Highest decision-making body in-between AGMs

3. REGIONAL SOLIDARITY COMMITTEES

- 1 rep per affiliate
- Each affiliate attends in closest region
- Implement regional campaigns
- Build solidarity and interaction

4. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- 1 rep. per affiliate
- Ensures Co-ordinating Committee decisions are carried out
- Meets fortnightly

5. OFFICE-BEARERS

- Chairperson, secretary, organiser, treasurer, office administrator
- Monitor and implement organisational decisions
- Take care of day-to-day running of organisation
- Meets once a fortnight

6. COMMITTEES

- Media, Legal, Trade Union, Research, Finance
- 1 rep. per affiliate
- Each committee guides APF work in its area of expertise
- All meet fortnightly, except Legal whose meetings are ad hoc

7. STAFF

- *Administrator*: Runs office and is in charge of APF admin.
- *Organiser*: In charge of organisational building and liaison with affiliates

Appendix 3. PROFILE OF AN ACTIVIST

TEBOGO MASHOTA

Chairperson of the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC)

Administrator and Office-bearer of the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF)

Tebogo Mashota is a resident of Pimville, Soweto, who was driven into the ranks of the new social movements by curiosity. In 2000 Trevor Ngwane, the charismatic leaders of the Pimville Ratepayers' Association had just been expelled by the African National Congress (ANC) for daring to question the wisdom of its cost-recovery approach to municipal service provision. So he decided to stand in that year's municipal elections as an independent candidate. At about the same time he and others formed the SECC in response to the spate of electricity cut-offs in the township. Mashota's home happened to be one of those affected. Given that she had time to spare (she had just dropped out of technikon because she could no longer afford the fees) and was curious, she decided to attend an SECC meeting to be addressed by Ngwane. The SECC had a simple solution to the problem. During the night they got their 'technicians' to work and people's electricity would be reconnected.

After her family's electricity supply had been restored, Mashota continued to attend more meetings and later became active in the APF. After a while she worked for the SECC and the AIDC in their COSATU House offices as a volunteer. At this time the SECC did not have any resources of its own and so was dependent on the AIDC for everything, including office space. In her role as a volunteer, Mashota co-ordinated the activities of both organisations. When the AIDC moved to Cape Town in 2002, she did volunteer work for the APF as well, this in addition to being an activist in her own right. In 2003 the APF employed her as a full-time administrator, a position that makes her an ex-officio office-bearer of the Forum.

Then, at age 21 (she is 22 this year) she was elected into one of the most powerful positions in the burgeoning social movements in South Africa, as chairperson of both the Pimville Ratepayers' Association and the SECC. The significance of this election becomes clear when one considers that the SECC is by far the largest of all the APF's affiliates, constituting about 60 percent of the Forum's support base.

Mashota's elevation to this position can be attributed to the fact that she is committed, is prepared to learn and she is confident, something she feels many women in the new movements still lack. 'They speak in meetings in their communities, but they keep quiet in APF meetings. Maybe they are shy', she says.

One of the challenges she says the APF and other movements face is organising the youth. 'For the youth, politics is a dirty game and all politicians are liars'. She also argues that often movements don't understand the needs of young people. 'Young people need space to be by themselves and to talk about issues affecting them'.

Mashota is passionate about the new social movements and believes they are here to stay. She talks enthusiastically about how the SECC will participate in the 2005 municipal elections and how SECC councillors will be kept accountable. But she also tempers her enthusiasm with critical comments about the state of the APF today.

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APF, minutes of meetings
APF, minutes of workshops
APF, newsletter
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Endnotes

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- ⁱ This report is about the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF) of Gauteng and does not claim to be about any other organisation of the same name. At the moment the APF Gauteng is the biggest of the three APFs that exist in South Africa. The Cape Town APF is a smaller and less significant organisation that was formed with the assistance of the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) about three years ago. It is not related to the APF in Gauteng. In addition there is another much smaller body in Nelspruit that shares the name. Activists in that city established it to link up with struggles against water privatisation. At some point Trevor Ngwane had links with the Nelspruit APF but the organisation seems to have become dormant in recent months.
- ⁱⁱ I would like to thank Catherine Lebesse, an MA student in Sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand, for her assistance in gathering the primary documents and identifying the main sources and websites consulted for this report.
- ⁱⁱⁱ In 2004 Appolis was expelled by CEPPWAWU for presenting a demand by workers in his region for a COSATU-wide ‘workers’ referendum’ on the Tripartite Alliance in view of the ANC’s embrace of neo-liberal policies.
- ^{iv} This is shown by the report of a recent survey of COSATU members conducted by researchers at the Sociology of Work Unit (SWOP) and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) at the beginning of 2004. The author of this report is part of the team and these findings will form the basis of a book to be published in 2005.