The life and times of Helen Kies: a brief examination

I interviewed Mrs Helen Kies on the day Leila Khaled flew out of Cape Town.

The lives of these two great women mimic each other in terms of passion and commitment to struggle, with such uncanny and bewildering similarity; I can't help but make the connection.

Mrs Kies, at 81, remains the editor of the *Educational Journal* – a left, radical and very proudly Marxist publication of current affairs commentary – more than 40 years after taking on this mantleship. At the same time it is more than 50 years of her participation, commitment, pronouncement and dedication to the struggle for the total emancipation of the poor and oppressed people of South Africa.

Leila Khaled, at 64, is a member of the Central Committee of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, more than 30 years after she was hurtled into the global consciousness when she led the hijack of an American passenger plane for the sole and explicit aim of raising global awareness about the plight and struggle of the oppressed people of Palestine.

During Leila Khaled's stay in Cape Town, I was fortunate at times to have close contact and conversation with her and witness up close her staggering and unwavering commitment to the emancipation of the Palestinian people.

The interview for this assignment allowed me up close contact with Mrs Kies for the first time in nearly two decades. Mrs Kies was a teacher at my high school. Although she taught me for only two years (English), I had the honour of also interacting with her during my high school career on issues of politics and political activism – a mainstay of my high school life during the brutal and highly repressive mid-1980s South Africa.

Unlike Leila Khaled, Mrs Kies naturally didn't commandeer a plane nor least of all carry an AK-47 gun, but it no less detracts from the two women's unquestioned devotion to expose the machinations of real and powerful forces in the oppression of people.

My comparison with Leila Khaled ends here as I proceed to reflect on Mrs Helen Kies as media personality and journalist with a noble history and legacy.

The mission of an interview

Mrs Kies lives in Upper Bloem Street in Bo Kaap, the steepest road in that historic suburb of Cape Town. It was an uphill battle, literally and figuratively, to secure an interview with her.

She's not a recluse. On the contrary, a very busy and active women. This not only stems from her role as editor of the *Journal*, and I'll come to that later, but also her ongoing

involvement in the Harold Cressy Alumni Society, the New Unity Movement (NUM), the Teachers League of South Africa (TLSA) and, sadly, among the rearguard of a generation of comrades who unquestionably have had an impact on the history of ideological struggle in this country and who are now mostly, and in some cases only recently, departed[1].

The battle to secure an interview, which took weeks of begging and pleading and eventual cautious agreement, is a matter of speculation on my part, but nonetheless relevant to this essay in contextualizing the nature of the media operation which is the *Educational Journal* and Mrs Kies as editor.

While no doubt highly protective of her privacy, Mrs Kies' dithering, refusal but eventual reluctance to be interviewed stemmed from, in my opinion, three other important factors too:

1. Her surprise at my theoretical approach in locating the *Journal* and herself within the aspect of media. As she admitted in the interview, she had never considered herself a journalist or the *Journal* as media in the general sense of the word such as when talking about "the media in South Africa". Naturally, this is less a matter of concern to her as it is for me in thus actually locating the *Educational Journal* in the body of media praxis and Mrs Kies in the community of media practitioners.

2. The paranoia of radical ideologues. This is cultural, and stems from repressive apartheid and its ultimate violation (short of death): the banning and suppression of your speech and ideas. From the 1960s period onwards, what names appeared in the *Educational Journal*(except that of Mrs Kies) were pseudonyms[2]. Contributors couldn't risk being exposed since invariably they were employed in the civil service as teachers. One could say they were happy to enjoy anonymity as long as their ideas were getting out. But this would eventually mutate into an anxiety to ensure nobody found out, beyond the "circle", who was actually behind the EJ. This has persisted, even by Mrs Kies' own admission[3]. The anxiety is quaint, to say the least, but both jarring and amusing to a journalist [re: media practitioner] operating in South Africa's democratic dispensation; and ultimately frustrating for a student pursuing academic inquiry. Nevertheless, the inclination towards secrecy is tenacious and also quite principally defended by Mrs Kies in the following point.

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[1] The history of the role and impact of the ideology and personalities in the New Unity Movement (formerly Non-European Unity Movement) and the Teachers League of South Africa (TLSA) are breathtakingly captured in the works of: Mohamed Adhikari, Neville Alexander, Linda Chisholm, Richard Dudley, Sarah Mokone and Bill Nasson. The names of the personalities are numerous, suffice to say that Mrs Kies and Mr Richard Dudley are among the few remaining from those who seeded the Unity Movement at its formation in 1943.

[2] Interview with Mrs Kies, 29/07/06.

[3] Ibid. "I can't tell you any names of the board … Because we don't want you to find out who is behind the Journal."

3. Principled collectivism. The *Educational Journal* is and has always been a collectivized media operation[4]. An editorial board decides on content, while all content is also subject to collective input. It was most likely unnerving that I had singled out Mrs Kies for an essay such as this since in principle she doesn't regard herself as being "behind" the *Journal* nor least of all responsible for it's strategic direction or continued survival. Nor does anyone else. Herein lies a leaf out of the institutional culture of media practice at the *Educational Journal*, which may well be the subject of more detailed theoretical scrutiny in the body of media studies, but is beyond the scope of this essay. Suffice to add: while collective input in mainstream media content is not new, a comparative analysis with the *Journal*'s practice will need to be nuanced by clear understandings of collectivist, collectivism, corporate collectivism and collective consultation. Finally, the editorial practice of the *Journal* means that a focus on Mrs Kies as editor will inevitably involve reflecting on the content and ideas emanating from the *Journal*. I quote from the *Journal* not to imply the individual voice of Mrs Kies, but to reflect the unique and radical alternative discourse coming from the *Journal*, of which Mrs Kies has, singularly, been the public face for the past 45 years. Notwithstanding, she does have a pseudonym in the *Journal*, "The Invigilator", and writes the only regular column that appears at the back of the *Journal*, "Notes in School"[5]. This is made up of short commentaries on various topical events happening in the news.

Media History and Media Theory

My decision to focus on Mrs Kies and the *Educational Journal* for this assignment stemmed from my research for another assignment essay I submitted earlier this year. That essay looked at the history of an alternative media title in the Western Cape - *Solidariy* newpaper - during the mid-1980s. In the course of my research, I discovered that of all the alternative media extant at the time, the *Educational Journal* was the most well established.

In 1984, it was on Vol 55, and in 1990, it was on Vol 60, where volume number is the *jaargang*. Mrs Kies was naturally the editor then. She's been the editor since the late 1950s[6].

Media Theory

I locate the *Journal* in the broad category of *alternative media*, which enjoys a contentious categorization in South Africa. Switzer (1997) naively lumps all media aimed at "black (meaning African, Coloured and Asian) communities" (ibid:1) as making up the

[4] Ibid

[5] Ibid. While Mrs Kies hastily cautioned in the interview that she doesn't write the entire column all the time, I will in this instance err in favour of my own speculation. While I might concede that her role in "Notes in School" may have diminished in recent times, I am fairly certain that she was singularly responsible for the "Notes" from the late 1970s throughout the 1980s period. The witty, acerbic and highly insightful style remains constant throughout this period adding weight to my speculation that one person was the author and given her admission, I can only conclude that it was her.

[6] Interview with Mrs Kies, 29/07/06.

alternative Press in the country. This definition hence included some of the white-owned tabloids and consumer magazines aimed at black audiences in the 1940's and 50's. It would also thus, when applied to South Africa now, probably regard the many (white-owned) tabloid newspapers proliferating the country as being the "new alternative media" since they are mainly aimed at black readers. I reject such a categorization and insist that a definition of alternative media should involve fundamental content, structural and ideological considerations.

Broadly speaking, I consider media to be *alternative* when it neither reflects in tone and slant what is being said in mainstream media, nor does it mimic the production processes and decision-making hierarchies of mainstream media. Other characteristics of alternative media can include: access to limited financial and other resources; collective editorial decision making processes, advocacy and open political partisanship; a concern with fundamental issues and conditions of poor and marginalized people; and established horizontal patterns of interaction between audiences and the media producers. (Chomsky: 1997; McKay:2003; Albert:2006)

Except for the last point perhaps, the *Journal* fits all these criteria. Historically, it straddles two of the eleven broad catergories of Press outlined by Louw and Tomaselli (1991) viz: the "Left-Wing Press" and the "Progressive-Alternative Press".

Media history

In all instances, the *Educational Journal*, is completely overlooked in the major research and analytical studies on the history of alternative media in South Africa. I discuss these omissions further down in this section.

Up until a few months ago, while still writing up my earlier essay, I assumed that I would be approaching the *Educational Journal* as historically *having been*, and similarly Mrs Kies as the *former editor* of the defunct *Educational Journal*. But the *Educational Journal*, much to my surprise, did not go the way of most all other alternative media titles in South Africa. It continues to be published although by now, regrettably, it has dropped the volume number on its cover and comes out only four times a year.

A modest looking newsprint publication, it is all text, no photos and unchanged in its typographical look for over 6 decades. Whether it is old fashion or stuck in a time warp is merely design semantics, because its content is as fresh and topical as ever. By focusing on Mrs Kies as editor, I apply a further elementary definitional constant of media – the editor – to the *Educational Journal*.

The *Journal* was definitely not in the same league, in terms of size (of media operation) and readership, as some of the other alternative media titles that existed in South Africa, particularly in the 1980s onwards. Although I didn't get any print-run figures (the next best thing to actual readership figures) from Mrs Kies - she simply didn't know them she said - I speculate from my local experience of the struggle in Cape Town and the extent of the *Journal* and TLSA's reach or influence at the time, that the *Journal* certainly never reached large circulation figures of titles such as New Nation (80 000); Grassroots (40

000); South (20 000) or The Indicator (27 000) (Jackson 1993:48). However, none of these titles nor any other alternative media title in the country (ever) can compare to the staying power of the *Journal* and the resilience of Mrs Kies.

But apart from unwavering and undisputed commitment and dedication to the ideals espoused in the *Journal*, I must admit a fundamental economic logic to its continued existence: it is cheap to produce and probably always has been so. Apart from the cheap production, there are no salaried employees of the *Journal* (including Mrs Kies), distribution is done voluntarily by fellow TLSA members (and currently members of the National Union of Public Servants and Allied Workers - NUPSAW), while the only other costs are for the mailing of copies, which in any case are covered by subscription fees[7].

It is a cost effective media operation, whose overriding objective, I can safely say, is to provide a platform for very principled and radical analysis of topical issues impacting on the majority of people in this country. This analysis happens to also be the current and historical policy positions of the Unity Movement, the TLSA and currently the NUPSAW, but it will be a disservice analytically to confine its objective to merely being a mouthpiece of these organizations.

The *Journal*'s main content issues are around education, but, as stressed by Mrs Kies, "It is not an education journal, but an educatio*nal* journal."

As such, the *Journal*,

> "Is not about running lessons and what to do in the classroom. It is intended to educate people. To give them as broad a grasp as possible about what is going on in the country, and why it is happening, so that teachers know the context in which they are teaching. We deal with just about every aspect [of society], political and economic, and which could affect education in this country.[8]"

The *Journal* was first published shortly after the formation of the TLSA in 1913. However, it was only in 1924 that an editor-in-chief and editorial board was formally established (Adhikari 1986:66). By 1933 it was being published most regularly at 5 copies per annum (ibid:77), but by the next decade the nature and content of the *Journal* would be fundamentally altered with the emergence of the TLSA's new leadership triumvirate of Allie Fataar, Willem van Schoor and Benjamin Kies (Adhikari 1986:90; EJ 1980:4).

After 1943, the number of journals would increase to eight editions per year right up until the turn of the 20th century!

The major research and analytical texts on alternative media in South Africa all give scant attention, if at all, to the *Journal*. Louw (1991), Tomaselli (1991) and Johnson (1991) all fail to mention the *Journal*, largely because of their bias towards the then-

[7] Ibid
[8] Ibid

Transvaal and Natal regions of the country and their preoccupation with the populist titles that emerged particularly after 1985. Evans and Seeber (2000), Cloete (2000) and Berger (2000) also fail to mention it but here I contend it is scholarly oversight since they suffer no similar bias or preoccupation as the former.

Switzer (1997) mentions the *Journal* in passing but only up until the 1920s period (ibid: 29), which he mistakenly conflates with the period after 1940. By that time, the now radical TLSA and its mouthpiece the *Journal* was, except in name, a completely different organization ideologically from the racist, parochial TLSA that emerged originally in 1915.

Adhikari (1981 & 1997), in his historical examination of the TLSA, provides great insight into the early days of the *Journal* but he too does not go beyond the definitive and lasting period of the *Journal*, which would only start in the 1940s.

Given this, Mrs Kies and the journal she has edited for the past 45 years, in no uncertain terms, can be regarded as having been marginalized and overlooked in the body of media studies examining the history of media in this country and no doubt in the mainstream media too, where their voice certainly didn't feature.

Early Days

Helen Abrahams was born in Athlone on the Cape Flats. She had a very poor upbringing[9], but there was no skimping on education. Her father, who never completed high school education, worked hard to give his children a university education (Wieder 2003:17).

After matriculating from Trafalgar High School, the only so-called "coloured" school in Cape Town at the time that went up to matric, she enrolled for a BA degree at the University of Cape Town. On completing her degree in 1947, she entered the teaching profession the following year at Athlone High School (Wieder 2003:18).

In 1949, Helen Abrahams married Benjamin Kies, whom she had known since her first day at high school[10]. They were not school mates though.

Ben Kies was a teacher at Trafalgar (he started teaching on the same day she started high school[11]) but he never taught Helen. By the early days of Ben's school career, he was already a known activist and had a reputation as an "atheist communist" (Wieder 2003:18).

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[9] Ibid. Other biographical information is taken from Wieder (2003), in which Mrs Kies was interviewed and featured in the context of an activist teacher during the days of apartheid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

The 1943-1963 period was the heyday of the Unity Movement and the TLSA and the period in which it probably enjoyed the most dominance as its articulate leadership, among them Ben Kies, provided the necessary class analysis and principled ideological foundations for the struggle against institutional apartheid introduced in 1948 (Mokone 1991:27, 32, 67, 68). By the end of this period, this leadership would be hounded out and silenced through bannings and exile (EJ 1980:8).

In 1957, the year after Ben Kies was dismissed from the teaching profession because of his political pronouncements, Mrs Kies took up a teaching post at Harold Cressy High School, where she would remain a teacher until her retirement in 1985.

A Women Editor

Mrs Kies became editor of the *Journal* in 1959[12]. The move was closely linked to the fortunes of her husband.

In 1959, Ben Kies was banned in terms of the recently promulgated Suppression of Communism Act, just three years after being dismissed from the teaching profession. (Cavernelis 1993:8). He was editor of the *Journal* up until then, and the banning precluded him from engaging in any public activities or belonging to any organizations.

However, the move by Mrs Kies to editor wasn't merely symbolic as a cover for the work of her husband. She was by that time also an active member of the TLSA and the Unity Movement. She had been involved in sub-editing tasks on *The Torch* newspaper[13], a weekly newspaper started in 1946 and edited at one time by Ben Kies but which was also banned and driven to closure by the 1960s (Switzer 1997:44; EJ 1980:6; New Unity Movement 1994:28). By the time Ben Kies was banned, Mrs Kies was also actively involved in editing and editorial tasks on the *Journal*[14]. Thus in her own right, Mrs Kies was a committed activist, ready and willing to take on the responsibility and consequences of being the public face of the *Journal*.

An extract from the obituary to Ben Kies as it appeared in the *Journal* in 1980, gives an apt description of the historical times, and perhaps baptism by fire, that Mrs Kies had to endure in her early days as editor:

> "The fifties and sixties were decades of the passing of some of the most savage legislation in the statute book, and some of the most savage persecutions in the history of this country. *The Torch* had been forced to cease publication as one editor after the other was banned. Hundreds of teachers who opposed slave schooling and the bush colleges were dismissed and banned, a process that was to be intensified after the Sharpeville-Langa events and the reign of terror that

[12] Mrs Kies didn't recall any particular dates during the interview. I based this date on deduction from the various events I discuss shortly. She did confirm that she became the editor when Ben was banned.

[13] Interview with Mrs Kies

[14] ibid

> followed. Ben was amongst those who were forced to resign from *all* the organizations to which he had ever belonged and which he had had so big a hand in creating and working in. … The sixties were dark days indeed in the annals of the struggles of the oppressed. The Treason Trials, the Rivonia arrests and the Alexander Trial, the looming up of Robben Island in the lives of the people, the states of emergency that did not end, and have still not ended, shattered the morale of many people in the political movement." (EJ 1980:8)

Being Editor

It was difficult to extract personal anecdotes from Mrs Kies around her tenure as editor of the *Journal* as she vehemently steered away from any personalized questions about her role and job. I had to sneak in questions disguised as queries on operational matters, and observe some production matters she casually shared with me in order to gather the nature of her workload.

She convenes and hosts the two editorial meetings per issue. The editorial collective is made up of nine members. Very seldom is anybody outside the collective ever commissioned to write for the *Journal*, so the editor isn't involved in commissioning articles.

The first meeting of the collective is to decide on the content for the issue, and where members, including Mrs Kies, will be assigned their articles. The next meeting is to examine and comment on the articles written. Thereafter, Mrs Kies takes sole care of production.

All articles are FAXED back to her for editing, which is then faxed back to the respective writers for corrections. She takes receipt of the final stiffy disc with all the articles, and liaises with the printer to ensure pick-up and final production.

Mrs Kies also co-ordinates the subscriptions: taking receipt of subscription orders, fees, and mailing the *Journal* to subscribers.

NUPSAW pays the print costs of the *Journal* and while polite discretion stopped me from questioning too deeply about financial matters, I presume that Mrs Kies has no dealings with the financial matters and running costs of the *Journal* or the TLSA, although it could well have been the case thirty years ago.

Thirty years ago Mrs Kies was a teacher at Harold Cressy High School. District Six, the area in which this school is located, was only recently de-populated in the infamous and callous urban forced removal programme of the Aparthied rulers. The ghettos of South Africa were ablaze, literally and figuratively, with a revolutionary spirit being kindled by radical youth anxious for liberation from Afrikaner tyranny. The ideology of Black Conciousness as articulated by the Black People's Convention (BPC) and the South African Students Organisation (SASO) was in ascendance in shaping the strategic and

ideological direction of the struggle (Johnson 1997:28). Wieder captures some of Mrs Kies' comments as teacher during this time:

> "I don't know why my memory of the details of the 1976 unrest is not very vivid. I sometimes wonder whether the role we [TLSA teachers] played then was not the right one. Then I look at the thousands of young who fell out of schools during the three school uprisings – who didn't go back, who today are among the hardly literate unemployed of our country. It's strange, you know, that although the 1976 school boycotts started in the then Transvaal, the boycotts became concentrated in the Western Cape. It was in the Western Cape that the youngsters suffered the full force of the police brutality – imprisonment, torture, shootings, killings." (Wieder 2003:22)

Although the TLSA had fundamental problems with the racialised articulation and practice of Black Consciousness, they were very close ideologically in their anti-capitalist analysis and principled opposition to any semblance of collaborating with the system on the pretext of working for change from within (Zwerver 1988:34).

Within three years, by 1979, the radical momentum of 1976 was curtailed through vicious state repression that included the violent suppression of the urban youth uprising, the extra-judicial murder of activists including influential leader Steve Biko, lengthy prison sentences on treason charges, and the hounding into exile of hundreds of activists. In December of that year, Ben Kies died at the age of 69. The *Journal* was on volume 51, and had already been banned several times by then.

The Working Activist

Being editor of a known radical journal; living with a husband who was banned and probably watched by the security branch; working as a teacher in the employ of the government; and having to be mindful of the ever looming threat of state harassment in the form of raids, detention, bannings and so forth; certainly meant these were stressful times for Mrs Kies. Yet, the production run of the *Journal* was never interrupted during the entire period from the 1960s[15], except of course for the regular bannings that occurred after print.

While the work of the *Journal* has always been strictly voluntary for Mrs Kies, her energies during her working days were also directed towards the crucial role of providing political education to each generation of learners passing through Harold Cressy High, as well as the on the ground activism work required from TLSA and Unity Movement members.

> "As members of the organization [TLSA], we were expected to teach not only the syllabus, but what every child in South Africa was entitled to know. Especially the oppressed child. When we went out recruiting

[15] ibid

> we had to explain what the TLSA stood for, you know, what its objectives were. We did a lot of traveling throughout the country to talk at the various branches of the League and to participate in regional meetings, a combination of branches. I did quite a bit of that on my own after Ben had been sacked and banned. … In the local branch to which I belonged I did editorial work – the branch newsletter, for instance. We had very strong Parent-Teacher-Student Associations which we established when "Bantu" and "Coloured" education were introduced. They were very powerful organizations, the parents and teachers joined together to defend their children's education and their rights. We held regular monthly meetings to politicize the parents, and public meetings on specific issues." (Wierder 2003:20)

As an activist teacher, Mrs Kies went through all three major student uprisings in the country and which also engulfed the Western Cape: the 1976 uprising; the 1980 student boycotts; and the 1984-85 national uprising.

> "We had to defend the children, make them understand what the rulers were trying to do, and why. And this meant providing political education as well. To counter the rulers' main objective: retribalizing to make their divide-and-rule policy possible and easier. … The Education Departments all had a very strict Code of Conduct for teachers, you see, with a series of misconduct clauses. Chief of these was a total ban on talking politics in classrooms. … We had to just go ahead and take the chance. Also, the Special Branch Police knew at which schools the politically active teachers were to be found. They enlisted a group of pupil-spies at these schools. Gave them all sorts of bribes – money, clothing, offers of jobs when they left school. … Teachers at some schools fell found of the misconduct no politics clauses. I'd like to think that the TLSA teachers at Harold Cressy survived because we managed to win the trust of the pupils and their parents." (Wieder 2003:22)

The student boycott in South African revolutionary theory was a powerful strategic weapon that stemmed from the understanding of the role of Christian National Education (CNE) in the debasement of Black people and the reproduction of the status quo. Hence it involved the conscious decision by students to remove themselves from this system, not merely to demonstrate their awareness of the oppressive role of CNE, but in the process to also subvert structural power hierarchies by asserting control over schools and universities (Patel 2005:8) and facilitate political awareness amongst the broader populous as a result of the visible political protests.

In 1980, students in the Western Cape, and later throughout the country, boycotted classes for 4 months from April until July (Patel 2005:4). The action included boycotting the mid-year exams.

On 29 July 1985, just more than a month after the declaration of a State of Emergency, students from over a dozen schools in the Western Cape voted to go on boycott. It would be the longest student boycott yet, with students only returning to classes at the beginning of the following year. That year, 1985, was also the last year of teaching for Mrs Kies. She reflects on these turbulent times:

> "The one thing we TLSA teachers were determined to do was to keep the kids at school. We foresaw a collapse of schooling. We knew how hard it would be to get the children back into the schools, you know. But of course our concern to keep education going was later countered by the "liberation before education" slogan. …Well, we had to try to keep children under control, to keep them politically informed, to give them a history of what was happening. We had sessions every day, the whole school assembled in the hall, or classes combined in various venues, workshops, sometimes a little concert for a release from the strain or tension. But no formal lessons. This would have been breaking the boycott.
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> "… [T]he one bonus was that throughout the country pupils were being given ideas. They knew at least that things were wrong and that things should change. Schools had been politicized to varying degrees. The main job was to see that something positive came from all this. … We were among the few schools that had almost all the pupils present every day. … We were doing a lot more than many schools in that period. There was no education of any sort going on in them. I think the controlling hand we kept on the children while doing what we felt we had to do, I think that paid off. It gave them a certain maturity. It made them think. They had to discuss things. They had to think about why a particular strategy might work and another not, and that sort of thing. There were very many kids at the school who had never been exposed to political ideas – depending on who were their teachers. The boycotts were an eye-opener for them." (Wieder 2003:22-24)

Detention

In November 1985, a month before her retirement, Mrs Kies was arrested and detained for a month at Pollsmoor Prison.

> "I was collected from school. We were all in the hall enjoying a bit of relaxation – a month from the end of the 1985 school year. … The department [of Education] obviously thought I was mainly responsible for the school's involvement in the boycotts. They were wrong, of course. I was one of a band of teachers who had to observe decisions taken by teachers at other schools who were orchestrating the boycotts. But in the eyes of the authorities, if there was one person responsible for what was happening at Harold Cressy it was me.

> "Pupils and teachers were brought in daily [to Pollsmoor]. More pupils than teachers. There was great camaraderie among us. Known activists were kept separate from us. One day they smuggled through a note to say they were going on a hunger strike and asking us to do so also. … The warders were very worried. We demanded to see the person right at the top. We eventually got him. I was the spokesman, so I was not surprised when at the end of fourteen days – that was the period for which detainees were kept – I was told I would not be released. … I must admit, with great shame, that I found being in prison a release from all the stress and tension that was the order in the schools. Our teachers were feeling sorry for me and I was feeling sorry for them. You see, it would have been different if I had a husband and children. I didn't have children outside waiting for me. I didn't have anyone in particular that I wanted to get out to be with. I think that was a major factor. They let me out on the last day of the school term." (Wieder 2003:24)

Retirement

To get a parting gift of a month in prison on your retirement would likely be enough for any weaker person to throw in the towel to ensure at least peace and quiet as you take leave of the normal drudgery of the past 35 years. Not so Mrs Kies.

The mid-1980's onwards was the peak of Apartheid repression as the fascist state moved in to crush the popular uprisings that characterized the whole of 1985. It was particularly the period of intense media repression as by that time many independent alternative titles had sprung up around the country. (Louw & Tomaselli 1991:175)

The *Journal*, with Mrs Kies as editor, continued to be published consistently and one could say, against all odds.

However, by 1986 the voice and influence of the Unity Movement/TLSA tendency was well on the decline as the populist movement in the form of the United Democratic Front (UDF) marched along en masse, setting the tone and direction for the struggle in the late 80's.

The eventual unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC) in the 1990's set the stage for its dominance of the negotiated deals that would shape the new South Africa.

The voice of the *Journal* was relegated to the fringe as the atmosphere of negotiation meant principles of anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism and anti-neocolonialism were easily whittled down or bartered away.

By 1986, some five years *before* the actual machinery of negotiations would move into place, the *Journal* had already pre-empted the implicit danger for the oppressed people:

> "It is against this general background that *negotiation* has become a word bandied about with as much freedom and regularity as *rugby* and similar magic terms. What, in fact, is this negotiation? For that section of the ruling class sheltering behind the army and the National Party it means reaching an agreement by which the oppressed accept multi-national structures with their thirteen racist, oppressive machineries called parliaments and all the rest of the panoply of laws to buttress apartheid: by which the rulers deny all but the 4.5 million 'whites' full citizenship and maintain iron-fisted total control over the boer-republic and its satellite labour reservoirs.
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> "To another section of the ruling class it means something little different. Perhaps a discriminatory law or two fewer, with concessions that can postpone the granting of fundamental rights, and a bigger and more bogus parliament with Bills of Rights *ad nauseam*, but no common citizenship in an undivided, non-racial South Africa. A South Africa where international capital can peacefully exploit the human and material wealth of the country, yes – much as it has done before – and place the controls in the hands of a white minority backed up by a black minority bought over with a greater stake in the existing order. And the overwhelming majority will wait in vain for their rightful share in the wealth they produce and their right to peace and the enjoyment of life. They will continue to wallow in what has been described as a 'sodden mass of misery', in a locationised society." (EJ 1986:1-2)

On the eve of the 1994 elections, the Unity Movement and the TLSA were the lone voice calling on the oppressed people of South Africa not to vote as the new South Africa looming on the horizon was a neo-colonial sham that fell way short of freedom and liberation (Unity Movement 1994:7-11). They were hopelessly marginalized in the heady days of democracy, but as this assignment proves, they were neither cowered into silence nor conveniently relegated to the historical ash heap of the misguided or the *passé*.

The Struggle Continues

Post 1994, the *Journal* never lost its penchant for insightful commentary and analysis on current affairs to expose the deeper causes behind the continuing poverty, racism, inequality and violence in the country. Its dedication to educational matters remains intact, although now its battle is not directed against 'Bantu' education, but the whole host of educational reforms introduced by the successive Ministers of Education since 1994. Globalised capital operating through neo-liberalism, and it's unavoidable effect on South African social policy, means the *Journal* also regularly devotes space to analysis on debt, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the regular world indabas such as Doha and Montreal arising from this.

In all respects, the struggle for true liberation from racism, poverty and inequality continues unabated in the pages of the *Journal*. In a very personal way, the struggle also

continues for Mrs Kies, not only in her continued dedication to the above ideals, but also in her battle to ensure the raising up of a new generation that will keep the fire of the *Journal* burning for as long as the contradictions of capitalism persist in South Africa. I wish her well and salute her courage and dedication.

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