

THE AIM OF AZANIA WORKER

1. The struggle for national liberation in South Africa is a struggle against white domination and racial oppression of the majority black population. White domination and racism are inextricably woven into the economic development of capitalism in South Africa. The elimination of white domination and racism can only be completed after the disappearance of capitalism. Thus the struggle for national liberation is a combined one with the struggle for socialism.

2. The leading role in the struggle for socialism is played by the working class. In South Africa at the present time, this role belongs to the black working class in industry, mining, agriculture and the domestic service of white households. The black workers and their families constitute not only a majority of the population but are also the most oppressed and most exploited section of the population and working class in South Africa.

3. The working class can only secure its leading role in the combined struggle for national liberation and socialism through its own independent political working class organisation which expresses its specific political, economic and social demands. We thus fully support the project of creating an independent political organisation of the working class in South Africa.

4. An independent political organisation of the working class is necessary because:

i) without an organisation of their own the workers will never in their own name and interests be able to struggle for, assume and maintain power; worker's power is a necessary condition for successful and meaningful social change that will bring an end to racism and capitalism and usher in a period of transition to socialism, an independent political working class organisation is the means by which the working class secures its interests and representation in any political conjuncture, now and in the future;

ii) without an organisation of their own the workers will not be able to press within the popular and national liberation struggle the political, economic and social demands of the working class and other dominated classes: the example of many former colonial countries shows that the popular and national struggles often end by serving the interests of indigenous middle class elites rather than those of workers and other toiling classes.

5. An independent political organisation of the working class can only be created out of the political and trade union organisations and the various socialist currents which exist at the time. For this organisation to have deep roots and a mass base in the working class itself, it cannot be built in isolation from the working class and the organisations in which the workers presently find themselves, nor can it be built by any one socialist current in isolation from

all others actively involved in workers' and mass struggles. There is a need, as a step towards the building of a working class organisation for all socialists to engage in discussion. Our journal is offered as an open medium of expression to all socialists actively involved in struggles, and remains non-sectarian in that it will publish contributions which may not agree with our own.

6. Without a relevant theory and practice of social change the working class can have no organisation worthy of its leading role. Our journal is further offered as a forum in which socialists from all political currents within the trade unions, student and national liberation movements can contribute towards the development of a relevant theory and practice of social change, and in which they can exchange experiences and lessons drawn from present and past struggles.

7. In a world dominated by capitalism the struggle against capitalism is an international one. We cannot therefore conceive of a political organisation of the working class in South Africa in isolation from the organisations, experience and history of the working class and toiling masses in other countries of the world. We offer our journal as a link between the struggle in South Africa and the struggles in other countries and, to this end, extend an invitation to socialists in other parts of the world to join us in developing a relevant theory and practice of social change and share with us their experiences of struggles in a manner relevant to the workers' struggle in South Africa. In particular we seek contribution of articles which will help in the understanding of questions such as race, class, culture, ideology, consciousness and subjectivity.

AZANIA WORKER
BM BOX 4863,
LONDON WC1N 3XX

No 8. August 1987 (Vol 3. No 3)

CONTENTS

Editorial	3
South African Battleground by Baruch Hirson.....	5

EDITORIAL

Azania Worker Number 8
(Volume 3 Number 3)
August 1987

The current phase of struggle in South Africa abounds in debates some of which are conducted with a ferocity equalling that of the struggle between the oppressors and oppressed. One of the debates is on the Freedom Charter, the programmatic declaration of the African National Congress. This is an old debate which resurfaced about ten years ago at the same time as the beginning of the present upsurge of militant struggle.

At the beginning of this period, the argument centred on whether the Freedom Charter is a revolutionary communist document, as the South African government makes out, or whether the Freedom Charter is no more revolutionary than the beliefs upheld by "respectable" parliamentary social democratic parties in Western capitalist countries and thus compatible with welfare capitalism. The latter view was put forth by academics and clergymen who were campaigning for the unbanning of the Freedom Charter by the government.

The implication of the argument was that if the Freedom Charter is not a revolutionary communist document then the government must lift the ban on its publication and circulation inside South Africa. A series of such interventions, in the press as well as appeals to, and sometimes blatant defiance of, the Censorship Board, ultimately led to the unbanning of the Freedom Charter (provided it was not published and issued by a banned organisation).

In the last few years, the terms of the debate over the Freedom Charter have shifted to the left. No more a debate between rightists and centrists over the banning and unbanning of the Freedom Charter. Now, it is a debate, conducted almost exclusively on the left side of centre, on whether the Freedom Charter adequately addresses the challenges of a national liberation struggle in conditions which have yielded a proletariat as the most important element of the forces in struggle against oppression.

The debate is occasioned by developments in the mass movement, particularly the working

class movement emerging out of the new trade unions formed in the last decade. The workers are increasingly playing a self-conscious role in the national struggles, influencing as well as being influenced by the greater spread and popularity currently enjoyed by socialist ideas. The question being asked is what has the working class and other exploited classes to gain from a struggle for formal national liberation?

The need for the development of a working class politics and a working class political organisation was first spelt from inside the democratic mass movement in a speech made by Joe Foster in 1982 as general secretary of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU). Until then such need was often expressed by intellectuals or small groups divorced from the main streams of the mass movement.

In the time since Foster enunciated FOSATU's political project, a number of leading trade unions have taken the first steps towards the creation of a working class politics. Among other initiatives, they have begun to look beyond the Freedom Charter or any available programme of minimum or elementary democratic rights. The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), in addition to adopting the Freedom Charter, have each in their own individual ways, made declarations characterising their struggles as struggles for socialism. NUMSA, in particular, has resolved to formulate a working class programme of political and social demands to complement the minimum demands contained in the Freedom Charter.

Broadly speaking, there are three protagonists to the debate. First, the conservationists, mainly the ANC and its more ardent supporters inside the country. They see no need to complement or transcend the Freedom Charter. Before she was murdered, Ruth First, arguably the ANC's most perceptive thinker, had said that "one can no longer evaluate ANC policy merely by the Freedom Charter". This was an admission of the inadequacy of the Freedom Charter which, according to First, had now to be looked at in conjunction with the *Strategy and Tactics* document adopted by the ANC in 1969.

In contrast to the Freedom Charter, the *Strategy and Tactics* document acknowledges the leading role of the working class and "speaks of a speedy progression from formal liberation to genuine and lasting emancipation as a result of the actions of the working class and its class consciousness, in its struggle for liberation and socialism" (Emphasis by Ruth First, ROAPE 11 p98). But, as others have already observed, the ANC has shelved this more radical document in order to consolidate its black middle class support and, it may now be added, to woo the City of London, white South African businessmen to Lusaka and "Afrikaner dissidents" to Dakar.

Secondly, there are those who though they strongly support the retention of the Freedom Charter do so from a left wing perspective. They agree that the Freedom Charter is not socialist. But they argue that under South African conditions even the demands of the Charter cannot be realised short of socialism. Partly for this reason, they do not advocate the creation of a workers' political organisation or the adoption of a socialist programme.

Thirdly, there is the Foster or ex-FOSATU group strongly represented inside the industrial unions such as the NUM, NUMSA and CCAWUSA, which strives to have a working class programme spelt out and ultimately aims to found a working class political movement.

The most optimistic feature of this particular debate is that all three protagonists are working together in the trade unions, particularly those affiliated to COSATU. This could mean the emergence of policies which, though not entirely socialist, will bear the strong influence of the working class.

But it must be stated that the debate is marred by coercive and desperate methods - the threat of the "necklace" always looming large - which some supporters of the Freedom Charter use against left-wing critics of the charter. These supporters are bent on stifling any debate on the Freedom Charter and preventing the emergence of a working class programme which they fear will transcend the Freedom Charter and cut the grass under the feet of the ANC.

As one example among several constituting a pattern, we need only look at the recent

machinations of a clique inside Cosatu which disrupted the congress to launch a larger Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa (CCAWUSA). After the congress had closed, as a result of the disruption, and most delegates had left for home, this clique convened their own meeting at which they adopted the Freedom Charter and elected a "national executive committee". At a "press conference" afterwards, they presented their committee as the National Executive Committee of CCAWUSA and their adoption of the Freedom Charter as the outcome of the CCAWUSA congress. It does not serve the cause of the democratic mass movement for this act of piracy to be given a semblance of legitimacy in papers such as *The New Nation* and *The Weekly Mail*.

* * * * *

This issue of *Azania Worker* is given wholly to an article pertinent to the debate on the Freedom Charter and a working class programme. The article also addresses the upsurge of popular struggles which have engulfed South Africa since 1984, and some aspects of the sanctions campaign. Baruch Hirson, the author, needs very little introduction from us: after serving a political sentence of 9 years in a South African prison he wrote *Year of Fire, Year of Ash (The Soweto Revolt: Roots of a Revolution?)*, (1979) and is shortly to have published a second book on the making of the African working class in South Africa in the period 1930-47.

A Marxist since the early 40s, Hirson, addressing his remarks particularly to the trade union Left, calls for "the formation of a qualitatively different kind of organisation, in which a programme of social transformation must be firmly entrenched." He argues for a socialist politics not tainted in any way by black nationalism or the kind of politics which stresses skin colour. Whether the founding of such a movement on a mass basis is possible at the present moment is a moot point on the Left. Some of the arguments he deploys to sustain his plea for what he conceives as a thoroughly socialist politics will be found to be most controversial. We can only hope that Hirson's views will stimulate a deeper debate on the quality and appropriateness of a socially transformative politics.

SOUTH AFRICAN BATTLEFIELD¹

by Baruch Hirson

One hundred years ago, when colonial expansion was at its height, and Britain sought gold to under-pin sterling and expand world trade, this precious metal was discovered on the Witwatersrand. Mining towns were opened up in and around Johannesburg, and capital to develop the mines poured in from the finance houses of Europe, with London leading the way. The mines were situated inside the Boer republic, and to secure their control the British Colonial Office, in alliance with the financiers, tried first to destabilize, then to hijack, and finally, in a predatory war, annexed the Transvaal. Henceforth the country was considered an outpost of Imperial Britain.

To exploit the mines artisans were recruited from Europe, and black labourers drawn from across the sub-continent. In a ruthless drive for profits, the mines ate men: in the decade after the Anglo-Boer war, at least 100,000 and perhaps as many as 350,000, were killed in underground facilities, or from contracting phthisis, the deadly miner's disease. Since then, despite some improvements, the fatality rate has remained unacceptably high. When miners, white or black, came out on strike, they were ruthlessly suppressed, or shot down, by a government that worked hand-in-glove with the Randlords.

The income from gold transformed the economy of South Africa, and around the pit-heads, towns were built, and workshops established. Ultimately, industry outstripped the mines in the country's economy, and employed a larger work force, but the mines had the biggest capital investment and remained the largest single employer of labour power (with a complement of over half a million in the 1980s). Gold provided 70% of the country's exports, and some 40% of state revenue; paid for the importation of goods and machinery; assured the balance of payments; and subsidised the (white) farmers.

Within a decade of the Anglo-Boer war, the country was united politically under a predominantly Boer government. The vote was in the hands of an almost all-white electorate, as was some 90% of the land, and all industry and towns within that region.²

White Towns - Black Locations

Most towns in South Africa consist of exclusively white resident suburbs, encircling a central business area.³ On the outskirts, insulated from the whites, are satellite regions, with populations larger than the town itself. These are the locations or townships housing Africans (or Coloureds or Indians);⁴ the "better" houses containing two or three rooms, with no running water, electricity, gas or water borne sewage. The roads are dirt tracks, but wide enough for armoured trucks to make a U-turn; play grounds are vacant lots. And being slums, these are the hunting grounds of criminal gangs who spread a grim toll of weekly deaths, muggings and rape.

In this atomised society, the locations are separated from the towns by fence and guards, and these barriers divide the working class on ethnic grounds. The segregation in the towns mirrors the separation of capital from labour power; and of ruler from ruled - originally designed to exclude Africans who did not serve the interests of capital, or their masters.⁵ Blacks allowed in the towns must live in single-sex compounds (on the pattern of mine workers), or in locations - except for domestic servants who occupy

² At the time of union there were a limited number of Africans on the voters roll in the Cape Province, only to be abolished in 1936. Similarly, some latitude in the purchase of land by Africans was finally stopped in 1936 - when the areathe Reserves could be expanded was fixed at some 13% of the total land surface in the country. This amount was never reached.

³ The pattern is changing as more blacks stream into the towns, moving illegally into some former white-only suburbs, and become the main customers in the central shopping area. However, the government will undoubtedly try to reverse the "invasion" of white suburbs, and in this lies the seed of further struggles.

⁴ Locations or townships, once situated alongside white suburbs, have been removed, and the houses destroyed or occupied by whites. Africans are mainly confined to locations; Coloured and Indians live in townships. The few African townships, in which property could be owned, were mostly expropriated in the 1950s and 1960s.

⁵ Col. Stallard, Report of the "Local Government Commission of Inquiry", 1922, and the basis of all future policy.

¹ A shorter version of this article first appeared in Third World Affairs, 1987.

shacks in the back yards of their employers' houses, or "locations in the sky" on the top floors of high-rise flats.

The locations are shadow-towns, not usually found in the atlases. The best known is Soweto (an acronym for South West Township), scene of the 1976/7 revolt, some 12 miles from the centre of Johannesburg; the official population of which is about half a million (whites), that of Soweto being an estimated 1.5 million. A host of other locations, whose residents service the towns to which they are attached, have held the spotlight on one or more occasion during the riots, shootings or boycotts since 1984.

It seemed like a U-turn when blacks were invited by Johannesburg's city fathers in 1986, to participate in the centenary celebrations. The approach had more to do with the financial contribution blacks might have made to the events than with any feeling of shared civic pride. The black community saw no cause for jubilation, and they rejected the approach, providing a further indication (if such was needed) of the state of revolt in the country.

Insurrection!

The current black uprising commenced in September 1984, in the Eastern Cape, when the Port Elizabeth Youth Congress took control of the locations, drove out black Councillors and policemen; closed the schools and set up "people's courts" to try criminals and suspected informers. They also instituted a boycott of white shops, as a protest against discrimination and as a means to force the government to introduce reforms and control prices in location shops.

By early 1985, with the economy in recession, black communities were in revolt against wage cuts, retrenchments and an increase in prices of basic commodities. There were protests at increased rentals in the Vaal triangle; clashes at Crossroads, the Cape squatter camp, where eighteen residents were killed by police; and clashes and deaths at Duduza, Bloemfontein, Uitenhage, Atteridgeville, Kroonstad, Langa, Tembisa, Katlehong and Welkom. A new tricameral parliament, excluding Africans,

was inaugurated⁶ and there was an impending strike in Port Elizabeth to protest against: low wages, high rents, high unemployment, increased bus fares and 2,500 redundancies in the automobile industry.

In 1986, when the authorities tried to relocate squatters camps and settlements or redundancies bit deeper, the violence increased. There were strikes for higher wages and protests in schools over poor tuition, sexual harassment by teachers, refusal to allow student representative councils, and overcrowding.

Much was won by the protesters. The students decided when to leave or when to return to school, despite draconian measures by the authorities to end the boycott; Councillors were forced to resign; rents pegged; discrimination against black shoppers in department stores halted; informers were silenced and black policemen driven out of locations. But the cost was high. Hundreds died in clashes with the army and police and many more were wounded; thousands were arrested and detained. Families were disrupted, some irreparably, when parents or children were killed or went missing; when shacks or houses were destroyed; or when men and women were dismissed from jobs at shops, factories or offices.

As the fighting intensified communities polarised and clashes across lines of ethnic, class and age differences, that previously seemed to be secondary, assumed new significance. Young radicals called "comrades" danced the toy-toyi jig at funerals,⁷ as they bore the coffins of their martyrs aloft, gave the clenched fist salute and called for the release of Mandela. They fought armoured cars with stones and Molotov cocktails and built barricades in the streets.

It was some of these youths who made "necklaces" of old car tyres filled with petrol and hung from the victims' necks; or burnt down the houses of black businessmen,

⁶ Under the Constitution Act of 1983, the head of state and of government is a President, acting through a Presidential Council. There are separate parliaments for whites, "Coloureds" and Indians, which legislate for their "own" communities. It has been claimed that the exclusion of Africans precipitated the events of 1984/6, but this has not been substantiated.

⁷ Described in the *Weekly Mail*, 16-22 May 1986, as a militant jig danced during protest events to a background of Freedom Songs.

informers, policemen and councillors, forcing them to flee the townships. They saved squatters, stopped rent increases, picketed schools or prevented removals. Here was a heroic plebeian force, with radical slogans, but with an inchoate ideology that seemed to stop with the catchwords "freedom" and "liberation". These calls resonated inside the communities, burdened by the oppressive machinery of the state, but they remained words with little political content and were not attached to tactics or strategy that could lead to "liberation".⁸

Despite undoubted sacrifices their use of lynch law is unacceptable. Assassinations do not make a revolution and inevitably rebounds on the community. It also becomes indiscriminate and has led to the death of innocent bystanders, including trade union organisers in the western Cape. The vicious methods employed by the army and police makes it difficult to condemn the comrades, who are only returning the violence to which they were subjected. Yet, their methods have not always differed from that of the gangsters who prey on the inhabitants of the locations and their policies and methods can immobilise rather than lead to significant political responses by the community or the working class. Their methods of physical violence against opponents within the townships cannot substitute for the action of the majority of the population (even if they had community support in some of their "necklacing").

The appearance of street and area committees in the location showed that resistance to the regime was, and is, very much alive. This introduced a new dimension into the South African struggle. These committees were formed to mobilise residents in the struggle and a new generation of militants was formed in the process - self reliant and not *always* following any of the political tendencies in the country. It also pointed to the shortcomings of existing political groups. In ways similar to that of Soweto in 1976/7, the youth acted ahead of a political leadership that lacked political initiative and, as in 1976, this was a new generation thrown into battle with little preparation. If the actions of

the "comrades" are to be condemned, then it is the existing political organisations that must bear most of the blame: it was their failure that left the vacuum these youth set out to fill.

The police cracked down on the comrades, as did the vigilante groups, encouraged, sponsored, paid and/or armed by the authorities. Some vigilantes were older, more conservative residents of the locations; others were migrant workers who had little sympathy with the demands of the youth. Most became the tools of councillors, businessmen or "shacklords"⁹ or of ethnic movements like Inkatha. Those in the Reserves (or Bantustans) were directed by the ruling cliques and their armed thugs, and operated with the consent of, or were promoted by the South African authorities. Ultimately, having no alternative strategy, the youth were routed. Langa (near Uitenhage), a symbol of resistance, where 21 people were killed by police when they marched to a funeral in March 1985, was demolished and the residents dumped on a new site ten miles away. Houses of UDF supporters in nearby Kwanobuhle were ransacked by over 1000 vigilantes, while spotter helicopters flew overhead. After years of successful resistance, Crossroads, in the western Cape, was demolished by vigilantes, the people removed and the area controlled by the police.

This was a defeat that bragging must not obscure. For Oliver Tambo to claim, in a BBC broadcast on the eve of the 75th anniversary of the ANC, that a victory had been won because the army had to take control of the key points of the country, was absurd. As ridiculous as the German communists in 1933, who claimed the advent of the Nazis as a victory, because they said, "After Hitler, our turn."

The Two-Pronged Struggle

By late 1985 there was a qualitative change in the struggle as conflict and civil strife became insurrection and it is the nature of this conflict that has to be understood.

⁸ There were others who were more precise in their demands, but these the media ignored. We know from some members of community committees that they have a far better idea of the problems involved.

⁹ Squatter camps like Crossroads, were taken over by strongarm men, who exacted monthly payment, in return for the right to build and occupy shanties; *Weekly Mail*, 30th May - 6th June 1986. See Josette G. Cole, "Crossroads: From Popular Resistance to Mini-Bantustan", Centre for African studies, University of Cape Town, July 1986.

To ascribe current events to a fight against white minority rule, as if it is a simple matter of skin colour, will not do. Location and squatter radicals have faced not only the armed forces of the state - black as well as white - but also Zulu migrant workers mobilised by Inkatha, Sotho gangs known as "Russians", "Homeland" armies and police, and black vigilantes. There are also clashes on the mines; between Zulu and Mpondo and between Africans and Indians in Natal; between Moutse and Ndebele in KwaNdebele, and so on. These cannot be dismissed as state inspired, despite the obvious involvement of state and local authorities, because this leaves unexplained the participation of vast numbers of vigilantes in murder and mayhem.

In this atomised society, communities have been, and are, sealed off from one another. They are divided racially in every mode of social and political life; they are separated in the rural areas and they are segregated in the towns;¹⁰ they are herded into compounds or locations where they are also divided ethnically. This segregation, buttressed by oppressive legislation, has been the target of most black political movements during the twentieth century. They have petitioned against, organised and campaigned for the repeal of some or all of this legislation.

The struggle today is still concerned with removing this repressive system, and organisations that have arisen for this purpose, the African National Congress (and the Congress Alliance), the All African Convention, the Black Consciousness Movement and so on, have all been known as "National Liberation Movements." They are also usually assumed to be fighting the same struggle as that conducted by the peoples of black Africa, after the Second World War, for independence.

Because the demand in South Africa is for the right to citizenship, there is some similarity with events north of the Limpopo. The call in colonial Africa was for National Liberation, and for the right to self government. In many cases this was achieved after negotiations with the Imperial power - but otherwise there was a bitter struggle before that independence was gained. Precisely what the people of those

territories gained from that independence is open to debate - but in South Africa the call for "independence" is meaningless, because the country is independent and political control is not vested in some colonial power.

The demands of these liberation movements in South Africa are for the vote, for citizenship, and sometimes, for land. This leads them to calls for equality and for incorporation into the existing polity. If there is any content to the demand for "independence", that can only have meaning for leaders of the Bantustans who mean to carve out their own fiefdoms. This is the role played by Inkatha - and possibly others, but there is sometimes little to distinguish the rhetoric of Inkatha from that of the ANC, the PAC and other groups.

While there can be little doubt that leaders of the Bantustans (whether they be from KwaZulu, or the Ciskei, of KwaNdebele, etc) are playing a dastardly game in their campaign of violence against their political opponents, there is still obvious similarities between many of their goals and that of the ANC, irrespective of ones likes or dislikes of their leaderships; and the same must be said about many other black organisations in the country. In fact, similarities can be found with many of the regional parties that appeared in Nigeria or Ghana in the early 1960s. Once this is recognised, the ANC will no longer appear as a sacred cow beyond all criticism, and it will be possible to assess, objectively, the nature of the several "national liberatory" movements that abound in South Africa. The ANC will then be seen as one of many organisations, all of whom have programmes that include elements of black exclusiveness and/or demands for civil rights, and all of whom stand for the retention of the capitalist system, with provisions for social security for all.

However, there is a conflict at a different level, that proceeds alongside, and incorporates the central demands of the "liberation movements", for an end to the apartheid system. This is a struggle that is directed against capital, and the state which maintains the capitalist system, and can only be consummated by the working class. It is a struggle which must lead to the complete overthrow of the existing social and economic system, and replace it by a socialist democracy, in which there will be

¹⁰ This has been tightened through the Group Areas Acts, which separates groups in the towns.

no discrimination on grounds of class, colour or sex.

The workers' struggle has never ceased, despite periods of apparent quiescence. It has taken the form of go-slows, strikes, stay-at-homes and even sabotage, in pursuit of better wages and work conditions, and of recognition of trade unions and the right to strike. It has also led to recent moves for the formulation of a "Workers' Charter", in which the workers' rights are set out.

The question might well be asked why the demands for workers' rights have been so consistently pushed into the background. It is quite obvious that the employers, and the government, should wish to curtail the working class rights to independent action. For them, the first objective is the protection of capital, and they correctly perceive the workers' struggle as the main enemy. Over the past century the employers and the state have used every means to divide the working class, and used every device to stifle independent working class action, and in this they were aided by white workers who jealously guarded their own narrow interests. This much has been clear to at least some sections of the working class, and they continued to struggle even under the severest repressive measures.

However, it has been less clear to workers that the leaders of the national liberation movements, whether wittingly or otherwise, have also followed a path that leads to the silencing of the working class. In their campaigns, and in their programmes, the liberation movements have also either tried, or succeeded in, silencing the working class. They have, perhaps, been more subtle than the ruling class - publicly stating that the workers are at the centre of the struggle for liberation, and claiming that the ultimate weapon in the hands of the oppressed people lay in the withdrawal of workers from the factories and mines. However, such withdrawals were either neglected, or on some occasions called into play on issues that did not particularly interest the majority of workers.¹¹

¹¹ For example: in 1958, and again in 1987, workers were called upon to stay at home in order to influence the way whites voted in elections. In neither case was the workers' cause advanced. On the other hand, plans to call out the workers at the end of the Defiance Campaign in 1952 were not put into operation.

The position has been made even more complex by the manipulation of workers' actions along ethnic lines. This includes the mobilization of migrant workers in the locations against the activists, stretching back to the use of Sotho gangsters (the "Russians") against bus boycotters at Evaton in 1957, the employment of Zulu migrants against the students in Soweto in 1976/7, and even more extensively during the current uprisings. And to this must be added the actions of "leaders" who have used inter-ethnic rivalry, or even intra-ethnic rivalry, as in the case of the Transkei and Ciskei to advance their own dynastic claims.

Cutting across the "liberation" organisations, and the ethnic movements, are the trade unions, whose aims and methods of struggle mark them as fundamentally different. They have made significant advances, chalking up major successes when they called out their members on a three day stay away in November 1984 in the Transvaal, and again on May Day 1986, or when they responded to calls to commemorate June 16 in 1987. Furthermore, in some unions there has been a rapid development of class consciousness, and a realisation of the strength they possess in their ability to bring industry to a standstill. The metal workers, mine workers, railway workers and the distributive workers (to name but a few) have shown their ability to stand up against their employers, and the state itself, in securing their demands. The time has surely come for the unions to find other methods of campaigning, in order to protect their members from the vicious machinery of the state, and to improve their ability to win concessions.

The organisation of workers in unions, which has been remarkably successful to date, is only the first step towards establishing the independent aims of the working class. The union is the necessary sentinel of living standards, and of working conditions; it is also one instrument through which workers can weld unity, at the workplace, in the industry, and nationally. It is an instrument for transcending ethnicity, and for sweeping aside racial differences. Furthermore, it is a means whereby workers can create their own independent organisation, and develop a tradition of worker independence. That is the necessary first step. Alongside this, the workers will learn to carve out a new, socialist tradition,

so that they can move towards the society which they will control, and in which they will govern.

Yet, with some notable exceptions, the unions have not advanced socialist demands, and most have allied themselves to movements of "national liberation", or a Homeland's government. This has led to Inkatha, the instrument of Buthelezi, launching its own "independent" trade union, the United Workers Union of South Africa (Uwusa). This puppet union was launched at a rally attended by some 60,000 men, and appointed an executive to control the "union", composed almost entirely of businessmen and managers!¹²

The formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) on 1 December 1985, when the current struggles were growing in severity, was the most important working class organisation to date. At the time Cosatu claimed the affiliation of 33 trade unions, with a membership of half a million workers - organised on a non-racial basis, and this has made it the largest workers' organisation in the country's history.¹³

From the outset, Cosatu was torn between those who wished to maintain trade union independence from the existing political movement, and those who wanted to tie the unions to the ANC. At the first conference, Cyril Ramaphosa, the general secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers, spoke of Cosatu's "contribution to the struggle for liberation" and said:

As unions we have sought to develop a consciousness among workers, not only to racial oppression, but also to their exploitation as a working class. As unions we have influenced the wider political struggle. Our struggles on the shop floor have widened the space for struggle in the community. Through interaction with community organisations, we have developed the principle of worker controlled democratic organisations. But our main political task as workers is to develop organisation among workers as well as a

¹² The appearance of Rowly Arenstein, one time communist/Maoist, on the platform of the union, is a commentary on the state of political consciousness in South Africa, and a reminder that the "left" in that country is divided on the nature of the "national liberation" movement. For Arenstein's justification, see below.

¹³ See Martin Plaut, "The Political Significance of Cosatu", *Transformation*, 2, 1986.

strong worker leadership. We have, as unions, to act decisively to ensure we, as workers, lead the struggle.¹⁴

But as Ramaphosa continued, it transpired that Cosatu would "meet with progressive political organisations ...and co-operate with them on realistic campaigns". Precisely what was meant was not altogether clear at the time, but within the month the general secretary of Cosatu, Jay Naidoo, met leaders of the ANC abroad. Then, in March, Naidoo, Ramaphosa, and another, met the ANC leadership and agreed to the need to mobilise workers in the general democratic struggle "both as an independent organisation and as an essential component of the democratic forces of our country ...headed by the ANC". Subsequently, Ramaphosa maintained that Cosatu had made it clear to the ANC that the unions intended retaining their independence, but it is doubtful whether either the ANC, or the Communist Party, will endorse that position.

The Politics of "Liberation"

The call for "national liberation" by the ANC, PAC, AZAPO, and the "Homeland's" leaders, and their common use of a nationalist rhetoric, is not accidental. The stress on skin colour and the burden of segregation (both in the Reserves and the towns), provides these organisations with their rallying cries. Here is the "concrete" issue that is easily observable, and avoids the need for any "abstract" analysis.¹⁵ What is surprising, is not that the black petty bourgeoisie, or that the South African Communist Party, (and those "radicals" who support Inkatha) all resort to this kind of appeal, but that those who think of themselves as Marxists, in South Africa or abroad, give uncritical support to these ideas.

The struggle in South Africa has been pre-empted by the petty bourgeoisie, who have foisted their own narrow class interests on an entire people and, in so doing, have subverted the workers' struggle against capital. The nationalist slogans are radical,

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Marx, in the introduction to *Grundrisse* points to the difference between concepts that seem to be real and concrete, but which turn out to be empty abstractions; and the simpler concepts, derived analytically, which alone could lead back to the concrete, with an understanding of the "rich totality of many determinations and relations".

without being revolutionary, and can be accommodated in a capitalist South Africa, in which "people of talent" shall take their "rightful place" in society. By way of contrast, the workers' struggle must be revolutionary if they are to appropriate the factories, mines and land, and are to overthrow the state as it is at present constituted. It is not only ethnic discrimination that must be destroyed, but capital, that has generated, and sustains, this discrimination. Only socialism offers the programme by which this can be done, and that is why the state, the mines, and all big business are so vigorously opposed to a genuine working class movement.

The nationalists direct their criticisms at dispossession, or "colonial" control, and (with varying stress) demand the vote, citizenship and representation, and the restoration of land. Yet, these claims can be advanced by supporters of the system, as well as its opponents. Bantustan leaders can use the same language of nationalism to advance their own ethnic interests. They too want land, (all too often for their own personal use), but their claims to greater democratic rights tend to be in inverse proportion to their own repressive administrations. Nonetheless the similarities allow Gatsha Buthelezi of KwaZulu, Lucas Mangope of Bophuthatswana, and so on, to appear as proponents of "liberation".¹⁶ Their ethnic based nationalism, often indistinguishable in rhetoric from that of the ANC, is used to deny workers the right to independent trade unions, and students the right to campus organisations, and they are as vicious as the South African authorities in their repressiveness - providing a foretaste of what could happen if any nationalists (ANC or otherwise) ever won state power.

The use of socialist phraseology by the nationalists, seemingly associates two conflicting ideologies within one camp. Yet, these ideologies represent the interests of two opposing classes, and middle class hegemony is all too easily imposed on the workers if the latter's autonomy is not jealously guarded. It is the working class, and its mobilisation against capital, primarily at the work place, that is central to the struggle. The next step must be the

formation of a qualitatively different kind of organisation, in which a programme of social transformation must be firmly entrenched.

The building of a working class movement, with a socialist programme for restructuring the country, cannot be lightly undertaken under the present repressive regime. The government's stated policy is to defend capital, and it will use the full force of the state to smash a movement of the left. Nonetheless, such a movement must, and will be built, to present the demands of the working class. However, it is not only state force that will be employed against a socialist movement: an independent workers' organisation will also be confronted by the Communist Party, which does not brook opposition lightly.

The Communist Party, while posing as the party of socialism, has acted against the interests of the working class over the past half century in South Africa. It has done this through mass expulsions from its party (in which all the leading members were silenced or removed), or open collaboration with white liberals against black worker interests, or by closing its eyes to the extermination of its delegates to Moscow in the 1930s. More recently it has provided the ANC with its reason for subverting the working class movement by claiming that it represents those interests, and by maintaining a grip on that shadow trade union movement, the South African Congress of Trade Unions.

The SACP has tacked and veered over the years, appearing at one time as the champion of a united working class, and at others, as the proponents of a "democratic revolution", in which the National Liberation movement would take the lead. Behind these apparent moves there has always lurked the two stage theory, in which a (bourgeois) democratic revolution would be the necessary first step, to be followed at some later date by a campaign for socialism. This has now been restated by a variety of voices, speaking from Moscow, from Lusaka, and from KwaNatal. Listen then to the voices of Joe Slovo, for the Communist Party; to Gleb Starushenko, the Soviet analyst; and to Rowly Arenstein, one-time

¹⁶ It is thus not accidental that Mangope has allowed ANC statements to be broadcast from his territory; and that Buthelezi always appeals for the release of Mandela.

"communist/turned Maoist", and supporter of Inkatha.¹⁷

Central to Communist Party orthodoxy is the concept of "Colonialism of a Special Type", adopted by the SACP in its programme of 1962, and advocating the two stage revolution. Nyawuza, writing in 1985 in the *African Communist* condemned those Marxists who rejected these theories, or questioned the "genuineness of the non-proletarian forces in the (national democratic stage of the) struggle."¹⁸ Joe Slovo, the leading spokesperson for the SACP, appears to speak with two tongues, but in fact places his stress on the needs of the petty bourgeoisie. In an article in the London *Guardian* of August 1986, that is redolent of shop-keeper philosophy, he maintains that:

For some while after apartheid falls there will undoubtedly be a mixed economy, implying a role for levels of non-monopoly private enterprise represented not only by the small racially oppressed black business sector but also by managers and business people of goodwill who have or who are prepared to shed racism.

And even when he writes of the working class playing a leading role, "not as an appendage of the petty bourgeoisie but as a conscious vanguard class", he only proposes that they be "capable of advancing [their] own democratic interests" - whatever that might mean.¹⁹

The Soviet academician Starushenko, in a paper presented to the Second Soviet-African Conference, proposed a solution for South Africa that did not differ appreciably from the decision approved by liberals and Inkatha at the recent KwaNatal indaba (or talks). Starushenko favoured the establishment of a two-chamber parliament, which would give whites the "right of a minority veto" on legislation, and the retention of the capitalist market system - but with apartheid abolished. He wrote approvingly of the white bourgeoisie who were inclined to enter into negotiations with the ANC, and likewise commended the

"anti-racist forces" who did not "plan for a broad nationalisation of capitalist property ... and are willing to give the bourgeoisie the corresponding guarantee."²⁰ By this means, said Starushenko, the (good) white bourgeoisie could be separated from the nasties, that is the middle and lower strata of the white community, who supported the more reactionary parties. He castigated the "evil" and "despicable" regime in South Africa, and saw in the ANC the main opponent of the government. In an appraisal of the SACP he added:

(They) do not advance at the present stage of social development, any other but general democratic slogans. They believe that the restructuring of South African society along socialist lines is a matter of the future and will be possible only after the necessary conditions are ripened.

Continuing in this vein, Starushenko then stated that the CP "being internationalists", took a firm stand against "adventurist plans of all kinds of leftist organisations", which, he said, "convincingly show their reactionary nature." Nowhere in his paper, did Starushenko have anything to say about the workers, and not a word about the trade unions.²¹

Arenstein's article is every bit as bizarre.²² The crude arguments of this one-time leading member of the SACP, helps to underline the absurdity of Slovo, Starushenko, *et al*, and his support for Inkatha, the KwaNatal indaba, and the businessmen who "favour an integrated system with safeguards for minorities", is not qualitatively different from the Soviet support for the ANC.

Arenstein calls for a revision of the Marxist tenet that power can be "suddenly" transferred to the proletariat, and of the belief in the "dictatorship of the proletariat", because the worker has first to be steered through the micro-electronic revolution, which only the bourgeoisie can develop! Therefore he calls for "a bourgeois democratic republic with safeguards for minorities and with welfare state

¹⁷ Although Arenstein is repudiated by the CP, he still claims to be a disciple of Stalin and his absurdities highlight the errors of the CP position.

¹⁸ Nyawuza, "New 'Marxist' Tendencies and the Battle of Ideas in South Africa", *African Communist*, 103, 1985. He maintained that the theories of the SACP were accepted and adapted by the ANC in 1969 at the Morogoro Conference.

¹⁹ *African Communist*, No 87, 1981.

²⁰ See the report by P. Van Niekerk in *Weekly Mail*, 9-15 January 1987. All quotations from Starushenko are taken from this article.

²¹ It was the writer of the article in the *Weekly Mail*, who observed that there was no reference to the workers, and not a word about the existence, never mind the role, of the trade unions.

²² Rowly Arenstein, "Socialism in the South African Context", n.d., typescript.

provisions."²³ This leads him to his ultimate claim, for "the rights of nations to self-determination", and being unashamedly an admirer of Stalin, he quotes from the "master" to prove that there are several nations in South Africa, and their rights must be safeguarded. That is the Zulu are a nation, and his support for Inkatha is justified.

Unlike Starushenko, Arenstein does discuss the black workers and their trade unions. Their role is to work together "with professional persons and with traders and businessmen because of their consumer power, and it is this that will win over businessmen to democracy (*sic*). Their unions will also win over white workers to the support of a democratic South Africa."

Statements from the ANC, are in line with those of the "communists". They talk of "forcing Pretoria to the negotiating table", where some suitable compromise can be reached. The objective, said Thabo Mbeki, a leading member of the ANC, (as quoted in the *Observer*, 2 March 1986), was the "breaking up of the power structure", which included Homelands' leaders deserting the Botha camp, "out of which you will get a re-alignment of forces. We are not talking of over-throwing the government but of turning so many people against it that it will be forced to do what Ian Smith did."

Further quotes are unnecessary, because these texts only stagger from one absurdity to another, but before leaving these men it must be stressed that Arenstein's view of the role of the workers is not very different from that of Slovo: they both wish to use the workers' strength to further the aims of their own chosen organisation(s) for a bourgeois democratic state. The crucial (but unspoken) difference lies in the backing they hope to get from forces in South Africa, and the finances they can raise abroad. There is no doubt that in finding Soviet backing, Slovo is far ahead!

Despite the influence exerted by the ANC and the SACP in South Africa, and their hold on many trade union leaders, there are a number of calls for socialism, which indicates that the workers can find the means to struggle independently of the petty

²³ In this he is not alone. Starushenko also proposed a two-chamber parliament, with the right to minority veto. Any resemblance to Menshevism, at its crudest, is not accidental.

bourgeoisie, and outside the straight-jacket of these organisations. As yet there is no (published) political economy of South Africa, and theory tends to be thin; consequently, there is no group with a socialist programme with which to rally the working class as an independent political force.

There are trade union leaders who have seen through the petty bourgeoisie, and have called for genuine worker controlled trade unions, or warned against the dangers of co-option by the nationalists.²⁴ Many are syndicalists, who still believe that trade unions alone can provide the base for a workers' movement, and there is still much that has to be learnt. Nonetheless as workers gain more confidence in their own strength, and discard nationalist slogans, they will build a socialist movement. Despite some reservations, it is refreshing to read statements by Gonolemo Mokae, the national publicity secretary of the Azanian Students Movement, who said:

The struggle is not merely a struggle against apartheid, whereby the oppressed simply struggle for a place within the capitalist set-up. Blacks are fighting for the destruction of capitalism and the establishment of a socialist republic.²⁵

This is a sentiment that is still far from being universally accepted in the towns (or in the Reserves!), but is being expressed more frequently. There have been calls for a socialist movement to develop a revolutionary programme, and although there is still much that has to be clarified, this represents the way forward.

Conflict in the Locations

The dual nature of the conflict in South Africa has been reflected in the struggle in the locations, the mines and the factories, during the twentieth century. The locations have been the scene of riots, boycotts and stay-at-homes, that have erupted and involved tens of thousands on issues that loomed large at the time. The residents

²⁴ These trade unionists are few in number, but some have called for independence for the workers movement. See the speeches and articles of Joe Foster, Alec Erwin and Chris Dlamini.

²⁵ Gonolemo Mokae, "Above all, Blacks won't negotiate about Socialism", *Star*, 9 December 1985. Other sentiments expressed in the article have a strong nationalist flavour, but this does not necessarily negate his central point.

rioted against police harassment, and the persecution of women who brewed beer;²⁶ against raids for pass offenders, or those who did not have lodger permits; or against discriminatory regulations. They campaigned against increases in transport costs, and boycotted buses; and seized land for the establishment of shanty towns when overcrowding was no longer bearable.

In many respects these riots and boycotts were directly related to the cost of living, and although they were community struggles, they were the obverse side of the workers' struggle for better living conditions. The demand for higher wages was also taken to the community, and in the inter-war years the first strikes took the form of stay-at-homes, in which the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa (otherwise known as the ICU), sealed off the location with pickets, to bring the commerce and industry of the (white) town to a halt. It was only in the 1950s that these sporadic outbursts were co-ordinated, and nation-wide stay-at-homes took place. Most were summoned as protests against new oppressive legislation, but at least one such call, in 1958, was initially conceived as a means to obtaining a national wage increase that would give African workers a minimum wage of £1 per day.²⁷

It was only during the early forties, when industries absorbed more Africans, and the exigencies of war forced the state to make some concessions to African workers, that industrial unionism took root, and the struggles in the locations started diverging from that of the workshop. However, there were always attempts to combine community and class struggles, and the fluctuating strength of trade union and community organisations decided the focus of campaigns in the 50s and 60s.

The qualitative change came in the early 1970s, when workers found the means to organise, and to win concessions on wage levels, in a wave of strikes that swept

²⁶ Women were not welcomed in the towns before 1939, and were largely excluded from urban employment, except as domestic servants or as washerwomen. The only other source of income (outside prostitution) was from brewing beer - and that was always illegal.

²⁷ The £1 a day campaign was joined with a call to unseat the Nationalist Party at the general election. On both counts the stay-at-home failed, and this led to bitter recriminations over the merging of the two issues. However, few saw that the difficulties arose from the incompatibility of combining slogans drawn from two disparate struggles.

through the country from 1973-76. It was the response to this wave of militancy, and to events in the former Portuguese colonies, that fired the youth to new political initiatives. Soweto erupted around the issue of inferior education, and this sparked off a year long revolt that brought in communities, apparently quiescent, but now demanding improved living conditions and an end to discrimination.²⁸ The revolt was suppressed, but important concessions were won, including the legalisation of trade unions and the right to strike.

As the country entered the 1980s, politically unaltered, despite the impact of the Soweto revolt on African communities, the unions were a new force. Their legalisation was designed to both prevent industrial action and wild-cat strikes, and political involvement by the organised workers, and some industrialists saw the unions as instruments for restraining the workers. However, the authorities saw a revolutionary lurking in every trade union office, and trade unionists soon topped the roll of those detained by the police - if not actually killed. In some respects the state had a clearer perception of the dual nature of the struggle than many members of the SACP.

When eventually the new insurrectionary wave swept the locations in 1984/5, the police, with the help of the army, moved in to smash or undermine all organisation, and stifle the many protests. Once again there were two prongs to the attacks on government policy. On the one side stood the nationalist groups: the ANC, and its local satellites organised in the United Democratic Front (UDF); and the National Forum and its offshoot in the Cape, which incorporated the Black Consciousness student groups and some sections of the former Unity Movement.²⁹ On the other side stood the trade union movement, undecided on its stand on political demands, but determined to represent the working class.

The unions could not stand aloof from politics, and called for an end to race discrimination, the abolition of "influx control", and the pass laws. However, this

²⁸ See B. Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash: Soweto, Roots of a Revolution? 1976-1977*, Zed, London, 1979, for a discussion of the relation between trade union action and the school boycott.

²⁹ It is not always easy to determine what separates the two umbrella movements - both of which are tied to nationalist solutions, but they obviously feel bitter enough to engage in vicious infighting which seems to have led at times to murder and arson.

had to be placed inside the context of working class demands, and despite talk about socialism, the trade union organisation(s) became embroiled in the politics of the nationalists, and the ethnic political movements. Cosatu adopted the rhetoric of the UDF, another group of trade unions affiliated to the National Confederation of Trade Unions (Nactu) sided with the National Forum, and Inkatha launched its own ethnic trade union movement. Only in the "independent" Bantustans, where most organisations are outlawed, is there no trade union movement, although the future appearance of ethnic trade unions cannot be ruled out.

The state has tried to suppress all meaningful opposition, bolstering the Homelands' leaders, co-opting the new emergent middle class, and above all, maintaining capitalism.³⁰ It was under the aegis of the South African state that Bantustans' police forces and armies were trained, and that these regional bodies took steps to prevent dissenting voices being heard. The Bantustan populations were governed by regulations that outdid those in the rest of the country, and the Inkatha movement was encouraged to act against the mainstream nationalist groups. This helped prime the vigilante movements, associated in the rural areas with the local (black) police, and more ominously, with the white police in locations and squatter camps.³¹

The response of the ANC was to call on location residents to render the areas ungovernable - a call that was absurd on two counts: firstly because such a call suggested that one last push would lead to the end of the apartheid regime, although there was not, and is not, any possibility of overthrowing the South African state at the present moment; secondly because in so doing, the ANC surrendered control in the townships to groups who became a law unto themselves. The ANC was left in the peculiar situation of having influence, but not the means of disciplining (in cases where there was clear

30 In 1979 the Prime Minister, P.W.Botha, moving to prevent the threat of revolution from within, and intervention from abroad, laid down his 12-point principles. Segregation was to be furthered (with some reduction of "petty apartheid"); a tri-cameral institution inaugurated to embrace Coloureds and Indians; a strong defence force and a clean administration created to back this system. All this as the basis of a free enterprise system.

31 The threat posed by these vigilante gangs requires a separate treatment. See Cole, "Crossroads: From Popular Resistance to Mini-Bantustan". It seems that Ms.Cole was detained at some time during the second state of emergency.

need to discipline) those that called themselves the "comrades", and it is not yet clear which groups are genuinely radical, and which consists of lumpen elements, cashing in on the possibility of enriching themselves. It is salutary to note that the vigilantes who control the rump of Crossroads, the one-time model of militancy, and the pride of every opponent of the regime, are the men who were once 13 leading cadres of the UDF, and the most vocal proponents of the Freedom Charter.³²

The state, using all the resources of the armed forces, hit-squads, and vigilante groups - in the rural areas, and in the towns, has established an uneasy control of the situation. An unknown number of men, women and children have been killed, by the armed forces, or by vigilantes, leading one critic to observe that "detention without trial has been replaced by execution without trial".³³ Thousands of trade unionists and nationalist leaders (at all levels) are in detention, and the daily killings continue.

The white minority government cannot crush a revolt that has behind it millions of aggrieved blacks, but equally, the state cannot be overthrown as long as the armed forces stay loyal to the government, and control the joint management committees (which determines the gathering of all internal intelligence), and as long as the authorities are able to seal off any and every location at will.³⁴

I would have preferred to present a scenario in which victory against the forces of apartheid could be predicted. Yet, even such an account would have to face the fact that: "if apartheid were removed, the struggle between those who owned land and wealth and those who did not - would still exist".³⁵ But at this stage, the possibility of removing apartheid, or of securing a more equitable socialist state is problematic. The stage is set for a long drawn out struggle, in which the government will use all its resources to silence the opposition. The state will use the carrot and the stick, employing all the

32 See Cole, *op.cit.*

33 These words are ascribed to a Transkei academician who obviously prefers anonymity; quoted in *Weekly Mail*, 20-26 December 1985.

34 *The Financial Times*, 28 October 1985, reported that the police force was to be increased by 11,000 to bring the strength up to 56,000 in 18 months. The army has also been fully committed to bring the insurrection to an end.

35 Curtis Nkondo, one time President of the Azanian People's Organisation, quoted in *Cape Times*, 10 April 1980.

methods open to it to maintain the status quo. Buthelezi and his ilk will be given some concessions; the vigilantes will find themselves "favourite sons"; there will even be attempts to split the nationalists by offers of talks and even some say in the national advisory bodies. Against this, the opposition forces will need to clarify their position, and determine their priorities. There will have to be some clarification on the society that is desired and the forces that must be employed to secure a land in which race discrimination is ended, and in which the gross inequalities of the present society are removed. That is, the control of capital must be ended, and this will require the emergence of a Marxist party, which can enter into meaningful dialogue with those workers determined to effect this change.

A Footnote on the Question of Sanctions

It is most likely that our readers have had their fill on the question of sanctions. The media has had a field day on this topic, and have wrung every last tear out of the subject. The American Congressmen and Senators, whose cynical attention to the subject must be obvious to every serious observer, have used the South African question to boost their election machines in the USA.

These people are not our concern, except to make us pause and think twice when reading the names of those who climb on the bandwagon. At the same time, the attitudes of the Thatchers or Kohls need not concern us over-much. We detest the policies of these persons, but that is not a reason for favouring sanctions or divestment. Policies on sanctions and on boycotts depend on the political objectives of those that oppose the regime, and not from support of or an aversion to, particular political leaders.

To those who believe that they can have no dealings with this barbaric regime, we can only say that we sympathise with their feelings, but that they should not confuse their guilt feelings with a political programme that aims to overthrow capital in South Africa. There can be no deviation from a political programme, no matter how flexible one's tactics might be, and if the enemy is seen as capital, it is absurd to believe that (international) capital can be called in to destroy (South African) capital.

The disagreement between Thatcher and US Congressmen lies on how best to save capitalism - and is certainly not linked to the need for a radical restructuring of the society through working class action.

The call for change in South Africa, particularly by the Western "leaders" is a holding operation, to allow the state the opportunity of co-opting the black petty bourgeoisie into the existing system, and saving the country for capitalism. The suggestion that Yankee (or any other) capital would take steps to bring down its South African counterpart, is ludicrous.

The imposition of sanctions has annoyed the South African government - and if annoyance could lead to radical changes, we would be more enthusiastic about this campaign. However, the call for international sanctions is only the other side of the call for making the country ungovernable. That is, it conjures up the illusion that this is a necessary step to ending apartheid - without affecting the capitalist regime. There is little purpose in discussing the mechanics of the sanctions campaign, but in asking a few questions, its supporters might conceivably pause:

- * By securing the departure of IBM or GM from South Africa - and the handing over of the companies to local consortia, how has the economy been affected?
- * By handing over Barclays bank to Anglo-American, et al, how has apartheid (never mind capitalism) been altered?
- * What response has there been from the workers at GM (the one case which has been publicised) to the departure of the US connection?
- * When it was suggested that gold might be affected, and South Africa threatened to stop the supply of gold to the world market, why did the gold price shoot up - something that the South African government has been trying to achieve for years without success?

But even if these questions did not raise doubts about the entire sanctions campaign,

it would not alter the basic contention: that sanctions is essentially a reformist tactic (at best), and arouses false expectations of what can be achieved.

The other component of the campaign, that of a cultural boycott, is something else. Despite our abhorrence for some of the men and women who travel regularly to South Africa, and particularly those who advise the government on anti-insurgency tactics, we cannot and do not support this recipe for ignorance. South African publishers must be protected against censorship, and we cannot impose such bans from abroad. To say that publishers make money in the process is absurd.³⁶ We all feel the burden of high book prices, and would welcome a change which would bring prices down, but as long as capitalism exists that will be the only way in which most books will be distributed in South Africa. There is a need for more books, and those who might heed the boycott are precisely those who would assist our comrades in the country to extend their knowledge and clarify their ideas.

By the same token the ANC or the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) have no brief to determine what plays should be performed by South African groups in London, or what conferences should be held on South Africa, who should be allowed to attend, or what should be discussed.

Many of these escapades escape public notice, but the reader might well ask how the following actions undermine the South African regime:

- * The ban on books from Ravan Press, David Philip and other publishers, who have produced some of the more important works on South Africa in recent years.
- * The picket line set up to dissuade an audience attending the play, by an all-African cast, of *Bopha*.
- * The picketing at Warwick University in Britain of a lecture on independent South African trade unions - because the ANC had not been consulted.

³⁶ See the *Observer*, 23 November 1986, for the spurious reasons advanced in South Africa, including the accusation that the firms are only interested in making money. Instead, the ANC will now publish the book (or so they say), and they will make the money!

- * The withdrawal of funds for a lectureship by former political prisoner Dave Kitson, by his one time trade union (TASS) at Ruskin College, because his family had earned the displeasure of the AAM - although they are loyal supporters of the ANC.

- * The ban on delegates from South Africa at international conferences, including that of anthropology, almost all of whom are opponents of apartheid.

The people who are affected by this phoney war on culture, are those who are fighting the system - those that support the status quo, either ignore all boycotts, or have little or no desire to attend these international forums. It is not necessary to support all, or any, of the meetings, lectures, plays or books, to realise that this attempt to muzzle thought is an excrescence of Stalinism that must be vigorously fought.

Afterword

In recent weeks, since the above article was completed, there has been a conference organised in Dakar (Senegal), ostensibly by the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA). That is, the pressure group set up by men who were once the leaders of the Progressive Federal Party (PFP), seeking some role in South Africa's political arena, from which they are largely excluded.

Fifty-four white South Africans and a 17 member delegation from the ANC met from 9-12 July 1987, and discussed (in less than four days!); strategies for bringing about fundamental change in South Africa; the building of national unity; perspectives on the structures of government for a free South Africa; and the economy of a liberated South Africa. Finally, they stated, having agreed - or perhaps agreed to disagree on these issues - they "unanimously expressed preference for a negotiated resolution of the South African question."

What then did the delegates discuss in those sessions about which we are not informed? And how do they envisage negotiations that might resolve the political, economical and social problems of South Africa? Were the delegates proposing a Lancaster House kind solution to the issues over which people have

been battling for years now? Is it really possible to believe that there can be any radical changes in the country's economy through negotiations - that Anglo-American will appear, cap in hand, and say, please expropriate us? Or that the ruling Nationalist Party, or its right-wing opponents, will surrender power because fifty-four kith and kin met with members of the ANC? Can there be fundamental constitutional changes after negotiations, when even the (much despised) Kwa-Natal Indaba got short shrift from the government? And finally, what can be made of that remarkable conclusion that: "Participants recognised that the attitude of those in power is the principal obstacle to progress in this regard." They must be kidding? After all these years of battle, after successive States of Emergency, after all those killings by soldiers and by vigilantes, after the detentions and the imprisonments, we learn that those in power are the "principal obstacle to progress."

If those conclusions seem unreal, what then was the purpose of that meeting? Was this a case of self-appointed leaders hoping to batten on the struggles of the past few years, thereby providing themselves with a political fig-leaf? At the end of four days the assembled body offered the world, and presumably the people of South Africa, *The Dakar Declaration*. For the record, let it be said, there was not even a fig-leaf. The delegates stood bare, and it is necessary to say aloud, lest people be deceived, that they were devoid of any political principles.

The Dakar Declaration has since been circulated by the ANC without comment, and without any reservations. What is contained therein is no surprise: the statement only confirms all that we have feared. That is, that the so-called liberation movement is prepared to accept a sell-out, and assume some position amongst the rulers of South Africa, if only their role as "leaders" is accepted by the ruling class. It is because of this that the composition of the conference, and the terms of the declaration needs discussion.

In the first place it is noteworthy that those who composed the declaration state: (a) that most of the whites who participated were Afrikaners, and (b) that they "represented no organised formation within South Africa."

For South Africans it seems, the significance of the gathering lay in the fact that the whites were nearly all Afrikaners. How long, one must ask, will we be dogged by ethnic body counts? Is it not possible for South Africans to escape from this vicious racism, in which the significance of any gathering is determined by the ethnic origins of the participants? Or is it just that the ANC must have it noted that the sons of the governing clique will sit down at table with them?

It is stated in the Declaration that these men (and it does not seem as if there were many women present, despite the publicity always given by the ANC to "women's day") "took part in their individual capacities", and were drawn from "the academic, professional, cultural, religious and business fields." For reasons that are not obvious, it is not stated that among the delegates were one time leaders of the PFP which rejected the possibility of one-person-one vote, and favoured the retention of the so-called Homelands in a federal South Africa! What ideas did others, who never even got as far as the PFP, entertain, when they entered the conference hall?

The fifty-four who gathered in Dakar are presumably honourable people, and it is not my intention to impugn their motives. But it is not their honesty that concerns me here. The question that must be asked by all observers is: what influence do they have over events in South Africa? As far as can be ascertained they possess no political, or military, or economic influence - or at least none that is significant enough to effect the Nationalist Party, or the army or police, or the finance houses that control the economy. They might have the ear of some academics - but it seems from recent election results that they are even marginal in that context. Who then do they represent? Certainly not capital, and definitely not the workers, and even more definitively, not the Street Committees, or the "Comrades". Yet, the declaration claimed that "this was part of the process of the South African people making history." Such is the cant that can be written in the name of the "people"!

The participants, it is claimed, "shared a common commitment of having rejected both the ideology and practice of the apartheid system", and agreed to work for "a non-racial democracy ...[using] different

strategies ...in accordance with the possibilities available to the various forces opposed to the system of apartheid." What, one may ask, is all this mumbo-jumbo about? What forces are required to "liberate" South Africa? Which classes will be mobilised in this task, and what will be their objectives? What kind of society will replace the present apartheid system - if, in our wildest dreams, we can conceive of the Dakar delegates achieving this goal?

When the rhetoric of the *Dakar Declaration* is stripped away, it is found that nothing was really achieved. The academics and clerics, the students and the businessmen were deeply concerned by the continuation of the armed struggle, but they neither condemned the acts of sabotage nor did they support them. They merely "accepted its historic reality", and recognised that the existing system was maintained by force. The group, we are informed, "developed an understanding of the conditions which have generated a wide spread revolt by the black people", making this reader wonder where they had been over the past few decades! But there must have been some reason for writing this kind of nonsense, and this is spelt out in the same sentence: the delegates had recognised "the importance of the ANC as a factor in resolving the conflict." There we have it: the progressives (with a small *p*) must take the message home, that the ANC can resolve the conflict! Of other movements, trade unions, township communities, or the people in the Reserves, not a word!

It also seems that there were no new initiatives, even in theory, on ideological issues. Despite the discussions on the future economy, there is no indication of what was resolved. There is certainly no mention of socialism in the document; no mention of the land, the mines, the banks, or even of provisions of welfare. And, after all that campaigning by the ANC and the Anti-Apartheid Movement, not a whisper about sanctions or divestment. There was also discussion on "the structures of the government of a free South Africa", but no mention of any radical changes in the way the country will be governed. Is federalism (and the Homelands policy) to be scrapped, despite the inclinations of Slabbert and his fellow Progressives? Will Group Areas be junked? Presumably, what is involved, will

be the selection (or nomination?) of blacks for Parliament, and the Executive - provided that is, they are approved by the ANC!

Ultimately, however, it must be admitted that trying to analyse this document is akin to filleting a boneless fish. The meeting in Dakar was designed (with apologies to Madame Danielle Mitterand and President Diouf of Senegal who gave assistance in organising the gathering) to gain publicity in the world press - for the ANC, which must continuously claim that it constitutes the leadership in South Africa, and by the intellectuals who have little, if any, following in South Africa, and whose political mentors (the PFP) were beaten into third place in the recent whites-only election.

AZANIA WORKER

Subscription rates
to be paid in sterling.

UK and Eire.... (individuals)	£4.00
..... (institutions)	£6.00
Europe..... (individuals)	£6.00
..... (institutions)	£9.00
Rest of world (individuals)	£10.00
..... (institutions)	£15.00

Send your subscription to:
Azania Worker
BM Box 4863
London WC1N 3XX

AZANIA FRONTLINE

Subscription rates
to be paid in sterling.

UK and Eire.... (individuals)	£3.50
..... (institutions)	£6.00
Overseas..... (individuals)	£7.00
..... (institutions)	£9.00

Send your subscription to:
Azania Liberation
Support Committee
BM Box 4863
London WC1N 3XX

AZANIA WORKER
Contents of back numbers

AW Vol.1 No.1 (1983). Price 90p.

Prospects of Trade Union Unity	Roseinnes Phahle
Revolution in the Caribbean	Caro Bivanlho
Trade Unions and the Struggle	Dora Katzis
History of the ICU	Sipho Buthelezi

AW Vol.1 No.2/3 (1984). Price £1.20.

Background to the Nkomati Accords ... J. Pearse, N. Dollie, and N. Alexander	
Mozambique's Rapprochement with South Africa	Jo Hendrickse
Gold, South Africa and Imperialism	Geoff Morris
Democracy and Revolution	Nimrod Nkoto
What is UDF and Where is it Going?	SA exiles in Europe
UDF, Colour and the Split in MWASA	Roseinnes Phahle
Cape of No Hope (Book Review)	V.A. February

AW Vol.2 No.1 (1985). Price 90p.

Alliances	(author unnamed)
After the August Elections	(author unnamed)
Struggles in Education	(author unnamed)
Changing Class Relationships	Enver Mohamed
After Kennedy	"Dambisa"
Open Letter to Archbishop Hurley	Buti Tlhagale et al

AW Vol.2 No.2 (1985). Special Edition. Price 60p.

An Approach to the National Question in South Africa	Neville Alexander
--	-------------------

AW Vol.2 No.3 (1986). Price 90p.

Cape Action League on Education Crisis	(author unnamed)
Teachers' Tasks in Education Crisis	(author unnamed)
Documents	
Birth of COSATU	Charlie Van Gelderen
1973 Durban Mass Strike	Sipho Buthelezi

AW Vol.3 No.1 (1987). Price 90p.

History of Liberation Organisations in South Africa	John Garvey
Non-collaboration in Western Cape, 1943-63	Neville Alexander

AW No. 7 (Vol.3 No.2, 1987). Price 90p

Some Questions and Answers on Education Crisis.....	SA exiles
The Philippines.....	Inst. for Popular Democracy
COSATU Message for 1987.....	COSATU
OK Bazaars Strike	CCAWUSA