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Visually Constructing Socialist Identity in 20th Century South Africa: A comparison between Communist Party of South Africa Cartoons from the 1930s and Congress of South African Trade Unions Posters from the 1980s

BIOGRAPHY

Deirdre Pretorius is a Senior Lecturer in the Graphic Design Department of the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture at the University of Johannesburg. Her MA in Information Design, which was completed in 2002, presented her research on the South African protest posters from the 1980s. She is currently enrolled for a DLitt *et* Phil in Historical Studies at the University of Johannesburg. Her research area is the printed graphic propaganda of the Communist Party of South Africa from 1921-1950 and she has published two subsidy-bearing articles on this topic to date. She has also published a number of articles and reviews on design and visual communication in the popular press.

→ **Sibongakonke Shoba** (2008:[sp]) reported that following former Gauteng premier Mbhazima Shilowa's resignation from the African National Congress (ANC) in 2008 and announcement of the intention to create a breakaway party, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) stated that Shilowa had "changed from being a darling of workers to a member of expensive, elitist, whisky-drinking and cigar-smoking clubs". In a similar vein, Gaye Davis (2008:1) reported that Zwelinzima Vavi, Cosatu secretary general described Shilowa as changing from "a son of the workers" and an "ardent socialist who wore red socks with pride" to a "cigar-smoking wealthy businessman".

These descriptions clearly position the positive image of the 'worker' against his negative 'other', the 'capitalist' through naming and the use of class markers such as 'cigars' and 'red socks'. These stereotypes of the agents of socialism and capitalism are embedded in classic socialist rhetoric and indicate the endurance and stability of these images over time. The stability of political images is commented on by Robert Philippe (1982:25) who posits that "political iconography had traditional stereotypes, a kind of motionlessness, a repertoire of eternally true types". Philippe (1982:18) further argues that "images … create human types on which individuals unconsciously model themselves", in other words, images enable individuals to construct a sense of identity.

In this paper, I compare two samples of twentieth century South African political graphics to reveal the continuities and ruptures in their visual construction of socialist identity. The origins of the visual imagery are traced and an account provided for the endurance of some images as well as their changes over time. The samples selected to achieve this aim are positioned half a century apart. The first sample consists of the linocut

cartoons published in the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) official newspaper *Umsebenzi* that existed from 1930 to 1936. The second sample is drawn from the posters created from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s by Cosatu. During the 1980s Cosatu was affiliated with the then banned South African Communist Party (SACP) and the ANC and following the SACP and ANC's unbanning these three organisations formed a Tripartite Alliance.

In comparing the *Umsebenzi* cartoons with the Cosatu posters it became clear that both samples were directly inspired by an international socialist visual language which had been developing throughout the nineteenth century and which in turn looked for inspiration in earlier visual and symbolic expressions relating to revolution and democracy. The influence of international socialist iconography emerged in both samples in the depictions of processions carrying banners and flags with slogans, the worker, peasant and their class markers, which include the hammer and sickle, and the repeated depiction of the clenched fist.

Despite these similarities important differences do appear between the two samples. The representation of the worker as anonymous, black and male in the 1930s is replaced in the 1980s by representations that acknowledge gender and race diversity among workers. Other notable differences between the two samples include the use of the key socialist images of the enemy, especially the capitalist, and the individual breaking free from chains in the *Umsebenzi* cartoons which do not appear in the Cosatu posters. A further difference appears in the use of the image of the warrior, spear and shield in the 1930s cartoons which is absent from the Cosatu posters. These differences reflect the move from the CPSA's drive to recruit, and build class consciousness among, African workers to Cosatu's aim of mass mobilisation across race and gender lines.

Introduction

In October 2008 Sibongakonke Shoba (2008:[sp]) reported in *Business Day* that, following former Gauteng premier Mbhazima Shilowa's resignation from the African National Congress (ANC) and the announcement of the intention to create a breakaway party, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) stated that the erstwhile premier had "changed from being a darling of workers to a member of expensive, elitist, whisky-drinking and cigar-smoking clubs". In a similar vein, Gaye Davis (2008:1) reported that Zwelinzima Vavi, Cosatu secretary general, described Shilowa as changing from "a son of the workers" and an "ardent socialist ... who wore red socks with pride" to a "cigar-smoking wealthy businessman".

These descriptions clearly position the positive image of the 'worker' against his negative 'other', the 'capitalist', through naming and the use of class markers such as 'cigars' and 'red socks'.[1] These stereotypes of the agents of socialism and capitalism are embedded in classic socialist rhetoric and indicate the endurance and stability of these images over time. The stability of political images is commented on by Robert Philippe (1982:25) who posits that "political iconography had traditional stereotypes, a kind of motionlessness, a repertoire of eternally true types". Philippe (1982:18) further argues that "images ... create human types on which individuals unconsciously model themselves"; in other words, images enable individuals to construct a sense of identity.

In this paper, I compare two samples of twentieth century South African political graphics to reveal the continuities and ruptures in their visual construction of socialist identity. I trace the origins of the visual imagery as well as ways in which this has changed over time, and provide an account for the endurance of certain images. The samples selected to achieve this aim are positioned half a century apart. The first sample consists of the linocut cartoons published in the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) official newspaper *Umsebenzi*,[2] which existed from 1930 to 1936.[3] The second sample is drawn from the Cosatu posters[4] created from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s.[5] During the 1980s Cosatu was affiliated with the then banned South African Communist Party (SACP)[6] and the ANC; following the SACP and ANC's unbanning these three organisations formed a Tripartite Alliance.

Internationalism

Judy Seidman (2007) and The Posterbook Collective (2004) proffer that throughout the twentieth century South African oppositional political graphics have drawn from international socialist imagery. Seidman (2007:27) observes that during the first half of the twentieth century the iconography used by the South African Left originated in "international revolutionary graphics" and that CPSA and trade union magazines and newspapers not only reprinted international images, but also adapted graphics to become more relevant to the South African context, especially with regard to race and class issues.

The Posterbook Collective (2004:8) notes the similarity in style of the resistance posters of the 1980s and ascribes this similarity to the fact that the posters used a limited range of symbols, some of which were drawn from "an international visual vocabulary of struggle such as the clenched fist and banners", which were repeated and reinterpreted, while other symbols were characteristically South African, for example the spear and shield of the ANC and *Umkhonto we Siswe* (MK).[7] In addition, the poster makers, who were mostly untrained, drew inspiration from "posters and images from the Russian Revolution, from Germany in the 1930s, from France and the United States in the 1960s, from Cuba, Nicaragua and Chile, and from the murals and posters of Mozambique in the 1970s"[8] (The Posterbook Collective 2004:8). Seidman (2007:22-35) concurs with this view, locating the visual foundation for the South African poster movement[9] in the early twentieth century South African political graphics

published in African Nationalist, trade union and socialist publications and revolutionary images, which were, in the main, imported from Europe and Russia.

The production and circulation of an "international visual vocabulary of struggle" (The Posterbook Collective 2004:8) or "international revolutionary graphics" (Seidman 2007:27) can, in part, be ascribed to the emphasis placed in Marxism on the international solidarity of workers, as epitomised in the final line of the 1848 *Communist Manifesto* (Marx & Engels 2004:52), which states: "Working men of all countries, unite". This spirit of internationalism resulted in the forging of links between socialist parties across countries and continents. Their activities included the distribution and circulation of socialist propaganda, one outcome of which was the development of a shared socialist visual language and iconography that was adapted for local conditions.

Since its inception the CPSA formed part of an "international community of revolutionary socialism" (Drew 2002:55) that was confirmed by the Party's acceptance of *The Twenty-one Points – Conditions of Admission to the Communist International* at its founding conference in 1921 (Bunting 1981:58-62). The Communist International (Comintern) was a worldwide organisation of Communist parties that functioned out of Moscow from 1919 until 1943 (Davidson, Filatova, Gorodnov & Johns 2003:1). The CPSA followed the Comintern's policies and directives; party members attended its conferences and studied in Moscow (Drew 2002). Similarly, many of Cosatu's founding affiliates had connections with overseas unions on whom they could rely for support and sharing of resources and experience (Cosatu 1995:25). South African trade unionists were also invited abroad to countries including Scandinavia, Britain and Australia for study programmes (Cosatu 1995:103). The links forged by the CPSA and Cosatu with international socialist organisations ensured that the graphics created by both bodies were influenced by a well-established tradition of international socialist iconography.

The development of an international socialist visual language has a long history and its influences are found as far back as the symbols and rituals of classical antiquity, the political woodblock prints created in western Europe in the fifteenth century, the symbols and rituals of the French Revolution, as well as the more recent graphics of the nineteenth century Socialist and Labour movements (Lane 1981; Philippe 1982; Tumarkin 1983; White 1988; Bonnell 1997). The propaganda produced in the Soviet Union from 1917 until the late 1920s synthesised most of the aforementioned traditions whilst also drawing on Russian religious and visual traditions, satirical magazines and commercial advertising posters (White 1988:1). Stephen White (1988:34) notes that the symbols and imagery that were invented and popularised during these years "have had a significant influence upon the graphic art of other countries as well as upon Soviet political art to the present day".

Workers of the world unite!

The influence of these visual traditions on South African socialist graphics emerges clearly from the samples examined. One of the images that is repeated most frequently in both samples is that of a procession of people carrying banners and/or flags. A striking similarity is evident between an image printed in the *Umsebenzi* of 18 April 1930 (Fig. 1) in anticipation of the May Day celebrations of 1930, and the 1988 poster issued by Cosatu (Fig. 2) calling for an anti-apartheid conference. Both images depict a line of marchers seen in silhouette from the side with raised fists and carrying flags that stream in the wind above their heads.

Another pair of posters is instructive for both the similarities and differences that they offer. The *Umsebenzi* cartoon from 12 December 1930 (Fig. 3) shows a procession of featureless black men carrying banners protesting against the carrying of passes. The poster for a special Congress of Cosatu taking place on 14-15 May 1988 (Fig. 4) similarly shows a marching crowd with a banner proclaiming 'no to restrictions'. The procession is led by a female with a raised fist dressed in an overcoat and beret followed by a male in a red headband and Cosatu tracksuit, a mineworker in a hard hat, and other figures with recognisable features. Behind them the procession recedes into the background into an amorphous mass.

Notable differences between these two images are evident in the depiction of the marchers. The *Umsebenzi* cartoon shows a deindividualised crowd of black men, while the Cosatu poster includes both sexes and leaves ascriptions of race up to the viewer. These differences can be attributed to the differing aims of the organisations. From the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s the CPSA focused in their propaganda on recruiting African males, while Cosatu drew together many and diverse trade unions and was dedicated to non-racialism and non-sexism.

The similarity between the images is the result of the use of the classic image of a procession of people carrying banners and/or flags. The origins of this key image of socialist and revolutionary graphics can be traced back from Greek and Roman antiquity, to the graphics of the French Revolution, the International Worker's and Socialist Movements and

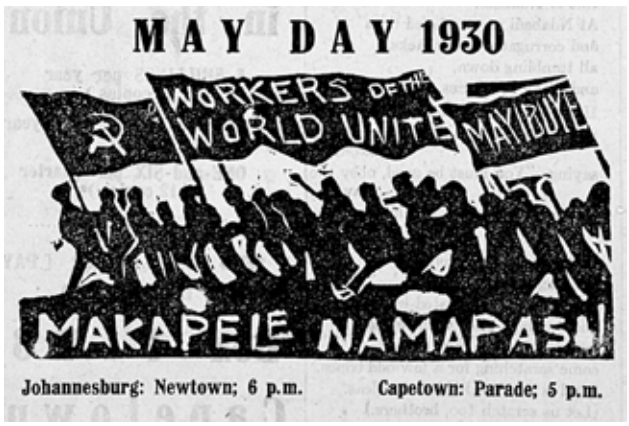


Fig 1: Roux, E. 1930. Linocut cartoon. *Umsebenzi* 610, 18 April:4.

Fig 2: Congress of South African Trade Unions. (Cosatu) 1988. Poster. South African History Archive (SAHA) poster collection AL2446, poster number 1236.

Fig 3: Roux, E. 1930. Linocut cartoon. *Umsebenzi* 644, 12 December:1.

Fig 4: Cosatu. 1988. Poster. SAHA poster collection. AL2446, poster number 595.

through these to Soviet rituals and symbols (Lane 1981; Philippe 1982; Tumarkin 1983; White 1988; Bonnell 1997). Christel Lane (1981:153) notes that the political holidays of the Soviet Union from 1918-1978 were influenced by the political holidays of the ancient Greek city-states and French post-revolutionary society. The French festivals were characterised by the massed procession that often stopped in symbolic places on its way to the final gathering in a location associated with the revolution (Lane 1981:263).

The French festivals borrowed elements from classical antiquity to inject the proceedings with "pomp and grandeur",[10] as well as the idea of "popular participation" (Lane 1981:263). These elements were combined with symbols such as the statue of liberty and the banner of the republic (Lane 1981:264). A French lithograph from 1848, reproduced in Philippe (1982:114-115), depicts an allegory of this universal, democratic and social republic. It shows a snaking procession of people carrying raised flags representing European nations such as France, Germany and England. The image of a procession of people carrying raised flags was reproduced repeatedly in the graphics of the Worker's movements.

Worker's movements appeared in Britain in the beginning of the nineteenth century and by the end of the century themes of unity, struggle and strikes became a source of inspiration for artists (Philippe 1982:212). The *First International*[11] encouraged the creation of a mass of graphic work. A typical example created by Théophile Alexandre Steinlen in 1895 depicts a crowd of workers moving towards the viewer carrying banners on which the names of different Worker's parties are displayed (Philippe 1982:212), thus indicating international working class solidarity. Other symbols of international solidarity, which appear in the South African samples examined, include the globe and the handshake, the slogan 'Workers of the world unite', and graphics celebrating May Day.

May Day is the most important international ritual for socialist labour movements and was first celebrated in 1890 (Hobsbawm 2000:283). May Day contributed greatly to the development of socialist iconography of

Fig 5: Roux, E. 1933. Linocut cartoon. *Umsebenzi* 694, 6 January:1.

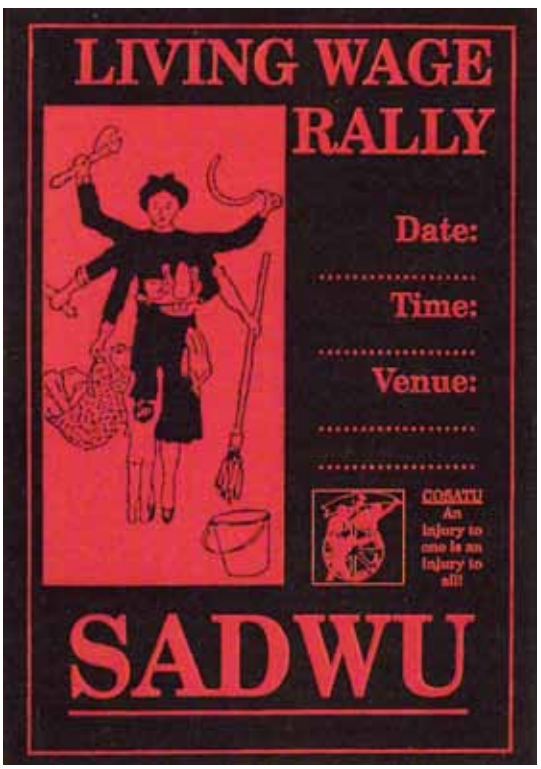


Fig 6: Cosatu & The Other Press Service (TOPS). 1989. Poster. SAHA poster collection AL2446, poster number 91.

the 1890s. Graphics commemorating this day not only included references to struggle but also messages of "hope, confidence and the approach of a bright future" (Hobsbawm 2000:285).

The engraving, *The Triumph of Labour*,[12] created by Walter Crane in 1891 to celebrate May Day, summarises the socialist ideals that had developed during the nineteenth century (Philippe 1982:206). The image depicts a procession of people led by Nike, the Goddess of Victory, wearing a Phrygian bonnet and holding a blazing torch of liberty,[13] as well as a peasant on a horse. The peasant raises his straw hat with one hand while holding onto, in the other hand, a pitchfork on which a sign is mounted that reads 'The Labour May Day 1891'. The procession consists of male and female peasants and workers, some of whom are on foot while others are seated in a cart bearing banners and flags that read 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity', 'The Land for the People', 'Labour is the Source of Wealth', and 'The International Solidarity of Labour'.

The hammer and sickle

The image of the peasant armed with farm implements, such as scythes and pitchforks, appeared in printed graphics advancing revolutionary social ideas by the end of the thirteenth century (Philippe 1982:11). The cause of the peasants was taken up by Albrech Dürer in the wake of the Peasants' War of 1525. In his *Treatise on Geometry*, Dürer (cited in Phillipe 1982:12) explained that a monument created to commemorate a Peasants' War should consist of a column, the body of which must be a "sheath of corn, with a hoe, spade, pitchfork, and scythe tied around it". These objects have all become an integral part of the visual language of socialism.

Fig 7: Cosatu. 1990. Poster. SAHA poster collection AL2446, poster number 3323.

A variety of tools and implements appear in both *Umsebenzi* cartoons and Cosatu posters. An example from the *Umsebenzi* of 6 January 1933 (Fig. 5) shows a number of arms thrusting into the picture plane wielding sickles and hammers, while a Cosatu poster announcing a living wage rally (Fig. 6) depicts a woman worker with multiple arms holding various tools including a sickle. The hammer and sickle symbol was adopted in 1918 as the official state emblem of the Soviet Union and rapidly gained popularity (Lane 1981:164; White 1988:36). The hammer and sickle symbol not only appears in *Umsebenzi* cartoons, but is also incorporated into the newspaper's masthead. None of the posters viewed from the 1980s displays the hammer and sickle emblem, but after the unbanning of the SACP in 1990 this symbol started appearing in Cosatu posters (Fig. 7).

As the sickle symbolises the peasant, the hammer symbolises the industrial worker. Victoria Bonnell (1997:8) identifies the worker as central to Bolshevik imagery and notes how the worker in early Bolshevik posters was represented by the blacksmith with his "distinctive markers ... hammer, leather apron, sometimes anvil ..." (Bonnell 1997:23). Hammers appear frequently in both samples of South African political graphics and are mostly shown held aloft or breaking through constraints such as walls and chains. For example, an *Umsebenzi* cartoon captioned 'Smash the Barriers!', which was copied from the *Young Worker* – an American publication published on 12 September 1930 (Fig. 8) – depicts a male figure breaking through a wooden fence (inscribed with the words 'colour bar') with a hammer. Similarly, a Cosatu poster from 1989 (Fig. 9) calls on workers to 'Smash the Labour Relations Act!' and depicts a crowd of workers demolishing a brick wall with hammers and picks.

The worker

As with Bolshevik propaganda, the image of the worker predominates in both samples of South African political

graphics. The major difference between the cartoons and posters are found in the types of workers depicted. The image of the worker constructed in *Umsebenzi* cartoons is that of a black male represented either as a 'generic worker', dressed in black pants and white shirt, or as a specific type of worker, such as dock or mine worker, connoted by their placement within a particular working environment.

The appearance of the image of the mineworker in South African socialist graphics is to be expected considering the important role which gold mining played in South African history. Miners have appeared in socialist iconography since the nineteenth century, as is evident in an image from *Punch*[14] of 1872, reproduced in Philippe (1982:208-209). This image, titled 'Capital and Labour', shows a horizontally divided picture plane. In the top half of the image, the rich laze about in lavish surroundings while being served wine and delicacies by uniformed servants. Underneath this scene the viewer is shown the interior of a mine where haggard-looking men, women and children toil while a fat overseer lounges about with bags of gold at his feet.

This visual depiction of the class system is repeated in a cartoon from the *Umsebenzi* from 29 August 1930 (Fig. 10) captioned 'The gold mining industry, how it works'. In this image a smiling 'mine magnate', clasping a glass of champagne and bottle in outstretched hands, and two female figures in evening dress are seated at a table decked with a food and wine. Below the table a 'native miner' is seen drilling in a mine, while to his left a 'white overseer' is comfortably seated with a pipe in his mouth. This image frames the class struggle not only around class, but race as well. A May Day poster from 1988 headlined 'Cosatu' shows three African men, one of whom can be identified as a miner by his hard hat with a lamp. The image of the African mineworker as represented in Cosatu and National Union of Mineworker (NUM) posters (Fig. 11) had become a South African icon by the 1980s.

In addition to mineworkers, the Cosatu posters also include depictions of farm workers and women workers, such as domestic workers, identified by markers such as headscarves, overdresses and vacuum cleaners (Fig. 12). The equal representation of women in the Cosatu posters

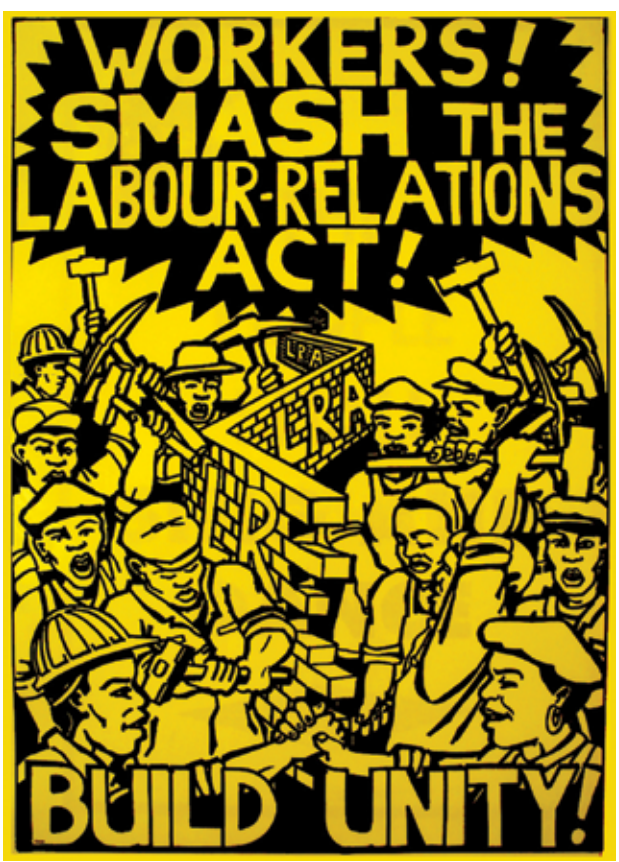


Fig 9: Cosatu & National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU). 1989. Poster. SAHA poster collection AL2446, poster number 587.

Fig 8: Roux, E. 1930. Linocut cartoon. *Umsebenzi* 631, 12 September:1.

Fig 10: Roux, E. 1930. Linocut cartoon. *Umsebenzi* 629, 29 August:1.

is a significant departure from the *Umsebenzi* cartoons in which very few women (and no women workers) appear. When women do appear in the *Umsebenzi* cartoons they are mostly shown passively as part of a family group consisting of a woman, man and child. Although the CPSA was in principle committed to equal rights for all workers, the reality was that during the 1930s the Party had only a small number of female members; it was dominated by males and female leadership was not encouraged (Drew 2002:179).

The Cosatu posters not only depict women frequently, but also cast them in active roles such as taking leading positions in processions or energetically dancing and shouting defiantly with their arms thrusting into the air (Fig. 13). The Cosatu posters also depict women in the role of mothers. For example, a 1988 poster (Fig. 14) calling on women to fight for their rights shows a woman, a baby strapped to her back, hanging up the washing. It is also worth noting that following objections to the exclusion of women from its logo, Cosatu replaced one of the three male workers — depicted marching alongside a wheel in the original emblem — with a woman with a baby on her back (Cosatu 1995:10). The dominant presence of women in Cosatu posters can be ascribed to the organisation's commitment to gender equality within and outside the organisation (Cosatu 1995:85). The organisation acknowledged the significant role that women played in building the trade unions, the necessity of developing women leaders, and the importance of taking up women's issues in the workplace (Cosatu 1995:4-21). The representation of male and female workers in the Cosatu posters contributed to the building of unity in the organisation, an important ideal that found expression in the image of the raised, clenched fist.

Unity

The raised, clenched fist is arguably the most consistently reproduced and best known icon of revolutionary movements and appears in both samples. According to Phil Patton (2006:104) this icon originates in the "revolutionary imagery of 1848 and French Romantic paintings". On the meaning of the clenched fist, Seidman (2007:78)

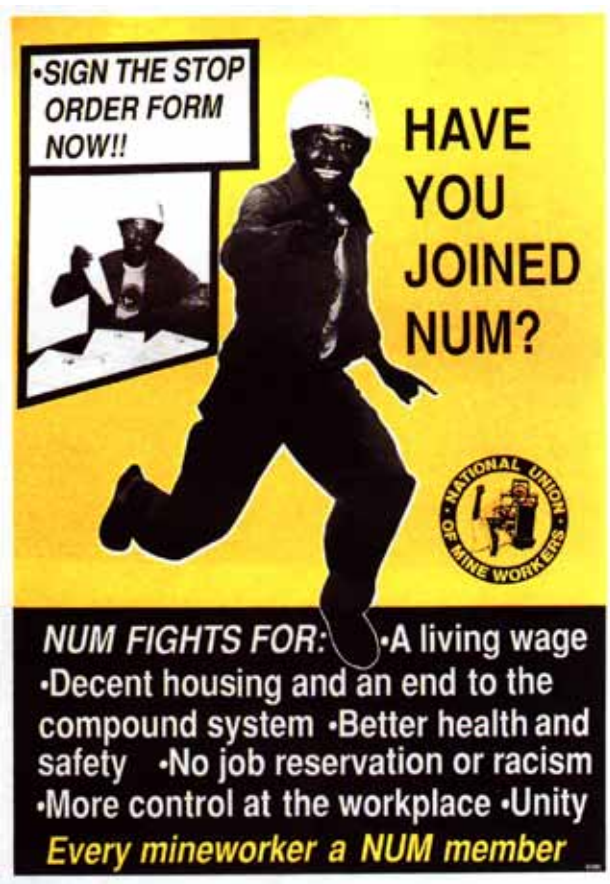


Fig 11: National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) . 1989. Poster. SAHA poster collection AL2446, poster number 1096.

Fig 12: Cosatu. 1989. Poster. SAHA poster collection AL2446, poster number 1231.

Fig 13: Cosatu. [Sa]. Poster. SAHA poster collection AL2446, poster number 1579.

Fig 15: Kustodiev, B. 1919. Cover for the Communist International. Reprinted in *Umsebenzi* 775, 9 March 1935.

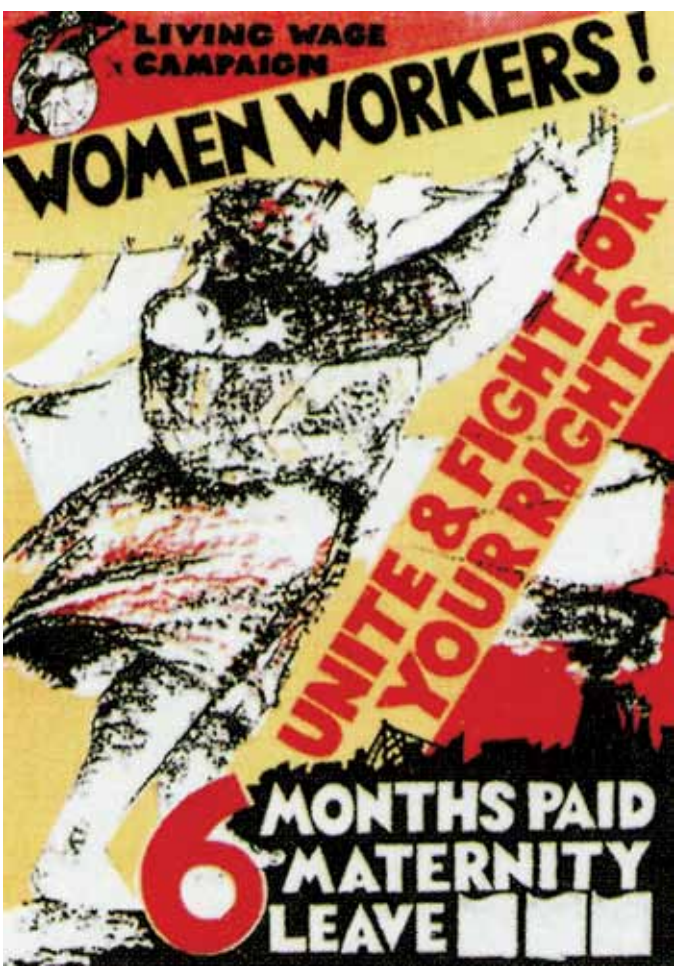


Fig 14: Cosatu. 1988. Poster. SAHA poster collection AL2446, poster number 1006.

Fig 16: Roux, E. 1933. Linocut cartoon. *Umsebenzi* 713, 30 November:1.

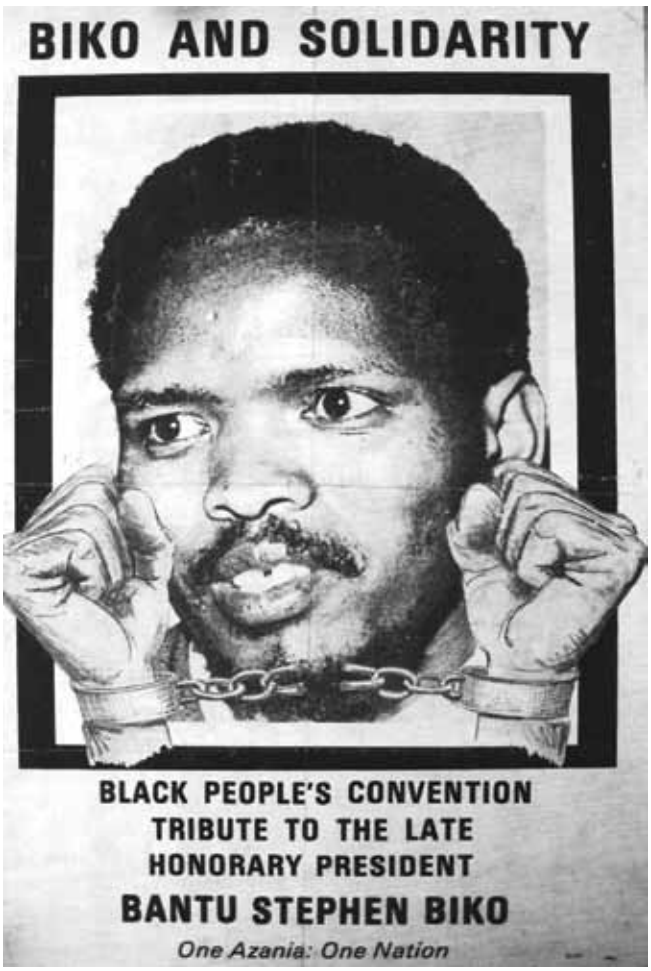


Fig 17: Black People's Convention (BPC). 1977. Poster. SAHA poster collection AL2446, poster number 3275.

quotes trade unionist Oscar Mpetha, who views the fist as symbolising unity and strength. An *Umsebenzi* cartoon from 15 September 1934 (Fig. 18) offers a classic example of the use of the clenched fist in its depiction of an arm and fist smashing through a piece of paper. Over fifty years later the image is repeated in the launch poster for Cosatu (Fig. 19), the main difference being that the colour of the arm is now a vivid red.

There is a strong likeness between a Bolshevik linocut created in 1917 by VI Kozlinsky titled *Agitator* (White 1988:80) and the launch poster for Cosatu from 1985 (Fig. 19). The Kozlinsky linocut must have been a familiar image as it is reprinted in a 1980s South African May Day pamphlet (CRIC ([sa]:15). Both images show a crowd of expressively drawn faces in front of a large angular factory. The Bolshevik image shows a figure with a raised fist facing a crowd of people, while the Cosatu poster has a large red arm and clenched fist thrusting in from the bottom left.

The enemy

A notable difference between the constructions of socialist identity in the two samples concerns the depiction of enemies. The worker in *Umsebenzi* cartoons is often shown directly confronting his enemies, who are white male politicians, soldiers and capitalists. The capitalist, one of the most familiar enemies in socialist iconography, appeared in socialist cartoons of the *Belle Époque* (Hobsbawm 1978:122), emerged in the South African press at the beginning of the twentieth century and is commonly found in Bolshevik political posters. Bonnell (1997:14) describes the capitalist as a fat male, wearing a top hat and black or striped trousers and surrounded by symbols of wealth such as gold or bags of money. In certain instances, he smokes a cigar or is depicted with porcine features. This description of the capitalist is equally applicable to the depiction of the capitalist in *Umsebenzi* cartoons.

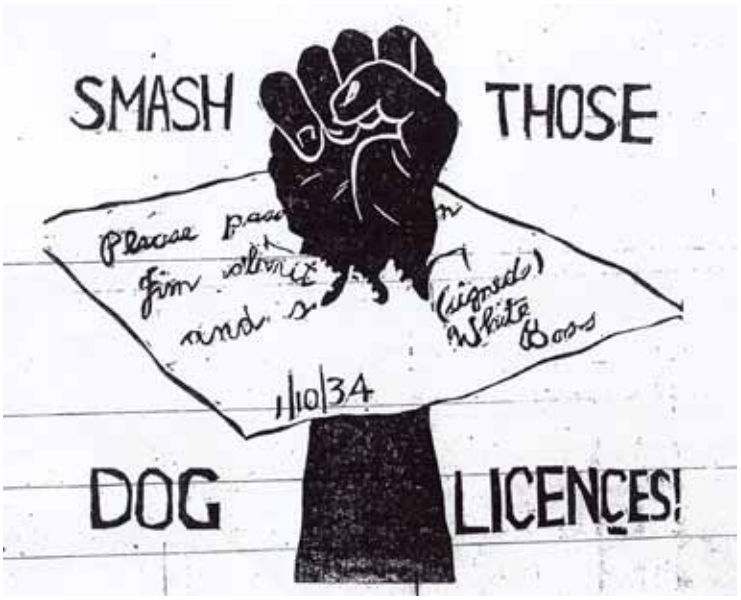
A typical example (Fig. 5) shows a fat white man with top hat, suit and bow tie wielding a whip in his right hand and a chain in his left. Across his body is written *ungxowankulu* (capitalist) and he stands on a mound labelled 'gold'. Nearly fifty years later the capitalist does appear again in South African protest posters, for example in a United Democratic Front (UDF) poster from 1985 (Seidman 2007:133), but despite Cosatu (1995:22) identifying the 'government' and the 'bosses' as their enemies in the 1980s, there are no depictions of the 'bosses', or government representatives such as politicians or soldiers in Cosatu posters in the sample examined.

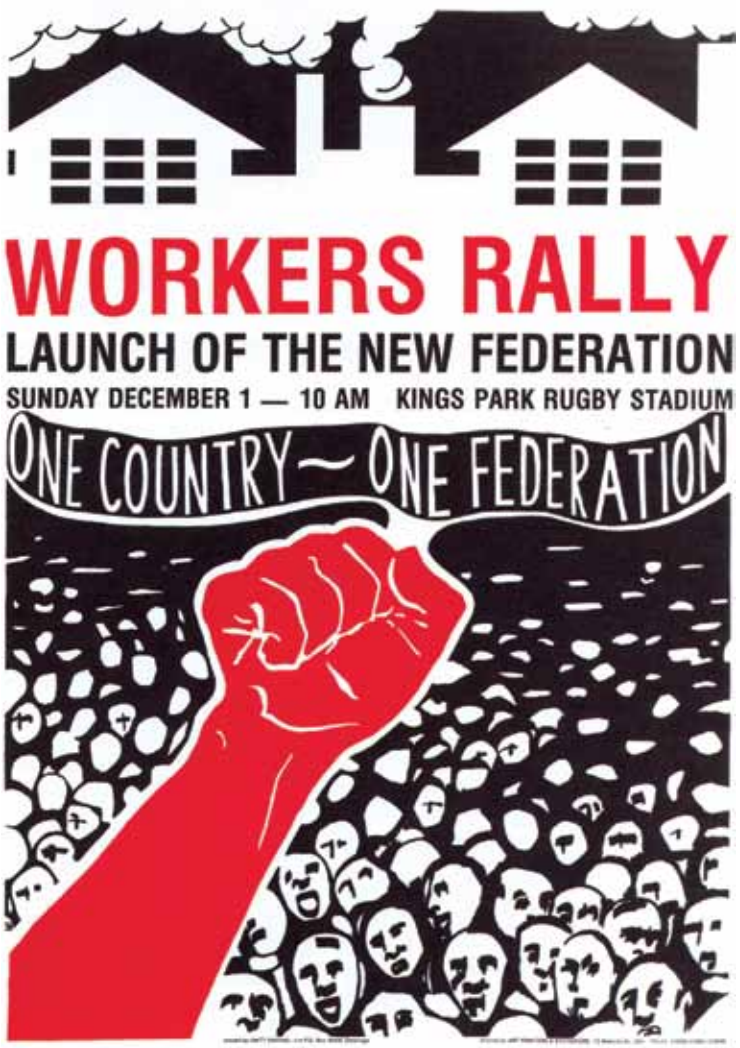
The predominance of the enemy in the *Umsebenzi* cartoons and the absence of the enemy from the Cosatu posters is a noteworthy difference evident in the two samples. A possible answer for this difference might be found in the fact that the awakening of the class consciousness of Africans during the 1930s was an important task for the CPSA. Since socialism was an "imported doctrine" that developed fairly late in South Africa (Drew 2002:6), the CPSA had to create representations of South African workers and their class enemies that would visually educate the audience on the meaning of class struggle and socialist ideas. As Eric Hobsbawm (2003:126) has noted, the concept of class only becomes a reality "at the historical moment when classes begin to acquire consciousness of themselves as such". Cosatu, on the other hand, was more concerned with building solidarity among their members who were, no doubt, already class-conscious. Through the omission of the enemies of the organisation, Cosatu may have been attempting to diminish the danger inherent in mass mobilisation and action that relies on a willingness of the audience to "act in the face of danger" (Cosatu 1995:85).

The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains

The image of a person breaking chains or freeing themselves from chains is another staple of socialist imagery that often appears in *Umsebenzi* and South African political graphics but is absent from the Cosatu posters. This image was powerfully represented by Soviet artist Boris Kustodiev for the cover of the journal *Communist International*, which started publication in 1919 (White 1988:36). The image — which shows a powerful man striking with a heavy hammer at the chains encircling a globe — resonates, according to White (1988:36), with the Greek myth of Prometheus, but draws more obviously from the *Communist Manifesto* (Marx & Engels 2004:52) that in its conclusion contains the lines: "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win". The Kustodiev image (Fig. 15) clearly appealed to South African socialists as it was directly reprinted in the *Umsebenzi* of 9 March 1935, a 1989 poster for May Day (Seidman 2007:171) and a South African May Day pamphlet from the 1980s (CRIC [sa]:15).

The appeal of the symbol of a man breaking free from chains is evident in its repeated use in the *Umsebenzi* cartoons. A typical example published on 30 November 1933 (Fig. 16) shows a man with a determined look on his face, breaking apart the chain cuffing his wrists. Analogous images appear in the poster movement posters, for example, the poster (Fig. 17) created for Steve Biko's funeral in 1977 by the Black People's Convention (BPC) (Seidman 2007:59). However,





apart from a poster which contains a small logo for the Posts and Telecommunications Workers Association (POTWA), which consists of two raised clenched fists breaking the shackles bounding the wrists, the image does not appear in the Cosatu posters examined.

The warrior

The warrior wielding a spear and shield is frequently depicted in *Umsebenzi* cartoons and appears in South African revolutionary imagery, but is conspicuously absent from the Cosatu posters. On 23 November 1935 (Fig. 20) a cartoon protesting the invasion of Ethiopia by Mussolini depicted a small black silhouette, labelled 'Ethiopia', with knees bent poised to throw a spear held aloft while protecting itself with a shield. The logo adopted by MK to represent the organisation appears very similar to this image. The shield as a symbol of protection was a favoured motif in *Umsebenzi*, and shields labelled '*Umsebenzi*' or 'Ikaka Workers Defence'[17] indicate that these bodies act as shields to protect the workers. The current ANC logo includes a spear and a shield and the ANC (2009) explains that this logo represents:

> **the early wars of resistance to colonial rule, the armed struggle of the ANC's former wing, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, and the ANC's ongoing struggle against racial privilege and oppression ... The fist holding the spear represents the power of a people united in struggle for freedom and equality.**

The image of the warrior has been criticised as a colonialist stereotype that signified savagery (Pieterse 1992:79); however, use of this image by the CPSA, ANC and MK shows that these organisations appropriated the warrior to represent their values and ideals. A possible reason why the warrior, spear and shield do not appear in the Cosatu posters may be that the organisation avoided making overt reference to the iconography used by the then banned ANC.

Conclusion

When comparing the *Umsebenzi* cartoons with the Cosatu posters it becomes clear that both samples were directly inspired by an international socialist visual language that had been developing throughout the nineteenth century and that, in turn, looked for inspiration in earlier visual and symbolic expressions relating to revolution and democracy. The influence of international socialist iconography emerged in both samples with regard to the depictions of processions carrying banners and flags with slogans, the worker, peasant and their class markers, including the hammer and sickle, and the repeated depiction of the clenched fist.

Despite these similarities important differences are nonetheless evident in the two samples. The representation of the worker as anonymous, black and male in the 1930s is replaced in the 1980s by representations that acknowledge gender and race diversity among workers. Other notable differences between the two samples include the use of the key socialist images of the enemy, especially the capitalist, and the individual breaking free from chains in the *Umsebenzi* cartoons, neither of which appears in the Cosatu posters. A further difference emerges in the use, in the 1930s cartoons, of the images of the warrior, spear and shield, all of which are absent from the Cosatu posters. These differences reflect the move from the CPSA's drive to recruit and build class consciousness among African workers, to Cosatu's aim of mass mobilisation across race and gender lines.

Fig 18: Roux, E. 1934. Linocut cartoon. *Umsebenzi* 751, 15 September:1.

Fig 19: Cosatu. 1985. Poster. SAHA poster collection AL2446, poster number 199.

Fig 20: Roux, E. 1935. Linocut cartoon. *Umsebenzi* 812, 23 November:1.

Endnotes

1. Victoria Bonnell (1997:24) refers to the attributes that describe a standard type in Soviet political posters, such as the capitalist, as "class markers".
2. The CPSA was founded in 1921 and disbanded in 1950 due to the Suppression of Communism Act. It regrouped in 1953 as an underground party under the name South African Communist Party (SACP) which was unbanned in 1990. The CPSA Party newspaper was named *The International* from 1916-1925, changed its name to *South African Worker* in 1926, and to *Umsebenzi* in 1930. From the middle of 1936 it was published in two sections named the *South African Worker* and *Umsebenzi* until it ceased publication in 1938 due to financial difficulties. At the turn of the decade the paper was revived and published throughout the 1940s under the name *Inkululeko*.
3. The *Umsebenzi's* are housed in the National Library of South Africa in Cape Town. For the purposes of this paper, all the available copies were examined, from issue 610 of 18 April 1930 to issue 838 of 13 June 1936. Between April 1930 and June 1936 linocut cartoons predominate with most issues displaying at least one cartoon on the front page. A total of 210 linocut cartoons were examined. This is the third of three articles by the author which address *Umsebenzi* cartoons. The first (Pretorius 2007) examines the construction of class, race and gender identities in the anti-pass laws cartoons published between 1933 and 1936 and the second (Pretorius 2008) examines the cartoons from 1930-1936 to determine how the cartoons countered racist stereotypes of Africans.
4. The Cosatu posters are drawn from the South African History Archive (SAHA) poster collection, collection number AL2446, which is housed in the William Cullen Library at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Of the 157 posters listed in the database as issued by Cosatu, or by Cosatu in conjunction with trade unions and other political organisations, 90 were available for viewing. Of these, 44 posters were dated indicating that 39 were created between 1985 and 1990, four in 1992, and one in 1994.
5. Cosatu was launched in 1985 as a federation of South African trade unions committed to socialism and a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa (Cosatu 1996).
6. Jeremy Baskin (1991:6-12) acknowledges the important role played by the CPSA in building the trade union movement in South Africa from the 1920s through to 1950; and then by Cosatu in the 1980s in building working-class support for socialism and the ANC (Baskin 1991:451). According to Baskin (1991:22) most of the key founders of Cosatu supported the banned ANC and SACP or were staunch Marxists.
7. *Umkhonto we Siswe* translates to 'Spear of the Nation' and was formed as the military wing of the ANC in 1961 (Worden 2007:126).
8. This borrowing of existing visual imagery and symbols by South African poster makers is typical of revolutionary movements. Nina Tumarkin (1983:2) observes that "just as the deification of Greek and Roman rulers was rooted in older conceptions of power and divinity and stimulated by current needs of state, so later revolutionary cults were generated by political imperatives and were ... based on existing traditional forms and symbols".
9. Posters that resisted apartheid during the time period 1975 to 2000 are identified by Seidman (2007:11) as forming part of the "South African poster movement".
10. The use of the symbolism of neo-classical monumental art was pioneered by the neo-classical artist Jacques Louis David who directed the design of most artistic festivals (Lane 1981:263).
11. The term 'International' describes a series of federations of socialist parties and organisations. The first of these was the International Working Men's Association, or First International (founded in London in 1864 and dissolved in 1876), followed by the Second International (founded in Paris 1889 and disbanded with the outbreak of the Second World War) and then the Third International (founded in Moscow in 1919 and dissolved in 1943) also known as the Comintern (Bullock & Trombley 1999:439).
12. Philippe (1982:206) points out the strong resemblance between Crane's image and the *Truimphal Procession of Maximillian I* by Albrecht Dürer.
13. The Phrygian bonnet, also known as the liberty cap, symbolises freedom because it was the cap given to freed slaves in Rome (Agulhon 1979:2), and emerged again as a symbol of freedom in the first months of the French Revolution of 1789 (Hunt 1984:59).
14. *Punch* was a British satirical journal which was published from 1841-1992 (Jobling & Crowley 1996:41).
15. The colour red in South African political graphics came to signify "struggle, socialism and the South African Communist Party" (The Posterbook Collective 2004:8) and red and black predominate in the Cosatu posters, the majority of which have been reproduced by way of offset lithography. The colour red was very important in the Soviet Union (Lane 1981:200). It is a synonym for 'beautiful' in Russian (Lane 1981:201), and was a colour preferred by Russian icon painters for whom it represented the "blood of martyrs and the fire of faith" (White 1988:5). Red was popular in pre-revolutionary Russia and the Russian Social-Democratic movement – the predecessor for the Communist Party of the Soviet Union – appropriated red from the Paris communards who used it to symbolise blood and revolution (Lane 1981:200). The use of the colour red in socialist imagery is so pervasive that Hobsbawm (2000:284) considers red flags as the only 'universal' symbol of the Socialist movement. Due to technical and budget constraints the *Umsebenzi* cartoons are printed from lino blocks in black only. Despite the differences in reproduction methods the two samples do share a stylistic similarity in the use of simplified forms, sharp contrast, and the use of bold white or black outlines to define shapes.
16. *Ikaka labasebenzi* was a branch of the communist organisation called the International Red Aid which defended arrested Africans (Roux 1948:288).

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