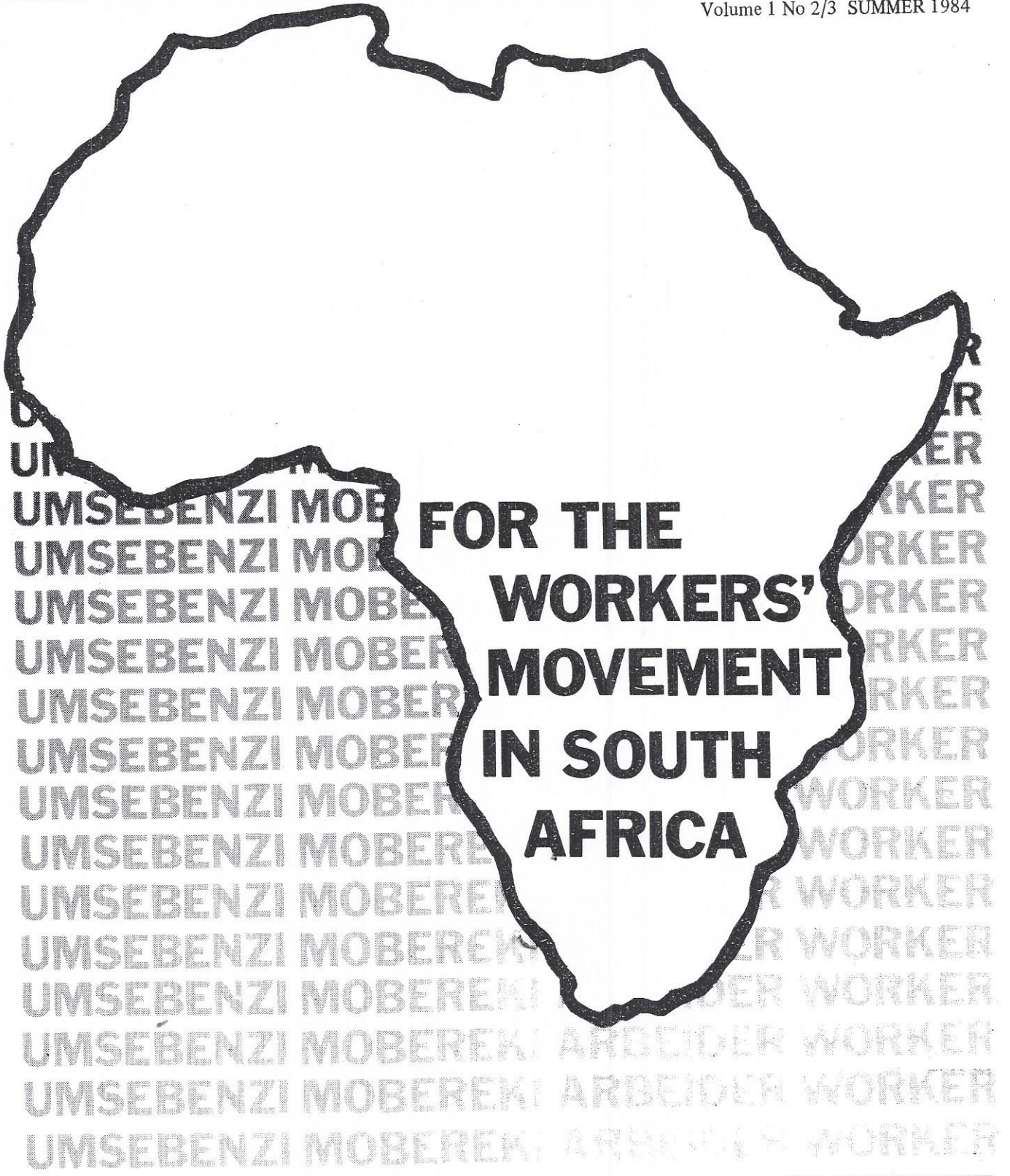


# AZANIA WORKER

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# EDITORIAL

In this second issue of our journal a recurrent theme throughout is the centrality of trade union struggles and unity in the struggle against imperialist exploitation and oppression, whether in South Africa or elsewhere. The first article gives a brief overview of superpower strategies in the Southern African region as a background to a detailed analysis of South Africa's importance to imperialism, of its economic and military stranglehold on the front line states and of their failure to break that grip, all of which has led to the debilitating process of dialogue, collaboration and now the Nkomati Accords. The consequences for South African liberation are soberly assessed and the article ends on an optimistic note for the struggle.

In the second article, we have first a detailed presentation of the clauses and content of the Nkomati Accords reached between Maputo and Pretoria. The response of the bourgeois media both inside South Africa and internationally are revealing pointers to the scale of the setback that such an agreement represents for Southern African liberation. Such a precedent, involving as it does Southern Africa's 'paradigm' revolutionary success, Mozambique, bodes ill for the other front line states that also keenly feel the grip and pressures of the economic and military might of the South African state. The consequences for the liberation movement in South Africa itself are clear indicators for a profound change of the focus for the struggle towards the organised trade union movement.

Gold plays a central role in Marxist analysis of the capitalist system, and South Africa is, of course, its Mecca. We next have an article which looks at the unique role that gold has played in the industrial evolution of South Africa, and furthermore its special relationship with world imperialism. This symbolic interdependence, at once antagonistic and amicable, gives the South African state considerable leverage both in its economic strategies towards a more independent status within

imperialism, and also in its diplomatic clout with the other imperialist powers. However, it inevitably carries, too, the reverberations of international capitalist crises, where the wildly fluctuating price of gold wreaks havoc with such strategies.

Our next short article confronts the issue of democratic organisation within and between movements confronting imperialism. Not all the setbacks have been caused by the strength of the enemy — some have resulted from our own weaknesses and divisions. The article argues the prioritisation of democratic independence of mass, popular organisations. Some episodes in the chronicles of our history must be the subject of close, constructive self-scrutiny.

Following this we have a critical analysis of the nature of the United Democratic Front and the relationship that the South African trade union movement has with it. Its central assertion is the necessity for a correct united front approach by the unions, informed by an understanding of the primacy of trade union independence and democracy in the ultimate overthrow of apartheid and capitalism in South Africa.

Our last article takes a close look at the serious split in the Media Workers Association of South Africa, which focussed precisely on its relationship with, and characterisation of, such popular fronts as the UDF. Its central stress and conclusion is that trade union unity must override any but the most serious differences if the revolutionary changes that are so pressing in South Africa are to occur.

We finally have a review of *Cape of Torments — Cape of no hope*, a book which researches the history of slavery in the Cape Province. Such accounts perform an integral function in the reconstruction of the evolution of revolutionary struggle in South Africa.

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<b>UDF, Colour and the split in MWASA — Rose Innes Phale</b>	<b>30</b>	We hope you find this second double issue of our journal interesting and useful in the struggle. Future issues will feature a letters page and we are looking forward to your support and criticisms. This is YOUR journal. Treat it as such. <b>THE EDITORS.</b>	
<b>Cape of Torment — Cape of No Hope — V. A. February</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>All Correspondence to: AZANIA WORKER</b> <b>BM BOX 4863</b> <b>LONDON WC1 3XX</b>	

The article on Gold, South Africa and Imperialism on page 21 was written by Geoff Morris.



# 'LET'S FIGHT AGAINST THE ORGAN GRINDER' BACKGROUND TO THE NKOMATI ACCORDS

(Address delivered at the National Internal Summit under the auspices of the National Forum Committee on Sunday 22 April 1984 at the Lay Ecumenical Centre, Pietermaritzburg. This paper was prepared by J Pease, N Dollie and N Alexander.)

Addressing a mass rally in Inhambane in March 1982, President Samora Machel told the crowd that the working people of Mozambique had not only defeated Portuguese colonialism but had had to fight against and defeat the Smith regime of Rhodesia. He then continued:

"Now we are called to war once more, this time to liquidate the armed bandits who are the agents of the racist and minority regime in Pretoria, the agents of international imperialism. . . . Let the South Africans come themselves. We don't want the agents, we want their boss. Let's fight against the organ-grinder, not the monkey."

It is now a matter of history that the South Africans did come. They went to a place called Nkomati where they signed the so-called Peace Accords, with the self-same president Samora Machel.

How are we to explain this sudden somersault, this breath-taking reversal? What from the point of view of the national liberation movement, are the consequences of the 'non-aggression pact'? In this brief paper, we attempt to throw some light on these two questions.

At one level the answer is terribly simple. There is general agreement on the obvious facts that drought-ravaged economies coupled with the economic and military sabotage carried out by Renamo and Unita bandits, backed by South Africa and the world imperialism, have brought the social fabric of Mozambique and Angola to the point of disintegration. The 'peace' was therefore one signed at gunpoint. This decision involved inevitably scaling down the material support of these countries for the armed elements of the liberation movements — the ANC in Mozambique and SWAPO in Angola.

Pressure on SWAPO to bring about 'a settlement of the Namibian problem' has increased to the point where most people expect Namibia's political independence to be imminent. This is despite the fact that such independence would hardly free the colonially-oppressed and exploited people of Namibia from the shackles of colonial exploitation. Most people assume that the ANC movement will go into decline.

The South African and Western propaganda media have hailed the Accords. It is justification of the USA's policy of 'constructive engagement'. It appears to defuse the potentially explosive situation in Southern Africa — a threat to the stability needed for capitalist progress in the area. It also demonstrates the willingness of the South African regime to move closer to the liberal outlook of manipulation politics. For this PW Botha will no doubt receive the overt Western recognition his regime has so ardently sought, along with a papal blessing to boot, when he tours Europe soon. He will, no doubt, be demanding an end to South Africa's isolation and pleading for a chance to implement his internal reforms.

## **Southern Africa in geostrategic perspective**

According to the American Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Dr Chester Crocker "a wide range of vital Western interests, and US interests in particular, are engaged in the Southern African region". In order to understand this admission, it is perhaps necessary to remind ourselves in

Orwell's year of 1984, that for the strategists in the White House every country in the world is viewed in terms of the epochal contest between the capitalist and the socialist systems.

The USA is the undisputed leader of the capitalist segment. The USSR represents the main strength of what Rudolph Bahro called, with a mixture of resignation and criticism, the actually existing socialist countries of the world.

To complete the Orwellian picture, we should mention the People's Republic of China, which to the Soviet leadership represents the leader of 'revisionist' forces in the world. So, to all intents and purposes, these three superpowers are constantly attempting to bring under their influence or control whatever part of the world they come into contact with.

Of course, this is a highly simplified horror picture of the world in 1984. Historically, capitalism is on the strategic defensive. Socialism is gaining ground, not least of all because of the devastation wrought by colonial and neo-colonial regimes in less industrialised parts of the world. There is no question here of treating the 'superpowers' as though their respective strategies are of equal status and value. For an oppressed people today, whatever criticisms its leadership may have in regard to Soviet policies and practices, there can be no doubt at all that it must support, in general terms, the socialist road. Revolutionary and even reformist movements in the less industrialised parts of the world inevitably come to be seen, and even to see themselves, as part of the world movement towards socialism.

Many, if not most of these claims are doomed to be merely rhetorical in the short term. Those who can remember the history of the French Revolution which inaugurated the rapid transition from feudalism to capitalism in Europe, will recall what disparate and sometimes sinister groups and movements suddenly become 'democrats' or even 'Jacobins'. Historically, the centres of revolutionary development in the world exercise a magnetic attraction on any socialist movement anywhere in the world.

In the global context certain parts of the world have been conceded as 'belonging' to one or the other superpower. Thus the NATO countries are regarded as being within the American sphere of influence, whereas the Warsaw Pact countries and Indo-China fall within the Soviet sphere — although China contests hegemony in the latter region. Certain regions of the world, because of their strategically vital character, are centres of intense superpower competition and conflict.

In these regions, wars and class struggles are carried out mainly by the local states and their populations, armed and supported by the competing world powers. The three most important of these are undoubtedly the Middle East, the Caribbean basin and Southern Africa.

In the Middle East, world imperialism backs, in particular, Israel; in the Caribbean, the United States itself plays the role of 'regional gendarme', while in Southern Africa the main counter-revolutionary force is South Africa.

Again, this is a highly simplified outline of a complex picture — but it is a necessary background in order to grasp the significance of events in our part of the world. The stakes, as we have seen, are very high indeed. For this reason, political leadership has to weigh carefully every word uttered or written, lest we play, unwittingly, into the hands of enemy forces.

## **Why is Southern Africa important to the capitalist world?**

Southern Africa is one of the main treasure houses of the





world. Like the oil deposits in the Middle East, this makes of this region an arena of potential superpower conflict. Two conservative authors, Gann and Duignan, give expression in the following statement to a widely-held view among Western strategists and business people:

As a source of strategic raw materials, South Africa is of vast importance to the Western world. . . . Whether in peace or in war, such supplies would be hard to replace were they denied to the West, or if they came under Soviet influence.

Although the United States, for instance, is interested in all the mineral wealth of Southern Africa, it is particularly concerned that South Africa's deposits of chromite ore, antimony, vanadium and platinum metals should not fall into Soviet hands or under Soviet influence. One understands the vulnerability of the capitalist world in regard to these strategic minerals when one realises that the USSR and the RSA together produce 99% of the world's platinum, 97% of its vanadium, and 84% of its chromite ore (with most of the rest being produced in Zimbabwe)! From the point of view of the cold-war paranoia of the so-called Free World, Southern Africa in respect of those minerals is one of the 'choke-points' of the West not unlike the Straits of Hormuz.

Mozambique, South Africa, Namibia and Angola are all important countries on the strategically vital Cape Sea Route. Along here passes most of the capitalist world's commerce. This is especially true of its vital oil supplies. Since most crude oil is now carried in very large crude carriers of more than 160,000 tonnes, too large to pass through the Suez Canal, the Cape Sea Route with the highly developed port and repair facilities of the Republic of South Africa, has regained the strategic value it held before 1869, the year in which the Suez Canal was opened.

Gann and Duignan calculate that more than half of Western Europe's oil supplies, a quarter of its food and nearly 70% of its strategic minerals come around the Cape. They argue further that the Cape route "is not likely to lose its present importance in relation to the Suez Canal".

But an increasing volume of trade from the capitalist world no longer circumnavigates the Cape. Instead it goes to the Cape. South Africa has become one of the top twenty trading countries in the world. Some of the countries of Western Europe, such as Britain, are critically dependent on exports to South Africa for the maintenance of a high level of employment in vital sectors of their economy. The USA in 1980 had invested directly no less than \$2,300 million in Southern Africa and had a two-way trade amounting to \$7,200 million.

All the larger capitalist countries have invested heavily in Southern Africa. About 60% of the USA's investments in Africa south of the Sahara are concentrated in the ten nations

of Southern Africa. Because of the extremely low cost of labour in apartheid South Africa, US investment in the Republic has grown much faster than in the rest of Africa. By 1975, more than 40% of US direct investment in the whole of Africa was placed in the Republic of South Africa. More than 360 US companies have direct operations in South Africa and about 6,000 companies do business with the Republic. South African capitalists often boast that apart from the oil countries, the Republic offers its foreign investors the highest return for every dollar invested. How important apartheid is in keeping down the wage levels of the black working class can be gauged from the fact that:

In 1973-74, the average profit rate for US mining firms and financial institutions were three times higher in South Africa than in the rest of the continent, and manufacturers reported rates six times higher. (*ICP* 1167 - 30.11.81).

What has been said here about US investment and trading with Southern and South Africa applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to all the larger capitalist countries. Britain, particularly, has a very high level of investment in the region and Japan, a relative newcomer, has been increasing its share rapidly.

### 'Constructive engagement'

Crocker is widely regarded as the creator of the term 'constructive engagement', which has come to stand for Reagan's policy in Southern Africa and which is supposed to contrast with the Carter policy of 'disengagement' and hostile criticism of the apartheid state. A clear enunciation of this policy of constructive engagement was given by the US ambassador to the Republic of South Africa, Herman W Nickel, on 16.2.1983 in an address to the American Chamber of Commerce in South Africa. He said that:

. . . Constructive engagement is a regional policy, directed not at South Africa alone, but at all of Southern Africa. Progress towards a more representative government in South Africa and economic progress throughout the rest of Southern Africa are inseparably linked to region-wide stability. This is why we have been working towards a set of interrelated goals. These include:

- 1) an internationally recognised independence for Namibia;
- 2) a negotiated withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola;
- 3) some form of detente between South Africa and the other states in the region, and, since internal conditions in South Africa also contribute to regional conflicts;
- 4) the peaceful evolutionary change in South Africa towards a constitutional order to be defined by South Africans themselves, but one firmly rooted in the principle of government by consent of the governed;
- 5) recognition of the need for internationally supported programs for the economic development of the region.

Here, as in a miniature, we see all the features of the imperialists conspiracy in Southern Africa. Here, in a nutshell, we find stated the reasons for a Yankee imperialist policy of 'peace' in Southern Africa. In a region where the capitalist mode of production is dominant and not yet seriously threatened, a policy of peaceful adaptation to the new balance of class forces without any fundamental change in the relations of production serves the best interests of the capitalist class — both locally and overseas. This is the meaning of the same Ambassador Nickel's assessment of Soviet policy in a very recent address on "America's role in peaceful settlements in Southern Africa".

We know that our global adversary, the USSR, can best advance its interests in a climate of conflict and



confrontation fueled by mistrust, suspicion and political and social injustice. (14.3.84).

According to this American view, the USSR has no specific strategy for Southern Africa. It is merely taking advantage in an opportunistic manner of points of conflict or "targets of opportunity" so as to "keep the region in turmoil".

These basic guidelines of imperialist policy for Southern Africa were laid down after Dr Kissinger's visit to the region in 1976. Crocker's and Reagan's policy is the same as that of Kissinger and in their essence, Carter's and Andy Young's. Nathan Shamyurira, now a cabinet minister in Zimbabwe, in a seminar paper on 'Liberation Movements in South Africa' held at Indiana University in 1978, outlined the imperialist strategy very clearly:

The imperialist US strategy for Southern Africa encouraged explicit recognition of and support for South Africa. . . . The US also accepted South African hegemony over the Bantustans and the neighboring states of Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia, and Zimbabwe, even if the last two states fall under *controlled black rule*. Finally, the US supported strengthening the neocolonial ties among the frontline states so as to *weaken the rearmbase for liberation movements* . . . (our italics)

In terms of this analysis, which we support, the twin aims of imperialist strategy are to install in all the countries of Southern Africa, but not necessarily in the Republic of South Africa, controllable black majority regimes. Where more independent, or less controllable, regimes are in power, as in Mozambique and Angola, its strategy is to "weaken the rearmbase for liberation movements". This, it should be said, is the real meaning of constructive engagement, this is the real purpose of the alleged policy of "peace and stability" in Southern Africa. Despite episodic and tactical disagreements, all the imperialist powers are agreed on these aims.

The policy of 'constructive engagement' is hedged about with a military shield which is prepared for the worst, should it happen. NATO has been authorised to operate in the South Atlantic and Indian Oceans in order to 'protect' the Cape sea route and "to go to the aid of our potential allies in Southern Africa if the need should arise" (NATO official). But more of that later.

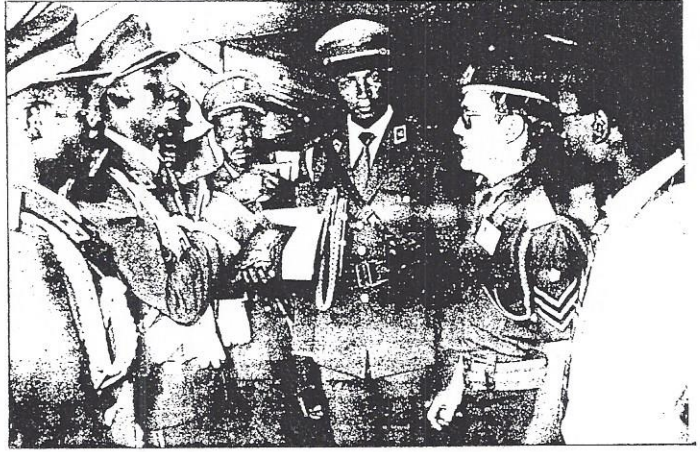
The Nkomati Accords demonstrate that the Botha regime has accepted the United States blueprint for Southern Africa. The Afrikaner National Party is going to play the game according to the ground rules designed in Washington. None other than the United States Secretary of State, Mr George Shultz, has pointed to where the dog lies buried when, in a recent speech, he explained the role of the USA in the peace negotiations:

We have helped foster a dialogue . . . between South Africa and Mozambique. Ours is a balanced role whose only tilt is toward the principles of peaceful settlement and respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty. . . . We have made it clear to both sides that our goal is to nurture mutual security. In such a climate we are prepared to do our part to assist in Mozambique's development and to bolster its chances for genuine nonalignment. And we have moved swiftly to respond to cyclones and drought that have repeatedly brought Mozambique to the edge of disaster.

(*'The United States and Africa in the 1980s'*, 2.2.84)

### Soviet policy in Southern Africa

The global policy of the USSR consists, theoretically, of propagating and facilitating the world socialist revolution. In practice, this general project can take many different and contradictory forms. This is not the forum in which to analyse or discuss in detail the dynamics of Soviet foreign policy.



Suffice it to say that the USSR has, as part of its strategy, supported (since their inception) the nationalist movements for independence from imperialist control – even if these were mostly led by the middle class.

In Southern Africa, in the case of the former Portuguese colonies, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa itself, the USSR has generally supported those armed movements which in the estimation of its leadership were 'authentic' representatives of the oppressed and exploited people. This policy has often reinforced extreme divisions within the liberation movement but this is not the question we want to consider here.

What is more pertinent is the fact that Soviet strategy has, generally, encouraged the 'non-capitalist road' of development for these newly-independent states. Where a socialist intelligentsia has been able to come into being during colonial times, a national democratic struggle as a first stage towards eventual socialist reconstruction has generally been advocated. Socialist-orientated regimes have been given preferential treatment, but most observers have remarked on the reserved character of Soviet policy towards them. Winrich Kuhne gives the following explanation of this phenomenon:

. . . The most outstanding characteristic of Soviet policy in Africa has been the imbalance, or disproportion, between its ability to export arms and provide military aid, on the one hand, and its low performance in trade and economic relations, on the other. This discrepancy not only explains the typical fluctuation between gains and losses in Soviet African policy but also will almost certainly rule out in the foreseeable future that certain parts of Africa will fall victim to an Eastern European type of Soviet hegemony. The fact that certain African regimes ideologically lean on Moscow and cooperate with it does not guarantee any lasting and comprehensive Soviet control. For these regimes, socialism is primarily a means of pursuing certain goals of national development and of legitimising their own rule and methods of governing. It is for this reason that they have entered into an alliance with the Eastern alliance – not because they want to promote Soviet global policies.

This applies to Angola and Mozambique, who have not been invited to join Comecon, nor have they been beneficiaries of Soviet economic aid on a large scale. One of the results of this situation has been to reinforce the natural tendency of the relevant liberation movements or parties to maintain their independence.

Whether or not it is correct, as many Western analysts maintain, that the Soviet leadership does not trust these parties, what is clear is that the USSR is not prepared to create 'a second Cuba' in Africa because it has no vital strategic interests there. On the other hand, by tradition and conviction the Soviet Union will support and encourage any anti-imperialist impulse.



Though the model of superpower competition is undoubtedly valid at a certain level of description, there seems to be little reason to share the reported fear of the Chinese Communist Party leadership that as a result of the Nkomati Accords and:

in the face of Washington's offensives under the banner of peace, Moscow certainly will not reconcile itself. It will surely adopt some counter-measures to defend its influence. It has already made clear it is not in favour of the moves taken by Angola and Mozambique for improving relations with South Africa. (Xinhua news agency quoted in 'Chinese are uneasy about Nkomati', *Argus* 30.3.84)

### **The Accords and the liberation of South Africa – the front-line states**

What has emerged as 'Front-line collaboration' in Southern Africa reflects two principal themes in the dynamic interplay which is Southern African politics. In the first place, the alliance between Angola, Zambia, Mozambique, Tanzania, Botswana and – since 1980 – Zimbabwe, bears testimony to the decisive role that the apartheid regime continues to play in determining socio-economic patterns of development in the sub-continent.

In the second place, the very existence of a 'Frontline coalition' is in certain respects an indictment of the OAU and its role, not only in Southern Africa but throughout the continent. Nkrumah's dream of a united all-African government in accordance with the philosophy of pan-Africanism, has rapidly faded in the past decade. The OAU has become little more than a miniature UN for African heads of state. To understand why this is so, we need perhaps to remind ourselves that the OAU Charter of May 1963 stressed only the need to end colonialism on every inch of African soil – it did not commit the signatories to an anti-capitalist road. The varied methods of capitalist domination in Africa coupled with the low level of development of the productive forces have reduced the OAU to observer status in the political and economic development of the continent. Because of its ineffectiveness, a front-line strategy in Southern Africa became necessary.

### **Frontline Collaboration**

The intensification of the struggle for Zimbabwe led to dramatic changes and shifts in alliances within the nationalist movements. These, in turn, led to changes in attitudes and policies in the surrounding states and governments which provided sanctuaries for the guerillas. This led to increased diplomatic participation by the four presidents of Angola, Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique in the anti-colonial war that was being waged by ZANU and ZAPU.

On the surface, the interventions by the 'Four Presidents' appeared to be directed solely against the Smith settler regime. However, the basis for collaboration became immediately linked to the scale and scope of the conflicts engulfing the subcontinent. It was assumed that an end to white minority rule was indispensable to 'regional security'. Towards the end of the 1970s, this became the principal ideological premise for Frontline collaboration. With the electoral victory of ZANU (PF) in 1980, new contradictions became meshed into the Southern African conflict. The transformation to majority rule in Zimbabwe did not bring about the much desired land of milk and honey. In actual fact, the very processes and structures which set into motion the Lancaster House option brought into being contradictions of great significance for the liberation movements not only in Zimbabwe, but throughout the African continent. Issues such as the relationship between the national and class struggles, national liberation and the struggle for socialism became major questions in the struggle for Zimbabwe and clarity on these questions has become vital for those of us engaged in the liberation process.

At this stage we should remind ourselves of the contents of the Lusako Manifesto of 1969, in particular the sections dealing with the liberation struggles in Africa:

. . . We have always preferred, and we still prefer, to achieve (liberation) without physical violence. We would prefer to negotiate rather than to destroy, to talk rather than to kill. . . . If peaceful progress to emancipation were possible, or if changed circumstances were to make it possible in the future, we would urge our brothers in the resistance movement to use peaceful methods of struggle even at the cost of some compromise on the timing of change . . .

The 'liberation strategy' of the Frontline States stems directly from this manifesto of 1969. What is more, the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration of 1974 reinforced the approach adopted by these states. Among other things, the armed struggle was endorsed as a tactic in Zimbabwe and Namibia, but not in South Africa. These are controversial conclusions of which the liberation movements must take cognisance.

There can be no doubt that the Frontline States have contributed to the apparent unification of liberation movements in Zimbabwe and, at the level of diplomacy, tried to promote the Geneva and Lancaster House conferences. But, and this is the salient point, to quote Nathan Shamyurira again;

. . . As a result of this involvement, the Frontline States have been caught in the imperialist network and face contradictions within their own societies.

Indeed, agreements on words like 'majority rule', 'peaceful settlements' and others conceal wide differences between the regimes comprising the Frontline coalition. Pertinent questions like what does Kaunda represent, what class or combination of class interests does the party in Zambia embody, should be thrashed out. If we are genuinely looking for explanations of the activities and dynamics of the Frontline States we should not be afraid to confront these kinds of questions. To avoid them means that we cannot evolve an effective strategy for Southern African liberation.

### **The SADCC – "From poverty to economic liberation?"**

In almost every commentary on developments in Southern Africa, mention is made of South Africa's dominance. Because of its capitalist ascendancy in the region, South Africa maintains an economic and military stranglehold over the independent states. Against the increase in dependency on South Africa, we have seen since 1980, among other things, the creation of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC).

Even though South Africa's population of 34 million is only half of that of the nine countries within the SADCC, its gross domestic product of \$85 billion is almost four times the GDPs of Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Malawi. To exacerbate the problem of underdevelopment, the independent states have been battered by cyclones, floods and droughts. Perhaps more important for our analysis, the Frontline States have been brought to heel by South Africa's destabilisation campaign. In a leading article of the London *Observer*, reprinted in the *Argus* of 11 September 1981, one aspect of South Africa's role in Southern Africa was put succinctly:

. . . In brief, it is to create a Lebanon situation in Angola, with Jonas Savimbi's UNITA forces playing the role of the Lebanese Christians, and South Africa playing the role of Israel. . .

Today we can add that South Africa's operations have been extended into Swaziland, Lesotho and Mozambique. But this shift in South Africa's subcontinental policy towards systematic economic and military intervention in neighbouring countries is a direct consequence of the failure of its previous strategy



offering economic incentives to the independent regimes in order to draw them further into the web of the much acclaimed, but still-born, Constellation of Southern African States. Against this possibility, the independent states formed the SADCC. The *Economist* of 11 February 1984 carried an article which expounds clearly the character of the organisation:

SADCC is united against South Africa and the weather, but divided against itself. Swaziland, Botswana and Malawi have free-wheeling capitalist economies; Angola, Mozambique, and increasingly, Zimbabwe, are socialist. Nearly all produce raw materials which they cannot sell to each other and need to ship to western markets via (you've guessed it) South Africa.

These are some of the dilemmas that the Frontline States and SADCC are forced to contend with. In the short to medium term, the capitalist axis between Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Zambia may well provide the opening for further capitalist exploitation of the black workers in the region. One line of thinking which has gained some ground among the strategists in the 'Free World' is a linking up of South Africa and SADCC in one powerful bastion of capitalist enterprise. Thus, for instance, the view of D A Etheridge of Anglo-American Corporation:

. . . The process of regional co-operation has taken important steps since the independence of Zimbabwe. But for real progress South Africa must participate and the SADCC which has made a promising start, needs to subjugate its hostility towards South Africa to the crying needs of the states of Southern Africa.

The imperialist powers have taken a 'soft line' on the organisation. But this soft line is dictated by the iron laws of capitalist accumulation and expansion. The strategists in Washington, Berlin, London and Melbourne are motivated by a long-term perspective of consolidating the Southern African link in the imperialist chain. Against possible overthrow of the capitalist bastion in Southern Africa, the strategists of finance capital are seeking to expand the regional base for continued domination in the subcontinent. This view is fraught with contradictions since Southern Africa will continue to be wracked by political instability and the weak, infrastructural networks that presently exist will not facilitate the expansions of capitalist markets.

Most states prefer to back a strategy to continue large-scale investments in the Republic of South Africa because of the cheap labour market and the very high rate of exploitation, and because the South African regime appears powerful enough to maintain the necessary law and order.

As for the socialist-inclined representatives within SADCC, their motives for participation appear to be just as complex as those guiding the capitalist initiative. It is their view that the interdependence of economic life in Southern Africa will persist. This view is premised on the correct belief that the migrant labour system, the 'bedrock of capitalism' in the subcontinent, has linked the working people of the region into a single regional economy. In addition, transport and communications networks have become indispensable to regional growth. Independent initiatives on the part of the neighbouring countries in these fields are necessary conditions to undermine dependence on South Africa. However, it is not very clear whether these initiatives will succeed.

The singularity of the Southern African political economy is the necessary context within which any attempts at economic liberation must be conceived. Consequently, if we want to develop a coherent strategy we need to trace the development of contradictions within South Africa itself, for here lies the key to the conflicts in Southern Africa. It is here that the intricacies of the opposing social forces at work can be unravelled. It is within the contradictions of South African society that the understanding of the Nkomati Accords can

be found, because South Africa's future and that of the rest of Southern Africa are inextricably interwoven.

The only real accords are with imperialism, not those with Southern Africa, whose needs objectively are diametrically opposed to those of the South African regime. Botha has won a brief respite in order to turn his attention to the problems at home.

### The shifting images of South African politics

But what exactly is the scenario at home? It can be summed up in one word — *CHANGE*. Of course CHANGE means different things to the forces of progress and those of reaction.

WORLD IMPERIALISM, as we have seen, has come to play a more direct and intense role in the political direction of South Africa and in the affairs of sub-Saharan Africa. In the past twenty years, investment in South Africa and expansion of industry through multinational corporations have multiplied ten times over. Direct overseas investment is estimated at 50 billion Rand, American shareholders alone hold more than 45 out of every 100 goldmining shares, foreign countries are in total control of the electronics industry and three-quarters of the annual turnover in the car industry is accounted for by foreign firms. These few observations out of a host of others serve to underline the important fact that South Africa is an industrialised capitalist country, but heavily dependent on foreign investments and technological assistance. It has already been mentioned that a large proportion of strategic raw materials are concentrated in Southern Africa. Manufacturing industry has overtaken the mining industry in the production of wealth and there has been the recent development of a South African finance capital sector — which does not mean that the country is moving towards bourgeois democracy as a result of the so-called 'objective needs of capitalism'.

The fact of the matter is that the more wealth is accumulated by the bourgeois camp the less it is possible to call into question the prison camp conditions imposed on the black population. The evolution of capitalism in South Africa each day further erodes the base of its continued existence.

The changes which have occurred on South Africa's borders and with the fall of the Portuguese empire in Africa and the rise to power of socialist-orientated states in Angola and Mozambique, the overthrow of the Smith racist regime in Zimbabwe and the escalating conflict in Namibia coupled with the rising tide of consciousness of the oppressed inside South Africa against the background of the world-wide recession, threw the ruling class into a state of crisis.

Change for the ruling class is therefore evidenced in the polarisation of white attitudes. The depth of their crisis is indicated by the fact that P W Botha was prepared to split Afrikanerdom in the search for white survival and the continued reproduction of capitalism. The bitter internecine splits in Afrikanerdom are merely a fight about means — there is absolute agreement on maintaining white domination. The 'verkramptes' at one end will have no dilution of apartheid in its pristine form because they see concessions as the beginning of the end: the slogan 'adapt sums up the position of the 'verligtes'. The latter are so close to the position held by the official opposition as to make no difference.

P W Botha and his henchmen have come to understand, at long last, that sheer survival depends upon a change in tactics. They are prepared to jettison whatever aspects of apartheid they may have to — provided that the reforms are within capitalist, economically-centred solutions. Also any power sharing must be one which totally excludes the black majority exercising democratic rights in an undiluted system of adult franchise. There is also the 'white back-lash' to contend with — most whites are not prepared to give up their privileges, euphemistically called the 'South African way of life' — a poll indicated that 74% of them were prepared to fight to maintain it. However, the white electorate gave the present regime a



resounding go-ahead in the recent referendum although if its initiatives fail, the Herstigte Nasionale Party might be the next government the electorate will choose.

A new ideology of 'economic growth' is now proposed as the panacea. There is the growing belief in some quarters that unfettered growth will sweep away racial prejudices and obsolete political structures and at the same time produce the stratum of black middle-class leaders who will help to give capitalism a longer lease of life. They will be the representatives of the oppressed who they hope will have accepted the 'free enterprise system' as one to defend, if necessary, with their lives. These black leaders will find it in their interest to negotiate with the ruling class, a political dispensation based upon the structures of economic co-operation which would arise due to capitalist expansion. This ties in well with the USA's policy of constructive engagement — new legislation has been passed for more defence aid to sustain economic growth and to restructure the economies of African countries with the emphasis on small and medium US firms pooling expenses and setting up joint operations with their African counterparts. The imperialist organ is being tuned in readiness.

Various changes have therefore been made in South Africa towards this end. A new political dispensation has been worked out to co-opt the 'Coloured' and 'Indian' layers into the white laager — a tricameral parliament is to be implemented, with effective power safely within white hands. A new deal has been worked out for the 'urban blacks' to buy off a section which they hope eventually to co-opt — with sops like leased land, various 'rights' in the white cities, a few schools to absorb those who can pay the exorbitant fees and a few concessions to black traders. Middle class aspirations will be catered for.

But the contradictions remain. All 'reform' can only be made within the confines of racial segregation — *'Ethnicity' is the fundamental organising principle of South Africa's political economy.* The historic implantation of capitalism into this country rests squarely upon the apartheid structure — the migrant labour system, ie a controlled, exploited labour force rigidly under influx control laws which are essential to the very existence of capitalism in this country.

Also, if the economy is to expand, so must the numbers of skilled employees. Therefore some of the educational 'changes' — as proposed by the De Lange commission — will be put into effect. These are mainly to provide a basic literacy with the emphasis on making students 'werkgereed' and with opportunities being created within the educational planning for students to drop out at convenient points for slotting into the needs of industry. The private sector will then be expected to play their part by footing the bill for black training. The Carlton House and other government-business conferences cemented these agreements — business groups are no longer just pressure groups, but bargaining partners — recognised by government. It is important to note that at the Carlton House conference not a single businessman spoke about black political rights.

To accommodate western pressures for giving blacks some civil rights, and to give substance to 'reform', while yet working within the confines of apartheid policy — the Bantustans are to remain. There, 'blacks' will exercise their political rights as separate nationalities outside of the Republic of South Africa — independent but economically integrated.

Mass migration to the cities will be curbed by tightening up the influx control laws via the Koornhof Acts and by decentralisation of industry. The decentralisation strategy is aimed at providing the economic base for the population mass removals needed to retain ethnicity as the fundamental organising principle of the society. Government expects the private sector to assist in ensuring the economic viability of the Homelands so that its constitutional and political goals can be realised. This will also play a pivotal role in influx control —

it has become essential that control of movement should rest less on coercion and more on where the work is.

So, hand in glove with economic strategy goes political partition — the New Deal can therefore never be seen as a move towards a non-racial constitution, nor even as a point of departure towards such a goal — it represents no less than the entrenchment of ethnicity. The only changes are those to co-opt a WIDER layer of black collaborators!

But for an expanding economy, markets are needed. South Africa's strategy to create these markets in Africa had therefore to incorporate a diplomatic offensive to win acceptance by African states, despite their abhorrence of apartheid.

There is a real contradiction between the necessity for the racist regime to play the role of imperialist policeman in Southern Africa, and its need to gain crucial markets. The only solution was to install governments with a more conciliatory attitude to South Africa in these regions.

Destabilisation of the economies of the surrounding states would serve many purposes — by blocking industrial growth in Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana there would be no competitors for South African industrialists; economically stable states on South Africa's borders, especially if these were hostile to South Africa and particularly if they were socialist-oriented, would not only serve as a source of inspiration to the oppressed and exploited masses inside the country but would give these countries economic independence to host guerillas and give assistance to liberatory movements.

South Africa could only accomplish this by military intervention on the one hand and economic subjugation on the other — actually two sides of the same coin. South Africa's policy for Southern Africa is therefore tailor-made for the imperialist gendarme of Southern Africa.

#### **Economic subjugation of Southern Africa**

The tentacles of South African capital, led by the Anglo-American Corporation, are spread throughout sub-Saharan Africa, dominating production, employment, trade, finance, transport and communications. This joint exploitation with other imperialist powers of Southern Africa's resources and black labour heightens the unequal economic relationships and siphons off large profits to Johannesburg and South Africa's overseas investors.

South Africa has direct or indirect trading links with 19 African countries. A significant amount of South African capital is invested in the area. South Africa dominates the economies of Botswana, Malawi, Lesotho and Swaziland. They are dependent upon South Africa for most of their food, they send a large workforce as migrant labour to the mines and all these states belong to the South African customs union. This allows relatively free trade amongst the states and assures South Africa of a captive market.

South Africa is the colonial power in Namibia, holding 47% of its foreign investment, and importing 80% of its goods. South Africa has extensive investments in Zimbabwe with which it trades and exerts a strong influence in Zambia's mining sector. It also supplies Zambia with food.

Its influence extends to Zaire, the Congo, Mauritius, Tanzania, Reunion and the Central African Republic. In Mozambique the port of Maputo is run by South African personnel while the giant Cahora Bassa Dam exports most of its power to South Africa. Through De Beers, South Africa has considerable influence in Angola, too. The South African communications network extends over most of the sub-continent. Most of these countries are dependent on South Africa for food. For 1980, South African exports to Africa increased by 66.6% to reach a level of 1.1 billion Rand.

The Witwatersrand is not only the industrial and financial capital of the whole of Southern Africa — it is also the centre of the migrant labour system which weaves the working class of almost all the Southern African countries together in a



single web of exploitation and oppression.

South Africa is a sub-imperialist metropole and will be used by the West to safeguard capitalism in Southern Africa.

### Militarisation

South Africa has acquired a sophisticated and bristling arsenal, as South Africa's air force chief said,

not only to defend the fatherland but to establish stability in Southern Africa and to establish ourselves as guardians of peace and freedom in this subcontinent.

— a clear echo of Chester Crocker's views on constructive engagement. It is aimed at upholding capitalism and white supremacy in South Africa while its substantial economic and political interests beyond the borders propel it to function as a regional policeman.

As guardian of imperial interests the partnership between Washington and Pretoria has grown. Washington quietly went on arming South Africa — as evidenced by the increase in open sales of aircraft which can be used for military purposes. The Cape Sea Route is well covered by NATO's contingency planning. In Silvermine we see a more direct NATO collaboration in technology which gives South Africa a radius of 5,000 miles surveillance.

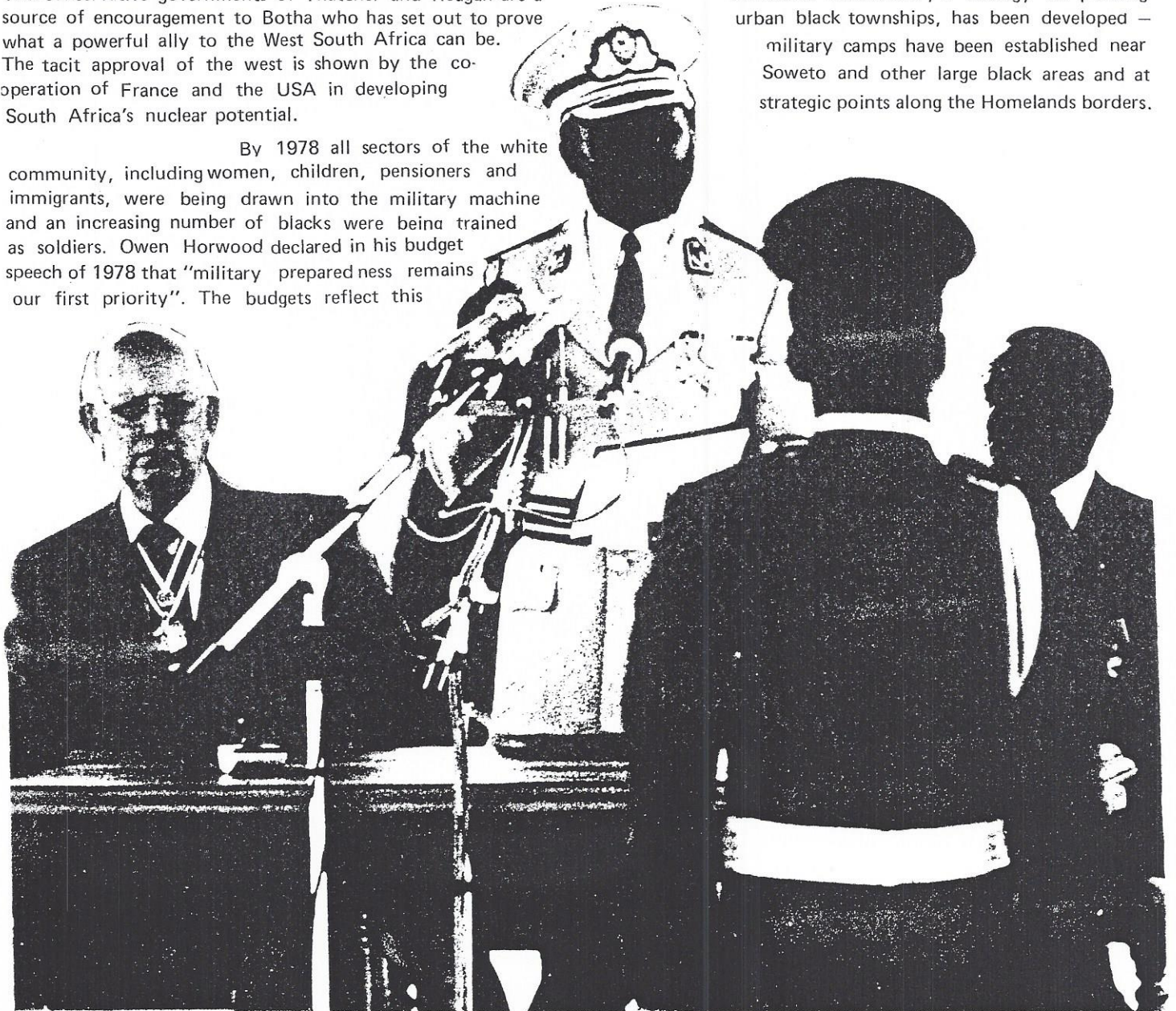
There was discreet backing of South Africa's invasion of Angola — an invasion thwarted only by Cuban aid to Angola. The conservative governments of Thatcher and Reagan are a source of encouragement to Botha who has set out to prove what a powerful ally to the West South Africa can be. The tacit approval of the west is shown by the co-operation of France and the USA in developing South Africa's nuclear potential.

By 1978 all sectors of the white community, including women, children, pensioners and immigrants, were being drawn into the military machine and an increasing number of blacks were being trained as soldiers. Owen Horwood declared in his budget speech of 1978 that "military preparedness remains our first priority". The budgets reflect this

fact — the defence vote increased from R493 million in 1973-74 to R1,654 million in 1977-78 — an increase of 235% over four years. After the Nkomati Accords it was announced that there would be no let-up in military spending. The stability of the region depended upon South Africa's military domination of the region.

A number of white farmers have abandoned their farms in the Northern Transvaal; 58% of farmers bordering Zimbabwe have deserted their land. These farms have been handed over to young farmer-soldiers who in time would be able to buy them on very favourable terms — operating along kibbutz lines. There is a concerted effort to secure the border regions. MARNET (a military area radio network) extends along the entire border from Namibia to Mozambique and was to be extended throughout the Eastern Cape area. Military bases are being set up along the borders and deforesting of bush areas has created a clear 10km strip between South Africa and its neighbours.

The white electorate has been prepared psychologically for the 'total onslaught'. A concerted effort to involve the whole white community has been made during the past few years — cadets were increased at schools, national service was extended, more women drawn into the military, and legislation became more severe for draft dodgers. A point of contention was the drive to recruit black volunteers. The high unemployment rate made this proposition appear relatively successful. The 'combined manoeuvre', a strategy for policing urban black townships, has been developed — military camps have been established near Soweto and other large black areas and at strategic points along the Homelands borders.





Periodically, members of the police, army, civil defence and commando units mobilize and surround a black area, usually around midnight. For twelve hours every person and vehicle going in and out of the area is searched, while riot police conduct house to house raids inside the township. These manoeuvres are passed off as a blitz on criminals — a number are usually apprehended.

Total armed forces numbered 65,000 in 1979, the army mustering 50,000 (43,000 conscripts and 2,100 women), literally bristling with arms. There is a navy of 5,500 men and an airforce of 10,000 with thousands of reserves. Paramilitary forces number 110,000 commandos — 13 air commando squadrons with private aircraft, 35,000 SA police and 20,000 police reserves. The picture is that of a police state in a state of siege — and so the Nkomati Accords do not represent a genuine peace. Vigilance remains the word for the ruling class.

Why is this so?

With an influence that extends thousands of miles beyond its borders, with the biggest industrial base in Africa, with a powerful military machine controlling its borders and internal unrest, the apartheid regime seems at the peak of its power.

That may be the perspective for the Ruling Class.

From the point of view of the oppressed, all the frantic military build-up and diplomatic and economic coercion demonstrate only one thing — there has been a shift in the balance of power between the black working class and the white ruling class. Slowly but inexorably over the years as one after another African country threw off the colonial yoke, the consciousness of South Africa's oppressed has passed to new heights. The overthrow of the Portuguese empire and the coming to power of ZANU in Zimbabwe was a source of great inspiration to the oppressed. The black working class started flexing its muscles in the early 70s and trade union organisations gained ground. At present there is a concerted effort being made at unity. The government was forced to recognise the danger posed by the mobilizing workers and the Wiehahn and Rieckert recommendations were formulated to control this threat.

Together with this, the students and youth epitomised the new mood of the oppressed — defiant, militant and as the struggle matured an acceptance of an ideology which more than anything else demonstrates the rejection by the oppressed of white baasskap.

The ideology sweeping through the liberatory movement embodies a belief in a single, anti-racist and non-racial South Africa — a total rejection of the carving up of South Africa into ethnic bases; a demand for complete unqualified equality between human beings and a rejection of white dominance.

More and more the CLASS question is being raised where it constitutes the core of the general political crisis in the area. It is an idea whose time has come. This is the real catalyst for change in Southern Africa, which has created the new milieu in which the organisations of the liberatory movements in South Africa must operate.

In the final analysis, the 'hearts, minds and actions' of the oppressed and exploited will determine the outcome in South Africa. The interrelationship — economically and politically — of Southern Africa states, the weaknesses and vulnerability of the Frontline States and their dominance by South Africa, underscores the fact that only partial and limited advances can be made within the confines of one country. The solution to our problems can be found only on a regional, and ultimately, an international basis.

### **The Accords and the liberation of South Africa**

To conclude this paper, we need to consider briefly how the Nkomati Accords and the so-called South African peace initiatives will affect the national liberation movement. For this purpose we put forward a few statements without arguing our case in detail.

- 1) The immediate consequences of the Accords are obvious. Organisations such as the ANC which have been operating to a large extent out of external bases will have to reconsider their military strategy. Although there is some evidence that the leadership of these organisations was informed about the probable course of events some time earlier, it is clear that the pressure from rank-and-file members on the leaders is intense. If the newspapers are to be taken seriously, there appears to be growing resentment at the Mozambican decision to sign the Accords. According to a report of 17th April 1984,

In a communique to the Mozambican Government the ANC executive council expressed 'deep disappointment' at the Nkomati Accord, which it described as 'a wounding blow to the struggle of our people'. ('Summit talks on ANC' — *Argus* 17.4.84)

The journalist from whose pen this article stems, Glenn Frankel, maintains that;

the ANC was facing its most serious crisis in a decade as it pondered how to continue an armed struggle against white rule in South Africa following its eviction from Mozambique. Confronted with what they conceded was a potentially crippling setback . . . the congress leadership says it intends to continue using Mozambican territory as an infiltration route in defiance of the new pact.

We do not have to believe all this but it is abundantly clear that a truly agonising reappraisal of strategy and tactics has been placed on the agenda of the entire liberation movement.

- 2) The policy of building up internal bases through political organisation and mobilisation remains valid and relevant regardless of what detailed changes are made by the forces concerned in the tactics of armed struggle. The inevitable calls made from the inevitable quarters for the abandonment of the armed struggle are as futile as they are opportunistic. This is a decision which has to be made by the freedom fighters. The logic of their position at this moment seems to indicate an amendment, not the abandonment, of the struggle they have waged up to now.
- 3) Peaceful coexistence between South Africa and its neighbours cannot and does not mean that there is class peace between the rulers and the ruled. The class struggle continues as before. Those who now call for 'dialogue' between the 'authentic leaders' of the people of South Africa and the National Party government, since the latter is prepared to talk to Presidents Machel and dos Santos, are either naive or devious. We are not yet in a position where we can talk as equals or from a position of superior strength to the present regime. We have to work very hard to get to that situation. To pretend to talk to them on any other basis is merely to fool the masses of the working people into believing that talking can take the place of organisation and struggle. Our organisations must prepare the soil, we must force this government or its successors to ask and to speak to us when they can no longer continue. The Accords of Nkomati must not lead us to propagate, as do the Buthelezis and the Hendrickses, a spurious peaceful co-existence between the oppressor and the oppressed. To do so would create a climate in which treachery, compromise and collaboration could flourish. Let us be on our guard against this temptation.

LET US FIGHT AGAINST THE ORGAN GRINDER!

LET US FORCE THEM TO CHANGE THEIR TUNE!

Despite the Nkomati Accords, victory is ours and victory is certain.



# MOZAMBIQUE'S RAPPROCHEMENT WITH SOUTH AFRICA

by Jo Hendrickse

On the 16th March 1984 Mozambique and SA signed a formal non-aggression pact, the Accord of Nkomati, whose "main purpose and thrust" has been widely presented as being a mutual undertaking by both sides not to support, or allow their respective territories to be used as launching pads for acts of violence or aggression against each other.

The SA government alleges that this non-aggression pact became necessary because the ANC of SA has been using Mozambique as a base from which to infiltrate its armed men into SA to carry out acts of 'terrorism' here. The government of Mozambique, for their part, have long been protesting at SA destabilisation of their country through the armed bandits who call themselves RENAMO, which stands for 'Mozambique National Resistance' (MNR). Although neither side admits to backing such armed activities against the other, the agreement is purportedly designed to stop such violence and aggressions henceforth.

The official voice of the SABC (8.2.84) says that SA is "substituting cooperation for confrontation with one of Africa's most radical states", and it has been welcomed in the SA press as a "major rapprochement" (*Rand Daily Mail*, 13.1.84) and a "magical breakthrough" for SA (*Die Beeld*, 21.1.84). At the same time they observe that in Mozambique, too, there is "a mood of optimism and friendliness . . . a constructive atmosphere" (*RDM*, 17.1.84) and, in its "battered capital", Maputo, "a buoyant atmosphere of cordiality and openness" (*The Star*, 6.2.84). At the same time, "Officials from SA's Foreign Affairs Department could scarcely disguise the tone of jubilation in their voices at having pulled it off" (*Star*, 16.3.84).

There may well be "jubilation" in Pretoria, and a "buoyant" atmosphere in Maputo, but this dramatic rapprochement must be viewed very differently by the oppressed black population of SA.

## From the view of the oppressed black population of SA

First of all, there is not only the disturbing sight of a neighbouring African state — a state widely regarded as being one of the most radical in Africa — going so far as to enter into high level negotiations with Pretoria. It goes much further than that because Maputo has not simply signed a minimal 'stand off' truce in order to try to end SA military aggression. This is an agreement incorporating such Vorsterian ideas as the promotion of "good neighbourliness", and anticipating "good faith" from the oppressors of millions of black people in this country.

Furthermore, the Mozambican government has expressed its conviction in the Accord that its relations of coexistence with SA "will contribute to peace, security, stability and progress in Southern Africa, the continent of Africa and the world". To the millions in SA suffering daily discrimination, cruel humiliations, gross exploitation and violent brutalisations, arbitrarily up-rooted at the will of the State and denied the most minimal human rights, it is a supreme irony to read that Mozambique's "good neighbourliness" with the SA government is contributing to "peace and security" in the

region. Furthermore to those struggling for social justice and liberation from capitalist exploitation in SA, it is very strange to read in the accord that the 'Marxist' FRELIMO government believes that it can contribute to "progress" through such relationships between 'socialist' Mozambique and capitalist SA.

Even if these notions could conceivably be regarded as tactical diplomatic formulas, they are part of a pact that commits the Mozambican government to maintain "periodic contacts" with the SA government, and to set up a Joint Security Commission with it. This is going to ensure that their common borders are "effectively patrolled" and that they "exercise strict control" over what SA regards as dangerous and undesirable elements within Mozambique. These are some of the terms within the accord that make even the *Financial Mail* (23.3.84) call it "a detailed and binding agreement covering more than simple coexistence".

Furthermore, while "high ranking" SA and Mozambican representatives on the Joint Security Commission are arguing and bargaining over those who — fleeing from oppression in SA — shall or shall not have refuge in Mozambique, and whether they shall reside, work, or study, in Mozambique, the Maputo government is formally committed in the accord (Article I) not to "interfere" in the "internal affairs" of SA — in other words not to interfere in the way in which the black population of this country are oppressed, exploited and brutalised under the present regime. Furthermore, a clause in Article V of the accord commits the FRELIMO government to "prohibit propaganda actions aimed at inciting acts of terrorism and civil war" in SA. This, together with the "non-interference" undertaking, could well be used to act as a gag on the expression of political support in Mozambique for any mass struggles ("civil war") arising *within SA* from the people against their oppression and exploitation. Time will tell!

In the meantime, however, while they have committed themselves "not to interfere in the internal affairs" of SA on terms laid down by our rulers and oppressors, that does not inhibit Mozambican leaders from making public pronouncements telling *us* what the nature of our oppression is, and the scope and methods of our struggle for liberation! Mozambican leaders are now actually telling us that our monumental struggle against oppression and exploitation is a mere reformist "civil rights" issue (Mozambican Defence Minister Mabote, quoted in *City Press*, 12.2.84), and to the ANC, as such, that it "must incorporate our new policies in its strategy". Because they themselves have taken a path of "peace" and cooperation with SA, they now tell us that we must adopt policies of "peaceful negotiation" with our oppressors (Foreign Minister Joaquim Chissano at the OAU, quoted in *The Sowetan*, 28.2.84). And, again, to the ANC as such, they say that it must "resume the peaceful pressure tactics it used in the days before it launched the armed struggle in the early 1960's after being banned" (senior Mozambican government official, quoted in *The Star*, 9.2.84). Such 'pressure politics' have always remained part of the ANC's strategy all these years but, by making such pronouncements, the Mozambican



authorities are strengthening the powerful forces and factions within the ANC that favour such reformist methods and 'solutions' in SA.

Mozambique is, however, interfering not only in the ANC but in the whole struggle in SA per se, by taking it upon themselves to define the ANC, as such, as our "voice and representative", as the "vanguard of the struggle" in SA and even as itself constituting the liberation movement in our country! It is not the role or right of Mozambique, any other African government, or any outside force whatsoever to *tell* the people of SA who they support or who they should support in their struggle for liberation! Whatever spectrum and balance of political forces and strategies and ideologies that exist in SA at any period of time, who the vanguard forces are and what the aims and methods of our struggle are can only develop out of our own political debates and struggles *within* SA. Who leads, or will lead, the people of this country in their struggles will develop and be proven in the real struggles here, not in outside propaganda.

In the meantime, amongst those who do support the ANC in SA and abroad, there must be other deep concerns at the implications for the Nkomati Accord for its future. On the positive side, it is certainly true that the huge propaganda case built up by Pretoria against the "dangers" to SA's "security" from Mozambique's collusion with the ANC has given an important boost internationally to the ANC's image and its 'armed struggle' perspective. On the other hand, yet another avenue of infiltration into SA is being sealed off and severe restrictions have been placed on ANC personnel in Mozambique. For those who believe that the sabotage and armed attacks carried out by ANC men from abroad into SA are vitally important to the liberation of the people of SA, the future must be looking quite bleak. Of course, the ANC may well be able to sustain these actions, for some time yet, on the basis of men and resources already sent into the country. If so, its campaign of "armed propaganda" can continue to effectively project its image onto the political scene at home and abroad. On the other hand, if it becomes increasingly difficult, or even impossible, to continue to infiltrate armed men into SA, the ANC may have to shift its strategy increasingly towards its political-diplomatic lobbying abroad, and towards its pressure campaigns through such political fronts as the UDF at home. Alternatively, or additionally, it may turn seriously towards working through the black trade unions, although it has hitherto tended to regard the independent black trade unions as being too 'non-political', 'economistic' and dangerously 'reformist', as well as not all conforming to the ANC's 'non-racial' criteria. Whatever tactics, or combination of tactics, the ANC resorts to henceforth, the major implication and challenge of the Nkomati Accord for its supporters will be whether the SA regime's propaganda that it is a mere "external threat" will be born out or not.

For those struggling against oppression and exploitation within SA who are *not* convinced that acts of sabotage are a serious threat to the SA state and system, the question arises as to *why* Pretoria and the press have built up such an awesome picture of the "threat" of external "terrorist" attacks to SA's "security" — a theme apparently picked up and elaborated upon in the foreign press. For those within SA who are able to judge the nature and extent of the impact of such sporadic — if spectacular — sabotage actions, such a governmental and national and international press campaign cannot but arouse deep suspicions.

Such armed actions could, to some degree, be said to be 'boosting' the 'morale' of the oppressed by showing them that blacks can hit back at white military and economic targets (even though blacks in the vicinity of these actions are also killed). Armed attacks might also cause unease amongst those whites who perceive themselves or their property as being potential targets. In this way, this tactic may there-

fore achieve another of its aims — namely threatening influential members of the ruling class enough for them to be moved to join the ranks of the white 'doubters', or 'reformers', or even the 'democrats' who participate in the UDF and other reformist groups.

However, such sabotage tactics, per se, have not threatened, and really cannot be said to be seriously threatening the strategic military and economic power of the SA state. For those who are convinced that the way in which the SA state will be overthrown will be through pervasive and powerful united mass action throughout SA, such clandestine armed acts carried out by individuals or small groups are a most *inadequate* mode of struggle. Armed tactics *can* be justified if they involve and stimulate mass self-organisation and action. As it has been argued in struggles against oppression elsewhere, however, such sabotage tactics tend, in fact, to be dangerously, and some even say by definition, substitutionist. More importantly, they tend to act as a diversion of effort away from the long-term and more fundamental struggle to achieve the highest possible degree of genuine politicisation, self-organisation and active mobilisation of the mass of the oppressed population and especially the organised working class, which is the only guarantee of the true liberation of them all.

Why then, we ask ourselves, does the SA state project such sabotage incidents as so terrible a threat and danger? Of course, at one level, acts of sabotage can be very destructive and, from the state's point of view have to be nipped in the bud before they become more frequent and more destructive. Pretoria's overkill on the issue, however, should make its opponents very wary of accepting so simplistic an explanation for SA's powerful campaign of destabilisation of Mozambique and Southern Africa in general over the past four years and more. This suspicion is reinforced when the *Financial Mail*, that far-sighted observer for the economic ruling class in SA, writes (23.3.84) that "the simplest but most incomplete view of the Agreement of Non-Aggression and Good-Neighbourliness is that SA wanted to stop the ANC in its tracks . . . there is more to the accord than that".

Whatever strategic argumentation the *Financial Mail* itself follows, we who are looking at it from the perspective of the oppressed are aware that the SA regime is implementing a much more comprehensive and sophisticated overall strategy against Mozambique, and in the region as a whole, than merely "stopping the ANC". It is in order to divert attention away from examining this strategy that SA has mounted a skillful campaign to divert African and international attention *towards* the (supposed or anticipated) political and military aims and effects of the Nkomati Accord in relation to the ANC as such . . . and *away* from the much wider and deeper socio-economic causes and aims and effects of this growing rapprochement in Southern Africa for the South African system as a whole.

### Economic content and context of rapprochement

In order to begin to be able to analyse this overall strategy, the most important dimension of the SA-Mozambique rapprochement is its *economic content*, and the *economic context* in which it was brought about. Despite the publicity given to the military aspects leading up to the non-aggression pact, the evidence is that Mozambique's rapprochement with South Africa was not brought about solely by military or diplomatic means, nor to serve only narrowly military/security ends. The military aspect of SA destabilisation has been dramatically evident in direct SA air strikes and Israeli-type commando raids on specific targets in Mozambique. SA has also been recruiting, training, arming and providing full logistical (including air) support to MNR bandits for years now and they have wreaked terrible destruction and suffering in Mozambique.



What is most striking, however, are the reports from Mozambique itself that such losses, although amounting to hundreds of millions of US dollars in value, are nonetheless much less than the losses and difficulties caused to them through SA's economic disengagement from Mozambique. This has had catastrophic effects upon the Mozambican economy and was, in turn, possible because FRELIMO took over from the Portuguese colonialists an economy intricately interlocked with SA's. These links were two-way. On the one hand Mozambique depended upon a considerable supply of SA manufactured goods, agricultural produce, and technical-managerial services; and, on the other hand, Mozambique earned vital foreign currency through providing various services to the SA economy. The principle of these services were: the supply of cheap labour from southern Mozambique for the SA mines and (to a lesser extent) farms; the supply of Indian Ocean port facilities convenient for exports and imports for the northern and eastern Transvaal; and, more recently, the

supply of cheap hydro-electric power to SA from the giant Cabora Bass dam in northern Mozambique.

Both governmental and press sources in SA say that SA's use of its previous economic arrangements with Mozambique had "fallen away in recent years" (*FM*, 20.1.84) owing to Mozambique's own inefficiency and lack of adequate facilities. The *Rand Daily Mail* (17.1.84) says that it was due to SA's determination not to be too dependent on a "hostile" neighbour. What is significant here, however, is the Maputo government's own interpretation of and response to this economic disengagement by South Africa.

The Mozambican authorities say that South Africa has been deliberately running down its use of Mozambican railways and the port of Maputo in order to undermine Mozambique's economy (*RDM*, 13.1.84). Although a formal agreement confirming this inherited arrangement was signed between independent Maputo and Pretoria in 1979, SA exports through Maputo have declined to 16% of the tonnage levels of colonial times. Thus, Maputo says, it has been denied revenues of some





250 million US dollars value over recent years. Similarly, by reducing the number of Mozambican migrant workers labouring on the SA mines from about 260,000 at the time of Mozambique's independence to some 100,000 by 1982, Maputo says SA has caused Mozambique to lose another 560 million US dollars that Mozambican workers would have sent back home in direct remittances to their families. Even more seriously, say the authorities in Maputo, about 2,600 million US dollars have been lost to Mozambican government revenues as a result of SA's unilateral abandonment (in April 1978) of the system which FRELIMO took over from the Portuguese colonial regime, whereby the authorities in Mozambique were paid in gold at a fixed price for the labour of Mozambican workers in SA. The gold was then sold on the international market, at convenient periods of higher world prices, bringing in vast sums in foreign currency for the government.

The FRELIMO government's response to this situation has been to table these subjects for review, as part of the rapprochement discussions, in the specific economic 'working groups' that met simultaneously with the 'security' meetings leading up to the Nkomati. A third 'working group' is dealing with tourism, and a fourth has been dealing solely with the problems related to Mozambique-SA interests in Cabora Bassa. This last has included representatives of the Portuguese government, since the main investors — and losers — in the Cabora Bassa scheme have been Portuguese governmental and private interests. A formal agreement has now emerged dealing with South African consumption of, and increased (but still very low) payment for Cabora Bassa power. What is new, and most significant of all, is the arrangement for 'joint' SA-Mozambican 'responsibility' henceforth for the protection of the hundreds of miles of Cabora Bassa transmission lines that run through eastern Mozambique into the Transvaal, in order to ensure an uninterrupted flow of electricity to SA. In its turn, SA supplies ESCOM electricity to southern Mozambique which cannot draw directly on Cabora Bassa power. Thus an intricate set of links between Mozambique and SA has been revived and are being strengthened.

Other revived and extended economic links will probably emerge in due course from the official economic 'working groups' and unofficial exchanges that have been continuing out of the glare of publicity of Nkomati. For example, the National Director of Mozambique's state-owned Harbours and Railway authority, on an official visit to South Africa, told the *Financial Mail* (16.1.84) in an interview, that although "obviously we must keep overall control of the port (of Maputo) we will accept managerial and technical advice and South African help in repairing equipment. Above all, we want assistance to help train our own people". SA technical and managerial assistance and capital investment is also being encouraged in Mozambican agriculture and fisheries, and in its fledgling processing industries, as well as in the empty and decaying tourist facilities that once serviced hundreds of thousands of South African tourists annually. South Africans are now being invited to invest in tourist complexes and to return to enjoy the tropical delights of independent 'socialist' Mozambique.

There are other subjects also apparently open for discussion between Mozambique and SA — including government and private bank loans or, more likely, commercial credits, and even emergency food aid to Mozambique. In fact, the South African press is full of reports these days of directors and delegations from Mozambican state enterprises coming to SA "to drum up South African business" (*Financial Mail*, 16.3.84). Similarly, hordes of SA government officials and "local businessmen (who) applaud the rapprochement between Pretoria and Maputo" (*Financial Mail*, 16.3.84) are busily flying in and out of the Mozambican capital.

If, as *The Star* says (18.3.84), "Peace in the region is the trigger to unlock private investment" from South Africa in

Mozambique, the economic background to and effects of rapprochement between Maputo and Pretoria must surely occasion the deepest doubts and concern amongst socialists in SA and Mozambique alike. And yet, the FRELIMO government welcomes these economic 'openings' — the resuscitation and extension of its inherited economic links with SA — and regards the ending of SA's recent "economic disengagement" as a great achievement and advancement for Mozambique. Furthermore, Mozambican leaders are convinced that these economic relations with SA are going to be revived not, according to the leader of the Mozambican negotiating team Jacinto Velosa, on the "old colonial terms" but on a "new basis" of "mutual advantage" as befits two "equal sovereign nations" (*Financial Mail*, 20.1.84). Mozambican leaders hail the new possibilities to now "develop in peace" as part and parcel of the "great victory" they achieved at Nkomati.

#### "Victory" for Mozambique in economic crisis?

These claims of "victory" are, if anything, the most extraordinary aspect of the entire recent development in the subcontinent. This triumphant posture seems to have been the Mozambican government's propaganda theme for weeks leading up to Nkomati and, on the day after the signing of the pact, it summoned the Mozambican masses to "victory" rallies to "hail the leadership of the FRELIMO party" (*RDM*, 17.3.84), for having achieved "peaceful coexistence" with SA at last.

According to a report from Maputo (*RDM*, 17.3.84) the FRELIMO government says that its longstanding campaign for peaceful coexistence and against SA destabilisation reached its high point in President Machel's five-nation tour of western Europe in October last year. Reports available from the European press indicate that the tour was viewed there as a desperate "turn to the west" (*Financial Times*, 19.10.83) by Maputo to obtain development aid and investment from European governments and private capital for its "shattered" economy. The Mozambican delegation did indeed make such approaches and appeals, but Maputo now projects the main diplomatic purpose as being their campaign to convince the West to recognise the full impact on the region — and the danger to the West's own 'interests' — of SA's aggressive destabilisation of the countries of the entire region.

It was as a result of the impact of President Machel's successful tour of Europe, according to the Mozambique News Agency (AIM, quoted in *The Star*, 8.3.84), that Pik Botha "found a large number of doors closed on him" when he followed hot-foot after Machel to Europe in November. He was indeed urged by a number of imperialist leaders — including Prime Minister Thatcher of Britain — in unusually strong terms to reduce tensions in the area. SA was urged to come to some settlement with Mozambique (and with Angola and on Namibia) lest war escalate in the region and jeopardise all their interests in the region by "playing into Soviet hands" (*Guardian*, 15.11.83).

It was during this period too, that Maputo turned its diplomatic lobbying to encourage its former colonial master Portugal to play an intermediary role in its campaign (*The Star*, 5.12.83). Another even more active intermediary brought into the flurry of diplomatic activity by Mozambique was the US. African Affairs officials of the American State Department could be observed busily flying from capital to capital in Southern Africa, and further afield, during this period; and in Maputo itself, they were given "an enthusiastic and effusive welcome" (*Washington Post*, quoted in *The Star*, 6.2.84).

Thus, through a complex process of shuttle diplomacy by a number of 'interested' parties was SA 'pushed' to the negotiating table at last. This, says Maputo, represents a "great victory" for Mozambique because it was SA that was now asking to reopen the dialogue that Mozambique had initiated in 1982 and been struggling to sustain ever since. Furthermore, say the Mozambican leaders, they had out-manoeuvred the 'hard-line militarists' in SA who had once before — in May 1983 —



managed to scuttle the dialogue then in progress. Finally, by getting SA to sign a public, non-aggression pact, the Mozambicans are convinced that they have an instrument to ensure that the "tap" of SA supplies to the bandits remains "turned off". In this way Mozambique can wipe out the bandits and turn its full attention and resources to solving its serious economic problems.

The Mozambican economy is in a state of acute crisis and it has recently had to appeal to western bankers to re-schedule payments on its foreign debt, which stands at \$1,400 million (*Financial Mail*, 16.3.84), because it simply does not have the foreign reserves with which to pay. Over the same period that its foreign currency earnings from providing services to SA have been sharply diminishing, its only other source of foreign earnings through the export of certain agricultural products has also been hit. Partly this is due to falls in international commodity prices for such produce in the current world recession. More seriously, it is due to a sharp decline in agricultural production within Mozambique per se . . . whether for export or internal consumption. This decline has, in turn, been caused by a complex range of factors. FRELIMO has concentrated its agricultural investment in the huge state farms which have proved to be a catastrophic failure due to mismanagement, inefficiency and corruption. Peasant production has not been encouraged by the failure of the government to respond to their minimal needs in consumer goods (clothing, utensils, soap, etc.) or even tools to stimulate production. In many areas peasants have actually retreated further into subsistence production in the face of bandit depredations, or cultivation has even ceased altogether as peasants flee their fields and villages to escape the bandit murders, rapes and mutilations. Most seriously of all, agricultural production has been wiped out by three years of drought that has devastated the central and southern provinces of Mozambique even worse than it has affected SA. The Maputo government is now faced with the desperate problems of feeding and clothing hundreds of thousands of starving people. The last straw came earlier this year when the capital itself and the south of the country took the full brunt of the same cyclone that hit northern Transvaal and Swaziland. By that time, however, Mozambique was already well into its retreat. Nor is it surprising if, in such circumstances, a government is forced into a tactical retreat. This is, however, a desperate and dangerous measure for any party or government to have to take for they can easily degenerate into *strategic defeats*. Thus it is absolutely essential to maintain the highest degree of political self-awareness and understanding of the objective position: the forces at work within the party and in the society at large, and the characteristics, tactics and strategies of the enemy at home and abroad.

The FRELIMO government, however, does not in the least present this accommodation with SA, as an unavoidable tactical retreat — even though that *could* be understood in its situation. Maputo, in fact, proudly declares the pact to be part and parcel of its long-standing policies, and a "victory" for its "principles". It welcomes the rapprochement and deepening its economic relations with SA, and it is moving rapidly to put them into effect. It does not seem to have weighed up the extreme dangers it is opening up for the Mozambican people — let alone for the oppressed millions in SA. Above all, the FRELIMO government's "victory" line shows that it really does not understand the character and strategies of the enemies that it is dealing with neither the imperialist powers nor with the SA ruling class.

#### Different factions and tactics amongst SA rulers

It is a serious mistake for Maputo to believe, as it claims, that there has been any sort of 'defeat' or even 'retreat' for the 'hard-line' militarists in SA. They are still in a powerful

position in the State Security Council even if the Foreign Affairs 'diplomats' of the Pik Botha ilk have at present achieved a shift in the balance of power towards their line. This by no means indicates that one faction has definitively replaced another because all these tactics have always been, and remain interchangeable parts of SA's "total strategy games plan" (*FM*, 20.1.84).

Even the bourgeois press in Britain acknowledged that SA has achieved a victory in Southern Africa through its combined tactics of "fight and talk" (*Daily Telegraph*, 21.2.84), and that Botha "talks softly" while "wielding the big stick" (*Times*, 10.1.84). Or, as the *Times* wrote on the eve of the Nkomati Accord, "The sword and the olive branch have long been mutually reinforcing instruments in South Africa's diplomacy." Such analysis tends to look at SA strategy in terms of its combinations of 'peaceful negotiation' and 'military might' and to ignore, or play down, SA use of economic means to serve its strategic ends. Others, however, such as the London *Financial Times* (20.2.84) do write in terms of SA's use of the "carrot" and the "stick" to control its neighbours, or like *The Economist* (29.12.83), claim that the "carrot" of economic relations is now replacing the "sjamook" of military destabilisation in Mozambique.

The reality is that 'peaceful negotiations' has not disarmed the 'militaristic line', as Mozambique would apparently believe. Nor have economic inducements definitively replaced economic pressures. All these weapons are at different times brought forward, separately or in combinations, through shifts in the balance of power between different factions of the ruling class, and they are used at periods suitable to SA and in appropriate directions. Thus, at the very time that SA was holding out the blandishments of 'peaceful negotiation' to Mozambique, in early December last year, it was staging its biggest military campaign inside Angola since 1975-76 . . . although there, too, it has since moved towards a 'negotiating' stance.

That is not to say that these shifts in tactics and power within the SA ruling class necessarily take place in direct correlation to the demands of objective circumstances. Nor does it mean that all these tactical approaches are of equal subtlety or effectiveness, or of equal advantageousness to SA internally or internationally. Military threats and attacks and, to a lesser extent, economic boycotts and pressures are, in fact, only the more direct and crude of the weapons in SA's "total strategy" arsenal. These latter methods gained ascendancy in Pretoria's strategy over recent years because SA was reeling from the combined shock of the internal upheavals within SA, from Soweto onwards, and the consolidation in power of what it saw to be dangerous black 'Marxist', 'communist' regimes on its borders in Mozambique, Angola and then Zimbabwe. SA has been paying a price, politically and economically, internally and externally, for such a heavy-handed approach, and sections of the ruling class have been arguing, for some time already, for a shift back to Vorster's more sophisticated 'detente' and 'cooperation' approach. Economic seduction through aid, trade credits and the like and, even more so, deeper economic relations in the form of capital investments are far more subtle and effective means towards undermining and controlling their neighbours. Or, as liberal South African journalist Stanley Uys writes in the London *Guardian* (3.3.84), "in terms of lives and cash, it is much cheaper to control one's neighbour through a network of economic relationships than to destabilise him". Such economic relations are, more importantly, actually of positive benefit to South Africa's own economy and to the global strategy of the more far-sighted sectors of the South African ruling class, in alliance with international capital, as we will discuss.

Maputo patently fails to understand that the shift of emphasis taking place from direct military to more subtle economic means of influence and control actually reflects the measure of South Africa's victory. Its recent period of



destabilisation of Mozambique has been so successful in beating the Maputo government to its knees, that South Africa can now suspend its politically and financially costly military campaign, and use more subtle, *and more profitable* economic means to keep Mozambique under control. What is more, for a party that claims to be 'Marxist' and 'socialist', FRELIMO shows the same remarkable naivete in its views on the role and strategies of imperialism.

### Role and strategies of imperialism

The Mozambique government claims a diplomatic 'victory' in having gained the support of various western governments to push SA to the negotiating table. SA was not 'pushed' by fear or threats but by the persuasive concern of its imperialist partners. The concern being felt in European capitals by the end of last year was that SA's campaign of violence beyond its borders could no longer be overlooked or covertly condoned because it was beginning to 'overstep the mark' somewhat. Furthermore, its destabilisation strategy over the past four years was seen to have served its purposes and judged to be counter-productive now that imperialism was satisfied that other means were now viable and could prove more effective in the region. When a relatively sophisticated representative of imperialist diplomacy in Southern Africa, such as Britain, and as right wing a government as Thatcher's is 'persuaded' and agrees to intervene in this way in southern African affairs, it must give pause for serious thought. Britain's stance in relation to SA has long revolved around a number of tactics geared to produce just enough pressure to get the regime to introduce enough 'reforms' into the apartheid system so as to ameliorate the worst abuses. By thus reducing social tensions, British interests have long hoped to prevent 'upheavals' and another of those conflagrations that, elsewhere in the world, are proving so dangerous to the interests of imperialism. British capitalism — with its billions of pounds invested in South Africa — is *part of the problem* not part of the solution to the oppression and exploitation here. Mozambique, by actively urging Britain and other imperialist powers to help solve the problems of the region, has actually contributed to ascribing to imperialism a 'beneficial' 'reforming' role, and a legitimacy in relation to the problems and struggles in the region.

What is more, the FRELIMO government has also, for two years already, been trying to improve its diplomatic and economic relations with the United States. Even the *Washington Post* (quoted in *The Star*, 6.2.84) sees this as a "stunning reversal" of Maputo's angry attacks on US imperialism when it expelled American diplomats for trying to recruit Mozambicans to spy for the CIA in 1981. It is, of course, the prerogative of an independent state to choose with whom, and when, it will have diplomatic, political and economic relations; although it cannot but be a matter of concern to friends of the Mozambique people to see its leadership "inviting the United States to involve itself in our agricultural production. . . . They know our potential for fishing, animal husbandry, forestry and mining. I would like the United States to help me and tell me what I have. The United States also knows the strategic value of Mozambique". (President Machel, interviewed in the US journal *Newsweek*, 7.11.83).

The Mozambican leaders seem, however, to have gone even further than that! They have been trying to draw the United States, the second major imperialist power in the region, even deeper into our affairs in SA, as well as Mozambique itself. The *Rand Daily Mail* (7.11.83) reported on this under the headlines that "Machel appeals to the US to 'join us to end apartheid' ". Even more alarmingly, President Machel, in welcoming the new US Ambassador to Maputo in November last year, is reported in the same article to have said, amongst other things, that "the United States has a great responsibility

as a power and as a country which respects human rights. It cannot ignore this case".

If it is true that President Machel made such a statement, it would occasion wry comment amongst oppressed peoples struggling against cruel US-backed regimes from Chile to El Salvador, from Lebanon to the Phillipines. In South Africa, too, such invitations to the US government to intervene for 'human rights' against racial oppression and capitalist exploitation is a cause for great concern: about its dangerous implications for the struggles of the people in SA *and* about the 'anti-imperialist' credentials of the 'Marxist' FRELIMO government itself.

FRELIMO has assisted imperialism to "a major diplomatic triumph" in Southern Africa (*Washington Post*, quoted in *The Star* 6.2.84). Some western analysts argue that the willingness of SA to go to the negotiating table with Mozambique represents a victory for the British-type approach of 'selective pressures' (*Guardian*, 22.12.83). Others that it is a vindication of the Reagan administrations' policy of "constructive engagement" with SA (*The Economist*, 25.2.84). If the latter were true, it would, as the *Financial Mail* says (23.3.84), "be a feather in Ronald Reagan's cap at a time when the US administration needs foreign policy successes", especially in this Presidential election year. Either way, the recent developments in the African subcontinent are being hailed as a major politico-diplomatic coup for the west . . . and a set-back for "Soviet designs" in the region (*Cape Times*, 16.11.83).

Whether socialists actually want the Soviet Union, as presently ruled by an oppressive bureaucratic caste, to have 'designs' on, or influence in Southern Africa is a matter for considerable doubt. What they do *not* want is increased imperialist prestige and power in the region. Is this what FRELIMO really intended when it turned in desperation to the west to help Mozambique in its critical situation? Furthermore, did Maputo realise, when it set off on this path, how dependent it was on making *itself* henceforth, on western goodwill to keep South Africa to the agreement, to guarantee 'peace' in the region? Maputo may have indeed received a favourable response from western governments, but it did so by pointing to the 'dangers' of East-West confrontation in the region to the West's own 'interests' there. At the same time that it blamed SA for thus placing the West's interests in jeopardy, Maputo's spokesmen were energetically proclaiming their own government's "independence" of any "outside forces" and "non-alignment" in international affairs. They were intent on convincing the West that Mozambique "represents no threat to Western interests" (*Guardian*, 19.10.83) but, to the contrary, wants Western businessmen to invest, with confidence, in Mozambique (and other SADCC countries).

Thus reassured that Mozambique is "turning to the West", imperialist governments agreed to take a 'firmer' line with SA. They are however, in return, henceforth going to *hold* Maputo to its own self-declared line . . . or else their own current position in relation to SA could also change. Such Mozambican dependence on sustaining imperialist support to underwrite the present rapprochement is being reinforced by a cunning campaign by Western governments and press to encourage Machel and his government even further down the path of 'moderation' and compromise. At the time of his visit to Europe, the American *International Herald Tribune* (14.10.83) praised Machel for "forging a role for Mozambique as a moderator in Southern Africa", and the *Financial Times* (19.10.83) editorialised that "In foreign relations President Machel has always proved one of the most flexible leaders of the so-called Front Line states", while the *Daily Telegraph* (19.10.83) was happy to observe that he "is particularly attractive to Downing Street because of his oft-repeated praise for Mrs Thatcher".

These flattering comments on President Machel and his



government's foreign policies were, furthermore, made in the period *before* he had actually gone into the non-aggression pact with South Africa! What these papers were then referring to was the earlier 'flexibility' and 'moderating' influence that FRELIMO displayed, in 1979, in encouraging Robert Mugabe that the time had come for ZANU to end its armed struggle for the liberation of Zimbabwe and enter into the Lancaster House accommodation with Britain and the Rhodesian settler order.

The West is, therefore, well aware of FRELIMO's preparedness for 'pragmatic' compromise and accommodation. Thus the *Times* (22.2.84) praised Machel for his "realism" and "pragmatism", and the *Guardian* (19.10.83) complimented him for being "one of the most articulate advocates of a new Western vision". The more important means by which Mozambique is to be "encouraged to continue the conversion" (*Times*, 18.10.83) and "coaxed still further from East to West" (*The Economist*, 24.12.83) is not through mere diplomacy and flattery, however, but through utilising its desperate desire for deeper economic relations with the imperialist countries. And that is why these relations demand particular attention.

### Economic relations with imperialism

Mozambique's opening up to Western capital is not a recent outcome of its current economic crisis. It has been trying to attract Western capital since as early as 1979, and to draw up an 'investment code' that would provide the sort of perspectives and guarantees that would encourage capitalist investment in Mozambican industry, agriculture, transport and mining (already vast areas off the Mozambique coast have been laid at the disposal of Western companies for oil exploration).

What is new, however, is that, although Maputo was "initially nervous at this new direction", it has recently become "increasingly bold in seeking ties with the EEC and the US" (*Sunday Express*, 15.1.84). Indeed, the Presidential tour of western Europe was not only about governmental and private aid and investment. It included a formal approach to join the EEC's Lome Convention — that neo-colonial appendage to Europe of ex-colonial and semi-colonial countries in the Third World. Maputo also announced its intention to join the IMF — with all the imperialist banking controls and interference in internal economic policies of debtor countries that that entails.

All these developments were welcomed in the corridors of political and economic power in the imperialist countries. What was less openly discussed, however, was the fact that the Mozambican leaders were urged during that tour to reach a settlement with South Africa before the Western businessmen would feel 'secure' about investing in Mozambique (*The Star*, 6.2.84). Or, in the significant words of the London *Financial Times* (19.10.83): "The greatest discouragement to private investment in Mozambique is not so much the government ideology as the fear of instability in the region . . ." What was also not disclosed, at the time, was that "those in the West to whom President Machel turned, pointed out the advantages of a closer economic association with his giant neighbour" (*Sunday Express*, 15.1.84), and many western companies indicated that if they were to invest in Mozambique, it would be through their subsidiaries in South Africa. The significance of this is that the West has been exerting pressure on Mozambique — and *not* just on SA — to go to the negotiating table. Furthermore, the West has manifestly been pushing Mozambique into SA's economic arms as a condition of imperialist support, diplomatic or economic. This theme has been picked up again by the *Rand Daily Mail* (17.3.84) which quotes the *Financial Times* as saying that "such flows . . . of investment and technical-assistance from the West for Mozambique's shattered economy . . . may be slow in coming because potential investors will be ultra-cautious until they see the

deal (with SA) will hold".

It is interesting to observe, however, that as soon as it became clear that Maputo was indeed moving rapidly towards a general diplomatic and economic rapprochement with SA, major potential investors were not so 'ultra-cautious' but actually very quick off the mark. Amongst these were world capitalist figures such as Harry Oppenheimer, David Rockefeller, and that notorious capitalist adventurer Tiny Rowlands of the Lonhro multinational corporation. The latter was soon reported to have swept into Maputo with an offer of five million dollars worth of emergency food aid! In return for this generosity he undoubtedly expects, and will receive, some profitable business quid pro quo in Mozambique. In other Third World countries such shameless capitalist bribery is of equal and grander scale, and even offered directly to key-placed individual government figures, as well as hard-pressed governments, as such.

Is such corruption of government leaders and enterprise managers going to become a feature of Mozambican society as well? Either way, the dangers of entering into dealings with capitalist entrepreneurs are evident. Governments may draw up the most careful of contractual agreements to circumscribe capitalist enterprises, and they may have the most elaborate of national economic plans into which capitalist investments have to fit. If the constraints are too tight, of course, investment will simply not be forthcoming. More often, however, adjustments are made so that capitalists will be willing to invest in a country. Even under the most promising of circumstances, where capitalist enterprises agree to fit in with development priorities, however, there remains the fundamental problem that capitalist projects are then an *integral part* of the country's production and become an integral part of a country's economic 'planning'. As such, careful account has always to be taken of whether or how such planning will affect the capitalist investors, even if they are intended only as 'interim' participants. And in the meantime such components set up their own self-reinforcing dynamic in conjunction with their deliberate manoeuvring to preserve their position and influence in the economy . . . and the economic dependence of the host country.

The other effects of the operations of capitalist enterprises over which Third World governments have even less control are their social, cultural, political and ideological effects. At one level, in appealing for Western aid, loans and investment, such governments make themselves politically, morally and psychologically, as well as financially, indebted to the donors and loaners. More importantly such relations are reinforcing age-old attitudes of cap-in-hand dependence and lack of self-confidence and initiative as well as passivity and humble gratitude in the population at large. How are the mass of the people ever to be really educated into understanding the demeaning, destructive and exploitative nature of capitalism if what they are made to see are the munificent fruits of capitalist aid pouring in to 'save them' at moments of particularly acute need? Obviously, they will contrast their current misery and the austerity of so-called 'socialism' in the Third World with the material abundance and 'generosity' of the capitalist world.

If Third World governments are actively appealing (and often competing) for such capitalist aid and investment, are they likely to do anything that will risk being turned down? Are they likely to be very energetic in campaigning to educate their people to understand that that overflowing wealth in or from the developed world actually derives, in the first place, from the exploitation and spoilation of the peoples and resources of the 'underdeveloped' world? Are governments, which are anxious to attract foreign investment, going to encourage, or even allow, their own working people to have strong trade union organisations, to protect themselves against capitalist exploitation, when such governments know that trade union



strength will have the effect of 'frightening off' foreign capitalist investment?

These are just some of the more serious negative implications of deeper involvement with capitalism for the mass of the working population. For other layers of the population the possibilities are quite different. These are the petty-bourgeois and aspirant bourgeois layers or — more common in countries like Mozambique with large state bureaucracies and a large state economic sector — the bureaucratic and technical and managerial layers. Although such elements enjoy a powerful role in the huge state enterprises, their attitudes are highly ambivalent and they are susceptible to the economic, political, ideological and cultural advantages offered by capitalist modes of production. Imperialist strategists are quite well aware of this. That is why the American Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs "speaking at a dinner in Maputo given by Mozambique's Chamber of Commerce . . . told businessmen from the state, private and mixed sectors that they are a bridge between Mozambique and the United States" (as reported by the English Service of Maputo Radio, 9.11.83). It is precisely these private, mixed sector and state 'businessmen' who welcome and move rapidly to take full advantage of any openings to capitalist penetration. They immediately strengthen their own positions, act as agents for capitalist relations and help to transform what the FRELIMO government may see as an 'interim' measure to solve 'immediate' economic problems into a deep and permanent surrender to capitalism.

All these effects of deeper economic integration into the world capitalist system apply equally to Mozambique's reviving and expanding relations with capitalist SA, as such. Already Jacinto Veloso, Minister for Economic Planning in the Mozambican President's Office, and leader of the negotiating team with SA, is speaking of "viable and lasting economic relations with South Africa" (quoted in the *Guardian*, 17.1.84). He is well on his way to achieving what he has long regarded to be a "logical relationship" between Mozambique and SA (quoted in the *Rand Daily Mail*, 20.7.83).

### **Economic and other relations with South Africa**

Mozambique is a poor country in a state of profound economic crisis and many SA newspapers argue that it is not SA but Mozambique that has far more to gain from their growing economic co-operation. Such newspapers argue that "apart from the security aspect there are no real benefits in the Mozambique accord for SA", but, as Stanley UYS writes (*Guardian*, 3.3.84), "nothing could be further from the truth".

Even putting aside the *economic* advantages to SA for the moment — the truth is that the more enlightened forces in South Africa want, and will ensure that Mozambique *is* "seen to prosper . . . from association with Pretoria" (*Financial Mail*, 20.1.84) precisely because of the contribution that this will make to Pretoria's regional strategy in Southern Africa. Success here will, in turn, have repercussions in Africa and internationally. Many states have a role to play in this strategy, but Machel's Mozambique is of particular importance because, as the *Financial Mail* goes on to argue, "In the wider context, if a Marxist state like Mozambique — a country not remotely in the same category as Swaziland or even Botswana — can be seen by Africa as benefiting from cooperation with the "racists", the ideological forces arrayed against SA will be weakened."

What this means in concrete terms is that, if as 'radical' a state as Mozambique can enter into these sorts of agreements with SA, other states in the region are going to feel even less constraints than they do at present about extending and even formalising their own economic — and other — relations with SA. Malawi has long maintained formal diplomatic relations with Pretoria. Others, such as Zimbabwe, maintain more covert contacts in SA, including "labour" and "commercial" offices enjoying quasi-diplomatic status! And Swaziland has

now revealed, in word and deed, its secret security pact with SA. The most important and most likely area of such expanding relations with SA will, however, probably continue to be in the field of commercial, technical and labour relations.

These proliferating networks of economic relations with SA are in direct contradiction to the declared aims of the Southern Africa Development Coordinating Conference (SADCC). This grouping of nine states around SA is supposedly committed to work out combined development strategies to break out of their economic dependence upon SA. This dependence, however, is not decreasing but increasing — especially with Mozambique's recent initiatives. Whatever its statutes may declare, the SADCC are inexorably being shaped into the "constellation of states" that SA strategy has been working to create around itself for decades.

This "constellation of states" will, through economic dependence, be forced to act as a buffer around SA — in much the same way as Mozambique now is — whether they sign formal security pacts or not. Furthermore, they will inevitably become more cautious in their political criticisms of SA for, as the *Times* headline proclaimed (4.1.84), "Hostility [is] Curbed by Dependence". Even more importantly, as the *Rand Daily Mail* (17.3.84) says quite bluntly, any proposals for such states to join in economic sanctions against SA "will henceforth be an absurdity".

In fact, African economic sanctions against South Africa have always been something of an absurdity. SA claims to have economic relations with some 49 African states. Whether that number is true or not, the regular calls by the OAU for international economic sanctions against SA have never amounted to more than ritualistic gestures. Nonetheless, even that level of opposition to SA in Africa may decline for, as Stanley Uys says (*Guardian* 3.3.84), "Some demotivation of the political crusade against apartheid can be foreseen, because it will not be easy for black Africa to maintain the great moral opprobrium against apartheid if the black governments most concerned, the Frontline ones, are signing treaties with Pretoria".

This decline in 'moral opprobrium' — for what it is worth — in Africa will, in turn, contribute to what SA anticipates will be a decline in international 'moral opprobrium' arising from the recent developments in the sub-continent. As Brand Fourie said, "The way into the West is through Africa". In fact, SA is already reaping the international benefits of its propaganda coup over Nkomati. The *Guardian* newspaper (21.2.84) anticipated, at the time, that "there is little doubt that it would be welcomed in governing circles in the outside world as evidence of the ability of SA to reach a modus vivendi with its majority-ruled neighbours, even Marxist-Leninists". This is precisely what Margaret Thatcher is arguing in justification as she, and other European leaders, open their doors to a visiting SA Prime Minister for the first time in twenty years.

This must be a political blow — and challenge — to those forces internationally which have been campaigning for an ever-increasing political, diplomatic, cultural, sporting and economic boycott of SA. These are important solidarity actions to the struggle within SA. That is why the SA regime has turned the Nkomati Accord and the rapprochement developments in Southern Africa into such a huge publicity exercise. Imperialism and the SA ruling class know full well, however, that such a proposed world boycott of SA is not their fundamental problem. Apartheid and capitalism in SA are not going to be overthrown from abroad, from Africa, or even from across SA's immediate borders. The real 'threat' lies right within SA. And that is what SA's fundamental economic strategy, and its regional rapprochements, and its 'constellation of states' are designed to contain and to combat.

### **To combat the real threat within South Africa.**

This country is going through its worst economic difficulties since the Second World War. The recession in the world



capitalist system has seriously affected SA — mainly through the overall decline in the world price of gold which is the financial underpinning to the entire SA economy. At the same time SA's expenditure on imports (especially oil) has been going up, and the country is now burdened with a serious balance of payments deficit and a growing foreign debt. Nor has SA been able to compensate for the decline in its earnings from gold by increasing its foreign earnings from its traditional agricultural exports, or by successfully expanding the overseas sales of its struggling manufacturing sector. Despite their very low labour costs, most SA exports carry high transport costs and are unable to enter international markets at competitive prices.

SA's longstanding solution for this fundamental problem has been to try to expand its markets closer to home — hence the *economic* importance of building up a 'constellation of states' around itself in Southern Africa. Although most of these states are closely integrated under its economic hegemony, SA has been unable in recent years to adequately increase its sales there of agricultural produce, manufactured goods and various services. This is *not* because such countries (as Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi) are suddenly refusing to trade with SA, but because, in the current world economic situation, they are struggling under very much more acute difficulties than even SA is. A number of these countries (especially Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Zambia) have also been affected in varying degrees by the long drought, and they all urgently need to increase their food imports from SA. This could have been a boon to SA's agricultural exports were it not that such countries can no more afford to pay for such vast food imports from SA than SA can afford to export to them — because it has itself also been badly affected by the drought. In fact, from being a major food (mainly grain) exporter to the whole region, SA has now for the first time become a net food importer from overseas — to the further detriment of its balance of payment problems.

What has also been agitating powerful economic interests in SA is that this whole situation has been aggravated by Pretoria's aggressive destabilisation campaign in relation to the region over the past four or five years. By simultaneously imposing heavy burdens of military expenditure, and war damages and disruptions, and selective economic pressures on all these countries, in one degree or another (but combined most damagingly in Mozambique), Pretoria may have achieved its politico-military aims and successfully kept, or whipped them into line. It has however, at the same time, contributed to plunging these countries into economic crises, and hence severely damaged their economic usefulness to SA.

It is not only as an economic hinterland providing markets for agricultural produce and manufactured goods that these states could contribute more and more to SA's economic development. They are also important users of SA's harbours and railway system, and potential customers for managerial and technical services in transport and communications, construction and all sorts of engineering. They could also be important recipients — and collaborators — in technical-scientific agricultural services, in seed and crop developments, pest and disease control, weather forecasting, flood control, and so on. Finally, these countries have certain important resources that SA itself needs such as water (for the OFS from Lesotho) or hydro-electric power (up to 10% of SA's electricity needs from Mozambique), and above all many hundreds of thousands of labourers from the whole region. It is a measure of the direct *negative* economic side-effects of destabilisation that such important resources for the SA economy were reduced and, in the case of Cabora Bassa power, even cut off through Pretoria's *own* actions and agents.

The more direct *internal* negative economic effects of Pretoria's policies over the recent period has been the astronomical military budget the country has to carry (with expendi-

ture on the war in Namibia alone calculated at R1,000 million in 1983!) Furthermore, SA has been suffering the loss of its precious white manpower — not only in the sense of the increasing number dying on military service, but also in the tens of thousands of potential skilled manpower withdrawn from an economy that desperately needs them in order to expand.

The SA economy is now characterised by very low growth rates and a rapidly growing unemployment rate — especially among the black rural population. Their miserable plight is made even worse because they are taking the full brunt of the appalling effects of the drought. The more aware elements of the SA ruling class — and Imperialism — know from experience elsewhere that a potentially explosive combination is emerging in SA of increasing misery amongst the mass of the black population in the rural areas, at the same time as there is emerging a powerful and increasingly organised and politically conscious black working class in the urban areas. The economic ruling class are thus urgently arguing for a two-fold socio-economic and political strategy to deal with this two-fold danger.

On the one hand, it is essential that economic progress be revived through a broad development strategy embracing the whole of Southern Africa, and that foreign capital be encouraged, through the prospect of regional 'peace' and 'stability', to invest in SA. Whether such foreign enterprises invest directly in SA or, through their subsidiaries in SA, in neighbouring countries, like Mozambique, the SA economy will gain. However, even where aid and investment goes directly to surrounding states "SA itself stands to benefit as the natural conduit for aid and assistance into Africa from abroad" (*The Star*, 18.3.84). And, in the longer term, economic revival in the countries around SA's borders will once more open them up as expanding markets for SA goods and services or, as the *Financial Mail* (23.3.84) says "economic cooperation can generate untold benefit in years to come". It goes on to say, however, that "SA will have to tackle its internal reform programme with renewed vigour if the wider expectations are to be met". *This means that, at the same time as 'rapprochement' and 'detente' are designed to reassure foreign capital on the security and profit of investing in SA and the region as a whole, 'reforms' and 'modifications' of apartheid within SA are necessary to reassure imperialism as to the prospects for a reduction in social tensions and political 'dangers', and the security of their investments within SA itself.*

On the other hand, economic progress and 'reforms' cannot be mere window dressing to attract foreign investment. As Harry Oppenheimer said to the Institute of International Affairs in Cape Town, "it is essential that internal reform should proceed on a parallel course with the process of external reconciliation. One without the other will eventually fail". What the big bourgeoisie is arguing is that there has to be a certain *reality* to 'progress' and 'reform' for certain of the black population, or the entire strategy will be placed in jeopardy by industrial unrest, urban upheavals, and even 'insurrectionary' uprisings within SA.

That is why bourgeois economists are arguing for "new strategies" to be able to "satisfy the demands of the politically aware black urban population" (*The Star*, 18.3.84). In a general sense, they say, this means alleviating the poverty of the black urban population with improvements in housing, transport, education and health services . . . etc . . . The frustrations of the actual and aspiring black middle-class must be catered for by "scrapping discriminatory legislation, particularly that restricting social, economic and residential freedom of choice." (*FM*, 23.3.84). This sort of reform would give those, with greater resources, better residential areas, property ownership rights and other 'privileges', and pacify them by opening up better job-promotion prospects. The seething discontent of the black urban working-class — evident for years



already in 'unofficial' strikes and self-organisation — must be channelled into legalised, reformist, economic trade unions. This is a very risky strategy for the ruling class because such trade unions can — and indeed most manifestly do — succeed in eluding ruling class designs for them. The independent black trade unions are effectively taking on their true role of defending, organising and mobilising the black working class. Many weapons to control and undermine these independent black trade unions remain in the ruling class' arsenal. These include political-ideological infiltration and subversion through the 'support' of such organisations as the American AFL-CIO and other international 'labour' bodies; corruption and seduction of trade union leaders and harassment and victimisation of trade union members. The working class movement is also weakened by the encouragement of conflict between workers of different 'racial', 'tribal' or 'national' groups, and by deliberate manipulations to split, or set different unions against each other. However, the most fundamental weapon of the ruling class to constantly hold back the powerful growth of the independent trade unions and to keep in check the militancy of the black working class in general, remains the vast unemployed 'reserve army of labour' that exists in and around SA.

That is why — whatever other significances there may be in the current Southern Africa 'rapprochement' — for the black trade union movement in SA the opening up of increasing supplies of cheap subservient migrant labour to SA from surrounding countries must remain the most ominous prospect of all. Already the capitalist class in SA have at their disposal vast masses of unemployed, poverty-stricken and desperate men and women in the rural areas of this country whom they utilise as a constant threat against those in employment. Basically the unemployed serve to keep the general level of wages low, but also to directly undercut any wage advances achieved through trade union struggles, and even to break strike actions for better wages and conditions. To this vast pool of labour there are, henceforth, going to be added an ever greater flow of hundreds of thousands more migrant labourers from surrounding territories — above all from Mozambique.

The Maputo government has, with Nkomati, achieved their desire for an increase in the numbers of Mozambican migrants to SA to be tabled for negotiation. Their representatives are now discussing 'labour' matters with the SA authorities. If these discussions include questions such as minimum wage levels for Mozambican miners, improving their accommodation and living conditions, safety down the mines, injury compensation and pension rights . . . etc . . . that could be beneficial to them . . . and possibly, in an indirect way, even to SA miners. It is not certain, however, that FRELIMO *is* even trying to protect its nationals in these ways. Even if it is, that raises question about the rights and needs of workers *themselves* to organise and decide for themselves their conditions and remuneration at work . . . etc . . .

What is, however, more likely to be under consideration in these 'labour' discussions, judging from Maputo's own preoccupations, is the vexacious question of SA's gold payments to the Mozambican government for its workers. Although FRELIMO condemned this joint state-mining company arrangement when it was enjoyed by the Portuguese colonial government — the 'socialist' government of independent Mozambique is anxious to sustain it now for itself for the huge revenues that it brings in. FRELIMO may well argue that this 'differs' from the earlier arrangement in that the Mozambican government intends to plough the gains from those gold payments back into the Mozambican economy to the benefit of the whole Mozambican people. If that is so, serious questions have to be posed about FRELIMO's conceptions of 'socialism'. Is FRELIMO consulting with the migrant workers in its negotiations with SA capitalists about how much value will be extracted from their labour and go to the Mozambique state

in the form of gold? Is FRELIMO consulting with those workers about how or where it should dispose of the vast revenues it might be making from their labour? What does FRELIMO see the state's relationship to be to production planning and surplus distribution . . . to the workers' direct role and rights at work . . . and to independent workers' organisations?

On the evidence available it seems to be *most unlikely* that Mozambican workers are being consulted . . . or that provision is being made for them to express their views on their conditions of work within SA. It is most unlikely that either the SA or the Mozambican authorities are the least interested in including provisions for the rights of Mozambican workers in SA to join trade unions here . . . let alone participate in strike actions. In fact the FRELIMO government would most probably be quite nervous about their workers having such rights or participating in the independent trade unions . . . least they take such experiences and influences back with them to Mozambique where such rights and independent organisations of the workers do not exist. This speaks volumes about the type of 'workers' society being built in Mozambique by the 'Marxist' 'socialist' FRELIMO party.

What this scenario says for the independent trade unions in SA — and especially the recently-formed Mineworkers Union here — is that the difficulties they face in their valiant struggle to unionise the SA mines are going to be compounded by the influx of ever-greater numbers of barrack-ghettoised, non-unionised — and *non*-organisable? — Mozambican workers. The position taken by such workers — *and* their home government — could pose serious problems henceforth as ever-greater struggles unfold in the coming period, between the SA working class and the SA bosses and their state.

Will Maputo really welcome future struggles in SA that could jeopardise the 'peace' and 'stability', and cooperation with SA upon which its own development strategies are now premised? At one level FRELIMO may well sympathise with popular actions in SA, but unless they are manifestly of an order to constitute a full-scale challenge to the status quo, the Mozambican leadership will probably be more worried about how *their* country could be adversely affected in the short term. Maputo *would* probably throw caution — and the Nkomati Accord — to the winds were it evident that the SA regime was on the verge of being overthrown. Before that day comes, however, there are going to be many different periods and forms of struggle and conflicts and disruptions in SA as the national liberatory movement led by the organised working class builds up for the final confrontation. From the way in which it is going now, FRELIMO is more likely to be holding back their own workers in these preliminary struggles and even allowing them to be used against the workers organisations and struggles in SA. It is in *this* way — far more than what it is supposedly doing to the few hundreds or thousands of ANC fighters abroad — that FRELIMO's positions can seriously affect the organisation and struggles of *many hundreds of thousands of workers who are the real vanguard of the liberatory struggle in our country*. In this way, FRELIMO carries a very heavy burden of responsibility . . . for which it will one day have to answer to the free people of Azania.



# GOLD, SOUTH AFRICA AND IMPERIALISM

The fate of working class struggles in South Africa, as elsewhere, does not take place in a vacuum. The strategy of the trade unions — political or merely economic action, revolution or reform, working class leadership or subordination to other progressive forces — must be dictated by the circumstances in which they find themselves, and those circumstances are much wider than the narrow sphere of wage bargaining.

Working class struggles in South Africa take place against a capitalist class struggling to escape from a very weak position in the imperialist world economy — a position of being dependent on the economic might of the great capitalist powers of the West. The needs and strategy of the South African capitalists in relation to apartheid and a quiescent, legally-minded workers' movement are formed by their desire to achieve economic independence from the other imperialist countries by the use of the one commodity which the Western world needs — the one commodity which makes the embarrassing apartheid regime strategically crucial to the interests of capitalist imperialism — Gold.

It has been commonly held that the South African economy would be cushioned from the effects of any world economic crisis by its predominant position in the production of world gold. In 1983 the South African gold mines disgorged nearly half the gold output of the world — 680 tonnes out of a total world output of 1420 tonnes. The only country to come near South African output was the Soviet Union, with 300 tonnes, and the Soviet Union is hardly a country on which the Western capitalists would wish to rely for their money production.

As the money commodity, gold has often appeared to be free from the discipline of the world market. If more gold is produced than is immediately needed, it could always serve as a hoard of wealth, while in a recession capitalists everywhere would be attracted to such a secure economy. Indeed, a 'flywheel effect' would take place — the money flowing to the South African coffers as a result of any rise in the price of gold would fuel industrialisation in the country, enabling it to finally advance to the front rank of the major imperialist powers. It was fondly believed that there would be a re-run of the 1930's, with an effortless economic boom in South Africa while the rest of the world plunged into economic crisis.

The consequences of this for working class struggles are profound. If South Africa could escape capitalist crisis; a labourist strategy of merely obtaining a higher share of capitalist profits through trade union struggle could become viable. If the Marxist theory of crisis did not apply to South Africa, then the whole struggle would *simply* become one of civil liberties, as apartheid could be abstracted from the social relations of production in which it is embedded. If this liberal view prevails, then capitalism need only be reformed by a 'progressive' government, rather than be destroyed by a workers' state.

However today the South African economy *is* in crisis, together with the rest of the capitalist world. Sluggish export markets have combined with a persistently strong domestic demand and imported inflation to cause major deficits in both the budget and the balance of payments. The commercial rand has depreciated drastically — 35% in one period from January 1981 to August 1982 — restricting economic growth without easing the balance of payments crisis.

Most importantly, the price of gold has careened wildly in recent years. It peaked at 850 dollars an ounce in January,

1980, (after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan), but then plunged to below 300 dollars over the next two years. In 1982, a relatively quiet year, the gold price was swinging from a low of 280 dollars a troy ounce to a high of 486 dollars, while in February, 1983, it dropped in one week by 100 dollars. These violent fluctuations have a profound effect on the ability of the South African regime to become a major imperialist power, since they play havoc with any attempt to plan economic growth by the state.

Any attempt to understand the reasons for this crisis of capital in South Africa, and its consequences for working class action, must look first to the role played by gold in the South African history, and only then look at the new role of gold in the economy today.

## Gold and Growth in South African History

By the end of the 19th Century, the accumulation of capital in the world had reached a point where a few very rich countries monopolised the world economy. The export of goods typical of capitalism in Marx's time had been replaced by the export of capital. Indeed, with the consolidation of capitalist imperialism, it could be said that virtually the whole world was incorporated into the network of capital's rule. The few developed capitalist countries dominated for their own benefit the many capitalistically underdeveloped countries, generally preventing the consistent development of productive forces in those countries.

South Africa is a classical example of the different ways in which imperialism expanded into underdeveloped countries. The uneven nature of capital accumulation, with a few monopolies standing out among a mainly agrarian economy, and with a complicated pattern of mutually hostile European settlers facing mutually hostile African tribes, stamped the South African economy and society with a mark all of its own.

The relatively under-developed economy of South Africa — characterised by struggles over land between white and black — was revolutionised by the discovery of diamonds in 1867 and of gold in 1886. The high capital requirements of deep-level mining, together with the very high weight of gold and diamonds, led to a concentration of capital among a number of monopolies, rapidly replacing the small individual holdings. De Beers Consolidated Mines Ltd. soon emerged as a highly capitalised industry in the diamond sector, employing modern scientific techniques and establishing a world monopoly of diamond sales by means of the London Diamond Syndicate. Gold, which came to occupy the dominant position in the economy, was dominated by foreign (mainly British) capital in the hitherto backward areas of the Transvaal. To the British Colonial Secretary, speaking of diamonds to the Cape Colony House of Representatives, the importance of the new discoveries was obvious — "Gentlemen, this is the rock on which the future of South Africa will be built".

Together, gold and diamonds accentuated the uneven development of the South African economy. In a predominantly agrarian context, they had a tremendous spin-off effect. The development of the mines led to the rapid construction of a railway network — a total of over 9500 miles of railway opened between 1860 and 1920, most of them a direct consequence of the gold and diamond discoveries — while coal mining developed to supply the power for deep-level gold mining (aided by the discovery of coal deposits near the gold mines).



Most importantly, the demand for labour created for the first time a sizeable working class in South Africa. The number of workers employed in the mines rose from zero to 325,000 in the fifty years to 1912; the bulk of these — 285,000 — were Africans drawn from all parts of southern Africa from as far north as Nyasaland (now Malawi) and the Rhodesias (now Zambia and Zimbabwe). Only a small minority — 36,000 — were whites, but the white miners had the advantage of being white, and better-paid, and permanent; the Africans were migratory workers who worked for only a short period before returning to the land. The white miners were mainly non-Afrikaans, coming from Britain, Germany and elsewhere. Wages were vastly different, with blacks earning only 10% to 20% of white wages. The fundamental difference in the working class was there from the outset.

However the economic development was extremely lopsided. Mining of gold and diamonds stood out in the middle of a backward agrarian economy where the bulk of the population lived on the land, while the small amount of manufacturing in the economy — 6.7% in 1912, compared with 27.1% of national product enjoyed by mining — underlined the fact that industry in South Africa has been mainly a spin-off from mining activities.

South Africa was an extremely undiversified economy, totally dependent on two commodities for its wealth. It had a small working class, but one that was highly concentrated in a small area — a major characteristic of a partly developed country in the imperialist epoch.

When a Nationalist government took power in 1924, committed to economic as well as political independence, they faced a major problem because of the lop-sided nature of the economy. James Connolly's remarks that whichever flag waved over Dublin the British would still rule economically applied just as much to South Africa, and attempts by private enterprise to form large-scale iron and steel works had failed as a result of insufficient capital.

In these circumstances the State, now under white Nationalist domination, stepped in to do the job that capital had failed to do. They established ISCOR (the Iron and Steel Corporation of South Africa) in 1928 as a public utility corporation, and this became the foundation on which iron, steel and engineering industries could expand. The policy of state subsidies to infant industries protected against foreign competition, combined with the expansion of gold mining in the 1930's and a large inflow of foreign capital, led to a major broadening of the economy, with manufacturing beginning to expand independently of mining. The victory of the hard-line Afrikaaner Nationalists in 1948 intensified this tendency, with state intervention being used much more consistently to diversify the economy. The expansion of the 1970's, on the back of a boom in the gold price, was only the most spectacular example of this.

This use of the bourgeois state to take over a role that the bourgeoisie was incapable of fulfilling had already been noted by Trotsky in relation to Tsarist Russia, and was to become the norm for all countries in the Third World after 1945 in their attempt to escape imperialist domination. However, their policies of state protection of infant industries and import substitution (or the development of viable industries at home to replace capital goods from the imperialist nations) were doomed to failure in the face of the power of Western capital, and have been brought to nought in the face of the present world crisis.

For South Africa, the main fly in the ointment has been gold itself. The 'flywheel effect' noted earlier has failed to work in recent times, so that there have been sharp limitations on how far South African capitalism can develop without a crisis. Indeed, the continuing importance of gold for the economy means that South Africa remains dependent on the more advanced capitalist countries, whose economic fortunes

dictate the fortunes of the South African economy through the price of gold.

Gold remains crucial to the South African economy, whether in fuelling economic growth or in precipitating economic crisis. For every 100 dollars an ounce the price of gold falls, the South African exchequer loses one billion Rand. An example of the upset can be seen after the dramatic fall in the gold price in 1980-1, which led to a surplus in the balance of payments of R2.8bn. in 1980 being turned into a deficit of over R4bn. in 1981. Gold is, indeed, South Africa's biggest export, taking about 50% of the country's export earnings. The economy is particularly sensitive to its price on the world market — in the early 1970's, as the gold price quadrupled, industrialisation progressed rapidly as the economy boomed; in the early 1980's, as the gold price fell, the economy was thrown into reverse.

It is on the revenue from gold that the Nationalist state has sought to build an imperialist economy. The gold mines have attracted an enormous amount of foreign capital, and its profits have been partly siphoned off by the state. After 1924, most mines were granted their mining rights provided that they agreed to share their profits with the state — about 20% of the government's revenue in the period 1946-66 came from this source, with the rest mainly derived from income tax. The importance of the industry to state economic policy led in 1963 to state subsidies to marginal mines. The gold mines continue to make a major contribution to the government's revenue, depending on the demand for it in world markets. For example, during the depressed years of 1976-8, the tax and lease payments from the gold mines to the state were only 6% of total state revenues, but in 1979-80 they comprised 13.6%, and in 1980-81 as much as 27.3%.

The goldmine owners are themselves protected by the state from the fluctuations of demand for gold on the world market. The earnings of the industry are denominated in Rand while the gold price is in U.S. dollars. The recent decline in the rand thus sustains the earnings of the gold industry at the expense of the rest of the economy. This is only the most startling example of the importance of gold in the economy, leading the state to protect it at all costs.

The dependence on gold is an indication of the dependent nature of the South African economy on imperialism. Outside the basic minerals, no other industry has become a viable competitor on world markets, so that South Africa is driven back onto its basic commodities in the same way as other countries dominated by imperialism — such as Nigeria on oil and Chile on copper. South Africa just cannot sell its goods abroad — in 1980 non-gold exports were R9.6bn., and in 1981 this was down to R9.3bn. Banking is mainly dominated by Barclays and Standard Bank International and both these foreign concerns have major holdings in local industry.

Indeed, the weakness of domestic industry has forced South Africa to look to foreign investment for its prosperity. Over 3,000 foreign companies have interests in the country under extremely favourable conditions. South Africa even has a special currency for foreign investors — the Financial Rand (FR) — which is used to attract capital from the imperialist countries. Introduced in 1979, the FR is used for fixed investments as well as portfolio transactions; capital is pumped into the country as FR's, earning a higher dividend than the commercial rand. As a result of its introduction, returns on foreign capital were boosted by R500 million a year. Contrary to expectations the lifting of exchange controls in 1983, which involved the abolition of the FR, has led to the biggest ever disinvestments (total and partial) from South Africa.

This picture of an economy dependent on the imperialist powers underlines the strength of the gold industry inside South Africa. A small number of companies control the industry, but the concentration and centralisation of capital in the industry has gone much further. The Chamber of Mines, which



controls the recruitment of black labour for the mines and negotiations with white labour, had in 1969 a membership of 16 financial companies and 108 mining companies covering gold, uranium, coal, diamond, platinum, antimony, asbestos and copper. Of these, the seven main gold financial groups (dominated by Anglo-American) effectively control all except one of the large gold mines. Anglo-American itself, headed by the 'liberal' Oppenheimer family, has developed a financial control over three other mining companies — Rand Mines Group, Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Co. Ltd., and General Mining and Finance — on whose boards sit Anglo-American representatives. Indeed, one of the 28 mines producing gold from 1945-65, Anglo-American had a nominee on every board of directors but one. Anglo-American has become the banker of the gold industry.

This is hardly finance capital in the way seen by Lenin. In superficial terms, the existence of monopolies and the importance of finance would seem to resemble the conditions of imperialism pointed to by Lenin, but South Africa has been dominated by such conditions for a century; they are a result of the absence of a broadly-based capitalist industrial base. In fact, Lenin saw imperialism not in the static terms of formal definitions, but as a historical process linked to a definite stage of capitalist production, leading to an overproduction of capital, which led to the export of capital which was to characterise capitalist imperialism as a form of *economic*, rather than merely military, exploitation. Capitalist nations like Britain, Germany, and the United States had established their industrial and military supremacy by the time of the Boer War; they used it ruthlessly to dominate the rest of the world, preventing the economically under-developed countries from developing their own productive resources in a *consistent* manner. The lopsided nature of the South African economy is a primary example of the way in which imperialism has worked, and still works.

Thus, where the export of capital in the imperialist countries is a result of the overproduction of capital there, in South Africa it is the result of the dominance of the gold and diamond industry. Other companies have begun the export of capital in an attempt to find more lucrative markets in the imperialist metropolis, but this export is still dominated by South Africa's oldest industries.

Anglo-American has used its base in gold and diamonds to build a multi-national conglomerate with assets of \$15bn. and shares (including companies in which it has a big stake) which account for half of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. It is the capitalist world's largest producer of gold, platinum, chrome and vanadium. It makes its foreign investments through Minorco (Minerals and Resources Corporation), based in Bermuda. However, despite an injection of \$300 million into Minorco in 1981, the company's earnings fell by \$63 million in the last half of the year as a result of its heavy dependence on base metals. Minorco mainly concentrates on North America, where half of its investments are located. However, it has had only one major success — the takeover in 1981 of the Wall Street investment bank, Saloman Brothers, by Phibro (27% of which is owned by Minorco) — and is usually involved in running feuds with US regulatory agencies. It remains a predominantly South African company with 80% of its assets based in South Africa.

### Gold and Apartheid

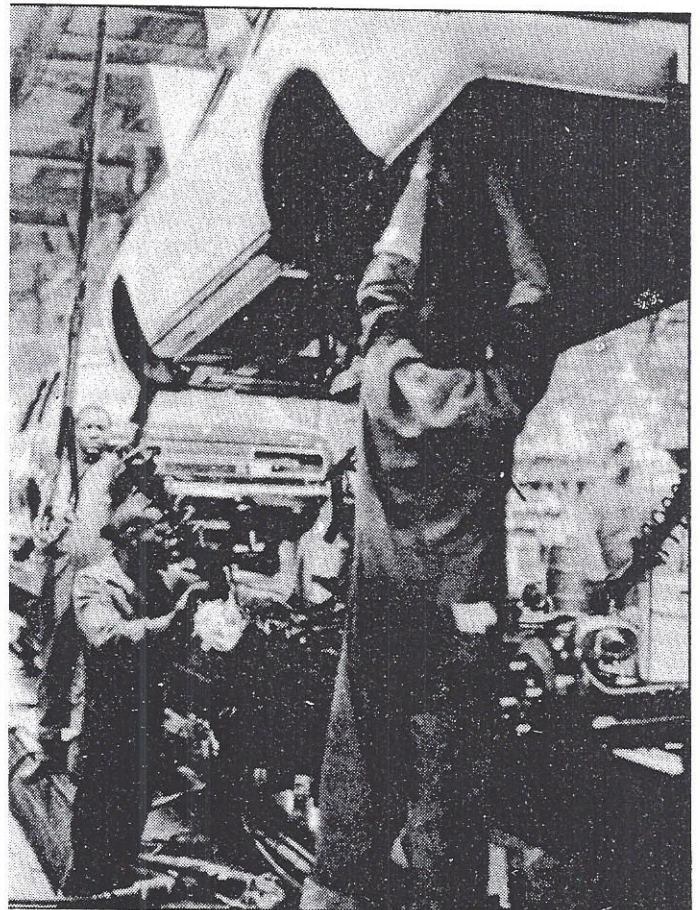
The exploitation of labour in the gold mines is the basis of apartheid in South Africa. There was apartheid long before the vicious methods introduced by Malan and his successors. The first pass laws were introduced by the Kruger Republic on the demand of the Chamber of Mines in 1895 in order to control the movement of labour. The 1923 Natives (Urban Areas) Act, which heralded a mass of labour and racial legislation, gave

major advantages to the mining industry over other manufacturing industries — no obstacle was placed in the way of men in the reserves wishing to go to the mines, but to get permission to go to work in a factory was far more difficult.

The thinking behind labour control is indicated by the 1921 Transvaal Local Government Commission report that "the native should only be allowed to enter the urban areas, which are essentially the white man's creation, where he is willing to minister to the needs of the white man and should depart therefrom when he ceases to minister".

The reasons for this lie in the capitalist nature of exploitation of gold. The industry particularly needs cheap labour because of the uniform distribution of gold in the mines, which means that the amount of gold varies fairly smoothly from high to low values in any given mine. Thus, if the price of gold rises or if the costs of production fall, ore that was previously unprofitable becomes worth mining. It also means that a small rise in wages can cause a large reduction in the volume of profitable ore. A massive and dirt-cheap reserve army of labour is therefore necessary more than in other industries. This army is provided by the apartheid economy of South Africa.

The labour policy of the mining industry had been determined by this. In 1893 the Chamber of Mines established a Native Labour Department to recruit labour in the Transvaal and Mozambique. It had the related task of taking "active steps for the gradual reduction of native wages to a reasonable level", as the Chamber recommended. These twin tasks have remained the same, and have been supervised by the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA). The needs of the mines for cheap labour has been served by a migrant labour force, traditionally an easy labour force to control. The supply of labour could only be increased by raising wages to attract labour (not favoured) or by casting the net wider. Chinese labour was used in the early years of the century, and





since the early 1930's, when the rise of manufacturing industry created competitive conditions for the labour market, the mines have looked further afield. Although total employees in mining rose from 318,000 to 371,000 in 1936-69, the number of black South African workers fell from 166,000 to 133,000 in the same period. As much as 45.7% of black workers came from outside South Africa — there would have been more if statutory limits on Mozambiquan labour had not been imposed in 1928, as 65.4% of the black labour force in 1906 was from Mozambique. Indeed, a 1937 amendment to the Immigration Act means that only the Chamber of Mines is in a position to bring in contract labour from countries to the north of South Africa. Other industries have been unable to afford the necessary recruiting, transport and accommodation facilities.

Recruitment from wider sources of supply, and the limited period of contract (usually 12-18 months), had the effect of holding down wages. It also allowed the industry to escape from the increasing competition for labour from the manufacturing industry which would normally have created pressures to increase wages. The mining industries' recruitment of foreign labour kept wages down throughout South Africa (for blacks). Furthermore, it is in the interests of the mining industry to ensure that rural earnings are kept down so that men have to migrate to live, even though wages in industry are miserably low. The apartheid economy thus becomes essential to ensure that black wages are kept down.

### Gold and Imperialism

If apartheid is essential to gold, then gold is essential to capitalist imperialism. Gold was once an extremely efficient unit of money, serving as a measure of value, a standard of price, and a means of exchange. However, the gold standard which was used to regulate international trade up to the 1930's has long been inefficient as a standard of price. The level of capital accumulation is no longer tied to the gold standard, which was first replaced by the U.S. dollar and is now subject to a relatively free market. Indeed, the imperialist financiers have tried to replace gold with other forms of money such as Special Drawing Rights (SDR's); in 1976, the Articles of Agreement of the IMF attempted to eliminate gold altogether by abolishing the official gold price and authorising the IMF to dispose of its gold holdings.

These attempts are doomed from the start — fortunately for the South African bourgeoisie — as nobody has yet found a real successor to gold. Gold is one of the easiest ways to transport accumulated wealth, either in coins or ingots, and is an international currency that can be bought and sold anywhere in the world. Above all, it remains essential to capitalist production as a measure of value — a unit of money that has to be produced by *labour-time*, and therefore the basic form of wealth which can measure the production by labour-time of all other commodities.

However, any attempt to return to a gold standard is also doomed, despite the calls of some conservative politicians and bankers to return to 'sound, honest money'. Gold no longer expresses the needs of capitalist production, and has not done so ever since credit became the basis of capitalist expansion. As the *Financial Times* commented on the demand to return to gold, "It is as if the Surgeon-General had been mandated to examine the potential for leeching, or the Attorney General told to look at ordeal by fire as a mode of criminal investigation" (FT 5.9.81).

Gold's role has changed rather than ended as far as the world economy is concerned. Gold remains an officially recognised reserve asset, while central banks have moved to replenish their gold reserves as a result of IMF sales. Moreover, the use of gold as a reserve asset has been entrenched by the part it was given in the European Monetary System (EMS) in which the System's currency unit (the ECU) has a backing in

gold. According to the IMF monetary holdings of gold at market prices accounted for over 52% of the total reserves of central banks at the end of April 1983. The pre-eminent position of gold is underlined by the size of the other reserve assets — \$350 bn. of reserve currencies, a mere \$20 bn. of SDR's (specifically designed to replace gold), against \$406 bn. of gold. As Rene Larre, former general manager of the Bank for International Settlements put it, "gold is still a part of the reserves, but it is kept at the bottom of the pile".

Imperialism is ultimately incapable of living without gold, but gold is no longer sufficient as a standard of price. As a result, gold is no longer fixed to any one standard. The fluctuations in the gold price, dating back to the recognition of a free gold market in 1968, have become increasingly violent as world recession and political tensions have worsened. The role of gold as the ultimate currency — the basis of the 'flywheel effect' — is seriously undermined when its price fluctuates so wildly. The fact that gold is a commodity like soya beans or copper — with a price which is not really more stable — has restricted monetary authorities in their gold dealings, and the South African bourgeoisie in their economic planning, because the next swing of the market price nullifies any movement within days or even hours. Predicting the price of gold is an impossible task, with present forecasts ranging from \$250 to \$12,000 an ounce within the next few years. Inflation, interest rates, oil prices, the value of the U.S. dollar, monetary and political developments all contribute to influencing a commodity which is extremely sensitive to daily developments. The 'flywheel effect' has proved wrong, as the gold price has not risen as a result of the crisis, and South Africa has not enjoyed a windfall.

### Imperialist Crisis in South Africa

The Imperialist Crisis is severely harming the South African government's dream of becoming a major imperialist power. This is seen most spectacularly in the recent failure of the government's policy of import substitution. In January 1983 Dr Simon Brand, an economic adviser to the Prime Minister, said, "we have perhaps a tendency to try to over-provide on the side of self-sufficiency . . . We have perhaps gone a bit far in some respects". There was a strong local outcry from the politically powerful group of maize farmers, Nampo (National Maize Producers' Organisation) over their payment of a sizeable premium for locally produced tractor and truck engines, fertiliser, raw materials and other farm requisites. They want to pay the cheaper prices offered by foreign suppliers. Similarly, the motor industry has to pay higher rates for locally produced import-replacement projects such as diesel engines, axles, and gearboxes. There is a large difference, especially with the world recession, between prices in South Africa and imports. As an example, the local price of PVC (polyvinyl-chloride) is R1590 a ton, compared with a world price of R600. This difference in various products affects a wide range of industries — including Sasol (the state-owned oil-from-coal corporation), the armaments factories, plastics, stainless steel, and synthetic rubber. Small wonder that Dr Brand admitted that "any drive towards self-sufficing tends to raise costs and to harm the competitiveness of our (non-mining and non-farming) export industries".

However, local industries need protection to survive. Denys Martin, the managing director of AECI, South Africa's largest chemicals producers, noted that the expansion of the local chemical industry was dependent on tight import controls, and warned that cheap imports from the USA, Europe and the Far East would throw grave doubt on further investment. South Africa has become less dependent on strategic industrial and consumer products, but it still relies heavily on foreign supplies for much of the plant to produce these items.

The dependence of South Africa on imperialism reinforces its dilemma. The attempt to reduce its dependence on strategic



imports led Barlow Rand, S. Africa's largest industrial conglomerate, to close their assembly plant for Oshkosh Heavy Trucks (a US concern) in December 1983. Oshkosh had refused to replace its traditional imported Caterpillar engines with local diesel engines. Within a day, Dr Dawie de Villiers, the Industries and Trade Minister, said that Pretoria was preparing to end import controls on textiles in favour of more selective customs tariffs. The government had also just abolished import controls on fertiliser and cement. This was because the controls meant that "South Africa has landed up with the most expensive raw materials for clothing in the world", according to Michael Getz, president of the National Clothing Federation.

However, the dilemma is merely intensified. The production runs of home industries like paper, textiles, footwear, domestic appliances, electrical machinery are generally small and their costs of production relatively high. They are unable to compete on world markets with foreign goods in terms of variety or quality. Double-digit inflation has made them even more dependent on protection.

The result is a major ambivalence on the government's part. To Dr de Villiers, protectionism "tends to limit competition and leads to flexible prices". However, "it can be disruptive if import control is removed all at once in respect of certain products. Industry will not be left in the lurch".

Thus, S. Africa faces a deepening crisis, caused by its status of dependence on imperialism and the failure of the 'flywheel' effect of gold. In the first ¾ of 1983, GDP was down by 4.5%, and in January 1984, Dr Chris Stals, the deputy governor of the Reserve Bank, told an agricultural conference in Pretoria that the low gold price made the short economic upswing of mid-1983 premature. Inflation is dangerously high, with repeated price rises particularly affecting blacks (from bus

fares to maize meal and other basics). Black workers are squeezed by lower wage increases, economic retrenchment, the 1983 drought and inflation. According to Charles Simkins, a labour economist at Cape Town University, black living standards had dropped by 4.1% in the year to May 1983. In this situation, with S. Africa going cap in hand to the IMF for a loan of £633m in the autumn of 1982, the class struggle will be intensified as capital in S. Africa seeks to safeguard its profits.

### Conclusion

Gold is the basis of South Africa's wealth today, as for the past century. Its *capitalist* exploitation makes capitalism the basis of apartheid, which has proved fundamental to South Africa's ability to squeeze the maximum profit out of the mines. No matter what superficial reforms the present government may push through, apartheid as a method of obtaining cheap labour remains essential to the existence of South African capitalism. It is capitalism which is the enemy of the black majority in South Africa today, and the growing strength and militancy of the black working class which provides the key to the destruction of capitalism.

This is not to say that the workers' movement should think only of its own narrow wage struggles — far from it — but that the working class is the *leader* of the nationalist struggle against black oppression, and that it must organise itself *politically* in order to destroy the capitalist social system which oppresses *all* Blacks in the country. It must be a revolutionary socialist movement which recognises that behind the thuggish and murderous brutality of the apartheid capitalist regime lies the interests of a capitalist world determined not to lose its major source of gold to those who produce the wealth.



**Migrant workers arriving at the gold mines. Gold miners were the first blacks to organise in unions and to take strike action.**



# DEMOCRACY AND REVOLUTION

Any left survey of 1983 must also point out the devastating, primarily self-inflicted wounds suffered by several liberation forces as they confront imperialism. The murder of Maurice Bishop, the civil war of the Palestine Liberation Organisation and the bloody struggle within one of the Salvadorean guerilla groups all underscore the inescapable necessity of political unity. These tragedies require careful investigation by activists in order that they not be repeated elsewhere.

(Extract from 'A Year of Living Dangerously', editorial in the American radical journal *The Guardian*, December 28, 1983.)

While the *Guardian* was concerning itself mainly with events in Central America and the Caribbean, African revolutionaries will be only too aware that these lessons also apply to many countries in Africa. This raises the necessity of an open and frank discussion within the liberation movements on the necessity of democratic structures within these movements.

This discussion on democracy in the revolutionary movement is crucial because all the setbacks talked about in the *Guardian's* editorial were *avoidable*. We have to face an unpalatable but nevertheless true reality: Ana Maria of El Salvador, Maurice Bishop, Unison Whiteman, Fitzroy Bain, Jacqueline Craft, Vincent Noel and Norris Bain of Grenada were not killed by the CIA or by the Rapid Deployment Force. The fifty Lebanese Communist Party members killed in Tripoli and the hundreds of Palestinian fighters killed in the fratricidal war between supporters of Yassar Arafat and Abu Musa and his Syrian allies, were not murdered by Israeli cluster bombs or the Mossad. The same could be said of hundreds of revolutionaries killed or imprisoned during the struggles for liberation in Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. These militants are not fighting alongside us today because of actions taken by people who believed they were fighting for imperialism.

Many on the left say we cannot and must not criticize those confronting Washington or Pretoria. Yet the struggle against exploitation and oppression is weakened and set back by the limits of workers' democracy in the Central American, Arab and African revolutions.

Workers' democracy, the idea that the working class and colonial masses themselves must make the decisions on the problems facing them is not an additional enhancement or an optional extra for a revolution to succeed. It is the only way of guaranteeing the continual self-organization and mobilisation of the social forces on which the revolution must rest. For the masses to be able to make decisions on the way forward, they must have access to all the different viewpoints on the revolution's course and the ability to organise themselves into parties and tendencies in order to influence the decision-making process. It is not enough for the party to discuss with and be influenced by the working class. Nor is it adequate for there to be popular support for the party demonstrated by frequent mobilisations. The workers and peasants must have an organised form for running society — workers' and peasants' councils.

In revolutionary organisations that are striving to take state power, there is also a need for workers' democracy. There must be a way for the rank and file to directly decide which of the conflicting orientations that are presented should be adopted. The revolutionary movement is strengthened when there is an internal situation where different opinions on the road forward are accepted as being differences *within* the movement. The idea, or even worse, the action of seeing

political alternatives in the revolutionary movement as 'obstacles' that have to be physically removed should be banished to the stalinist dungeons from whence they came. Violence is a means of self-defence against the capitalists, not a means of settling disputes in the revolutionary movement.

Many activists may see these ideas as utopian dreams. However, the Grenadian example shows the centrality of workers' democracy. Why was it that the revolution, to quote Fidel Castro "was already dead" before the US troops landed? In Grenada there was strong mass *consultation* in the Parish and Zonal Councils and many signs of popular support for the New Jewel Movement. But there was no way for either the NJM members or the Grenadian workers and peasants to *decide* questions of political orientation. The Grenadian people, therefore, had no means to organise against the putsch of Coard and Austin. This led to the situation of confusion and demoralisation which Washington took full advantage of. To put it simply, the level of workers' and peasants' democracy was just not strong enough for the revolution to survive.

Our arguments in favour of workers' democracy are not therefore simply side-line criticisms of or hostile attacks on those fighting imperialism today. They reflect a concern for the well-being of the revolutions and represent an important contribution to the political orientation of these fighters.

In the South African context, one point remains central. Whatever discussions we engage in, whatever criticisms we make, the responsibility of revolutionaries is to aid the progress of the revolutions we are discussing. Our job is to build a united movement dedicated to mass action which can bring down the Pretoria regime and open the road for genuine revolutionary advance throughout Southern Africa and beyond.

Nimrod Nkoto



Grenada revolution of March 1979 represented first extension of American socialist revolution after Cuba.



# WHAT IS THE UDF? AND WHERE IS IT GOING?

A contribution to the discussion from a group of South African exiles in Europe

The formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in August of last year was the direct response to the new constitution which set up the tri-camera parliament and the President's Council and the Koornhof Bill which aims to consolidate the status of Blacks in the urban areas\*.

While the UDF was not an exact replica of the Congress Alliance, its point of departure was definitely the Freedom Charter adopted by the People's Congress in June, 1955.

Although the UDF came into existence primarily to fight for a 'No' vote in the all-white referendum on the new constitution, it has now taken on a more permanent role and it is important to understand the tactical problems facing the leadership of the organisation.

On the face of it, the UDF would appear to be a multi-class and multi-race organisation with the aim of establishing a consensus between various organisations and centralising and controlling the struggles of the various components which constitute the new body.

Since 1978 there has been the growth of a great number of local and community associations in South Africa and, most important, the mushrooming of the black trade union movement. Although, undoubtedly, 'charterism' has had a considerable influence on many of these bodies, the variety of struggles which have taken place over the last few years have not necessarily been within the frame-work which the supporters of the Charter were trying to establish. A good example of this is the ongoing debate within the trade unions. Apart from SAAWU, CUSA is the only trade union organisation which is participating with UDF at a national level.

It is therefore important to realise that while it is correct to say that the project of UDF bears a strong relation to the aims of the Congress Alliance in the '50s, it is operating in a national and international situation which has gone through important changes and the relationship of forces is not the same.

The UDF must be evaluated in the light of this new political and social situation. When analysing it we must distinguish between the two aspects of the UDF — on the one hand the real character of the UDF and, on the other, its concrete impact on the masses. It is this latter aspect which we wish to consider in some depth.

To some extent, the UDF fills a political vacuum. Since 1960, after the Sharpeville bloodbath, when the ANC and PAC were banned there has been no 'legal' political expression of the oppressed until AZAPO was founded in 1978. For a part of the mass movement, the ANC programme concretised the political aspirations of the people in the form of a political organisation. But the ANC is seen as an external reference. The UDF, on the other hand, has set itself the perspective of filling this vacuum, of becoming the concrete, immediate political programme. It is 'charterism' in its legal, internal form. In this way it aims to fill a need expressed by thousands of workers, who today support the local associations or are enrolled in the trade unions and who raise the question of a political objective, the programme for liberation.

## The Debate among those on the left of the UDF

Our participation in this debate is limited by the small amount of material and information we have at our disposal. On the

one hand we have the press and leaflets of the UDF at the time of its proclamation. On the other hand we have a certain number of documents and articles criticising the nature and aims of the UDF. We know where some of these documents come from but we do not know the origins of others. But as a whole all these documents fall into the category of a left-wing criticism of the UDF.

In all these articles the UDF is condemned for being a class collaborationist front. However there is little or no criticism bringing out the fact that it is a privileged instrument of the Stalinists and the petty-bourgeois currents for controlling the mass movement and giving it a sort of 'bureaucratic official representation' rather than providing a real framework for mobilisation. The criticisms seem to insist more on the form of the UDF than on its long term aims.

Of course the two aspects are combined: at one and the same time there is a line of class collaboration and a project of controlling the movement. But these two elements are not strictly identical.

To over-emphasise the form taken by the UDF, represents a danger for action since it can lead to an underestimation of the way in which the masses themselves see the UDF. There is thus a risk of transforming a concept (that of the popular front in this case) into an abstraction and of not being understood by the masses.

The UDF is characterised in several publications as a 'popular front'. For example the newspaper *Cape Action League* states: "Therefore an alliance between workers and bosses (Popular Front) can only serve the interests of the bosses" (No 2, August 83). And the Western Cape Youth League states with respect to the UDF: "... it is a popular front which consists of both workers organisations as well as organisations of other classes" (which incidentally is not the best definition of the popular front...).

Even if we accept the basic principle that the UDF is a 'popular front' this does not resolve the basic problems:

- what are the social forces which make up this front?
- how and by whom are the bosses represented?
- how do the masses today perceive this class collaboration?

We have indeed to admit that this popular front is of a very particular type. The most working class institutions in the country — that is the independent trade unions — at least the most important of them, are not in the UDF. Only the SAAWU, the CUSA (which is also in the National Forum) and some other smaller trade unions have joined the UDF.

The aim of the charterist leaders of the UDF is to go around the obstacle of the trade unions. At a time when trade union unification is being discussed it is trying to find a means of having some *political influence* over this process. It will thus remain open to trade unions or trade union leaders who, wanting to go further than the programme of trade union struggle, will join the UDF in search of a political framework. Clearly there is a confrontation today between the UDF as an *explicit political* framework and the trade union movement as an *implicit* political framework. The UDF is able to say "we

\*The word 'Blacks' is used here within the context of the divisive policies of the apartheid regime and refers to the 'African' sector of the black community.



are the only mass political regroupment inside the country" whereas the trade unions cannot say clearly in an ongoing way that they are a potentially alternative political leadership to 'charterism'. Furthermore this characterises the polemic made by the SACP against FOSATU: the CP respond to the Foster speech on what sort of workers movement we should build by saying "a trade union alone cannot be the workers leadership, we need a party!". Here we have a second specificity of this 'popular front'.

The third characteristic is that the *white* bosses organisations — that is the real rulers of capitalism in this country — are not members of the UDF. One could maintain that these meetings cost a lot of money and it was certainly necessary to find money from somewhere . . . But that is not a sufficiently convincing argument for the broad masses.

Finally the fourth problem for this definition of a 'popular front' is that the UDF platform up to now has been limited to a precise objective — to denounce the President's Council. Therefore we cannot really say it is its programme which could prove to a part of the mass movement that it is within a framework of collaboration with the bourgeoisie. This is an important difference with other similar historical situations like the Popular Front in France, which was a front with an explicitly collaborationist government programme. We cannot talk about a 'popular front' whose platform is that of a one-off campaign on an institutional question in the same way as a 'popular front' which has a governmental programme.

Let's take a look at what's behind this analysis of the UDF as a popular front in the documents we have available.

For instance there are some bosses' organisations inside the UDF but these are non-white organisations like the 'African Chamber of Commerce' and the 'Athlone Professional and Businessmen's Association'. We could also find a form of class collaboration through the way the UDF deals with the non-racialist question. It appears that genuine non-racialism is not respected; organisations like the Transvaal Indian Congress are

participants. Finally one of the main examples of this class collaboration seems, according to our information, to be shown by the presence in the UDF of NUSAS and the Black Sash.

All this is obviously consistent with the political positions of the 'charterists' and is not at all surprising.

But do the masses today have the means of understanding that they must turn away from the UDF because it is a front which includes the small black bosses, the Transvaal Indian Congress, whom everybody knows has charterist affinities and with the white liberal student organisation?

### Complications with the National Question

Given the problem of the national question in this country it is not so easy as the WCYL makes out to develop a policy of the united workers front. For while it is obviously necessary to bring about the unity of the working class the proletariat must also be capable of unifying all the oppressed in an overall struggle against the system.

True, the regime is trying to build up a 'Coloured', 'Indian' and 'African' pettybourgeoisie to be a buffer between the masses and the state. But wanting something and transforming it into practice are two different things. Such layers do exist today. The government wants to broaden its social base and to form a 'class — in itself' which is both stable and collaborationist. But we are only at the beginning of this process. The masses are far from having gone through the process of the definitive betrayal of these social layers — apart from specific cases like the Labour Party. The consciousness of the oppressed is not immediately class consciousness. Theoretically it is furthermore rather difficult to express *in a simple way* the difference between the unity of the oppressed, including the non-proletarian layers, and unity with organisations of the better-off petty bourgeoisie and small 'Coloured', 'African' and 'Indian' bosses. Our objective is certainly to unify the



The UDF National executive



oppressed masses under the leadership of the industrial proletariat in a way that is independent of the liberal, collaborationist or bosses organisations. But how do we clearly and pedagogically express this objective? Thus at the opening speech of the SACOS conference it was said:

"In their own interests, the black workers of South Africa cannot allow the black middle class to go over into the camp of the white supremacy. For this reason and for many others, they have to take the lead in building the nation of Azania/South Africa . . . Only a movement that is fighting against the entire system of racial capitalism, a movement led by the black working class, can be successful and will be the salvation of all the people, no matter which class they belong to."

In reading carefully this quote we can understand the difficulty of expressing in a pedagogical way the desire to win the middle class without being tied to organisations which aim to organise these middle layers separately.

Are the workers capable today of seeing where the dividing line runs between the oppressed petty bourgeois layers who have to be won and their traitorous organisations?

*Why is this difficult today?* It is difficult at the present time because there is still no politically recognised leadership of the proletariat. The trade unions are putting themselves forward for this role. But on the one hand the leaderships are not yet recognised by the majority of the masses as the solution for the crisis of leadership. And on the other hand it is not the trade unions as such which can play this leadership role but a current coming out of the trade unions. Outside of the trade unions no political group can play this role for the moment and the charterist current takes advantage of this vacuum to put itself forward in a sectarian way as the 'national leadership'.

It would therefore be totally abstract to counterpose a still-hypothetical working class leadership to the UDF popular front. Obviously it is possible to use such a project as a starting point for propaganda denunciation of the charterist current leading the UDF. But can such an argument be used for mass agitation?

This debate furthermore overlaps with a discussion on the judgement of the coming period. Depending on whether one thinks there will be a linear development of the mass movement without a major or brutal reaction by the regime backed by at least a sector of imperialism one cannot give the same answer to a series of questions like the linear growth possibilities of the trade union movement or the likelihood of a permanent agreement between the charterists and liberals up to the moment they take power.

To think that behind the UDF there is a 'Lancaster House-type' project is to think first of all that you can have a 'Lancaster House' in this country outside of a revolutionary crisis and a generalised confrontation with the regime. If on the other hand one thinks that it is inevitable that the situation at a given moment will come to a point of rupture then one must revise judgement on the longterm project the UDF represents. The immediate danger is not the spectacle of the UDF, the liberals, Stalinists etc. . . coming to power. The immediate danger is to go into a pre-revolutionary situation with a mass movement organised in its majority by the charterists.

### **The UDF, a Framework of Bureaucratic Control**

The masses have not necessarily read the list of the numerous participants in the UDF. They have noted that the NUSAS people were on the platforms of the meetings, as well as the small 'African' or 'Coloured' bosses. But above all the masses know about the platform of the UDF which sets as its objective:

"organise and mobilise all community, worker, student, women religious, sporting and other organisa-

tions under the banner of the United Democratic Front . . . Build and strengthen all organisations of the people . . . and now therefore we pledge to come together in this United Democratic Front and fight side by side against government's constitutional proposals and the Koornhof bills."

When mobilising on such a platform the workers obviously do not have the feeling they are working for white liberals or for 'Coloured' or 'African' bosses. It is certainly not said in the platform that it is necessary to also fight against capitalist exploitation. This is the reproach made by the WCYL. But that can seem very natural for a conjunctural platform for struggle around a precise objective.

In this context denouncing the UDF as a popular front is perhaps secondary and criticism of it as a framework for bureaucratic control of the masses is surely more important.

What is important in the composition of the UDF is not the presence of for example, NUSAS. It is the importance of the churches. They are perhaps the main transmission belts for reformism, collaboration and betrayal. One only has to read the speeches of the religious leaders at the National Forum meeting to be aware of this danger. The UDF is therefore perhaps above all a longterm alliance between 'charterists' and religious hierarchies. Okay, it is true the liberals are in the corridors. But the point is that the white liberals have no organisation among the black masses whereas the churches certainly do have!

Popular fronts are generally class collaborationist fronts bringing together workers parties and bourgeois organisations. In the present context of South Africa for the sake of comparison one can say that a popular front of that type would regroup on one side the leaderships of independent trade unions and on the other white liberal parties. This is obviously not the case with the UDF today, even if liberals have given money discreetly to the UDF. And the sons of the liberal bourgeoisie in NUSAS cannot seriously replace their fathers.

### **The Masses need to have the Proof that the UDF will become an Obstacle to their Mobilisations.**

One of the documents we have, implicitly expresses the difficulty in bringing this about: "looking back at the debates in the DBAC we come to the conclusion that early admission of the liberal student organisation known as NUSAS pre-figured the kind of strategy which has now emerged in the draft declaration, programme and working principles (of UDF)". The key word here is 'pre-figured' for it clearly expresses that at this level of debate the polemic is being addressed to those people who have the political means to come to grips with the terms of the debate. It is quite a bit more difficult to explain to the masses that the UDF is a popular front because it has in it an organisation which 'prefigures' class collaboration.

It is probably not sufficient either to polemicise with the UDF appeal for a 'national convention' as one of the roneoed documents does. The member groups of the UDF are neither the PFP, the Labour Party or Inkatha . . .

Generally it is the civic associations and organisations like the SAAWU who are working for the UDF. The latter, which is also a response to the development of the independent trade unions in order to ensure the influence of 'charterism' in the debate on trade union unification, is going to use its ideological force among the leaderships of trade unions like SAAWU or of groupings like CAHAC. Without giving any perspective of central struggle for the masses, it is going, on the contrary, to use its links with militant groups like the former to appear as the 'natural' leadership of the masses.

Denouncing the UDF as a 'popular front' is therefore not perhaps the best formulation. At least certainly not in its most sectarian and dogmatic version, used by the WCYL which writes: "before we unite we must divide, we must distinguish



between those genuinely fighting in the interests of the exploited and oppressed and those against this". If this problem was really so simple there would be no difficulty at all in exposing the policy of the Stalinists in the world.

To conclude, we distinguish three things:

— the way in which the left has denounced the UDF as a 'popular front' only takes into consideration one of the aspects of the problem. A position is above all taken in relation to the implicit programme of the UDF and of the people in it and not enough from the point of view of concrete reality. It underestimates the immediate function of bureaucratic control of the mass movement and does not bring out the central role of the churches.

— How should we express our disagreement with the UDF in the mass movement? On this point our information is totally insufficient and we have too few documents in our possession to give an opinion. Generally we think the way in which one criticises the charterist current differs according to whether there is or isn't at that time a 'proletarian pole' which can speak in the name of the working

class. For this is the relationship of forces which facilitates an understanding of the problem, of the strategic choice in the people's consciousness.

— how we approach these questions depends on the analysis we make of the coming period. We do not think the danger is the charterists and liberals coming to power and then turning against the revolutionary mass movement and its vanguard currents. However this is what one of the documents leads one to expect: "along this false path of struggle lies victory for neo-colonial black middle classes in alliance with world capitalism-imperialism". Can there be a neo-colonial solution of this type in South Africa; that is an obstacle to the process of permanent revolution similar to what happened in Zimbabwe or Mozambique? We do not think so.

These are some thoughts on these problems, based on the few documents we have here. We are conscious that these are generalities and given the lack of more information this has to be seen as a tentative analysis.

## UDF, COLOUR AND THE SPLIT IN MWASA

The Media Workers Association of South Africa (MWASA), a small black trade union, but powerful as one of South Africa's leading black consciousness organisations, has split into two factions described by Jon Quelane (*Star*, 31.1.84) as "seemingly irrevocable". Two questions led to the split: one is affiliation to the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the other the opening of union membership to whites.

MWASA was formed out of the Writers Association of South Africa which succeeded the government banning in 1977 of the Union of Black Journalists. The Writers Association was disbanded in 1981 and, in its place, MWASA was organised as a union of not only journalists but all black workers in the media industry. Zwelakhe Sisulu, president of MWASA, emerged from the 1980 annual congress at which a resolution to dissolve the Writers Association was taken to announce to the press that "we have a mandate to form a new black union — no whites allowed" (*Afrika*, 24.10.80). By black is meant all workers from the politically disadvantaged ethnic groups in South Africa. Thus MWASA was founded upon a constitution which made it a blacks-only union.

The split in the union came to a head during the 1984 annual congress. The Border and Western Cape regions of MWASA, two regions comprising a minority faction in view of the opposition of the three regions representing the strongholds of MWASA in Natal, Southern and Northern Transvaal, came to conference obdurately determined to coerce MWASA into affiliation to UDF and opening membership to whites. The obduracy and coerciveness of the minority faction is evident from the report of Jon Quelane (*op. cit.*), himself a member of MWASA, and from whose report it is worth quoting excerpts at some length:

When the multiracial United Democratic Front was formed last year, the Western Cape region of MWASA formally affiliated and was immediately rapped on the knuckles by the other regions for taking such a step without the approval of a MWASA congress or national council.

When the region not only became adamant in its affiliation but also urged the national body to open its doors to all races, the beginning of the end had come and it was only a matter of time before the split became

real. (The region) argued that people were people and colour played no part.

The Western Cape and Border regions remained adamant that whites should be included in the union and that MWASA should affiliate to the UDF at national level — but they did not show proof of whites applying for MWASA membership.

At the end of congress, Border and Western Cape decided that the two regions' views should prevail over the views of the other three regions and the split was effected. The two regions immediately opted for the inclusion of whites into the union and said they would go ahead and affiliate to the UDF nationally. The two branches elected their own executive committee.

Whether a black organisation should be split by a minority on an issue such as opening its membership to whites is a question addressed later in this article. First, we look at the policy evolved by some trade unions towards the UDF and the rival black consciousness dominated National Forum Committee (NFC). In the rest of the article critical attention is focused on the UDF because it is affiliation to UDF which has apparently caused the break up of MWASA and because it is the attitude to blacks-only organisations by UDF or some of its adherents, like the MWASA minority faction, which is questioned. However, in the course of the criticism, some blacks-only organisations like the Black Allied Workers Union in the '70s, or the failure of black consciousness to cultivate alliances with progressive white groups and the lack of concern shown particularly by MWASA's majority (and minority) faction in the efforts to unite all the independent black trade unions in a single federation, are not exonerated.

### NFC, UDF and the trade unions

The most important grouping of independent black trade unions, the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), together with the Food and Canning Workers Union, the General Workers Union and the Cape Town Municipal Workers Association, have all refused to join either the NFC or the UDF. However, in their capacity as individuals, many union members have joined and are playing important roles in either



the NFC or UDF. Insofar as the general aims of these organisations are progressive, participation by individual union members is in fact encouraged by the unions which have decided to stay out as unions. There are three main reasons why these unions decided not to join either NFC or UDF.

Firstly, they believe that they must not be diverted from their most urgent task of creating a unity of all the independent black trade unions. "Trade union unity", according to the FOSATU annual report, "is also crucial if the unions are going to be able to effectively work with the new political organisations that are being formed in opposition to the government proposals". The new organisations are the NFC and UDF and the proposals referred to concern the new constitutions for a racist tri-cameral parliament.

Secondly, "FOSATU along with other major independent unions decided not to affiliate to these organisations because of the very different working structures of our union and these organisations". Trade unions are, in the main, single class organisations whose leadership, whether working class or not, act (or ought to act) on the basis of a mandate from their worker members. In South Africa the emergence of the FOSATU unions and the others which also decided against affiliation to NFC and UDF is based very strongly upon shop-floor democracy, workers mandates and thus the fullest possible participation by members in the policy making processes of the union. This, the unions are pointing out, is in sharp contrast to the structure of the NFC or UDF. The NFC and UDF are multi-class in structure and, as is the tendency with organisations of this nature, they are dominated by non-working class representatives. Moreover, an overwhelming majority of the organisations affiliated, particularly to the UDF, are neither mass nor workers-based. They are comprised of a small number of individuals organised as committees to act as pressure groups around some particular issues. The membership of these committees has some degree of overlap as often their individual members belong to more than one committee. Yet each committee is regarded as an organisation for the purpose of affiliation to the NFC and UDF, and thus accorded a representational status equal to that of mass-based organisations. Such an arrangement is in conflict with unions whose mandates derive from the thousands of workers they represent.

The third reason why some of the major unions are not in either NFC or UDF is that these organisations are in conflict with each other. The distinct political tendencies represented by each of these organisations are reproduced within sections of the working class: some union members support the NFC, others support the UDF, but beyond them are even greater sections which cannot be said to support either as yet. The unions have argued that affiliation to one or other or both would introduce into their ranks political conflicts with the effect of sowing disunity within each union and thus retarding the all-important task of forging a new unity of all the independent black trade unions. According to FOSATU's annual report: "FOSATU also wanted to avoid carrying political differences between these organisations into our membership".

In contrast to the stand adopted by FOSATU and the other unions mentioned above, there are some major unions which have affiliated to both the NFC and UDF. Notable amongst these are the Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa (CCAWUSA) and the trade union grouping federated under the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA). These unions have to date not elaborated on their reasons for affiliating to both organisations. Arguably, affiliation to both could be one way of containing the political divisions in their memberships.

#### Media workers

The division in political allegiances of union members is

nowhere sharper than in MWASA. Two factors contribute to making MWASA perhaps the most politicised independent union in South Africa. It originates in black consciousness and is still prominently black consciousness in orientation — this explains why the majority of MWASA members will not affiliate to UDF which is dominated by anti-black consciousness groups. It was founded by a highly articulate group of journalists committed to what they described as a journalism of liberation. As the Writers Association and, before them the Union of Black Journalists, every member was politically conscious and committed to national liberation; as MWASA it opened its doors to all black workers in the media industry but, despite this, remains a very small union with a membership each of whom is politically conscious and supporting one or other of the political tendencies prevailing in the national liberation movement in South Africa. In order to contain all these diverse political tendencies, MWASA has had a very good reason to follow the example of unions like FOSATU which have kept out of both NFC and UDF. Alternatively, it could have chosen to follow the example of CCAWUSA and CUSA which have affiliated to both.

But, rather than seek to influence MWASA, in a democratic fashion, to follow one or another of these strategies, the minority faction in MWASA has tried to coerce the majority to have MWASA affiliated to UDF only. The minority has also tried to coerce the union into opening its membership to whites — though it could not produce a single white person who wished to apply for MWASA membership. Failing to coerce the union, the minority has declared itself to be the union. In the final analysis, the minority has shown that it has no regard for democracy and unity within the union.

#### 'Non-racial democrats'

Yet in the media of the South African liberal establishment this minority has earned itself the accolade of 'non-racial democrats'. People are people and colour plays no part in the struggle, a refrain very much like the Tory election poster "Labour says they are black — the Tories say they are British", is what according to the liberal press makes them 'non-racial democrats'. They oppose black organisation, a 'non-racialism' by which they mean the inclusion of one, two or three but rarely more than a dozen whites in organisations with hundreds and thousands of blacks. This is non-racialism, which they proclaim with much breast-beating, is not anti-racist. It is more akin to the non-racialism which bosses, like the Tories, are sometimes heard to profess: tokenism or inverted racism. Why must black organisations cease to be black, to call themselves black, just because they include a handful of whites?

#### Autonomy of organisation

What manner of politics is it that causes open rifts in unions, and resorts to coercion? In the best socialist traditions we do not encourage breakaway unions and the setting up of 'red unions' in opposition to existing unions even when we think they do not represent the best interests of the workers. As a principle, we can only depart from this tradition under extremely exceptional circumstances; even then, we must be certain of enjoying the support of the overwhelming majority of members. This principle is equally applicable to black organisation and women's organisation or to any form of self-organisation by any group of oppressed people in response to their oppression. To them must always belong the last word as to how they organise themselves as a whole or as a section.

'People are people and colour plays no part' obscures a condition of oppression under capitalism and, therefore, serves the interests of capitalism. Because under capitalism people are not simply people without race: they are sex-ed, colour-ed and, what is more, class-ed. Women, blacks and workers each as a group suffer in very particular ways. Each is



defined by a particular set of oppressive and exploitative social relations which give rise to particular forms of consciousness and corresponding forms of self-organisation.

This does not mean a mechanical one to one correspondence between consciousness and organisation on the one hand and social relations on the other. Nor does it mean a homogenous consciousness in any single organisation. A group of blacks may believe that their condition as black oppressed means they must form an organisation which is working class or exclusively black, while another group of blacks may believe that the same condition implies the contrary. A group of women may believe the condition of their oppression means they must organise themselves as women or black women, whereas another group of women may think otherwise. Thus the same experience does not always lead to the same conclusion, and between the poles of opposite conclusions to which we have pointed there is a wide variety of others. Nevertheless, each form of consciousness and each form of organisation is a response to conditions of oppression. These forms are self-organisation or grassroot mobilisation. Each is determined to a large measure by the way people interpret their experience of the conditions of oppression or the social relations of oppression and exploitation.

We cannot claim that one interpretation of experience is valid and the others not. To do so would not only be arrogant but also counterproductive as in the case of the split in MWASA. What we must accept and learn to constructively live with are the multiplicity of these forms of consciousness and organisation. We must recognise the autonomy of each organisation which comes into existence in response to oppression. As socialists our duty must be to support the self-organisation of blacks, workers and women, and not to split organisations just because they do not admit non-blacks, non-workers and non-women. MWASA, for example, need not be a blacks-only union or a union open to blacks and whites. Organisations of both types thrive inside South Africa so that there is nothing in the conditions of oppression of blacks which makes one type of union a necessity and the others not a necessity — the privileging of one at the expense of the other takes place only in the realms of reactionary ideology. In the case of MWASA what we are faced with is a union, the majority of whose members want their union to be open to blacks only. We have no choice but to respect that wish, however much we may disagree and argue, democratically it must be stressed, against its advisability.

### Single cause underlies all recent splits

Since the late '70s, we have witnessed similar splits taking place in other unions and organisations like, for example, the Black Municipal Workers Union (BMWU) and the Azanian Students Organisation (AZASO). Both these organisations have strong foundations in black consciousness: their names proclaim these foundations. The split in each case took the form of a coup by anti black consciousness elements. The victory of these elements in the BMWU was reinforced by renaming the union 'Municipal and General Workers Union' to disassociate itself from black consciousness — that 'workers are workers, not black' is a variation upon the theme 'people are people and colour does not play a part'. The group in control of AZASO has not had the strength yet to shed 'Azanian' from the name of the organisation.

There is also the case of the South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU) which broke away from the Black Allied Workers Union (BAWU). This split was justifiable as an exception to the principle that we do not split unions. The split was justified not because BAWU was controlled by a group representing a right wing appropriation of black consciousness, disastrous though this could be for the working class movement. The split was justified because BAWU, despite

pretensions, was not a trade union; it was a social welfare organisation detracting workers from organising themselves as a union. BAWU's aims included the improvement of "workers' knowledge through general and specialised (occupational) educational programmes, thus bettering workers' skill and know-how by conducting: a) leadership courses; b) labouring seminars; c) lectures and specialised commercial courses" and "preparing (workers) to acquire school certificates which will put them in good stead for promotion". That SAAWU's formation and the split from BAWU was correct was demonstrated by SAAWU's subsequent phenomenal growth and influence as a community-linked trade union.

It can be argued that none of these splits, notwithstanding the laudable exception in SAAWU's case, had any relationship to the imperatives of actual struggle inside South Africa. Two problems inside South Africa are crying out for an urgent solution: unity of the independent black trade unions and the maximisation of areas in which united action by the trade unions and all the popular organisations can be achieved. None of the splits, including one in MWASA, have anything to do with unity. Each split has sown division where there was unity or a potential for unity in action. This is because each split can be traced to a motivation outside South Africa, to the imperative of an exiled organisation desperate, after its conspicuous absence in 1976, the year of the Soweto uprising, to stake a visible presence inside South Africa in order to retain international credibility, gain international prestige and be looked upon as the 'authentic and sole representative' of the people and all the workers in South Africa! It is not for us to name the organisation even though its identity, in order to demonstrate its presence, has to be and is made abundantly clear by those of its proponents responsible for the splits. In the case of SAAWU, since its formation, it has been subjected by sections of its leadership to play a highly tendentious role in furtherance of the need for this kind of presence.

The direction of all factions which have split unions and other organisations is one-way, to the UDF. This is because the UDF is itself a creation to satisfy the need for an internal surrogate. It carries out its function to unite all opposition from left to right to the constitutional proposals in the manner of a surrogate. Whether the UDF will in future live up to this image is a question which remains open at the present time. Because within the UDF there are individuals urging it to be responsive to the demands of the powerful groupings of trade unions which are not a part of UDF and which are independent groupings of trade unions which are not a part of UDF and which are independent of external pressure to act as surrogates. But it is the independence of the powerful groupings of trade unions which also explains the formation of UDF, the procrastinations and prevarications of the pro-UDF unions on trade union unity, and the fact that splits have taken place in the weak ones.

The development of independent black trade unions is the most remarkable achievement of our struggle in the last ten years. They are not the only mass-based organisations with a degree of real permanence that are being formed within the black working class. Their growth threatens to influence the course of national liberation in ways qualitatively different from the past. They point to the primacy of a political struggle waged internally in terms of mass organisations with a working class perspective. They represent a radical departure from a preoccupation with the capacity of an external organisation to initiate struggles, military or otherwise, from outside. Above all, the most powerful of the unions are independent of organisations in exile. It is in these respects that the trade unions pose a threat to any exiled organisation making claims of authentic and sole representation. Their power has thus to be circumvented by means such as the formation of the UDF. This explains why the splits: the weak unfederated unions must be split in order to create pro-UDF unions and



make up for the loss of influence in the recent development of the independent black trade union movement. This explains why the unions which are a result of split unions are not only the most ardent members of UDF but are the very ones dragging their feet on the question of trade union unity.

The split in MWASA is not an exception. It is one of a pattern with other splits in the unions. Though the split was acted out in terms of opening MWASA to whites, the blacks-only constitution of MWASA plays an insignificant part as against the grand design to create surrogates to counterpose the independent power of the trade unions. After all there are no whites who wished to join MWASA. As for the other reason for the split, namely affiliation to UDF, this shows too that an exclusively black union is not the important issue it is made out to be because affiliated to UDF are ethnically based organisations like the Indian Congresses – their 'African' vice-presidents act as tokens of non-ethnicity – to which MWASA's pro-UDF faction has not been heard to object. In terms of the thrust of the last 15 years to move away from 'Indian', 'Coloured' and 'African' organisations and to create single organisations to embrace all the oppressed blacks the resuscitation of an Indian Congress is a retrograde step of a much lower order than a blacks-only organisation, if indeed it can be said that the type of organisation to which MWASA's pro-UDF faction aspires, in which 'colour plays no part', is of a higher order. But the kind of opportunism bred by a need to give a visible presence to an external organisation means that anything can be seized upon to make an issue on which to split a union.

The split in MWASA is one that should never have taken place. The minority faction which has caused the split has gained no more advantage in associating freely with the UDF. First, this faction is already a part of UDF. Its individual members belong to other organisations affiliated to the UDF. This role they exercise as a matter of right for any individual trade unionist to join whatever political organisation. In fact within the majority faction are individuals whose political loyalties are to the UDF but who recognise that a union must not be split on the question of affiliation to a political organisation. Second, the MWASA regional branches to which the minority faction belong are affiliated to the UDF. They took the step unilaterally, "without the approval of a MWASA congress or national council" (Jon Quelane). They acted this way because, as a minority, they could never have won MWASA to affiliate to the UDF.

Why then split MWASA on what is objectively a non-issue – affiliation to UDF? Because the tendentious role played by this minority faction and their perception of pre-empting union power through the UDF is seen by them as more important than unity within the union and between the unions. Trailing behind the UDF-affiliated unions are prevaricating on trade union unity, the minority faction has shown little or no concern in the moves to unite the independent black unions under a new and wider federation. The black consciousness trade unions outside CUSA must also be criticised for having given the trade union unity talks a wide berth and, so too, must the majority faction in MWASA. As in any organisation unity, amidst differences because no organisation is homogeneous, is maintained by concern with urgent and practical tasks and not with sectarian viewpoints. If MWASA as a whole had concerned itself with the unity of the trade unions the split could perhaps have been over-ridden.

#### **Warning unheeded by majority**

The split in MWASA has simmered since early 1980 when the union was preparing itself for the transition from being a writers' only union to a union open to all black workers in the media industry. This change was opposed by some of those who now constitute a part of the minority faction. They argued that MWASA must 'leave the workers alone' and get



**UDF President Albertina Sisulu**

on with the business of organising journalists only. What they really meant was that by throwing MWASA open to all workers in the media industry, MWASA would not enjoy the status of a professional association and, as such, would not be attractive to white journalists who were already members of the white South African Society of Journalists. They had in fact brought to the 1980 conference two motions which they never tabled for consideration by conference but which were aimed to open the union to white journalists. It was in the context of these currents that MWASA president Sisulu announced "we have a mandate to form a new black union – no whites allowed".

Two years later, in 1982, the tensions inside MWASA must have built up to such an extent that the acting president Charles Nqakula, in his message to conference, made a special plea to the black consciousness majority faction. Speaking as a supporter of black consciousness, he warned of the marginalisation and splits which would follow an inflexible 'blacks-only' position on all questions and urged MWASA to seek alliances with other independent unions regardless of whether they were led by whites or not. It is timely to recall his words:

Our organisation cannot live in isolation from other trade unions in the country. We should go out and identify with trade unions with which we share mutual ideals. By its very nature, our organisation could play an important role in the trade union movement in this country. What we need to do to achieve this is just to take the right form and shape, which will not make us a square peg in a round hole.

MWASA is basically a black consciousness organisation and, to me, this is still the best stance we should adopt. There will be divisions in our ranks, however, if we refuse to accept that our application of the black consciousness principle in this decade cannot be the same as in the past decade.



Application of this theme, in this decade, should be designed to challenge the structures that the white man has put up in the socio-political arena of the country, and it should also be designed to disprove the myth of superiority which has been the white man's mantle in this country for more than 300 years.

This means we must invariably find ourselves engaged in talks with white workers whom we consider worth talking to; we must be involved in seminars involving whites, and we must organise our own workshops where whites we consider useful will help out.

We cannot refuse to talk to some of the trade unions in this country because they have white leadership. If they are worth talking to, then we must talk to them. Our ranks, however, should be closed until, at least, we have fashioned ourselves into a major unit of all workers in the media so as to influence the course of events in the media, in general, and in the country, in particular.

Nqakula has been proved correct in his warning that unless black consciousness was made relevant to the '80s there would be a division in the ranks of MWASA. The split in MWASA is, of course, not about how to make black consciousness relevant today. In fact, the minority faction decries black consciousness and asserts that 'colour has no part to play' in the struggle. That is why Nqakula's plea was specially addressed to the black consciousness majority faction to bend its principles in a way that would make possible co-operation with black unions with whites in their leadership. In this way, MWASA, without dissolving its black consciousness position, could have averted a split developing on account of a bogus non-racialism. To be sure, black consciousness is not necessarily made relevant by opening its organisations to whites. But it does operate on a terrain where alliances are necessary: alliances with black organisations which do not subscribe to black consciousness and, as such, will include whites in their ranks, or alliances with whites opposed to apartheid. There are many whites who are not only radical or marxist but who also have an empathy for black consciousness and recognise the need for autonomous black organisations. But black consciousness inside the country has failed to develop in ways that would have attracted this group of whites into its ranks. Instead, it has continued to repulse them by casting them all in the role of the white oppressor. For example, the operation of the

blacks-only principle on all questions makes joint platforms between NFC and FOSATU or affiliation to NFC impossible even though FOSATU has stated its support for the general aims of the NFC and its readiness to share platforms on matters of common interest. The consequences for black consciousness have been disastrous if the rise of the UDF and the more powerful trade unions, occupying more and more of the political space which only ten years ago belonged exclusively to black consciousness, are anything to go by. Such was the warning carried in Nqakula's message.

Obviously, the message was lost to both factions of MWASA at its 1984 congress. In the message is contained all the elements that would have accommodated the conflicting political tendencies within a democratic and united MWASA. The union is "Basically a black consciousness organisation", Nqakula said, so the majority faction could not have lost its pre-eminence in the union. But what this faction has not heeded in the message is to talk to and work with other trade unions, regardless of whether they are led by whites or not. On the other hand the minority faction could have proved its earnestness to open the union to whites in only one way: they could have argued for MWASA to take its place alongside all the unions which are at the present time seriously engaged in the task of creating a unity of the independent trade unions. Some of these unions do not only have white members but also have whites sharing the leadership role with black members. Nqakula's message unmistakably pointed in this direction: talk to *any* trade unions which are worth talking to. In concrete terms this could only mean participation by MWASA in the trade union unity talks and the new federation which is to follow these talks. But this message is equally unheeded by the minority faction to whom UDF is top priority.

The majority challenge at the time is not affiliation to UDF but the unity of the trade unions. It is a challenge which must be faced by each trade union united in its ranks. It is a challenge which can be the more easily met if the pro-UDF-only unions cease playing a tendentious role which divides rather than unites, if the black consciousness unions realise that their place is in a united trade union movement, and if the NFC and UDF realise that each of their organisations is a valid response to racial oppression.

Roseinnes Phale

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# CAPE OF TORMENTS— CAPE OF NO HOPE

reviewed by V A February

Books on slavery do not make for pleasant reading. They fascinate and send tremors down the spine, very much like an encounter with, for example the Green Mamba in Africa. Here after all one finds the sum total of man's inhumanity to man. The South African novelist, Es'kia Mphahlele once wrote that if you kill a man created in the image of God, you can never wash off the blood. Books on slavery are generally written by whites and with good reason. They, after all, are the descendants of the creators of this Western tradition of slavery. Not surprisingly therefore whites are possibly more zealous in their attempts to "wash off the blood".

Robert Ross is an English-born historian currently attached to the Institute of History and Overseas Expansion based in Leiden, the Netherlands. He has several creditable articles on history to his credit, a book on *Adam Kok's Griquas* (1976) and now he has written an important and moving book on slavery at the Cape, significantly called *Cape of Torments* (1983).\*

Slavery as a subject has not attracted much attention inside, let alone outside South Africa. When the word is nowadays used, it is generally meant to refer to the system of apartheid inside South Africa. In school books, the subject was generally glossed over or written from such a white point of view (and then only cursorily), that it never merited lots of attention. Victor de Kock has written one on slavery which is reasonably well known, called *Those in Bondage* (1950). Anna Boeseken's *Slaves and Free Blacks at the Cape 1658–1700* was published in 1977. Hengherr made slavery the subject of his M.A. thesis in 1953. There is a study by I. Edwards entitled "Towards Emancipation: A Study in South African Slavery" (1942). R.C.H. Shell published *The Impact of the Cape Slave Trade and its Population on Demography . . .* (in 1979).

Other references are to be found in numerous South African history textbooks. Many of these interpretations or accounts were coloured by the ethnic origin and ideas of the "white" historian in question. The dispossessed also expressed their views, notably members of the Non-European Unity Movement, but then mostly in publications catering for the intelligentsia of the dispossessed in and around Cape Town and environs. Ironically, the one history that was (and according to informants still is) widely used, namely *Three Hundred Years* by Mnguni (1952) was written by a member of the Unity Movement who, although in terms of tradition comes from an enslaved people (the Jews) was classified in terms of South African taxonomy as white.

The so-called Coloured, for they are the descendants of the slaves at the Cape, have largely ignored this tragic period in their life and for some very obvious reasons. In the post-slavery period, the emphasis was on assimilation, that is becoming as white as possible in order to advance within the South African setting. A dupe of South African historical forces, the "Coloureds" found themselves in such a spiral that it forced them into a process of "self-deception in self-definition". Slavery, the highest form of degradation endured by human beings, did not lend itself to any form of myth-making amongst the so-called Coloureds. The answer was a form of absolute amnesia. Similarly, the whites, and in particular the Afrikaner, preferred amnesia to a detailed analysis of slavery at the Cape.

In the Cape then, there was no literary tradition of romantic, wild and passionate slave novels, in the Mandingo vein, or reminiscent of those written by Edgar Mittelholzer (vide: *The Kaywana Trilogy*) until, of course, the Afrikaner Andre Brink appeared on the scene to fill this literary hiatus. His *An Instant in the Wind* (1976) and *Houd-Den-Bek* (1983) are masterpieces of slave eroticism in the best North American and Caribbean vein.

*Houd-Den-Bek*, his latest novel in particular, is based on a slave uprising, excellently described by Robert Ross in his book, *Cape of Torment*, and with greater precision and objectivity. Slavery at the Cape was as cruel as elsewhere in the new world. Robert Ross has written a harrowing account of slavery at the Cape, based on actual accounts and court records. This, to my mind, has never been done before, or never so systematically. Ross states that his approach is descriptive, although sensitive historian that he is, he would be the first to concede that even mere descriptions involve interpretations or at least, lend themselves to interpretation. Ross, to my mind is too conscious of his task as an historian, probing as he does in the historical minefield of South Africa, to fool himself into thinking of the historian only as an objective disinterested observer. In his article "The Teaching of South African history in Schools"\* (vide V. February, 1983, p. 96–112), the late Mr. Willem van Schoor, a prominent member of the Non-European Unity Movement spells out the problems in no uncertain terms. He maintains that there are two distinct types of historians in South Africa. Referring to the first type, the so-called Liberal class found generally amongst university professors and lecturers he says: "Their work is characterised by wide scientific research and a wealth of factual evidence . . . But, however commendable and laudable as this may be, their work is nevertheless open to severe criticism, and this because of an intellectual dishonesty which manifests itself in their would-be "objectivity". Through this "objectivity" they claim to be "fair" and "just" to all sides — to oppressors and oppressed, exploiters and exploited. But it is precisely by means of this "objectivity" that they commit the unpardonable sin of treating the forces of progress and reaction on the same basis". According to van Schoor, the "second type of 'historian' . . . are the petty pedlars of potted history, the crude, dishonest blockheads whose cheap textbooks are crammed with the crudest and most disgraceful stock of lies and distortions". (February, op. cit., p.99). These are the ones who (i) whitewash White domination (ii) . . . justify the cruel extermination, subjugation, exploitation and oppression of the subject races, (iii) . . . vilify and degrade the oppressed races and deny them their rightful place in the History of South Africa (V. February, op. cit., p.99).

*Cape of Torments*, in the typology of Willem van Schoor and to my mind, is an honest attempt "to look at history as the living reflection of the development of the productive forces and property relations" (V. February, op. cit., p.102). The study of history is after all about human relations, about the cultural and social lives of human beings. It tells us what that society was about in the past, how it developed and about the people (with names or nameless) who played an active role in it. Largely, *Cape of Torments* is about those nameless characters in South African history. To his credit, Robert Ross



has managed to rescue some of them from anonymity. Regrettably, because of the nature of the slave society, not many names are left. But, Leander Bugis, the leader of the Hanglip maroon community is rescued from anonymity and assigned an almost Robin Hoodesque place in South African history by Robert Ross, a feat of no mean ability.

The central question in *Cape of Torments* is, of course, the pattern of revolt among the slaves against their inhuman treatment at the Cape and the reason for the absence of any form of combined rebellion. The book is divided into several chapters although they seem to be more in the nature of commentaries on various aspects of slavery and the slave community rather than interconnecting chapters. Ross starts off with a fairly detailed introduction in which he reveals in no uncertain terms his attitude towards slavery and the slave system at the Cape. It was cruel in the extreme.

"The government of the Dutch East India Company was concerned to keep the monopoly of force in its own hands" (p.2). Ross continues: "For more serious offences they were subject to a legal system that exacted punishments of the utmost barbarity . . . When the victim was the slave's masters, the condemned man would be impaled on a stake driven up his anus and left to die. If he were lucky, he would become unconscious in two days". (p.3) In his introductory chapter, Ross reveals himself as an historian who writes objectively yet not dispassionately about slavery, someone capable of situating his work about the past, firmly within the present. Thus, he reminds us that the beautiful seventeenth century Cape Dutch gable houses, masterpieces of architecture were "built by slaves and with proceeds of the exploitation of slave labour . . . Beautiful they may be, but neither they nor the society that built them can be the object of romanticism. The petals of the protea are as poisonous as those of the magnolia." (p.2).

*Cape of Torments* is concerned with resistance and not acquiescence, the ways in which slaves tried to improve their lot. Ross is particularly concerned about the absence of any combined rebellion amongst the slaves at the Cape. Relying on Eugene Genovese's eight conditions as a sine qua non for rebellion among slave communities in the new world, Ross concludes that only one was present, namely foreign-born slaves decisively outnumbering the Creoles. For the rest, the small sizes of the slave communities, the scattered farms and the few slaves on them, the control of the master, the general absence of a community — all these factors contributed to the absence of a culture of resistance. Rebellion took on the form of individual efforts. At the Cape no Berbice or Toussaint L' Ouverture, although the leader of the rebellion at Hanglip, Leander Bougis, certainly had all the makings of a folk hero.

Ross describes in detail the life of the slaves at the Cape, their areas of origin (The Indonesian Isles, Bengal, South India and Sri Lanka, Madagascar and the East African Coast). He gives a harrowing account of the problems of existence encountered by the slaves at the Cape, the cruelty of institutionalised justice or barbarity. He vividly recreates slave life at the Cape, and gives an indication of the language situation in the eighteenth century where the main languages were Dutch, Malay and Portuguese Creole. On Afrikaans he states emphatically: "Afrikaans, then, is a language created out of the interaction of slaves (and Khoisan) with Europeans. In this sense, too, it is a paradigm for the construction of slave culture" (p.15).

In his discussion of the structure of domination, Robert Ross seems to shift the guilt onto the mandoor (driver) and the knegten, thus seeming to appear as an apologist for the master. He of all people must surely know that the master shared full responsibility for the system of institutionalised violence and barbarity at the Cape during slavery. In fact Ross, true to himself and never forgetting the parallel with the modern system of oppression inside South Africa, constantly

reminds us of it: "Then, as now, the sjambok, a hippopotamus hide whip was the symbol of white baasskap in South Africa" (p.33).

His remarks on the interaction between the slaves and the Khoisan is characterised by the same sensitivity which he has shown right through the book. He manoeuvres through this veritable mine-field with skill and diplomacy, revealing how the slaves fled and found refuge with the San, how they were sometimes betrayed to the white masters and even taken back by the Khoi, and how all this could not prevent some form of sleeping together, between the slaves and the Khoi which in turn led to greater tension. But, Ross concludes, "despite such tensions, the very similar positions of slaves and Khoi in respect to white exploitation slowly led to an increasing accommodation between them" (p.47). Nowhere is slavery at the Cape so clearly revealed than in "the pattern of individual, uncoordinated resistance . . . the realisation that they had no hope of turning the whole of Cape society upside down through combined rebellion" (p.117).

Ross deals with the relationship between the sailors and the slaves — an important element in the efforts of the slaves to escape on the ships which touched at the Cape periodically. He gives them a similar vivid account of slave-Xhosa relationships. It testifies to the power of the author that one is assailed with a feeling of revulsion in reading his account of slavery at the Cape. The Dutch in the Netherlands have much to answer for.

His most interesting chapter is then on Leander Bougis and Hanglip. This is also evident in his style. Here, we have the makings of a true folk hero. Hanglip and its slave rebel community may not have been Berbice; yet it had all the elements of romance, rebellion, resistance against injustice, the yearning for freedom, violence in extreme forms. Robert Ross certainly has rescued Leander Bougis from obscurity, without trying to turn him into a folk hero for the so-called "Coloureds", or a sex partner in Andre Brink style for some lost white woman in South Africa. His description of the slave rebellion led by Galant (turned into a novel by Brink: vide: *Houd-Den-Bek (1983)*), makes for similar breathless reading.

This is the best and most vivid account of slavery at the Cape that I have ever come across. The book has an interesting appendix, a very useful bibliography and excellent footnotes. This work merits close study and constant reading. It is an important record of slavery and slave rebellions at the Cape. At the same time it is an indictment of early South African society. As such, *Cape of Torment* is a good piece of resistance literature.

Ross does not hesitate to draw comparisons between the past system of oppression and the present system of apartheid. As an historian, he reminds his fellow historians "to keep matters in perspective, never to let them escape from the context in which they occurred. At the Cape of Good Hope, that context was exceedingly unpleasant for the majority of those who lived there, the slaves and, increasingly the Khoisan" (pp. 9–10).

That context is still exceedingly unpleasant for the dispossessed in 1984.

\*"From The Arsenal" — V.A. February, Leiden Studiesentrum, Leiden, 1983.

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\* *Cape of Torments — Slavery and Resistance in South Africa* (Routledge £10.95).