

# Editorial

**R**ule by emergency decree has become the norm in South Africa, as the third year of a national state of emergency continues.

But even if emergency regulations are lifted - and there are indications of growing pressure from international finance for this to happen - little will change. Hundreds of permanent statutes will still provide for detention without trial, censorship and closure of publications, and banning of organisations and people.

More importantly, the secret 'state within a state', made up of the state security council, joint management centres, defence-manpower liaison committees and the like, is increasingly governing South Africa. As a number of articles in this double edition of *Work In Progress* indicate, the secretive joint management centres are at the heart of state policy and practice. And they appear to operate above any laws - emergency or otherwise.

The past year is a difficult one to analyse. It is probably best characterised as involving an uneasy equilibrium, with both government and opposition forces making gains and suffering losses. A special supplement in this edition examines developments in a number of key areas: the economy, repression, labour, foreign policy and the courts.

The state has both survived a period of 'insurrectionary' political resistance, and appears to be making headway in regaining control of the townships. But opposition has not been crushed. The organised working class, in particular, has both demonstrated strengths and made gains in a year in which union-bashing has become fashionable for both state and employers. Internal

political and community organisation, however, has been severely weakened - some would say decimated - by the years of emergency rule.

In spite of concerted state attempts to obliterate the African National Congress from public consciousness, the ANC has established itself as one of the major actors on the political terrain - both nationally and internationally.

Despite indications of tensions within the ANC - especially over armed attacks on civilian targets - its diplomatic and propaganda successes have been substantial this year. Its draft constitutional guidelines have provoked serious and ongoing discussion over the nature of a future South Africa, and most South Africans believe the ANC is a crucial actor in resolving the political and economic crises which threaten to tear society apart. Recent visits by rugby and soccer administrators to Lusaka, headquarters of the banned organisation, are just one indication of this.

**T**his double edition of *Work In Progress* is the final one for the year. *WIP* has survived, despite ongoing government threats to close it and others. A Publications Act banning of *WIP* 53 was also successfully fought during the year.

But government is strongly committed to secrecy and censorship: indeed, with as much to hide as this government has, this is inevitable.

A vibrant press - critical, independent and progressive in nature - can play a vital role in building the future. But it has to be fought for, and protected - especially from a government fundamentally threatened by all that is worthwhile in journalism.

Cover graphic thanks to *International Viewpoint*

*Work In Progress* 56/57 - November/December 1988