These events culminated in a baton charge by the South African Police on workers and trade unionists in which 24 workers were taken to the Natalspruit Hospital for treatment. In a trial after the events two trade unionists were found not guilty of inciting the strike, but the magistrate in one of the trials following the baton charge found that

> There is also evidence to show that the complainant firm was not blameless in the march of events, and there must be more than a suspicion that the events were in fact engineered by the firm. In order to reach a show-down with their workers.

On Friday, 19th October, the state reached an out of court settlement in the case brought *against them by 19 African workers and a white* trade unionist for compensation for the injuries received. The state has agreed to pay out a total of R21 359, including an amount of R6 000 to Ms Christine Molokele who has lost effective vision in one eye.

GOOD NEWS
VENDA CIVIL SERVANTS!!!
SALARY INCREMENTS ON INDEPENDENCE DAY!

The Cabinet (of Venda) has decided to increase the salaries of officials of the Venda Public Service from the date of Independence (13 September 1979) with an average of 15%. This increment, on the one hand is to compensate officials for the great responsibility which they will have to carry after independence and on the other hand this is to make the young improve in education, which is regarded as one of the highest priorities in the development of Venda.

Examples of what salary increment embraces for certain ranks are as follows:

Secretaries (Head of Departments	R17 400 to R19 200
Deputy Secretary	R16 800 to R18 600
Chief Inspector of Education and Chief Education Planner	R16 800 to R18 000
Circuit Inspector	R15 000 x 600 — R16 800 to R15 600 x 600 — R17 400

Furthermore salary increments for Chiefs and Headmen have also been approved for the 13 September as follows:-

3 Chiefs	— R1800
22 Chiefs	— R1200
379 Headmen	— R 600

STRIKES in SOUTH AFRICA

IMPLICATIONS FOR WORKING CLASS STRATEGY.

THE QUESTION WHICH this paper attempts to answer is whether there is something essentially different between strikes in 'Third World' countries (ie South America, Africa, Middle East, Asia Minor and South East Asia) and those in the so-called 'rich' countries (ie North America and Western Europe). The importance of the question is that strategies of working class action depend on the answer provided. This paper will show how strike action by the working masses in South Africa (as a 'Third world' country) implied a certain understanding of the objective social conditions at different stages of South Africa's development.

This contribution is part of a longer paper on strikes in South Africa. The second part, dealing with the 1970s, will appear in the next issue of WIP. The paper attempts to explain and understand the difference between strike activity in so-called 'Third World' countries and the developed centres of capitalist power (Western Europe, North America, etc). In doing this, the argument is advanced that there are important features which distinguish the stronger parts of the capitalist world system (the major imperialist powers) from the weaker or peripheral capitalist societies (the 'Third World'). One of these features, it is suggested, is the nature of the state, which is far more repressive, and intervenes more directly, in the weaker links of the world capitalist system.

In a South African context, the paper also looks at a situation where a large part of the work-force is migrant, and retains links with family structures in the reserves/ bantustans (or what the ruling classes call 'homelands'). The paper shows how the enforced retention of this migrant relationship allows the capitalist class to pay wages which only have to take account of the individual worker, and can ignore his families subsistence needs. In doing this, the paper explores the nature of the relationship between urban and rural production in South Africa, and the way in which this relationship has historically affected the working class.

-The Editors.

In answering the question posed, this paper will at the same time implicitly criticise two other arguments about the specific differences between strikes in 'Third World' and 'rich' countries: one argument sees this difference in terms of the 'immaturity' or 'backwardness' of capitalist development in the 'Third World', while the other sees the difference in terms of the co-existence of two different 'economies' (ie a capitalist and a pre-capitalist economy existing within one country). The criticism of these arguments implies that they are at fault because they are <u>dualistic</u>: they divide the society into two isolated 'economic systems' without adequately analysing the complexity of the total system, both within the country, and within the capitalist world.

The argument of this paper will therefore start from the point of view that to understand the uniqueness of strikes within the 'Third World', it is first necessary to understand the workings of the capitalist system on an international scale. It will conclude that there is indeed something specific about 'Third World' countries - something which differentiates them from 'rich' countries. This difference lies in the specific functions of the state. In the 'Third World', the state constantly intervenes in the rest of society to actively suppress conflict between social groups and classes; whereas in the 'rich', highly developed capitalist countries the major role of the state is to institutionalise and contain this conflict rather than actively suppressing it. One indication of the difference is the presence in the 'rich' countries of 'economic freedom in the labour market' and bourgeois democratic rights concerning civil liberty and freedom of association. Clearly, these rights do not exist in most 'Third World' countries.

It is necessary to understand the specifically repressive role of the state in 'Third World' countries within the context of the production of goods and commodities. This entails understanding the capitalist way of producing commodities, and analysing the relationship between production and the repressive state. More specifically, it involves analysing capitalist production and development on an international scale, and understanding the way capitalism develops differently and unevenly within specific societies. The specific nature of the 'Third World' and therefore of 'Third World' strikes can only be grasped and understood within the context of the accumulation of capital on a world scale (including imperialist expansion from 'rich' countries). Specific capitalist socio-economic relations (ie labour repressive laws, the absence of political rights for workers and, in some cases, the growth of ideologies like racism) developed in such a way as to make the 'Third World' differ in important ways from the 'rich' societies. The starting point for any analysis of the 'Third World' strike lies in the particular way in which direct producers were separated from their land and forced to work in capitalist production. This forms the historical origins of labour-repressive economies.

From approximately 1894 onwards, capitalist production (and hence capital accumulation) on a world scale expanded rapidly, leading to a rising rate of profit. The origins of this expansion lay in the export of capital to the colonies by imperialist countries, and the setting up of productive industries in those colonies. This involved a particular form of exploitation of workers in the extractive (mainly mining) industries of the 'Third World': the payment of workers in these industries only sufficient wages to cover their own survival costs, but not those of their family members who were forced to support themselves in 'reserves', 'native lands', etc. This was the origin of the migrant labour system whereby the worker was not totally separated from the land he owned. While he worked as a migrant in the areas of industry, his family remained on the land. Because the family of the worker was in theory self-supporting through peasant and subsistence agriculture, low wages could be paid to the worker which only had to cover his own physical needs, and not those of his family. The state intervened in a repressive fashion to maintain the migrant labour system, especially when subsistence production in the 'reserves', 'homelands' or 'Bantustans' became incapable of supporting the inhabitants any longer.

In the case of South Africa, the migrant labour system particularly suited the needs of mining capital. Initially, labour was obtained from the steadily collapsing pre-capitalist economies, where more and more people were forced to eke out an existence on ever-diminishing land. By 1902 the point was reached in areas like Pondoland where many people were migrating to the mines in search

of work. However, because this process was itself not happening fast enough, the State stepped in to coerce people in these areas to become migrant workers. Examples of this type of action taken by the State include the introduction of hut taxes (1907), and the implementation of the Glen Grey Act (1897).

At the same time, the interests of mining capital were usefully served by the separation of workers from their families. On the one hand mining capital needed only to pay the worker enough to cover his own needs and not the needs of his family which was supposed to subsist off the land it owned in the reserves; on the other hand, by forcing workers to return periodically to their 'home areas', mining capitalists were able to weaken the strength of the working class by preventing the creation of a stable, settled work-force. Another form of strict worker control was embodied in the housing of workers in fortress-like compounds.

It must be emphasised here that the existence of a migrant labour system does not mean that here exists, in addition to the capitalist economic system, a pre-capitalist system. On the contrary, the migrant labour system as it developed in South Africa was and still is based on the needs of a capitalist system which pervades the entire society. Even when strikes take place because declining subsistence production in the reserves places strain on the resources of the urban worker, the strikes must be understood as occurring wholly within the capitalist economy and not be explained in terms of a relationship between a pre-capitalist and capitalist economy.

This is in fact the case in South Africa, although not all strikes in the history of South Africa can be explained and based on the migrant labour system.(The growth of secondary manufacturing industry, giving rise to a stable non-migrant working class, must be taken into account when analysing certain strikes). The rapid decline in subsistence production in the reserves increased both rural impoverishment and urban poverty as there was no corresponding increase in real wages. This resulted in militant action by workers. Strike action can therefore be seen as taking place within the context of the failure of capitalism in the reserve areas to provide a share of the goods necessary for the satisfaction of the subsistence needs of workers and their families. Conflict between black workers and mining capitalists reached a peak in 1920 and again in 1946, with the African Mineworkers Strike. It is to an analysis of the latter event that we now turn.

The mining sector has always been crucial to the South African economy. Mining relied totally on migrant labour, this being due to the peculiar cost-structure of the industry. Its inability to pass on increased costs to the consumer, because of the internationally-fixed price of gold, and its low level of labour productivity (the low degree of mechanisation on the mines) meant that substantial profits could only be made by paying mineworkers as little as possible. As explained above, this was done through providing for the worker's individual needs, but not those of his family.

In the past this had been rationalised by the particular capitalist relations established in the countryside (ie the supposed ability of the worker's family to subsist off the land on which they lived in the Reserves). However, by 1930 these relations had been almost totally undermined. The Native Economic Commission Report for 1930-2 showed that problems in the Reserves stemmed from over-population, overstocking, soil erosion and ignorance on the part of the population of modern farming methods. In 1940 the Landsdowne Commission noted both the existence of the reserves to supplement the miners' income and the increased cost of living with which the family within the Reserves had to cope. The Commission also noted that:

> "whereas in the past Blacks (workers) had come to urban areas to satisfy definite short term financial needs and had returned home as soon as they were satisfied, they were now returning continuously to the mines and only went home for a holiday visit".

This was said in reference to migrant workers from the OFS, Natal, Zululand and the Transvaal (O'Meara 1978:69). The Commission also suggested that the bulk of the recruits from the Transkei and Ciskei (ie 40% of the total labour force in 1936) were landless (O'Meara 1978:69).

Further indications of the rapid decline in the ability of the Reserve areas to partially meet the subsistence requirements of workers' families are the settling of the urban African population between 1921 and 1946, and the rapidly increasing ratio of African women to men in the cities (from under 1:5 in 1921 to 1:3 in 1946) (O'Meara 1978:65). The exact state of the migrant labour system at the time has been specified because all the strikers in

the 1946 strike were migrants.

It is a particular feature of South Africa's 'racial capitalism' that laws which are directed specifically against the working class (ie the laws underlying the whole migrant labour system of control) affect not only workers but also people from other classes who happen to be black. In other words, racial laws repress a section of the petty bourgeois class, ie the black petty bourgeoisie (traders, intellectuals, professional people etc). Working class strategy from early on in the forties seems to have taken the form of some sort of loose alliance with the black petty bourgeoisie. From this there seems to have developed a strategy which entailed the total abolition of the way in which capital was accumulated in South Africa, rather than a mere struggle to adjust wages.

This is indicated by the fact that the African Mine Workers Union (AMWU) was established in conjunction with the ANC and the Communist Party. One therefore had the involvement of people in working-class action who were unconnected with the work situation, and who organised workers to demand concessions not directly related to the place of work. Relatively better off workers also associated themselves with the AMWU. "The Native Mine Clerks Association affiliated to the AMWU when they were excluded by the Chamber (of Mines) from the statutory cost of living allowance payable to all industrial employees" (O'Meara 1978:68).

An explicit indication of the strategy is seen in the February 1943 AMWU demands from a government commission: in addition to bread and butter issues, they called for an end to migrant labour and the compound system (O'Meara 1978:68). Naturally these demands were by and large not met. Nevertheless, they implied the makings of a particular strategy which confronted the system not only on bread and butter issues but also at its foundation: the migrant labour system.

There seemed to be developing amongst workers the growing realisation that their interests as workers could best be served in an alliance with elements of the black petty bourgeoisie. Given the barrage of legislation which oppressed workers doubly - as workers and as blacks - and also discriminated against the black petty bourgeoisie, it was inevitable that at some or other time both workers and petty bourgeoisie would ally themselves in a common cause. The latter were making little, if any, headway by attempting to work within the system to exact reforms which could co-opt them. More than anything else, they lacked a mass base.

The 1946 mineworkers strike was not simply a mirror of the general state of the labour movement during this period. Due to the expansion of hitherto small-scale secondary industry (a specific factor which differentiates South Africa from many other 'Third World' societies) there was a rising tide in working class activity which reached a peak in 1945 when the Confederation of Non-European Trade Unions (CNETU) claimed a membership of 158,000 in 119 unions (O'Meara 1978:65). During the war years (1939-45) the strength of the settled urban working class involved mainly in secondary industry increased markedly; this was due to the importance for capitalism and the state of the smooth continuation of production as part of the war effort. The relative lack of unemployment because of the rapid growth in this secondary sector added to the strength of the working class. (in a period of low unemployment the working class has far more bargaining power). For these reasons the state took no blatantly repressive measures against the labour force involved in secondary industry. At the same time it is equally important to bear in mind that there was no attempt made to co-opt this labour force by institutionalising conflict (eg through the recognition of trade union rights, collective bargaining processes, state-run conciliation mechanisms, etc).

It would be too simple to argue that the state's response to the crisis which the migrant labour system faced, was merely more and more naked repression. It did, of course, appear to be this. However, underlying this appearance was a far more subtle adjustment of the migrant labour system. The immediate needs of capitalism in the post-war period centred around the control of the unemployed section of the working class, and the distribution and allocation of labour between the three sectors of mining, agriculture and manufacturing (secondary industry). The state set up apparatuses, such as the labour bureau system, to allocate labour on a more efficient basis between the three major sectors of the economy.

Given the rising tide of unemployment during this post war period (and this must be situated within the general post-war depression), this state used this labour allocation system to ensure stricter control of the unemployed fraction of the working class.

The relatively weakened position which the dominated classes found themselves in because of high unemployment also enabled the state to act decisively in the interests of capital in general, and smash any threat from organised resistance. That such organised resistance was showing increasing militancy was fast becoming evident.

After 1948 the trend towards an opposition front embracing a broad multi-racial nationalism was realised. The black petty bourgeoisie was subject to the restrictions of repressive race laws, while conditions for black workers were worsening; this was the basis for an alliance between them. The considerable dangers facing trade union leadership, the decline of purely working class organisations with the resultant decrease in the mobilisation of workers, together with the futility of the constitutional protest strategy pursued by the ANC led to the latter being transformed into a mass nationalist movement. Working class discontent was increasingly channeled into the ANC, and prominent trade unionists moved into important ANC leadership positions.

Communists joined the ANC, and militant Congress Youth League, which was locked in struggle against the old guard, played an important role in transforming the ANC into a mass-based organisation. The strategy was clearly one of popular resistance, which was a response to both the repressive role of the state, and the economic conditions of South Africa at that time.

In response to the militancy of working class action in the late 1940s, the state acted to smash the power of the workers and of the national liberation movement represented by the Congress Alliance. In 1950 the Communist Party was banned; 1953 saw the Native Labour Act set up works committees, this being part of a strategy aimed at continued non-recognition of black trade unions and the encouragement of the committees as a substitute for unions; influx control was tightened up, especially in Cape Town during 1950.

By 1954 the refusal of the state to legally recognise the African trade unions drove the more militant ones to political action In the same year the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) was formed as the trade union wing of the Congress Alliance. The latter was in fact taking the lead in utilising working people's grievances as part of an overall strategy of popular resistance. This does not mean that no factory-based action took place, but rather that it did not predominate. For example, the Food and Canning Workers Union, a SACTU affiliate, combined political activity with shop-floor organisation and met initially with a remarkable amount of success. However, by 1959 repressive action by the state and employers had undermined the effective organisation of this union.

The SACTU strategy has come in for some criticism. One of two assumptions underlie these criticisms: firstly, that if the working class enter into an alliance with any other class (eg the petty bourgeoisie), it will inevitably be sold down the river and therefore has nothing to gain from such an alliance; alternatively, if the working class is in a very weaR position and unites with another oppressed, non-working class group, it must only do so on its own terms to avoid being sold down the river. At the same time, it must concentrate its actions at the point of production so as to build up and consolidate its strength before taking on broader struggles. These assumptions underlie some of the criticisms which have been levelled against the SACTU position that there could be no fight for higher wages without a fight for national liberation.

Webster, for example, argues that this strategy led to the trade union struggle being subordinated to the national liberation struggle. Worker energies were continually diverted into politically-based stay away campaigns. This, he says, is what happened in 1958 when the essentially worker-based slogan of 'a pound a day' was taken over and and turned into the 'fake' slogan of 'the Nats must go'. According to Webster, members were signed up for SACTU after 1958 without being properly organised; when the unions failed to improve material conditions, support fell away. Webster concludes that SACTU "failed to locate the struggle on the battle ground where workers could establish viable intermediary institutions to win the confidence to take on wider struggles" (Webster 1979:13).

It would be oversimple to regard this critique of SACTU's strategy in the 1950s as the final statement. This is the case, even if the critique is valid. What one has to take into account when subjecting a strategy to criticism, are the social conditions at the time, which were both independent of, and gave rise to, the particular strategy adopted. Webster is aware of the need to locate SACTU within its historical context:

> "Faced with...deteriorating conditions, black workers responded through a groundswell of popular resistance such as bus boycotts, and SACTU had to choose either to let this wave of opposition sweep past them or respond positively by trying to direct it into a more viable and sustained opposition. Not surprisingly they chose to try and capture it, but lacking any adequate organisational base they were forced to use the limited tactic of the stay-away - a tactic as we have seen, that is most effective when some form of factory organisation existed" (Webster 1979:13).

We can conclude that the 1950s and early 1960s saw the development of an increasingly violent form of state repression of working class activity, and a refusal to institutionalise conflict in any way by granting legal recognition to the trade union movement. Working class strike activity soon became incorporated into a broader strategy aimed primarily at the liberation of the popular masses. By the 1960s the state had successfully crushed the labour movement.

PART II OF THIS ARTICLE, DEALING WITH THE 1970s, WILL APPEAR IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF WIP.

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THE TREASON TRIAL

FOR THE first time in nearly two decades, the charge of High Treason has been levelled against a group of accused in South Africa. Between 1956 and 1961, leading members of the Congress Alliance (comprising the African National Congress, Congress of Democrats, South African Congress of Trade Unions, Indian Congress and South African Coloured Peoples' Organisation) stood trial in Pretoria, charged with treason. But subsequent to their acquittal, the state preferred to charge its political opponents under the so-called Sabotage, Terrorism or Suppression of Communism (Internal Security) Acts. A change in this pattern was noticed when 11 Soweto students were charged with sedition in the recently concluded Kempton Park trial. Subsequent to them being found guilty on that charge, 12 men were charged with the more serious offence of high treason in Pietermaritzburg. The 12 accused in this treason trial all face a main charge of treason, with 43 alternative counts framed under the Terrorism Act, and further charges of conspiracy to commit murder.

The state has set out a series of acts allegedly committed by each of the accused, which it claims renders them guilty of the charges. All of the accused are alleged to have been acting in conspiracy with the banned African National Congress (ANC). The acts alleged against the accused are as follows:

accused number 1: John Mofokeng Sekete (24).

a). Between November 1976 and August 1978, he underwent military training in Angola, Russia and East Germany.

b). Between November 1976 and November 1978, he had access to and control over a cache of arms, ammunition and explosives near Witkleigat, Bophuthatswana.

c). Between July and November 1978 the accused, together with others, undertook a mission to reconnoitre the Transvaal and BophuthaTswana. He carried arms in Bophuthatswana, and on August 1st 1978 he engaged members of the South African Police and the Bophuthatswana Home Guard in armed conflict.

d). During November 1978, at Phokeng in Bophuthatswana, Sekete attempted to recruit