

# **BRITAIN AND SOUTH AFRICA** **by JOHN GOLLAN**

*(General Secretary, Communist Party of Great Britain)*

*Following a request by the editorial board of THE AFRICAN COMMUNIST for the views of the Communist Party of Great Britain concerning Britain's relations with the Republic of South Africa and with the High Commission Territories, the following statement of policy of the Communist Party of Great Britain has been made by its General Secretary, John Gollan.*

**THE SITUATION IN South Africa is rapidly reaching crisis point. The hated Verwoerd Government is piling repression on repression, determined to shut down every possibility of protest or criticism of the monstrous system of apartheid, and every demand of the people for democratic rights and for an end to the nightmare of racial discrimination and fascist tyranny. The only answer to this terror will be the justified revolt of the people of South Africa.**

**The recent historic conference of African heads of state at Addis Ababa shows that Africa is no longer prepared to tolerate the foul blot of apartheid on its soil. The 218 million people of independent Africa and the 48 million still under European domination have spoken—and now they are preparing to act.**

**It is time for the British people to act, too.**

**The people of Britain have a deep hatred for the whole rotten system of apartheid, a feeling that was sharply manifested at the time of the Sharpeville massacre three years ago, and has since been expressed in the many resolutions of protest adopted by numerous progressive organisations in Britain, by the consumer boycott, by numerous meetings and demonstrations, and by the campaign now developing to stop the shipment of arms to Verwoerd.**

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**But the struggle of the British people, in solidarity with the people of South Africa, needs to be greatly stepped up.**

Without the aid of British imperialism it would be difficult for the Verwoerd Government to carry on—and there is a growing awareness of this in Britain. Increasing indignation is being expressed in Britain over the British Tory Government's consistent support for the South African Government at U.N.O. In words the Tory ministers profess to abhor apartheid—but when it comes to action, they always have a ready excuse not to support any proposal at the United Nations which means bringing real pressure to bear on the Verwoerd Government.

Economically, too, British imperialism is assisting Verwoerd. The £1,000 million of British capital invested in South Africa is an investment in apartheid. The profits which British monopolies make from these investments are based on the agony, sweat and low wages of the African workers. Though forced to leave the Commonwealth, the Republic of South Africa still benefits from Commonwealth trade advantages with Britain.

The Tories and British big business, to protect their own economic interests, are helping to maintain Verwoerd in power by providing him with the necessary military equipment to repress the people, and to turn the Republic of South Africa into an armed camp. Defence expenditure in South Africa is now running at about £70 million a year—treble the amount of 1959. Every young European is now receiving military training, and even young girls are being trained to shoot.

Not content with supplying the Saracen armoured cars which were used in the Sharpeville massacre, British firms, with the agreement of the British Government, are providing Buccaneer Mk. 2 aircraft, Canberra Mk. 12s, and Westland Wasp military helicopters. A subsidiary of the I.C.I. is helping to construct three arms factories in South Africa. Other equipment is being sent under the terms of the Simonstown Agreement.

The Tory party and the monopolies they represent are not limiting their effort to supporting Verwoerd. Their most reactionary sections are helping the creation of a 'white axis' in southern Africa—a last-ditch stand of the four million settlers in South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, Mozambique and Angola, under Verwoerd, Salazar and Welensky. Thus the maintenance of the Verwoerd regime in South Africa, and its arms build-up with the aid of British imperialism, is not just a menace to the people of South Africa. It is a threat to all Africa still under the heel of colonialism—and a threat, too, to the 218 million Africans of the independent states who have pledged themselves to help liberate their oppressed brothers.



Thus British imperialism is conniving at creating a situation in Southern Africa which can rapidly produce a major threat to peace.

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A special danger confronts the three High Commission Territories—Basutoland, Swaziland and Bechuanaland. By denying them independence, the British Government is helping Verwoerd, who fears that as outposts of independence on the doorstep of the Republic of South Africa, the Territories would inspire the people of South Africa to even greater efforts in their fight for freedom.

The recent brutal suppression, by the British Government, of the strikes of Swaziland asbestos miners and sugar workers, backed by other sections of the Swaziland people, shows that British imperialism is the bitter enemy of the African people, and can never be relied on to defend Swaziland against the Verwoerd Government. The troops used for this repressive action were flown from the British military base in Kenya, making use of Southern Rhodesia's airplane landing facilities, and with the agreement of the Verwoerd Government to fly over South African territory.

The British Government is also collaborating with the South African authorities in making difficulties for those political refugees from South Africa who are endeavouring to carry on political activities in the High Commission Territories on behalf of their brothers in the Republic. As in the case of Ganyile, and more recently over the Leballo affair, it is clear that the South African police are being given every assistance by the police in Basutoland to persecute political refugees from the hell of South Africa. This is the same disgraceful policy as that being pursued by the Federal Government in Northern and Southern Rhodesia where attempts have been made, in some cases successfully, to deport political refugees back to South Africa.

All collusion between the British authorities in Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland, and the Verwoerd Government and police must be ended. Political refugees in these three territories should be granted their normal rights to conduct political activity on behalf of their oppressed brothers in the Republic of South Africa.

We further believe that these three Territories should be granted immediate independence and allowed at the same time to take their place, as sovereign states, in the United Nations. Once independent, these Territories, in association with the 32 independent African states, would be able to take the necessary measures to defend them-

selves against aggression from Verwoerd. The states and peoples of the African continent, who are taking serious measures to help liberate their brothers in the Republic of South Africa, are not likely to stand by and allow Verwoerd to extend his hated apartheid domain to new territories. A firm statement from the British Government that it would oppose a Verwoerd take-over would also play its part in deterring such aggression.

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The pledge of the Labour leader, Mr. Harold Wilson, that a Labour Government would not supply arms to support apartheid in South Africa has been warmly welcomed by the British people. But the matter is too urgent to await an electoral victory. The campaign for 'No British arms for South Africa' must be waged NOW, against the present Tory Government.

Furthermore, the Simonstown Agreement of 1955 must not become the excuse to ship arms to Verwoerd under another guise. This agreement is supported in some quarters as assisting 'the defence of the free world'. When the 'free world' includes such an abomination as the present South African Government based on a foul creed of racial discrimination, slave labour and fascist thought-control, it is clear that the less we have to do with it the better. In any case, the terms of the Simonstown Agreement make it clear that the so-called 'defence of South Africa' for which the agreement was drawn up includes 'Southern Africa, Africa and the Middle East gateways to Africa'. In other words, the Simonstown base is an aggressive base, a base for the protection of imperialist interests throughout Africa and the Middle East, and is thus a threat to the efforts of the peoples throughout these regions to win their complete independence from imperialist exploitation. We can never be a party to supporting the Simonstown Agreement, nor agree to the sending of arms to South Africa on the basis of fulfilling such an agreement.

Similarly, we cannot accept the argument of those who claim that arms sent to Verwoerd under the Simonstown Agreement are for *external* use and not for use against the people of South Africa. The arms are easily adaptable for either use; and moreover, the present government of South Africa is such an obvious menace to the peoples of Africa as a whole that any arms sent to it are arms for aggression against the African people.

There are those who would argue that we need these arms contracts in order to maintain workers in Britain in employment. The Tories had no compunction about stopping the shipment of arms to

Cuba once the dictator Batista had been overthrown. And there have been other states to which the Tories have stopped sending arms. In any case, the British engineering industry would find far bigger orders in producing machinery, tractors, merchant ships, civil aircraft and other useful goods for independent Africa than it ever could in continuing its squalid arms deal to maintain the system of apartheid.

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Our Party, which ever since its birth has consistently fought against the oppression of the African peoples, and which at its recent 28th Congress adopted a special Emergency Resolution in solidarity with the struggling people of South Africa, will do everything possible to arouse the people of Britain to redouble their efforts in support of the call for 'No British arms for South Africa'. We will give full support to the efforts of the Anti-Apartheid organisation, the Movement for Colonial Freedom and all other bodies campaigning for this aim and against colonialism and racial discrimination.

In this grave hour, when South Africa is rapidly becoming a threat to the whole of southern Africa and a base for imperialist aggression against the peaceloving African peoples, we declare our utmost solidarity with the peoples of South Africa, Basutoland, Swaziland and Bechuanaland, who are so valiantly struggling to break the chains of bondage and oppression and join their 218 million brothers in independent Africa.

We will do all in our power to respond to the needs of the situation in the realisation that a victory over Verwoerd in South Africa and for the independence of the High Commission Territories would be a powerful blow against British imperialism and an important victory in the common struggle of the British and African peoples for peace, friendship, economic co-operation and social advance.