



The African Communist

JOURNAL OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY

THE PATH TO POWER!



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For a democratic victory and advance to socialism



Programme adopted at the

SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY CONGRESS

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PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW ADDRESS

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EDITORIAL NOTES

THE CONTROVERSY AROUND TROTSKYISM

In No. 115 of this journal we published an article by Dialego analysing Trotskyism and the role it plays in the struggle against apartheid. Since then we have received a number of contributions from readers examining, at some considerable length, the role of Trotsky before, during and after the Russian Revolution, and evaluating his strengths and weaknesses in relation to those of Stalin and other Bolshevik leaders.

We are grateful to comrades who have taken the trouble to respond to Dialego's piece since we welcome controversy and comment. Reluctantly however we have decided not to publish the contributions we have received and a word of explanation is necessary as to why we have taken this decision.

The Cradock Letter and African Communism

In his famous Cradock letter in 1934, Moses Kotane, general secretary of our party until his death in 1978, made an eloquent case for 'Africanising' the theoretical and practical work of South African communists. The CPSA (as it was then) must, Kotane declared, 'pay special attention to S Africa, study the conditions in this country and concretise the demands of the toiling masses from first hand information'.

While he acknowledged that the party must not 'lose its international allegiance', he emphasised that it should be a party 'working in the interests and for the toiling people in S Africa and not a party of Europeans who are merely interested in European affairs'. Too many party members, he complained, are 'revolutionaries' and 'Bolsheviks'; their hobbies are 'the German situation' and the comintern, Stalin and 'the errors of various communist parties'. (*South African Communists Speak*, pp. 120-122).

Of course the character of our party has changed dramatically since Kotane's letter. But if we have succeeded in transforming ourselves into an authentically *South African Communist Party*, this is precisely because Kotane's plea for an 'Africanised' party has been taken seriously and constitutes one of the central strands of our political heritage. We take the view that *general* disquisitions on Stalin and Trotsky and 'the errors of various communist parties' would not serve our readers well. There are other journals in which it would be far more appropriate to pursue these kinds of debates.

Trotskyism as a South African Problem

Dialego's intention in 'What is Trotskyism?' was to analyse a general political trend in relationship to the particular circumstances of the South African revolution. Readers may well feel that in doing so he was either too harsh or too lenient about Trotsky's life and ideas; one contributor, for example, takes the view that Dialego should not simply have referred to Trotsky's death, but to the 'manner of his death' and who bore the responsibility for it.

But what is disappointing about all the responses we have received is their preoccupation with Trotsky and Trotskyism in general terms, and their failure to engage the question of Trotskyism in *South Africa* — the real concern of Dialego's article. Only in one of the contributions is there any reference at all to the South African context and we are happy to quote this in full:

In South Africa we have had our fair share of ultra-leftism. In the earlier years this manifested itself in arbitrary calls for boycotts. The Unity Movement and All-African Convention to a degree followed some of Trotsky's theories, by having little dealing with the mass liberatory movement. In the past these elements attacked the ANC and Communist Party as too broad and not sufficiently "pure". In the 1960s many of these elements resisted the government and went to jail. People like Neville Alexander learnt a great deal from our comrades in jail. Although critical, they are not enemies of the movement and have a greater respect for the people and work of the liberatory movement. Nevertheless ultra-leftism persists in "workerist" and Azapo circles. No doubt some continue to sympathise with Trotsky's theories on the stage of the revolution and the narrowness or broadness that the struggle need adopt. They continue to deny the National Democratic character of our revolution and direct their efforts for a proletarian struggle for socialism only, now. They have little sense of political and historic realities. They are text-bookish and have little idea of the complexity of the transition from National Liberation to Socialism. We should however not dismiss them out of hand and reject them as "only Trotskyists". Patience in analysing their errors will achieve much.

This would seem to be Dialego's conclusion as well: 'we need to draw into our ranks *all* who can contribute positively to the struggle against apartheid' (AC 115, p.77).

Trotsky, Trotskyism and Glasnost

Much was made in one contribution of the renewed concern in the USSR at the moment with the crimes of the Stalin era. As readers will know, our journal has warmly welcomed *perestroika* and *glasnost* and the new self-confidence these policies embody. We are also conscious of the considerable work of reappraisal and rediscovery which is now being undertaken by Soviet historians as a result of the new climate of opinion which exists in the USSR.

Doubtless the role of Trotsky will feature prominently in this work and it may well be that some of our traditional criticisms of Trotsky will need to be refined and reassessed as a result. But we can only reiterate: undertaking a general reappraisal of Trotsky and Trotskyism is not the task of our journal. We have the special responsibility for developing Marxist-Leninist thought in an African and South African context and this is the context in which Dialego sought to judge Trotsky's political ideas. We can only encourage those comrades critical of the article to do likewise.

A POWERFUL DEMONSTRATION OF WORKING CLASS UNITY

On the 4th and 5th of March, 1989, above 700 delegates, representing more than 40 trade unions and more than one million workers, held an historic

workers' summit. The trade unions comprised all of COSATU's affiliates, eleven important unions from NACTU and 17 non-affiliated trade unions.

The very act of coming together, under conditions of a State of Emergency, concentrated attacks, harassment and intimidation of workers and trade unionists was a fine achievement.

In his opening address to the summit, Elijah Barayi, president of COSATU, in making an impassioned plea for working class unity, said:

"Our differences are nothing compared to our commitment to the principle of working class unity"

This was also emphasised by Phate speaking on behalf of the independent trade unions. He said:

"This summit is indeed a challenge to all of us. It is a time that has arrived in our lives when we must fight or submit. And we cannot submit. We must fight."

The summit, in the words of Mbulelo Rakwena, a leader of NACTU, represented "one of the most significant demonstrations of worker unity in our history". The delegates adopted a programme of action which could result in a national strike against the Labour Relations Amendment Act (LRA). In negotiations with the employers, workers are called upon to demand:

- The right to strike
- The right to picket
- The right to engage in sympathy strikes
- Recognition of majority unions
- No dismissals without proper hearings
- Application of the principle, first to be hired, last to be fired.

In addition the summit recommended that workers seek to avoid using the industrial court and revise existing agreements with employers in order to circumvent the offensive clauses of the LRA. As part of the campaign against the LRA, workers are called upon to draw up their own LRA in which trade union rights would be extended to workers in the domestic, agricultural, public and forestry sectors.

Unity is the Key

The more strongly the working class movement develops, the more desperate are the attempts of the state and employers to suppress it or destroy it. As the confrontation between these antagonistic forces deepens the trade unions become even more significant. It is therefore regrettable that some leaders of NACTU had decided, at the last moment, to withdraw from the summit. Explorations and discussions of differences are important and

necessary, but unity at the grass-roots, on the factory floor and at leadership levels can and must emerge from unity in joint action. This was clearly demonstrated during the mighty three day strike in June, 1988.

Joint action to defend and extend the working people's economic and political rights requires unity in spite of theoretical, tactical and personal differences. Attempts to thwart and disrupt the unity and will of the majority of workers have to be defeated. Thus it is important that all forces fighting for liberation, including the NACTU and independent trade unions missing from the summit, be an integral part of the struggle against apartheid. Our watchword should be unity in deeds and not in mere words.

Unity of the workers within a particular industry is also precious and important. In this respect the agreement of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers' Union (Actwusa) and the Garment and Allied Workers' Union (Gawu) to merge is highly significant. The combination of Gawu's 112,000 members and Actwusa's 73,000 members will make it the second biggest trade union after the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).

The recent NUM conference highlighted the need to step up resistance to repression, revitalise and extend the Living Wage Campaign and to reconvene the anti-apartheid conference banned last year. That conference also pledged support and solidarity to SWAPO and the National Union of Namibian Workers, agreed to start discussing the ANC's constitutional guidelines, and to campaign for the unconditional release of all political prisoners and the unbanning of the ANC.

Women Workers

Women workers now constitute about 33 per cent of the economically active black population. They are primarily employed in the processing and service sector, in domestic service, semi-skilled or unskilled occupations in industry and as unskilled workers in agriculture. African women are the worst paid workers with little or no job security or protection from labour legislation. For one third of the labour force to play its full and active part in the struggle, the trade unions and the rest of the mass democratic movement have to prioritise the organising and mobilisation of women workers. Male workers have to be educated and their consciousness raised so that space and opportunities are created to enable women workers to develop experience of responsibilities and assume positions of leadership at all levels of the mass democratic movement.

There is also an urgent need to combat the gross racist wage differentials. In 1986, average African monthly wages amounted to 27.8 per cent of wages

paid to whites. Coloured workers' wages were 35 per cent and Indian workers' wages 52 per cent of that paid to whites.

The Struggle Continues

The discussions, debates and recommendations of the workers' summit are bound to exert a profound influence on developments in apartheid South Africa. Those employers that seek to exploit the LRA to harass trade unions and fire workers should be singled out for a sustained boycott campaign, nationally and internationally. The recalcitrant employers must feel the wrath not only of the mass democratic movement but of the entire community.

The apartheid state and monopoly capital will continue to utilise unemployment and retrenchment in the mines, textile, food and other industries to weaken the negotiating and bargaining positions of the trade union movement. Divisions within the labour movement are bound to be exaggerated and exploited by the enemy.

Disunited, the workers are weak and powerless. United they are a power and a force for change. Unity in action has far greater potential and impact if we have one trade union in one industry and one trade union federation in one country. Trade union unity can be optimally effected by a united organisation whose decisions are conscientiously implemented and carried out by its members.

The summit demonstrated that the trade union movement in our country is growing in scope and strength and rapidly maturing. It also served to emphasise that the black working class can never be subdued or defeated.

FOR A DEMOCRATIC VICTORY AND ADVANCE TO SOCIALISM: THE 7th CONGRESS OF THE SACP

Under extremely difficult conditions of illegality and a fascist reign of terror the SACP has steadily built up its underground structures and political influence. Since the Party was banned in 1950, communists have been hounded, arrested, tortured and killed. Nevertheless, the ideas of Marxism-Leninism continue to attract adherents and prove their viability in action for social change. Our working people are becoming more and more convinced that socialism is the only alternative to the degradation, oppression and exploitation of capitalism.

The growing popularity of the SACP and the ideas of socialism within the belly of the apartheid beast rendered the atmosphere of the 7th Congress even more poignant. Congress was convened under the slogan, "For a Democratic Victory and Advance to Socialism".

Delegates to Congress were elected by their units and regional committees. There were leading activists from the ANC, SACTU and our people's army, Umkhonto We Sizwe. Veterans and younger members were united by the common bond of Party membership and the science of Marxism-Leninism. We were all equals, young and old, women and men, leaders and activists.

The opening address by the chairman, comrade Dan Tloome, was received with warmth and enthusiasm. The report of the Central Committee, delivered by the General-Secretary comrade Joe Slovo, was a sober and honest assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of Party organisation and structures. Avoiding the use of rhetoric or pious declarations, it outlined the gains made by the Party since the last Congress, as well as the weaknesses and shortcomings that still have to be overcome. The discussions on the report reflected the multi-faceted nature of activities undertaken by members as well as the wealth of revolutionary experience thus far accumulated.

Inner Party work and relations are guided by the Leninist norms of democratic centralism. Over the past three decades the leadership has sought to develop a proper balance between centralism and democracy. It has endeavoured to ensure that all members, through their base units, are given wide opportunities to participate in decision-making and policy-making. Wherever possible, responsible posts are filled by election based on secret ballots. This correct approach was endorsed by the delegates. However, the incoming Central Committee and Political Bureau were called upon to improve the lines of communication between the higher and lower Party organs. Congress reaffirmed that at this juncture of our struggle, the SACP should remain a working class party composed primarily of professional revolutionaries.

PARTY PROGRAMME

The previous programme of the SACP, *The Road to South African Freedom* was adopted at the fifth national conference in 1962. That programme has played a very important role in characterising the nature of South African society and in helping to build the Party. But since its adoption the face of South Africa, southern Africa, the African continent and indeed the world has changed in many important respects. It has therefore become necessary to adopt a new programme which reflects all the new developments as well as indicating the "Path to Power".

The debates and discussions relating to the draft programme, though held in secret, were extensive and substantial. Prior to Congress the draft programme had been circulated to all regions and units. Numerous criticisms, suggestions and amendments were submitted to the P.B. There is no doubt that this input helped considerably to change the scope, form and content of the draft programme. Thus the revised document before Congress was a distinct improvement on the original. But it was not yet satisfactory.

Sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph delegates scrutinized the draft programme. Discussions, debates and controversies ensued over our understanding and perception of the nature and character of apartheid South Africa and of the way forward. Yet, throughout these intensive, highly theoretical, and eminently practical political discussions, (there was no personal acrimony and no word said in anger) one could almost feel the steel-like determination of the delegates to adopt a programme which would attract the working people of our country and chart the way ahead. The depth of political and theoretical maturity demonstrated by delegates who had been recruited into the SACP since 1976 was a testimony to the political calibre of the revolutionary alliance headed by the ANC. The discussions served to emphasise that none of the delegates were arm-chair theoreticians, but that all of them were freedom fighters deeply involved in the work of the revolutionary alliance.

The new programme represents the collective wisdom of practising revolutionaries. It is a programme — drawn up and adopted by the Party as a whole — which can become a material force in organising and mobilising our working class for the final revolutionary onslaught on the apartheid regime and for national democracy and socialism.

Internationalism

Congress reaffirmed the internationalist position of the SACP. Solidarity was expressed with all the people, parties and movements fighting against imperialist and neo-colonial domination and aggression. In particular, Congress condemned the racist aggression against the front-line states, and expressed profound support and solidarity with the people of our region and SWAPO.

Delegates expressed their appreciation for the unstinting and principled support and solidarity of the Socialist countries. The SACP shall continue to fight against the ideology and political practice of anti-Sovietism. Special tribute was paid to the peace policies and initiatives of the Soviet Union and to the Cuban internationalist forces who paid such a high price to ensure the

defeat of the racist military machine in Angola as well as helping to pave the way for Namibian independence. Messages of support and solidarity were received from the world communist movement.

The sessions of Congress were enlivened by the singing of revolutionary songs. One particular song that is very popular amongst our people and sung in many meetings, was sung beautifully and enthusiastically many times over. The words of the song are:

SASISHILO NGO 61 "U TAMBO UYABUYA"
KOKHALA MAXOKI "U TAMBO UYABUYA"
U BOTHA MAKEHLE "U TAMBO UYABUYA"
U TAMBO UYABUYA "U TAMBO UYABUYA"

SASISHILE MGUNGUNDLOVU "U TAMBO UYABUYA"
IZINYO NGEZINYO "U TAMBO UYABUYA"
I AKA NGE AKA "U TAMBO UYABUYA"
U BOTHA MAKEHLE "U TAMBO UYABUYA"
U TAMBO UYABUYA "U TAMBO UYABUYA"

The English translation is:

We said in 1961 Tambo is returning
The stooges will regret it Tambo is returning
Botha must step down Tambo is returning
Tambo is returning Tambo is returning

We said in Pietermaritzburg Tambo is returning
Tooth by tooth Tambo is returning
AK by AK Tambo is returning
Botha must step down Tambo is returning
Tambo is returning Tambo is returning

The value of this Congress did not stop at its formal achievements. Outside the formal Congress sessions, delegates had a marvellous time chatting with old friends, making new ones, playing indoor games, singing and continuing to debate and discuss issues confronting our revolutionary alliance. By exchanging experiences each delegate learnt something from another. We truly felt like one happy family united in our firm commitment and determination to help liberate our motherland from the evils of apartheid and to create the conditions for the building of a socialist society.

Re-Elected

Congress unanimously re-elected Joe Slovo, General-Secretary, and Dan Tloome, Chairman, of the SACP. A new central committee was also elected by secret ballot. After the election songs were sung in praise of Joe Slovo, Dan Tloome and O.R. Tambo, President of the ANC. After the General-Secretary had closed the Congress the hall erupted with the song:

USlovo no Tambo Makomando
Slovo and Tambo are our commanders.

Delegates filed out of the hall singing this song. Once outside, led by the youth, delegates danced the Toyi! Toyi! This is a marching dance that is a regular feature of mass demonstrations in South Africa. Young and old comrades joined in singing and dancing with joy, full of emotion to be part of such an organisation.

A highlight of the Congress was the inspiring message from comrade O.R. Tambo which emphasised the unity of interests which is the keystone for the two pillars of our revolution. Delegates expressed their appreciation by enthusiastic and sustained applause and by singing the song "U Tambo Uyabuya".

It was a truly historic and remarkable occasion. For the delegates it was an unforgettable event. Participants were lifted and strengthened to re-commit themselves to work even harder. Congress decisions and the new programme impose additional responsibilities on all South African communists. Congress called upon all party members to help build and strengthen the ANC; help build and strengthen SACTU; help build and strengthen Umkhonto we Sizwe; help build and strengthen the underground. Congress insisted that at all times party members must demonstrate in practice the highest form of communist morality and discipline.

OSCAR MPETHA: A SYMBOL OF RESISTANCE

A regime that persists in imprisoning an 80 year old person, whose only crime is his love for freedom and democracy, deserves the contempt and hostility of the world. Oscar Mpetha, born on August 5, 1909, is a veteran leader of the national liberation and trade union movement.

In June 1983 he was convicted of "terrorism" and sentenced to five years imprisonment. Whilst on bail he was elected President of the United

Democratic Front and the Release Mandela Committee. Both organisations are now banned. After his appeal had failed he began his sentence from August, 1985. Despite his suffering from diabetes and losing a leg through gangrene, the apartheid regime refused to free him unconditionally.

Since 1925 Oscar Mpetha has been involved in the work of the progressive trade union movement. In December 1949 he was elected General Secretary of the African Food and Canning Workers' Union (AFCWU) in recognition of his tireless work to build the union and to defend its members from the bosses and the state.

In this capacity as well as in his work for SACTU, Oscar's dynamism and energy were legendary. Concomitantly he was deeply involved in the national liberation movement. A member of the ANC since 1951, he was President of the ANC in the Cape at the time the organisation was banned in 1960.

Over the past three decades he has been banned, restricted, arrested and continuously harassed. But his indomitable spirit was and can never be subdued.

At the age of 69 he was appointed national organiser of the Food and Canning Workers' Union which had begun to regroup. Once more he helped to build up its structures and extend its influence. He was at that time actively involved in some of the major strikes such as the Fattis and Morris strike in Bellville, Cape Town. His trade union work only stopped when he was arrested in 1980, at the age of 71. Throughout his trial and imprisonment Oscar has remained faithful to the ideals for which he is prepared to die.

By its act of terror and vindictiveness the apartheid regime thought it could compel the people's warrior to lay down his spear. When this failed they tried another ploy. In July, 1988, they offered to release him if he renounced the armed struggle. He rejected with contempt this conditional offer.

Oscar Mafakafaka Mpetha, one of the oldest political prisoners in the world, is paying a high price for refusing to succumb to the blandishments, violence and crumbs alternately offered by Pretoria.

On 5 August he celebrates his 80th birthday. We call on all our allies and friends to mark this occasion and to use it to demand the unconditional release of Oscar Mpetha, Nelson Mandela and all other political prisoners and detainees.

THE GREAT FRENCH REVOLUTION — AN ENDURING HERITAGE

By Jack Simons

The French Revolution of 1789 belongs to a series of civil wars and revolutions that swept aside the decaying lumber of a dying feudal system and put in its place the “law and order” of the rising bourgeoisie¹, the present day capitalist class.

The English Civil War, 1642-69.

The first of the series in order of time is the English Civil War of the 17th century. It combined a class struggle with a religious revolt against Charles the First, an Anglo-Catholic, and his royalist followers. Three centuries later, scholars continue to disagree about the war's causes, aims and outcome.² Christopher Hill, an historical materialist, calls it a “bourgeois revolution” for the seizure of political power. The middle class rejected the government of Charles, and had him executed, because it upheld an obsolete, feudal social order. The revolution was a necessary stage in the passing from feudalism to a modern, capitalist economy.

This view of an outworn social system that stands in the way of a better life runs through all the case histories that make up the series. It is also the accepted thinking among South African revolutionaries, who say that racist apartheid is an outdated hangover from the colonial past, and that their aim is to destroy the country's “colonialism of a special type”³.

America's War of Independence, 1774-83.

This has a place in the series because it was the first successful war in modern times against a system of external colonial rule, and serves as a kind of model for South Africa's own war of liberation. The economic factor in the American conflict grew from commercial rivalries between merchants in England and the American colonies, both members of the same social class. The war was therefore less of a revolution than a struggle, which led to a demand for independence, over property rights, including African slaves owned, bred, employed and sold by the colonists.

Their Declaration of Rights, put forward in 1765, raised the modest cry of "No Taxation Without Representation". Eleven years later the Declaration of Independence of 4 July 1776 – observed as the USA's national day – justified the decision to take up arms, in much the same way as South African revolutionaries decided in June 1961 to start an armed revolt against the racist regime which, in the words of Nelson Mandela speaking from the dock in the Rivonia treason trial in 1964, had on purpose brought about "the atmosphere for civil war and revolution".

America's war of independence lasted for only four years. The colonial militia was at first no match for England's trained regulars and German mercenaries, but the tide turned in 1778 when the French monarchy recognised the USA's independence and entered into an alliance with the new nation. France's navy and army gave valuable material aid and a renewal of courage. The main conflict, which had shifted to the slave-owning South, ended with the surrender of the British army at Yorktown, Virginia, on 10 October 1778. Peace was formally declared, however, only in September 1783, when Britain signed, in Paris, the treaty that recognised the USA's independence.

The American Civil War, 1861-65.

The war began on 12 April, 1861 with the bombardment of Fort Sumter, Charleston, by the slave-owning Southern secessionists. "The North finds itself on the defensive", wrote Marx and Engels in October 1861, "in a war that emanated from the South"⁴. Its aim was to win recognition of slavery "as an institution good in itself, and as the foundation of the whole State edifice", not only in the South, but also in new Territories, as in Texas, or through the spread of slavery into the "free labour" territories of the USA.

The cultivation of cotton, tobacco, sugar and other plantation crops by slaves depended on easy access to wide areas of fertile soil whose cultivation needed only simple labour. In South Carolina, where slaves formed four-

tenths of the population, the growing of cotton had come to a standstill because the soil had lost its fertility. The state therefore bred slaves for export to the deeper South. For this reason, and to keep up its balance of power in the Senate⁵, the South required a continual formation of new slave states. "The present struggle between the South and North is, therefore, nothing but a struggle between two social systems, between the system of slavery and the system of free labour. The struggle has broken out because the two systems can no longer live peacefully side by side on the North American continent. It can only be ended by the victory of one system or the other"⁶.

Two questions arise: how could two such antagonistic systems "live peacefully side by side" on the same territory?; and why did they finally pull apart in the most bitter, bloody, costly and ruinous war of the century⁷?

They co-existed because of economic benefits obtained from trade. The sale of plantation crops, notably cotton, sugar and tobacco, to the "free labour" markets of the North-eastern states gave a big boost to their manufacturing industries, while at the same time favouring the spread of family farms in the West.

Up to about 1830, cotton was the most important product for the growth of manufacturing in the USA. By 1849, however, 64% of the crop went abroad, mainly to Great Britain. At the time of the civil war, she drew from the Southern states four-fifths of all her cotton imports⁸. The cotton monopoly of the slave states on the British market went hand in hand with Britain's monopoly of cotton manufacturing on the world market.

The Civil War endangered "this great pillar of English industry", wrote Marx in November 1861. The Union imposed a blockade on the export of cotton; the Confederacy responded with a counter-blockade, to force England to fetch and carry her cotton from the Southern harbours. Sanctions busting, the Confederacy thought, would drag Britain into the war on the side of the slave states⁹.

On 1st January 1863 president Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the emancipation of the slaves in all the states in rebellion¹⁰. From then on the North began fighting in revolutionary ways, as for instance by recruiting Afro-Americans as soldiers and labourers. About 186,000 blacks served in the northern armies during the struggle and lost some 68,000 killed in battle or died on active service without previous military experience. Some fighters rose from ranks to become commissioned officers, even reaching the rank of Lt. Colonel¹¹.

The war took a new turn in favour of the union, and ended with the surrender on 9 April 1865 of Robert Lee, the greatest of the Confederate

generals. Lincoln was shot through the brain on the night of 14 April and died on the morning of the 15th. His place was taken by Andrew Johnson, the vice-president, a former poor white like Abraham Lincoln. Marx wrote to Engels on 1st May 1865 that the South had committed a great piece of folly by plotting the assassination. It made people realise that great danger still lay in the system of slavery — which in fact continued for many generations in a concealed form. The 14th amendment, adopted in 1868, to the USA constitution of 1787, came out of the Civil War. The amendment prohibited slavery and guaranteed freedom of speech and religion. Afro-Americans however, are still struggling to make the promise of freedom, equal rights and democracy an irreversible reality.

The Great French Revolution of 1789

France had scored several points over her hated English rivals by helping the American rebel colonies with ships, arms and soldiers in their war of independence. Prestige was not enough, however, to cure Louis XVI's court at Versailles of corruption, vice and mismanagement. The regime was bankrupt, unable to pay its soldiers and creditors, unite the many competing factions in the social system, or satisfy the demands of peasant farmers who made up 90% of the population¹².

The nobility were parasites, hangers-on at the royal court, who held high office in the army and church, and lived by squeezing a surplus out of peasants. The sale of offices gave the king some independence from both the aristocracy and parliament, thereby contributing to the maintenance of the royal absolutism which blocked the way to reforms and helped to bring about the downfall of the old regime.

The regime admitted in August 1788 to being in big financial difficulties. It looked to the rich bourgeoisie — the bankers, merchants and landlords — for funds to mend its financial fences; and summoned parliament, known as the Estates-General (which had not met since 1614!) to vote the money needed to stave off national bankruptcy.

The Estates-General was divided into three parts: one for the nobility, one for the church, and a third (the 'tiers') for the commoners — the poor, the peasants, labourers, artisans, landlords, lawyers, merchants and bankers.

When they met on 5 May 1789, the Third Estate demanded that all three "houses" should meet together in a single assembly. The king opposed the joint meeting, but could not stop the tide that flowed in favour of the "tiers état", actually of the bourgeoisie, who wanted to destroy feudal laws and practices that held back the growth of trade and industry.

On 17 June the commoners proclaimed the transforming of the Estates-General into a National Assembly; on the 20th they banded themselves together by an oath to make a new constitution; on the 27th the king himself ordered the loyal clergy and nobles to take their place in the assembly, which on 9th July declared itself to be a Constituent Assembly, pledged to hammer out a new constitution.

The royalists in Versailles plotted a coup, surrounded the capital with French and foreign troops and refused to obey the constituent's demand for their withdrawal. The citizens of Paris took to the streets on 13 July, built barricades, seized muskets and organised a civic militia. It was transformed into a national guard after the taking of the Bastille¹³ on 14th July. Since then this day is regarded as the beginning of the revolution and celebrated yearly as the republic's national day.

Many provincial towns followed Paris's example, formed new municipalities, and turned their militia into units of the National Guard. Peasants refused their feudal dues or rose in revolt, threw themselves on the castles of their feudal lords: "and destroyed the deeds which laid down feudal rights in the purifying flames of fire"¹⁴

This show of force shocked aristocratic deputies into making reforms. On 4 August the assembly adopted a number of decrees that put an end to the legal structure of the old regime. They introduced equality before the law, abolished personal feudal dues, opened the public services to all citizens, and did away with the sale of offices. On 26 August the assembly voted the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen" — the equivalent of the English Bill of Rights of 1689 and the American Declaration of Independence of 1776.

The "Rights of Man" promised Liberty, Equality and Fraternity for all, but divided citizens into two groups: those who paid a specified tax, and the so-called "passive" people who paid no tax, had no vote, were excluded from the assembly and could not serve in the National Guard. They were, of course, the great majority of the population.

The nobility agreed under pressure to exchange their feudal claims for bourgeois property, but insisted on retaining control of the army, the state machine and a monopoly of profitable jobs. Rather than submit to the bourgeois democratic revolution, waves of aristocrats went into exile, formed a "provisional government", and prepared for a counter-revolutionary invasion of France. Priests were told to refuse the oath binding them to uphold the constitution and to join the passive resistance movement against the government¹⁵.

On 20 June, 1791 the king fled in disguise to join the 'emigrés', but was captured at Varennes, brought back under guard and suspended from the throne. His flight ruled out the prospect of a transition to a constitutional monarchy of the English kind, and brought closer the danger of an invasion by the Kings of Europe under the leadership of the Austrian emperor, brother of Marie Antoinette, the French queen.

There was a real threat of a counter-revolutionary coup during a period of much unrest in the towns and countryside, where people protested against the export of grain, food shortages and inflation. The war began in April 1792. It laid bare the queen's treachery and the Court's secret dealings with the invaders, who had the backing of the aristocrats, priests and black marketeers. On 25 July the emperor of Austria and the king of Prussia published a manifesto threatening Paris with military reprisals and total submission if the least violence was committed against any member of the royal family.

This threat spurred the people into an outburst of passion that broke out in an insurrection on 10 August, 1792. They stormed the palace, unseated the king, and demanded a republic. This, wrote Lenin, was a popular democratic revolution in which "the mass of the people, its lowest and most profound social strata... stamped on the course of the revolution the seal of their demands... to construct in their own manner a new society in place of the old one they were destroying"¹⁶.

Artisans, journeymen, labourers, supported by revolutionaries from the provinces, took the lead, attacked the palace, killed the Swiss guards, and sacked the monarchy. That the insurrection was more of a national uprising than a Paris revolt was seen in the arrival of Jacobins from Marseilles who sang the Marseillaise¹⁷, the national anthem, as they entered Paris in July and at the storming of the Tuileries in August.

The Legislative Assembly, which had taken the place of the Constituent in October 1791, gave way in 1792 to the Convention, France's third national assembly, elected by universal male adult suffrage in two stages¹⁸. This was the first time in France's history that workers and landless peasants took part in elections to the highest legislature.

Elections to the convention were held in August and September 1792. It upheld the sacred rights of private property, completed the business of doing away with feudal structures, took a hardline against counter-revolutionaries, and mobilised the people against foreign intervention. On 21-22 September the Convention abolished the royal power and proclaimed France a republic.

Louis XVI (1754-93) was brought to trial in December 1792 for treason against the republic. He was sentenced to death and guillotined on 21 January 1793. Marie Antoinette soon shared the same fate.

Revolutionary Terror

The simmering pot of the revolution came to the boil in September 1792 when a crowd summarily executed a batch of prisoners under escort. This became an example, followed in the jails. Of the estimated number of 1,250 who lost their lives in this way, only a quarter were nobles, priests or “political activists” of any kind; the rest were persons accused of common law crimes. The September massacre was a prelude to the official, organised Terror of 1793-94 in which some 37,500 people died during revolutionary repression, of whom 84% belonged to the Third Estate. Those executed were only a minority of the victims, the majority being killed during the repression of the counter-revolution.

Barrington Moore¹⁹, who compiled and examined the statistics, considers that the revolution was pushed to the left by radicals, who forced the dominant section of the Constituent Assembly to overthrow the moderates, such as the Girondists. He concludes²⁰ that “the reign of terror and the so-called dictatorship of the Committee of Public Safety, the creation of a new army, the driving of those allied against France back across the Rhine”, were made possible by the popular upsurge.

His verdict is much the same as observations made by Maurice Thorez²¹, the then general secretary of the French Communist Party, in a speech delivered in Paris on 25 June 1939. The role of revolution, he said, is to assist the birth of a new society. “The bourgeoisie no longer wishes to admit, and, indeed, cannot admit, that without the July 14, 1789, without the Committee of Public Safety, without the Revolutionary Terror, the old order of things, the feudal system, could not have been demolished and swept away to make way for the new regime, the capitalist regime”.

What attracts most attention is the in-fighting that took place between members of the different factions or parties that sat in the Assembly. The most economical way of describing them is to give thumbnail sketches of the leading personalities. As will be seen, most died on the guillotine in the days of the Terror.

● Honore Mirabeau (1749-91): aristocrat by birth, a Third Estate deputy, famous for his moderation, attempts to reform the monarchy and the opposition to him by the queen and Louis XVI. When Mirabeau died from natural causes, he was being threatened by the radical section in the Assembly.

● **Jean Paul Marat (1743-93):** medical doctor, writer and publisher; unyielding enemy of the king. His trial and acquittal by the Girondin government added to his popularity with the left-wing. The skin disease which he picked up while hiding in the sewers of Paris was so painful that he could obtain relief only by sitting in a hot bath, where he wrote his journals. He was stabbed to death by Charlotte Corday (1768-93), a Girondist of noble birth, who was sentenced for the crime and guillotined on 17 July, 1793.

● **Georges Jacques Danton (1759-94):** advocate, minister of justice in 1792, he justified the September massacres as an "inevitable excess"; a founding member of the Committee of Public Safety and leader of the "Mountain", so named because it sat on the top benches of the Assembly. He joined Marat in overthrowing the Girondin government which tried to save the king's life and fell in 1793. Danton then tried to end the "Terror" but his enemies persuaded Robespierre to impeach him. He was brought before the revolutionary tribunal which he had created a year before, sentenced to death without further hearing, and executed on 5 April 1794 with 14 other members of his party.

● **Camille Desmoulins (1760-94):** journalist and orator took an extreme radical view. An associate of Mirabeau and Danton, he was partly responsible for the killing of the Girondists. Later he joined Danton in urging a moderation of the Terror. Robespierre had him guillotined on 5 April, 1794. His young wife was executed a few days later.

● **Jacques Hébert (1757-94):** of working class origins, he came to Paris as a servant, threw himself into the revolution, wrote pamphlets, became a member of the Commune in 1792, took part in the September massacre, and sat on the commission which judged Marie Antoinette. Robespierre had him arrested and guillotined.

● **Louis Antoine Saint Just (1767-94):** member of the National Guard, the National Convention (1792), and Committee of Public Safety (1793), he drew up the reports calling for the overthrow of the Girondins and Hébertists, and the accusation that caused Danton's overthrow. He was put in charge of military operations in the Rhine and Moselle, and on his triumphant return was elected to the presidency of the Convention (February 1794). A close associate of Robespierre, he went with him to the guillotine on 28 July 1794.

● Maximilian Robespierre (1758-94): an advocate, Third Estate deputy (1789) he worked closely with Mirabeau in the early days and soon became a leader of the Jacobins, the most important of the many clubs and societies that rallied to the cause during the revolution²². The present-day bourgeois legend is that he used the Marat-Danton group to gain an ascendancy, and then brought about their destruction; helped to create the Revolutionary Tribunal, was elected to the National Convention and became a member of the Committee of Public Safety, the body which exercised supreme power. He was accused of instituting the “reign of terror” and this resulted in a plot to destroy him. He absented himself from the meeting of the Convention on 27 July, 1794 at which he was accused of despotism. A decree of arrest was sent out against him; he fled but was captured and guillotined on 28th July. After his death the “Terror” died away.

That is the approved bourgeois version. The communist verdict is that the Committee of Public Safety, led by the Jacobins, Robespierre and Louis — Just (1767-94) had to take extreme measures to defend the Republic against the “coalition of kings” and the royalists who rose in rebellion in the Vendee. The Republic’s general, Dumouriez, routed by the Austrian army on 18 March, deserted to the enemy. The Republic suffered other serious reverses. It was in this feverish atmosphere that Robespierre and the Jacobins acted to save the revolution.

Lenin²³ wrote that they gave France the best models of a démocratic revolution, repelled the coalition of monarchies, and achieved “great, ineradicable, unforgettable things”. The essence of Jacobinism is the transfer of power to the revolutionary oppressed class. “It is natural for the bourgeoisie to fear and hate it; but the class-conscious workers and toilers have faith in the transfer of power to the revolutionary oppressed class”.

Ringed by enemies, France declared, through the Constituent Assembly, on 22 May, 1790 that it had no intention of starting wars of conquest or using force against the liberties of any people. On 18 November, 1793, Robespierre protested strongly against the declaration of war in 1792 on Austria and England. He preferred diplomacy to war, firmness and realism to aggression. The annexationist treaties of 1795 were the work of the bourgeois government that came to power after the assassination of Robespierre. Under the treaties of Basle and the Hague, France regained possession of Flanders, pushed her frontier to the Rhine, reduced Holland (renamed the Batavian Republic) to a dependency and gained part of the West Indian Island of St. Domingue, better known as Haiti.

Royalist uprising in Paris in 1795 were put down by republican troops, including an artillery battalion commanded by Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) who cleared the street with a "whiff of grape shot". This prepared the way for his rise to fame and policy of aggressive expansion. In 1804 he declared himself the emperor of France and by wars of conquest became something of a dictator of the European continent.

His downfall began with defeats in Spain and the invasion of Russia in 1812. His armies reached Moscow but its scorched earth strategy forced him to retreat in shambles, losing 80% of their original number.

Russia, Prussia and Austria entered into an alliance, defeated the French army in 1813, invaded France and forced Napoleon to give up the throne. Exiled to Elba in 1814, he escaped in 1815 to France, raised a new army and suffered a disastrous defeat at Waterloo by the combined armies of Britain, Prussia and Holland under Wellington and Blucher. Napoleon surrendered to the British, who exiled him to St. Helena where he died in 1821.

The Rise and Fall of the French Monarchies

The allies restored the Bourbon monarchy by putting Louis XVIII, the brother of Louis XVI, on the throne. He died in 1824, and was succeeded by his brother Charles. A revolution in July 1830 toppled the Bourbon dynasty. Charles abdicated, his place on the throne being taken by Louis Philippe, who in turn was overthrown in 1848. The second Republic was formally declared on 27 February, and a new constitution adopted. On 10 December, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, nephew of Napoleon I, was elected president of the republic. He carried out a coup in 1851, dissolved the Legislative Assembly, and in December 1852 was proclaimed emperor, with the title Napoleon III.

Marx and Engels followed these events closely, using them for brilliant generalisations that were to become leading principles of historical materialism. One of Marx's famous sayings appears in "The eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte", in 1852²⁴. It reads:

"Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living".

The French Civil War

An even more urgent reason inspired the writing of the "Civil War in France", an address by the General Council of the International Working

Men's Association (the first International), on the Franco-Prussian War of 1870²⁵.

It was Bismarck's war, long foreseen and carefully planned, not for territorial expansion, but for power and to secure the establishment of Prussian hegemony in a united Germany.²⁶

To overcome the strong German opposition to the war, he promised sweeping reforms, including a parliament elected by universal male suffrage. Introduced in 1866, it became, Engels²⁷ claimed, "an entirely new method of proletarian struggle", as shown by the "astonishing growth" of the Social Democratic party and of the votes it obtained in general elections, rising from a mere 102,000 in 1871 to 1,800,000 in 1894. "The irony of world history", jubilated Engels in his controversial essay, "turns everything upside down. We the 'revolutionists', the 'overthrowers' we are thriving far better on legal methods than on illegal methods and overthrow".

It was another historical irony that German social democracy should have climbed high by means of a deal between Bismarck and the French bourgeoisie that would lead to a civil war against the Paris Commune of 1871 and the massacre of its defenders²⁸.

The man who ordered these atrocities under the protective shield of Bismarck's troops was Louis Adolphe Thiers (1797-1877)²⁹. He rose to the top in an upheaval that followed the defeat of the French army in the battle of Sedan on 2 September 1870, the capture and imprisonment of the emperor Napoleon III, the collapse of the French empire and the proclamation of the Third Republic on 4 September.

The end of the Bonaparte era was a great blow to French national pride. The first Napoleon had united nearly all Europe under the tricolour; the last one abdicated after a humiliating defeat that left France with little prestige and no foreign territory to speak of in Europe.

Paris tasted the bitterness of defeat when Prussian troops surrounded the capital, turned their guns on houses and forts alike, and starved the people into surrender on 8 January, 1871. Thiers and Bismarck signed a provisional treaty on 26 February which forced France to cede Alsace and Eastern Lorraine, and pay an indemnity of five thousand million Francs³⁰.

The Paris Commune

Thiers, France's executive president, had the powers of a dictator, which he used to carry out Bismarck's instructions in the name of law and order. Armed Paris stood in his way. He ordered it to lay down arms, but the National Guard refused³¹. It reorganised and elected a central committee

headed by Louis Auguste Blanqui (1805-81)³². He was appointed president of provisional government, which formed the Paris Commune, the world's first Workers' State, against which Thiers launched a civil war.

The Commune issued an amazing number of innovative reforms in its short life between 18 March and 5 May. Thiers' soldiers forced their way into the city on 11 May, and continued the massacre of citizens, prisoners and members of the Commune. Its last defenders were mowed down after eight days of bloody fighting.

A Paris correspondent of a right-wing London paper described them as "untended wounded wretches dying amid the tombstones — with 6,000 terror-stricken insurgents wandering in an agony of despair... to be shot down in scores by machine-gun fire"³³. Engels³⁴ gave details of the massacres and a day by day account of the Commune's innovations, which ended with a rebuke to social democrats who questioned the soundness of the concept of a working class dictatorship. "Well and good, gentlemen, do you want to know what this dictatorship looks like? Look at the Paris Commune. That was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat". Marx also paid a tribute. "Working men's Paris, with its Commune", he wrote, "will be forever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society. Its martyrs are enshrined in the great heart of the working people"³⁵.

Perspectives

The Commune's word became flesh, its vision a reality, not in the flowering culture of bourgeois France that followed her last revolution, and not in the aggressive militarism of Germany's expanding imperialism, but in revolutionary insurrections of the 1870s and 1880s against Russia's Tsarist autocracy.

There were Jacobin-Blanquists among the strains of radical popularism represented by Nikolay Chernyshevsky (1828-1900), Peter Nikitich Tkachev (1844-86) and Peter Lavrov (1823-1900). The second Peter, who had actually experienced the Commune, and talked it over with Marx in London, thought that it pointed the way to a new kind of state with a working class government, while Tkachev, the chief advocate of Jacobin-Blanquist ideas, "furnished Lenin with his organisational model"³⁶.

The Commune was a rich store-house of ideas and information from which different strains of radicals could draw material for opposing points of view. The controversies between social democrats and Russian Bolsheviks sharpened after the October 1917 revolution over questions of the state, government, parliament, elections, armed insurrection and dictatorship of

the proletariat. Karl Kautsky (1854-1938) crossed swords with Lenin on the issue of parliamentary democracy versus the dictatorship, each side quoting the Commune's record in support of its standpoint.

Lenin relied heavily on a famous passage in Marx's "Critique of the Gotha Programme", written in April-May 1875, with the experiences of the Commune fresh in mind. "Between capitalist and communist society", Marx wrote, "lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat"³⁷.

Examined and discussed at length by Soviet theorists the statement was to guide the thinking of future revolutionaries about the nature of the state, the seizure of power, and the form of government in a people's republic.

The great French revolution of 1789 left an imperishable legacy that belongs to all humanity: the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the Doctrine of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, People's Sovereignty, destruction of the aristocracy, and the abolition of inherited privileges.

There remains, however, a challenge voiced by Maurice Thorez, on the occasion of the 150th Anniversary of the Great French Revolution. This is what he said:

"The French working class has not to achieve 1789: it must accomplish the equivalent of a "1917" for the people of France — the conquest of power, the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat, which will undertake the construction of socialism, so that we shall march on the road to communism which is certain and inevitable."

FOOTNOTES

1. "Bourgeois" describes the social class that comes between the landed gentry and the "proletariat" the propertyless working men and women.
2. See PAM Taylor (ed.), *The Origin of the English Civil War*, Boston, 1960; Christopher Hill (ed.) *The English Revolution 1640*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1940.
3. For a short account see Joe Slovo, "The Working Class and Nation-Building", in *The National Question in South Africa*, ed. by Maria Von Diepen, ZED Press, London, 1988, ch. 10.
4. From an article in *Die Presse*, a Vienna journal, included in "The Civil War in the United States" by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, ed. by Richard Enmale, n.d., London, Lawrence and Wishart, p. 59,61,68.
5. Every state, big or small, in USA, was represented by two senators. The population of the free labour states was growing faster than of the slave owning South. It had to expand to maintain its influence in Congress and through it over the United States.
6. *Die Presse*, 7 November, 1861, Quoted in Enmale (ed.) above, p.18.

7. Engels wrote in March, 1862 that the war had no parallel "in the annals of military history". Among the war's special features were the great number of combatants, the "fabulous cost" of the armies, and their "Bonapartist" strategies (*Die Presse*, 26 March, 1862 in Enmale (ed.) above, p.164.
8. Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Penguin Press, 1967, p.116.
9. *Die Presse*, 6 November, 1861, in Enmale, (ed.) above, 85-6.
10. This excluded slave states in the union, and emancipated only slaves in territories where the US authorities had no administrative authority.
11. Enmale, (ed.) above p. xxii, xxiii.
12. The estimated population at the end of the 18th century was 25m, of whom 22m were peasants (Paul Bouthonnier, "The role of the peasants in the revolution", in *Essays on the French Revolution*, ed. T.A. Jackson, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1945, p.136-26).
13. The Bastille was a medieval towered castle, used to imprison dissidents and persons accused, often falsely, of crimes against the state. A symbol of tyranny, it was broken down by the people.
14. Jacques Duclos "The foreign conspiracy against the French Revolution", in Jackson, ed., above, p.46.
15. To obtain revenue and break the power of the church, the Assembly ordered the seizure of its land holdings. In return the state would pay the salaries and upkeep of the clergy on condition that they took in oath of allegiance.
16. Quoted by Etienne Fajon, "The Working Class in the Revolution of 1789", in Jackson, ed., above, p.121.
17. Written and composed in 1792 by Rouget de Lisle. It was a instant success, and widely known before it appeared in print on July 1792. Forbidden under the restored monarchy in 1821 and the second empire of 1852, it again became the national anthem in the Franco-German war of 1870-71.
18. The two-stage system has survived in France to the present time. In its original form, it required candidates elected in the first round to undergo scrutiny in the second by primary assemblies with power to reject those considered unworthy.
19. above, p.80, 103-41, 517-18 for statistics.
20. The same, p.86-87.
21. "One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary", in Jackson, ed., above, p.39.
22. Jean Bruhat, "The French Revolution and the Popular Masses" in Jackson, ed., above, p.101-120.
23. Quoted by Jacques Declos, secretary of the French Communist Party, in Jackson, ed., above, p.53-4.
24. A second edition appeared in July 1869 and is included in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, 1969, p.398-487.
25. A first address was written at the request of the Association soon after the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War on 19 July 1870. The second address, written in September, was published as a leaflet in English, German and French between September and December. The 'Civil War' pamphlet was published in June 1871 and widely circulated in the interest of proletarian international Solidarity Against Militarism. For the text see Marx and Engels, S.W. Vol. 2, p.190-244.
26. Baron von Moltke (1800-91), chief of the Prussian army's general staff, and commander of the army that defeated the French at Sedan in October 1870. Quoted by H.A.L. Fisher, *A History of Europe*, 1936, p.977.
27. Introduction to Marx's "Class Struggles in France", reissued in book form in 1895. *Selected Works*, above, Vol 1, p.186-204.
28. For an account of the Commune achievements and defeat see Engels and Marx, "The Civil War in France", 1871. *Selected Works*, Vol., 2, p.190-244.

29. A little man, with egg-shaped head and big spectacles, historian and politician, Thiers was a cabinet minister in 1832 during the Paris insurrection, the head of the government four years later, president and foreign secretary in 1840, and nominated deputy in 1863.
30. The final treaty was signed on 10th May 1871 in Frankfort. France took her revenge 48 years later at the end of the first World War, when Georges Clemenceau, Wilson of USA and their allies imposed harsh terms of surrender on the defeated empire of Kaiser Wilhelm by the Treaty of Versailles, signed on 28 June 1919.
31. First formed in 1789, the National Guard existed on and off until 1870, when it emerged as a leading revolutionary force in the Franco-Prussian war.
32. He was sentenced to death on the fall of the Commune in May 1871. The sentence was commuted to life imprisonment and he was freed in due course.
33. Quoted by Marx in "The Civil War in France", above, p.236, together with a note on the random selection of prisoners for summary execution.
34. Introduction, above, 1891, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2. p.189.
35. "The Civil War in France", above, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, p.241.
36. George Lichtheim, *A Short History of Socialism*, Fontana/Collins 1977, p.154.
37. *Selected Works*, above, Vol. 3, p.26.



AN HISTORIC WORKERS' SUMMIT

By Ray Alexander

In its attempts to strangle the trade union movement, the apartheid regime introduced the Labour Relations Bill. The Bill contained clauses designed to severely restrict the already rudimentary trade union rights enjoyed by the black workers.

COSATU led a mass base campaign against this Bill. It pointed out that the Bill was in breach of accepted international standards, attacked freedom of association, entrenched racial trade unions, eroded job security, attacked the right to engage in consumer boycotts and severely limited the right to strike. COSATU appealed to all trade unions organisations, including NACTU, and mass democratic organisations to put up a common fight.

Affiliates of COSATU responded positively. Shop steward committees and industrial area committees explained the Bill to the workers. They organised the unorganised and politicised more and more workers. Protests against the Bill spread to areas outside factory premises.

In the trains to and from work, workers chanted slogans, sang freedom songs and carried placards declaring; "Away with the Bill" "Away with the AWB", "Down with racist minority rule". They linked up with the community-based organisations to campaign against increases in rent, electricity and prices for service charges.

In the factories they put up posters and stickers: "Govan Mbeki Welcome Home", "Happy Birthday Cde Oliver Tambo".

But even this powerful mass militant campaign did not prevent the apartheid regime — with the support and encouragement of big capital — from enacting the Labour Relations Amendment Act (LRA) on 1st September 1988.

Given the imperative needed for trade union unity COSATU and NACTU agreed to hold a workers summit to discuss:

- a) what action to take in protest against the Act;
- b) what defensive action to take to counter the harsh effects of the bad clauses;
- c) the principle of one country one federation.

Preparations for the Summit

A joint COSATU-NACTU meeting held on 8th February 1989 agreed to the following:

- a) representation will be COSATU — 250, NACTU — 250, independent unions to be invited — 150-200, Bantustan-linked unions and white racist unions not to be invited;
- b) date of Summit 4th and 5th March 1989;
- c) chairing: Presidents and three from each side of worker office bearers, secretariat to take minutes, two officials from NACTU and COSATU.

AGENDA:

1. LRA Act
2. Building Unity
3. State Repression.

A committee was set up to attend to the logistics of the Summit. Meetings between COSATU/NACTU and other independent unions were to take place immediately. A further meeting was to be held by 21st February.

All COSATU affiliates, regions and locals were circulated with the report and asked to discuss it.

Following the 8th February joint meeting, the Co-ordinating Committee met on 9th February and agreed that a joint pamphlet explaining the background to the Summit be issued. It was also agreed to print it in five languages: English, Sotho, Zulu, Xhosa and Afrikaans. COSATU was to print the Zulu, Xhosa and Afrikaans pamphlets, while NACTU the ones in Sotho and English.

The hall was booked and letters of invitation signed for despatch. All logistics were attended to. On the 11th February the pamphlet was ready for printing. However, on Monday the 13th, COSATU received a fax from NACTU asking for the production of the pamphlet to be stopped and an urgent meeting be held to inform COSATU of NACTU's National Council

decision. The production of the pamphlet was halted pending the joint COSATU/NACTU meeting on that day.

At that meeting NACTU proposed that Item 2 of the workers' Summit, viz. Building Unity — be deleted and replaced with ironing out the differences between COSATU and NACTU. COSATU queried this, as it affected the role the 200 representatives from independent unions were expected to play.

NACTU's reply was that since the Summit was the initiative of COSATU/NACTU, 'We need to build unity by exposing the differences which exist on the factory floor with COSATU affiliates poaching NACTU members. The independent unions must decide which Federation they want to join'.

COSATU's response was, 'We find it difficult to accept that we should limit discussions at the workers' summit to differences between COSATU and NACTU. We are not ignorant that there may be differences, but we must also discuss the process towards overcoming these differences and building unity...' and proposed that Item 2 of the Agenda read:

2. Building Unity

— Why are we not united?

— How do we achieve unity?

NACTU agreed to take it back to their structures and to reply by the following week. Their delegates also argued that the two federations should publish their pamphlets independently.

The COSATU representatives pointed out that the two federations had worked together to make the general strike of 6, 7 and 8 June, 1988 a success; negotiated jointly with the employers' organisation SACCOLA; and agreed to hold a workers' summit. Thus, "we cannot understand why a joint pamphlet should be a problem. We have already printed 25,000 pamphlets. Are joint meetings at a local and regional level still to take place, and what would happen if NACTU's amendments from its NC are not acceptable to COSATU?"

By this time COSATU had already rescheduled four Regional Congresses, a National Women's Seminar, as well as meetings of the executive committees of a number of its affiliates.

It was nevertheless agreed that joint Regional and Local Meetings should continue and that the co-ordinating committee should sort out the problem about the pamphlet. The meeting with independent unions set for Thursday 16th February was to be held and affiliates from both federations were to be represented. This meeting was held and the independent unions accepted the invitation.

At the joint meeting on 20th February NACTU proposed the indefinite postponement of the Summit. COSATU put to NACTU that their reasons for postponement was inadequate. COSATU's delegation was unanimous that the Summit should go on as scheduled and that all unions including NACTU affiliates stand invited.

COSATU asked NACTU to let them know by 10 am 21st February, 1989 and thus if not advised to the contrary, COSATU would assume that NACTU has no objections.

On 21st February COSATU received a letter from NACTU which insisted on the postponement.

The Summit Takes Place

Despite all these obstacles, the Summit took place. More than 700 delegates attended the historical workers' Summit on the 4th to 5th March 1989 at the Witwatersrand University. At least 11 NACTU affiliates disobeyed their National Council and participated in the Summit. They represented one third of NACTU's paid-up membership. Among them were Food and Beverage Workers Union (FBWU), Black Allied Mining and Construction Workers Union (BAMCWU) and the Electrical and Allied Workers Trade Union (EAWU).

A BAMCWU spokesman said: "The eleven unions felt NACTU's decision was based on narrow ideological grounds and was not in the broad interest of the working class."

Brian Williams, Acting General Secretary of the EAWU, said: "The union felt that NACTU National Council decision to request an indefinite postponement of the Summit contradicted the principle of Worker Unity. The summit is bringing together workers from a wide range of view points to jointly fight the onslaught by the state and capital on the working class. This gathering indicates that workers can transcend stumbling blocks in the way of building a united working class". (*South* — March 2 to March 8, 1989, p.3)

The Summit was opened by Cde Elijah Barayi from COSATU, Cde Longwe Kwelemtini, representing the NACTU affiliates, and Cde Lawrence Phathe representing the independent unions. Their introductory speeches focussed on the need to build maximum unity of organised workers in South Africa.

These sentiments were echoed over the next two days as delegates engaged in rigorous debate over the need for united action. Spirits were very high and delegate after delegate emphasised the need for united worker action against the backdrop of increasing state repression and attacks from employers.

The Summit transcended the differences existing between the various participating unions. While recognising the different histories, traditions and policies of the unions attending, the overriding objective was the need for unity in action. It represents one of the most significant demonstrations of workers' unity in our history.

It is unfortunate and regrettable that some leaders of NACTU sought to obstruct the holding of the Summit. There is no doubt that the Summit makes a very good beginning towards workers' unity. To achieve a high degree of unity requires hard work with rank and file members and correct leadership. The revolutionary alliance must be more actively involved in this process. A united trade union movement constitutes one of the most important pillars of our struggle for national liberation and socialism.



AN UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE

By Mantoa Nompikazi

I had never, even in my wildest dreams, imagined myself as a participant in a Party Congress. After all, who was I? A woman in her late thirties, from a working class family, lacking political confidence and recruited into the Party less than five years ago. A delegate, I thought, had to have something. Whatever the “something” was, I knew I did not have it. Notwithstanding the who-am-I attitude I participated to the best of my ability in the pre-Congress preparations and discussions.

On learning I was to attend, my feelings sprinted from excitement to fear, thrill to anxiety and back! Excited at the opportunity to participate at the highest level in formulating policy, planning and strategising; thrilled at the chance to learn and enrich myself, meet openly with other South African communists and share views and exchange ideas with them. For the same reasons that I was excited and thrilled, I was afraid and anxious. Would I rise to the occasion? Was I, in fact, worthy and capable?

Congress soon answered all this. Congress was neither a platform where theoreticians expounded Marxism-Leninism in abstract, nor a testing ground for intellectual capacities. It was simply a meeting of South African communists from all walks of life and corners of the earth, coming together to discuss the burning issues of the day and to work out the best ways to meet the ever-growing demands of our revolution. At Congress I learnt a great deal and matured politically. Words are inadequate to describe the richness of our Party projected at Congress — the perceptiveness, the dedication and commitment, the openness and love of comradeship.

Business-like as this mood was, it was also jovial. We spent many happy moments together, chatting, laughing and singing. The discussions and the new Party programme charted the path to power and removed any cobwebs that might have been in front of our eyes.

As a black woman, since my teenage days — regrettably long gone by — I've had my fair share of suffering and fighting. One of the most difficult and serious of these fights has always been with myself. Centuries of women's oppression, African traditions and prejudices against women too, had left their indelible mark on me, resulting in an inferiority complex that needed a bulldozer to move. Congress actually articulated the myriad problems facing women — including the women themselves. Embarrassed as I was at being “discovered”, I was happy that the debate on this issue, as well as the resolution on it, was serious and enlightening. The presence of other women delegates, few as they were, did much to boost my confidence.

The clear commitment of Congress to increase our women contingent in the struggle in general and within the Party — quantitatively and qualitatively — reflected the seriousness with which this issue was dealt. As I participated in the debate and discussions I felt angry with myself for my failure as a woman to improve my work on this front. Needless to say I committed myself to ensure, as the Party demanded as well as my own conscience and consciousness dictated, that I give my all to this aspect of our struggle. At no stage at Congress, at formal and informal levels, did I have a feeling of being disadvantaged as a woman. I was like any other delegate of my level, putting a little brick on the house that was being constructed.

The closing remarks of our General Secretary, comrade Joe Slovo, are I am sure, imprinted in all the delegates' minds. They were not the usual closing remarks of an ordinary meeting. After all he was closing a historic meeting. His words were a call to action, a commitment and a vow on behalf of all the members to intensify the struggle on all fronts. Is it surprising then that as we sang *Nkosi sikelela Afrika* a heavy load seemed to be resting on my chest and was threatening to stifle me? I shed a few tears whilst singing the Internationale. Was I being too sentimental and emotional? The emotions packed in the voices that sang our national anthem and the Internationale convinced me that I was not and that I was not alone. We were all in song making our vows, we were all answering the call, “All Communists to the Front”.

As we parted we were sad and yet there was exhilaration. Sad that we were parting, exhilarated at having achieved so much and ready to do much more. For me attending Congress was an honour and a burden I was happy to carry. It was an experience I shall cherish for the rest of my life.

FEMINISM AND THE STRUGGLE FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION

By Clara
from the underground in South Africa

The 1985 Kabwe conference of the ANC mapped out a clear goal to ensure women's equal participation in the building of people's power, and in all four pillars of our struggle. In the wake of this commitment, there is a debate as to whether this decision represents a recognition of the importance of feminism by the liberation alliance. I answer that question by asserting that a feminist theoretical position cannot be adopted by a liberation movement committed to the liberation of the African people led by the black working class. The theory that guides us in our struggle for women's emancipation is Marxism-Leninism which incorporates within its ambit the national question, the class question and the woman question, not in three separable features of society, but as intertwined contradictions as presented by reality.

It is difficult to offer an adequate definition of feminism since not even women who define themselves as feminist can agree on what holds them together. The Women's Liberation Movement is broad and eclectic, united behind a number of tenets. Two groups of feminists may be identified — those who revise existing social theories which they reject as being blind to women's oppression, and those who reject all existing theory since theory does not recognise women as the basic producers of life and hence as the most basic social category. The latter group — the radical feminists — see life as revolving around a fundamental contradiction between men and women. The former group encompass bourgeois feminists, structural functionalist feminists, social feminists and Marxist feminists.

Marxism-Leninism is not blind to women's oppression and provides the basic tools of analysis with which to understand and change *any* concrete reality. When we analyse socialist countries, we find that much more still needs to be done for women's emancipation and participation. That does not mean that our theory is wrong, but rather that the objective conditions have not matured sufficiently for full women's emancipation to take root, and that the ruling party in those countries has not organised around the woman's question adequately. Any attempt to revise our theory dilutes the content of our revolution and distracts us from the immediate and long term goals. Feminism is a reformist ideology, that appeals strongly to middle class women. It should come as no surprise to know that the last British Women's Liberation movement conference broke down after conflicts over the demands of working class women and of black women.

However, whilst rejecting feminism as a theory we should work for an alliance between the mass democratic women's movement and the democratic and anti-apartheid feminist groupings. There is within the world feminist movement a hatred of oppression, a commitment to democracy and a desire for world peace. These "feminist values" find expression in South Africa in a strong anti-apartheid and anti-repression stand. They are a meeting point between anti-apartheid feminists (amongst them socialist feminists) and the women of the liberation movement. However, within that alliance, the leadership of black working class women must be secured and it is through Marxism-Leninism, the theory and practice of the working class, that such leadership will be secured.

In South Africa, the dominant contradiction is the national oppression of the black people, and more specifically of the African people. Our immediate task is the liberation of the black people. The determinant contradiction — that which underlies national oppression — is the contradiction between the owners of the means of production and the working class, namely the class struggle. Our struggle is an anti-imperialist struggle that recognises the interconnection between these two contradictions, giving us the short term goal of struggling against colonialism of a special type and the long term goal of the struggle for socialism.

But there are many other contradictions within our society too — and the oppression of women is the most far-reaching of these "other contradictions", because it affects half of the African nation, half of the working class and half of the people, and because it is experienced in all areas of society — work, school, home, town or country. If we understand that the women question is at this point in time a subordinate, less antagonistic contradiction in South

Africa, then we will draw correct conclusions about when and how to organise around women's experiences in the different stages of our revolution. It should be clear that the total emancipation of women is only realisable under a developed socialist economy, and only if, in each stage of our revolution, we organise women to participate fully and raise their demands as part of the people's demands. Marxist-Leninist theory therefore argues for continuous and ongoing organisation of women around issues pertinent to that phase of struggle from the eradication of apartheid, to the transition to socialism and to socialism itself. The struggle for women's emancipation is not a struggle of women against men, but is a struggle by people against systems of gender oppression enhanced and distorted within colonialism of a special type, and capitalism. As these two contradictions are resolved in our society, so the differences in interests between men and women will become clearer, and the scope for women's emancipation to be realised will become greater.

Guidelines for Organising

Marxism-Leninism gives us six points that constitute a guideline for our practice in organising women now and outline preconditions for women's emancipation. Our theory guides us to struggle for concessions to improve and change the position of women under colonialism of a special type and within a post-apartheid society.

1. *Gender, race and class:* A women's experience is shaped by her experience of the dominant contradiction, colonialism of a special type, and the determining contradiction, capitalist exploitation. There is no homogenous shared sisterhood of women. There are distinct experiences of women in different historical eras and under different modes of production, as well as within different national groups and classes within South Africa today. The basis for unity amongst women is thus determined by the nature of society. Marxism-Leninism therefore postulates that the women's movement should never disregard class and national inequalities. We call for a class alliance of women, led by the black working class women. Our focus presently is thus on the organisation of African working class women around the issues they are most affected by.

2. *Women and labour:* Women's exclusion from wage labour or their relegation to the worst, lowest paid and least skilled jobs is a determining factor in women's consciousness. An individual's consciousness is determined not only by the way he/she is socialised through education, culture and upbringing, but also and more importantly by the position he/she holds in

the production process. From this understanding, Marxism-Leninism prioritises the inclusion of women into socialised production on an equal basis, at equal pay and with equal training. In the South African context this is more complex because women's work experiences are determined by colonialism of a special type. For example within the W Cape, the job opportunities for African women and for Coloured women differ markedly because of the Coloured Labour Preference Area Policy. While the intersection of the national oppression and the oppression of women makes the resolution more complex, it does not detract from the immediate task of unionisation of women workers into a non-racial trade union movement, be it in the factories, on the farms, in the kitchens of the bourgeoisie, and of agitation for equal treatment and rights for men and women workers.

3. *The double day*: The traditional form of family relations, when women's area of productive work was in the home seeing to the domestic economy, growing and cooking food, caring for and socialising the children is no longer suitable for working women. If these traditionally "women's tasks" continue to be her sole responsibility, she is faced with two jobs — housework and wage labour. This constitutes another aspect of working class women's oppression, and if it is not addressed becomes an obstacle to women's participation in community life and politics. Through our struggle, our theory guides us to redefine motherhood and fatherhood in non-oppressive ways and to undertake the practical tasks of housework without sexual discrimination and exploitation.

4. *State welfare for women*: Under bourgeois rule and ideology, many areas of women's lives are defined as private, removed from the public sphere. In this way the state takes no responsibility for them. In South Africa, this situation is aggravated by the racist allocation of welfare resources by the minority regime. Paid or partial maternity leave and the right to return to her job, health facilities, childcare services and education opportunities are all necessary to facilitate the inclusion of women in the economy and to remove the chains that bind women to the home. The extent to which such concessions can be gained from the racist state and from capital is questionable. However such issues should be integrated into the demands for a democratic state, and where possible should be organised around in the workplace and in the community. It is only under people's power that such welfare services, whether controlled by the central state, or community based, can be provided and hence the basis for women's emancipation be strengthened.

5. *Violence and aggression against women:* Colonialisation of a special type, and capitalist exploitation are premised on violence and unequal power relations. South African people have been dispossessed of their land by force. They have been forced by taxes and pass laws to take up contract jobs. Workers are aggressively exploited by the task masters of the owners at work. Our peoples resistance and organisations are physically smashed. Exploitation and profit generate unemployment and crime. Apartheid breeds hatred and aggression that is manifested in many ways in our land. All these forms of violence come down on women far more harshly than on men. Women are always the least powerful in any situation — at work, in the community, in the homes, in politics, women are the most vulnerable. Aggression against women — be it physically crippling manual labour, rape, wife battering, pass raids, sexual harassment at work, child molestation — is rife in a society like ours which is built on the foundation of state and ruling class violence. Marxism-Leninism holds that all these aspects of violence can only be removed under socialism where the values of equality, democracy and the dignity of human labour prevail. Furthermore, our theory guides us to oppose and condemn oppressive violence in every way possible, and to counter it with a revolutionary violence to defend our communities, to curtail the regime's violence and to take back what has been removed from us by force.

6. *Equal participation in political life:* There are a number of factors that isolate women, and most specifically black working class women, from active involvement in political life. Basically some of the key factors are: the double day; the socialisation of women, their lack of skills and lack of confidence; social attitudes that women should be in the home or helping their man; the lack of welfare services. Within these factors some are material conditions that tie women up elsewhere than in the political arena, but there are also cultural factors that are hangovers from bygone days. Lenin has pointed out that this cultural lag, the tenacity of cultural forms that are no longer in keeping with prevailing social relations, is one of the most difficult areas of change. Marxism-Leninism argues that women's equal participation in all stages of our revolution is central to the ultimate achievement of women's emancipation. Flowing from this, we argue for special organising and agitational work (eg propaganda) to be undertaken among women within the context of the phase of struggle, so as to maximise the participation of women and thereby include their demands within the general demands of the period.

The contents of the struggle for women's emancipation is not determined by a set of women's demands around women's issues. It changes as the

phases of our revolution mature. Within each phase, the content of the women's struggle is the integration of women's experiences of the dominant contradiction into the demands and perspective of the liberation movement. This process will ensure ongoing participation by women in the struggles of the day and hence women's role in building the society within which the achievement of women's emancipation becomes a realistic goal. The driving forces for women's emancipation therefore are the black women, led by the African working class women, the triply oppressed and most exploited South Africans.





AFRICA

NOTES & COMMENT

By Jabulani Mkhathshwa

THATCHER TOUR OF AFRICA: SHE CAME, SHE SAW, BUT WAS CONQUERED

The British Prime Minister, Mrs Margaret Thatcher, has found a way of marking her important political dates by visiting African countries.

After she came to power ten years ago in 1979, she made her first visit to the continent to attend the Lusaka Commonwealth Conference in Zambia. Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia) was not yet independent at the time. Part of Mrs Thatcher's political package for the African Front Line States then was the promise to use the British government's influence on Ian Smith to bring him and his UDI rebels to a negotiating table with the Patriotic Front. In return, she wanted the Front Line States as well as the members of the British Commonwealth to steer off the calls for economic sanctions against apartheid South Africa where Britain has vast economic interests.

The negotiation process for Zimbabwean independence was not to be held in Africa, where the actual liberation struggle had taken place, but in

Britain, at Lancaster House, so as to register to the whole world that the benevolent British government under the leadership of Mrs Thatcher had brought about Zimbabwean independence.

In 1980, Zimbabwe got its independence following the agreements reached during the Lancaster House talks. The real political process leading to this event, of course, was the liberation war that had been waged against the Smith regime, leading to a profound economic crisis for the Rhodesian government. Mrs Thatcher's government's intervention only structured, at the last minute, a process that was inevitably going to lead to Zimbabwean independence. However, back in Britain, the commercial media loaded her with imperial praises and gave the impression that it was Mrs Thatcher — the miracle woman — who used her magic wand to do what African people had failed to do themselves, namely, achieve the independence of Zimbabwe.

In 1989, after a careful study by the British government of the deteriorating situation for the South African regime in Namibia as a result of the war waged by SWAPO, coupled with the ignominious defeat of the South African army in Angola, Mrs Thatcher again made up her mind to visit Africa, but this time with a purpose of giving the impression that the imminent and inevitable independence of Namibia had been the work of those western leaders who had advocated a policy of “constructive engagement” with South Africa rather than one of armed struggle or sanctions.

The crowning event of Mrs Thatcher's African tour was meant, right from the start, to be her visit to Namibia. It was a political exercise calculated to place her in the history books as well as in the international newspaper columns as the first head of state to put foot in Namibia. In that way Mrs Thatcher would, as in the case of Zimbabwean independence, be seen to have outdone both the leaders of the Front Line States as well as the Namibian liberation movement. The event itself had been deliberately kept secret in order not to create an unfavourable atmosphere during her talks with the leaders of Zimbabwe and Mozambique, since the whole purpose of her visit to Namibia was to hold confidential discussions with some members of the South African cabinet concerning the processes towards Namibian independence.

Mrs Thatcher has never had discussions with the leadership of SWAPO, despite the organisation being recognised by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 435 as the sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people. And although an impression is often given that Mrs Thatcher is an honest broker in the regional conflict, her fairness has yet to be demonstrated. Her current attitude to SWAPO shows that she adopts a

position that altogether favours the apartheid regime and holds the Namibian people as well as their representatives in contempt. This can be seen by her disregard of SWAPO as the logical counter-political force to the South African government. During her discussions with the South African cabinet in Namibia, she is reported to have advised the UN Special Representative to Namibia to request more military aid and personnel from the South African Defence Force in order to beef up the meagre UN forces and ensure the surrender of SWAPO combatants and their transportation outside of Namibia to an area north of the 16th parallel in Angola.

If Mrs Thatcher believed her own propaganda in 1979 about having liberated Zimbabwe, then the Zimbabweans in 1989 do not regard her as the liberator of Namibia. President Mugabe was forthright that Southern Africa was better understood by the African leaders than by a British Prime Minister. He impressed on her, despite her reputation of stubbornness, that only sanctions by Britain and other Western supporters of apartheid South Africa could force Pretoria towards considering abandoning the apartheid system. Although Mrs Thatcher went to Africa arrogantly and with pomp, with a message already sent ahead of her for the newspapers to publish, that she would come, to see and to conquer, she was not given an opportunity to lecture the leaders of the Front Line States about the processes in which they themselves had been intimately and consistently involved while Mrs Thatcher was in Europe, thousands of kilometres away from the African scene.

Her message was that the imminent independence of Namibia signalled new political conditions in the region, conditions in which all the regional conflicts could be resolved by negotiation rather than by armed struggle. She argued that the processes leading to Namibian independence came about as a result of South Africa being given an opportunity to "free Namibians", and not the Namibians freeing themselves. It was therefore time to give South Africa a chance, she said, since, according to her, South Africa has been isolated for too long. After exuberantly beating African drums at the opening of a gold mine in Zimbabwe, an exercise which was essentially meant to provide magnificent photo-opportunities for home and European consumption, she was told by President Robert Mugabe that her anti-sanctions message on behalf of South Africa was unacceptable.

She was reminded by the African leaders that the story of Namibian independence does not begin at the point of the meetings of the governments of Angola, Cuba, South Africa and the United States. Certain developments preceded these negotiations. The principal factor in those developments was

the struggle of the people of Namibia under the leadership of SWAPO. For more than 23 years the Namibian people waged a war against South Africa, which in combination with mass actions and international pressures, produced the situation where South Africa, much against her own desires, was unable to prolong the war. The South African army's defeat at the battle of Cuito Cuanavale in Angola became the final straw in the inevitable change of Namibian policy. It is precisely this factor that Mrs Thatcher pretended to have forgotten. In other words, that if Namibia was to be free tomorrow, it was not because South Africa had had a change of heart but because South Africa had been pressured to agree to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 435.

Leaders of the Front Line States took the opportunity to remind Mrs Thatcher that the problem of violence in the region is basically that of South Africa's making. The liberation movement, including the ANC, has no problem with the question of negotiations in principle. For decades the ANC had, in fact, been calling on the South African government to see reason and to resolve the problem of apartheid peacefully. The apartheid regime however, had not responded honestly to this initiative. South Africa has not yet demonstrated its willingness to abandon the apartheid system and its inherent doctrine of mass violence. If there was one lesson that the Namibian independence processes had shown, argued President Mugabe, it was that only pressure could force the South African regime to consider the demands of the oppressed people and the international community.

On the other hand, Mrs Thatcher's policy of patience with South Africa had not yet given the African people a single practical demonstration of something new and positive. Her policy had not yet led to a single apartheid law being repealed, it had not led to a single political prisoner being freed; it had not led to a single bantustan being dismantled. On the contrary, patience with apartheid had only given the South African regime the much needed opportunity to strengthen its repressive machinery.

On her visit to a Mozambique refugee camp in Malawi, Mrs Thatcher saw for herself the effects of South African support of the bandit movements like Renamo, and she was forced to say: "I just want to get the message across to whoever might be contributing to Renamo that it is really not a political organisation fighting for political ends. No one, but no one, should be supporting them."

Mrs Thatcher must, even if it is for the first time in her political career, consider that she might be wrong and the African leaders right. If her visits to Africa are to be meaningful at all, it must be because she is going there with a

modest political attitude, with a purpose to learn, and not to come like Casaer, to see and to conquer. Gone are the days of the emperors. African leaders do not come to Europe with the idea of instructing leaders of the European Community about how not to resolve their problems. Such behaviour would be frowned upon and perhaps even dismissed. Equally, it is time that Mrs Thatcher disposes of her colonial hang-ups, and considers the fact that she is not more responsible for the economies of Southern Africa than the regions's own democratically elected leaders and representatives of their peoples. When these leaders say, despite their knowledge of the likely effects of sanctions on their economies, that they would prefer them as one of the means to bring South Africa to reason, then Mrs Thatcher should listen and learn well if she aspires to be a good student of African politics.

ZAIRE: THE MOST CORRUPT RECORD IN POST-INDEPENDENT AFRICA

When Jonas Savimbi was interviewed by the *New African* in March 1989, he said that one African leader that he admires most is Mobuto Sese Seko, the president of Zaire. That statement alone gave an important clue about the kind of country Savimbi would like Angola to be if he were to be incorporated into government with his UNITA bandits. President Mobuto has been addressed by many names by his supporters. He is the "Great Guide", the "Great Redeemer", the "Father of Revolution" and many similar references.

An insight on how President Mobuto rules Zaire was revealed recently when the Belgian financial daily, *Financial Economische Tijd* published documents from the Belgian Ministry of Finance showing details of President Mobuto's properties in Belgium. The net value of the properties showed President Mobuto to be richer than King Baudouin of the Belgians in his own country. Eight of the properties are in the most expensive locations, such as Avenue du Prince D'Orange, Avenue Marechal Ney, etc.

What angered the Belgians was that President Mobuto had not even paid taxes for this property since 1984. When this was revealed in the Belgian parliament, the media joined the legislatives in giving publicity to this corruption. In the course of further investigations, the press revealed that instead of paying his taxes, President Mobuto had imported by air into Belgium expensive French wine at the value of \$14 million. This was revealed by the customs officials at the Ostend airport. The wine was priced at about \$100 per bottle.

The Belgian Ministry of Finance document also listed other items that had been imported by President Mobuto into Belgium, such as expensive perfume, pink marble for one of his palaces in that country, the Chateau Fond'Roy, situated in a magnificent park at Uccle, antique furniture and other such items. What was he doing with all this wine and perfume? The nearest answer that the Belgian media was able to come to was to track the beneficiaries of the perfume, about fifteen ladies with different surnames as well as one, a singer, called Tabu Ley. Some of the material was ordered and delivered at the premises of his late uncle, Litho Mobothi Nyanyombo, a businessman who had houses in Avenue Brugmann and Avenue de la Ramee.

Where was President Mobuto getting all this money when the Zairean economy was collapsing and the population living in starvation? The answer was given by the same Ministry of Finance document which revealed to the Belgian parliament that the foreign exchange was taken by President Mobuto and his close relatives from the Bank of Zaire. The document, which by no means systematically lists all of President Mobuto's financial exploits, shows that in a period of less than ten years President Mobuto had taken into his pocket and that of his extended family a total amount of \$20 million, all appropriated from public funds.

This is not the first time that President Mobuto has been exposed for corruption and ill-gotten riches. Newspapers in France, Switzerland, Britain and the United States have long shown how a country already in difficulties in paying its debts has its leader busy pocketing public revenue for personal and family use. Zaire, badly hit by falling revenues from its main export, copper, and plagued with mismanagement and corruption, has a foreign debt of more than \$7 billion and desperately needs loans to keep its economy afloat. Yet the available money that is not used for personal consumption by the president, is used in completely nonproductive schemes such as the construction of stadiums and the modernisation of the military force.

NIGERIA: NEW CONSTITUTION AND THE CREATION OF A SOCIALIST ALLIANCE

Is the coming democracy going to last long enough to change the political image of Nigeria? This is what every Nigerian seems to be asking as the work of the constituent assembly has now been completed and the new democratic constitution become ready for promulgation. Judged by its 1979 predecessor the current draft carries a number of clauses which, if implemented in both

letter and spirit, may begin to give Nigeria a completely different image from the succession of military coups d'état that have prevailed since independence.

Nigeria, of course, is no new comer to the promulgation of new constitutions. Since the colonial days, several constitutions have been drafted. Between 1914 and 1922 was the first one, then it was substituted by the Clifford Constitution from 1922-1946. Between 1946 and the Independent constitution in 1963 there were three other constitutional exercises. Then entered the period of the republics and the coups. The 1979 constitution, which was thought to be the final, and perhaps the best that Nigerians had drafted themselves, even had a clause that limited the number of years of the head of state's tenure in office, stating, according to Section 127 (2), that it shall be a four-year two-term period. Yet the military intervened and acted over and above the constitutional provisions. The current draft restricts the tenure of the head of state's office even further, to a single six-year term only, a period during which all projects embarked upon are expected to have been implemented.

The crucial year is 1992, when President Ibrahim Babangida is expected to hand over power to a civilian government that will, once again, make an attempt to steer the country along a democratic path. There is every reason for Nigerians to look forward to such an event, given the fact that the country has had military rule for up to two decades of its 29 year period of independence.

The new draft constitution stipulates, at least for the first time, that military intervention (or coup) shall not only be a punishable offence but its leaders will also be punishable by law when they ultimately relinquish power.

Nigerian Marxists proceed from the fact that even if the military stage another come back, the Nigerian working class needs to be given a solid leadership by a Party that relies on Marxism-Leninism as its ideological guide.

For the first time in more than four decades of Nigerian working class movement, a united Marxist-Leninist formation has been created in preparation for the coming class battles. It is the All-Nigeria Socialist Alliance (ANSA). Its aim is "to mobilise all genuine Marxist-Leninist parties and groups for the common political task of building a Nigerian society devoid of all forms of exploitation of man by man".

ANSA notes that in the past, Marxist-Leninist groups in Nigeria existed in isolation and at times even in utter contempt of each other, even though in many instances their programmes and perspectives were similar. This

situation easily led to some sections the left being used by the reactionary forces to destabilise or subvert other sections, whether in the trade union or student movement. ANSA, through its laid down rules and regulations and a code of conduct, strives to establish and maintain the highest possible level of comradeship among Marxist groups. It is determined to eliminate personality rivalries and encourage group achievements.

Only in such a strong organisation can the Nigerian Marxists mobilise and educate the popular masses and raise their scientific socialist consciousness towards political struggle for the advancement of their material and spiritual conditions of living. The ANSA, coming as it does in the period of preparation for a new democratic life in Nigeria, correctly defines its task as that of upholding the general democratisation of Nigerian society.

Nigeria is still being exploited by imperialism, and for that reason the masses of the working people need to be mobilised into an anti-imperialist force that struggles against exploitation of Nigerian labour and wealth by foreign powers. It is this anti-imperialist perspective that will galvanise greater forces in the country, led by the working class, against neo-colonialism. ANSA's main task in this regard would be to rationalise and harmonise all work-programmes and resources in a manner designed to achieve more from joint action, and so hasten, through the development of a strong spirit of collectivism among groups, one viable political fighting force capable of winning and retaining socialist democracy in Nigeria.

Commenting on the significance of the creation of this alliance, Comrade Chris Abashie said that ANSA "is founded on the highest and loftiest ideas of Marxism-Leninism and all those who are in the alliance are bound by the deepest comradesly relations — relations that shun sectarianism, personal ambition and all that are anti-Marxist."

SAHARAWI: REALITY THAT CANNOT BE IGNORED

At the beginning of 1989 the leaders of Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia signed an agreement in the southern Moroccan city of Marrakesh that set up the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA). This new grouping is intended to provide the basis for greater regional economic cooperation and political stability. The two-day summit in Marrakesh set up a permanent political structure under the treaty, although this was less extensive than was originally proposed. Declarations were also issued on the

opening of borders, the free movement of people and the intra-regional exchange of currencies. There shall be a presidential council which will meet every six months, with the chair rotating among them, and King Hassan of Morocco being the first. Only the presidential council of the union has the power to take decisions on the basis of consensus.

According to articles 14 and 15 of the treaty, any aggression to which a member state is subjected will be considered as an aggression against the other member states. Consequently, the member states pledged not to permit any activity or organisation within their territory that could harm the security, territorial integrity or political system of any other member states. Likewise, member states pledged to refrain from joining any alliance or military or political block directed against the political independence or territorial integrity of the other member states.

Conspicuously absent from this Union was the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). Ten years ago in 1979, Mauritania renounced its claim to parts of Western Sahara and recognised the SADR after Polisario fighters inflicted defeat on the Mauritanian forces in several battles. What was left of the Saharawi territory was the part that is presently still occupied by Morocco, which pursues a policy of "Greater Morocco".

In approaching the problem the United Nations passed Resolution 40/50 (1985), 42/78 (1987) and 43/33 (1988) which was in line with the OAU Resolution AHG/104 (1983), all of which call for direct negotiations between the Polisario Front and Morocco, and a cease-fire followed by a referendum on self-determination for the Saharawi people as the only way to resolve the question of decolonisation in the Western Sahara. The conflict in Western Sahara is essentially a conflict over decolonisation. This fact was recently recognised even by the European parliament which voted in plenary session on 15th March, 1989, that "the question of the Western Sahara is a problem of decolonisation which must be resolved on the basis of the inalienable right of the Saharan people to self-determination and independence".

The right of people to self-determination is a fundamental right in international law and as such should be respected. It cannot be jeopardized by any other principle. In the current climate of optimism for peace and stability in the Maghreb region, this problem cannot be ignored.

King Hassan of Morocco has made repeated statements to the effect that he would accept the result of a referendum, even if it clearly favoured Saharawi independence. In pursuit of this declaration, a meeting was held at the beginning of 1989 between Morocco and the leaders of the Polisario

Front, but Morocco has so far refused to set a date for the further talks which were promised. The second meeting between Morocco and the Polisario Front, agreed by both parties and expected to take place before the Maghreb summit at Marrakesh, never occurred. SADR President and General Secretary of the Polisario Front, Mohamed Abdelaziz, sent a letter to the summit in which he expressed the wishes of the SADR that the occasion should be a success. "We took the decision," the letter said, "to observe a military truce throughout February to contribute to the creation of favourable conditions for the success of this summit..."

In his letter, President Abdelaziz expressed hope that both the truce and the meeting of the two belligerents would open the way, in a climate of total confidence, towards the building of the Maghreb, within which all peoples of the region, including the Saharawis, would find their natural and legitimate place.



A GIANT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN REVOLUTION

By Mhlanganyelwa Maphumephethe

On November 26, 1988, Harry Gwala was released from prison, after serving 11 years of a life sentence under the Terrorism Act. Comrade Gwala has a long and rich political history which began in 1942. In that year in Pietermaritzburg, whilst teaching, he came into contact with the ideas of Marxism-Leninism and joined the Communist Party of South Africa. In 1943 he started organising and recruiting students into the CPSA. Among those students two stood head and shoulders above the others. They were Moses Mabhida and Agripa Ngcobo. Both were brilliant students, but Agripa dropped out and disappeared from the political scene. Moses Mabhida went on to hold leading positions in the ANC, SACTU, Umkhonto We Sizwe, and at his death was the General Secretary of the SACP.

In the same year Gwala was accused of teaching communism in school and was arraigned by the educational authorities. At that time the second world war was in full swing and Gwala spoke to the students about its origins, causes and development. Moses Mabhida always recalled the clear explanations that Harry Gwala had given them and how he had helped him to understand the causes and the objectives of the second world war. The clarity for Mabhida came because "it was explained from the Marxist-Leninist point of view."

A year later, in 1944, Gwala left teaching and immersed himself in the work of the trade union movement. In that year he joined the ANC which was being revived and regenerated in Natal. This was the period when the youth were injecting a new energy and dynamism into the whole movement. While at first his political work was concentrated within the CPSA and the trade union movement, from 1944 he was actively involved in the important and historic process of revitalising the ANC. During this period his involvement was with the distributive, chemical and textile workers and not, as some have claimed, the railway workers.

In 1948 Harry Gwala took an active part in organising the ANC Youth League in Natal. He was elected vice-president, and M.B. Yengwa provincial secretary. Since that time the two worked very closely together in the Youth League as well as the mother body.

Harry Gwala was actively involved in the work of the CPSA, ANC, and trade union movement. In the latter, he began working in the Rubber Workers' Union at Howick and the Municipal Workers' Union in Pietermaritzburg in 1950. As one of the leading trade union organisers he was deeply involved in the formation of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). The formation of SACTU was an important qualitative development of the whole labour movement. SACTU helped to inject a new dynamic element into the broad struggle of the working class by helping to ensure that this trade union movement had its proper place theoretically and in concrete practice in that struggle.

When the CPSA was banned in 1950, Gwala was listed under the Suppression of Communism Act and banned for a period of two years. At the end of this period the banning order was extended. In 1952 he was charged with contravening his banning order for participating in the activities of the Rubber Workers' Union. However, the prosecution lost the case.

The banning order made it difficult for him to find a job. But in 1954 he was employed as a typist by the Edendale hospital in Pietermaritzburg. A few years later he was dismissed for organising the workers in the one pound per day campaign launched by SACTU.

Harry Gwala refused to be intimidated by the actions of the regime or employers. In 1961 he once more became involved in the activities of the Rubber Workers' Union. Once more he was charged with breaking his banning order, and again won the case.

Like so many of his comrades, Gwala was detained under the notorious 90 days detention without trial law, in August 1963. The state accused him of working for the ANC underground. Two months later he was released

because the state was unable to prove its charges. His freedom from incarceration was to last only a few more months. In February, 1964 he was accused of furthering the aims of a banned organisation and of recruiting for Umkhonto We Sizwe. He and his co-accused were found guilty and in June 1964 he was sentenced to 8 years imprisonment.

Following his years of imprisonment in Robben Island, he was restricted to the area of Pietermaritzburg and banned from participating in any political activities. On Robben Island Harry Gwala was a tower of strength. His courage, fortitude and sharply analytical mind were appreciated by all his fellow prisoners. He would explain and analyse political events and developments with patience, modesty and clarity. His use of the Marxist-Leninist methodology was masterly.

Three years after his release he was once more detained and charged with furthering the aims of a banned organisation and of recruiting for Umkhonto We Sizwe. The other comrades who were charged with him were: M. Meyiwa, Z. Mdlalose, A. Xaba, J. Nene, T. Magubane, J. Nduli, C. Ndlovu and W. Khanyile.

Except for Nduli and Ndlovu, all the other accused had already served long terms of imprisonment on Robben Island. Nduli and Ndlovu had been kidnapped from Swaziland and, as in the recent case of Ebrahim, were illegally arraigned before the court and sentenced. In 1976 all the accused except W. Khanyile were found "guilty", and Harry Gwala was given a life sentence. Khanyile was later killed in cold blood by the racist army in the massacre of Matola, Maputo, in 1981. Harry Gwala had recruited Khanyile into the trade union movement, ANC and SACP.

A teacher by profession, Gwala is a wonderful political teacher and leader. He helped to develop many revolutionaries, including the outstanding leader of the South African working class, Moses Mabhida. At the time when he was still allowed to appear on public platforms, Gwala showed that he was a powerful public speaker. His speeches were always enthusiastically received and stimulated many people into political action. On many occasions when Gwala was asked to speak, A.W. Champion (Mahlathamnyama), a former leader of the ANC in Natal, used to shout at the top of his voice, "Isando Nesikela" (hammer and sickle) thus indicating to the audience Gwala's political commitment and affiliation as well as his public speaking powers.

For him, a revolutionary has to have a clear perception of the world we live in, and how to change it. He always teaches that one is a better revolutionary if one has a clear and unambiguous understanding of the forces that stand for oppression and exploitation in contrast to the forces that have the mission

and ability to change the world. He is, without a doubt, an outstanding product and leader of the South African revolutionary process. He is a giant amongst giants in one of the most complex revolutions on the African continent. Harry Gwala ranks alongside other leading communists produced in our country. He is indeed a determined and committed revolutionary, blessed with an amazing political and theoretical depth and clarity.

Whilst serving his life sentence he contracted the motor neurone disease, which is both painful and debilitating. This illness is a consequence of his imprisonment. The apartheid regime bears responsibility for this as well as for those suffered by Nelson Mandela and others. In fact, some prisoners have died as a result of falling gravely ill whilst in prison.

The racist regime was in the end compelled to release him on November 26, 1988, on health grounds. He is out of a small prison but is still in a large prison — South Africa itself — battling to recover from his difficult illness. On his release he was welcomed by hundreds of people. For the movement, for the toiling masses, Harry Gwala is a great teacher, a fierce and uncompromising fighter against injustice and exploitation and a courageous leader who never shirked his duties and responsibilities.

The racist regime has wounded one of our bravest warriors. But he continues to fight and the struggle goes on. Our friends and allies in the international community should intensify their all-round support for our struggle. Let their voices be heard!

Release all South African political prisoners and detainees!

NOW!

Unconditionally!



“THE AFRICAN COMMUNIST” — AN INDISPENSABLE RESOURCE

By Saradar Pillay

As an activist of the mass democratic movement for the last ten years, I would like to express my ideas on why the *AC* is an indispensable resource for militants of the mass democratic, national liberation and working class movement.

I am an Indian from a middle-class family. My first exposure to politics came from an uncle who was involved in the Congress movement. Because of the victories in Angola and Mozambique, the Soweto uprising of 1976, and flood relief work in the late seventies, my political interest developed into active participation. The catalyst to my involvement was the 1980 school and university boycott. These intense battles strengthened my commitment, broadened my experience and gave me the feeling that I had “graduated” to become an “activist”.

Groomed in the Congress tradition, I learnt about its long history, the ANC and the Freedom Charter. Whilst a student I had only acquired a general understanding of Marxism, socialism, the national democratic revolution and the need to organise and mobilise the people. At that time my political involvement was based on an emotional commitment to the struggle (not a bad thing as long as it is not the only reason) and lacked a proper theoretical backing.

A qualitative leap in my political development came as a consequence of acquiring a scientific understanding of the world, how to change it, the nature of South African society, the theory of our revolution, our organisation and dynamics of social change.

This leap was greatly assisted by the *African Communist* and other materials from the SACP. My first contact with the *AC* was the pamphlet "Philosophy and Class Struggle" by Dialego. It gave me a theoretical foundation and increased confidence in my political work. In the early eighties a few of us formed a disciplined discussion group. The studying and reading of the *AC* helped to deepen our understanding of the struggle and in many ways directly affected our organisational work. Apart from providing us with much needed theoretical nourishment, the *AC* helped us to defend the movement's position from the attacks of the ultra-leftists who reject the leadership of the ANC and SACP. In particular, our group benefitted from the Marxist-Leninist analysis of Colonialism of a Special Type, the strategic objectives of the national democratic revolution, current developments at home and abroad. The strong sense of internationalism promoted by our journal helped us to learn from other peoples' experience and broadened our perspectives.

The *AC* has a very important role to play in developing the political consciousness of our cadres. Our struggle for a non-racial, democratic and non-exploitative society requires the theory and practice of Marxism-Leninism.

My experience shows that activists in the mass democratic movement need to have a sound theoretical knowledge if they are to play their role adequately. For this purpose, the *AC* is an indispensable resource. The *AC* has proved to be a useful organiser and teacher. Using the *AC*, our group learnt a great deal about criticism and self-criticism, strategy and tactics of our revolutionary alliance, nature and character of apartheid South Africa, the rich traditions and history of our national liberation and working class movement and communist discipline, morality and ethics.

At a personal level, the *AC* has helped me to develop a strong sense of international solidarity. It enabled me to understand that I am part of an international movement that is actively working to change the world and make it a better place for all.

Future *AC* articles could deal with the political development and maturity of individuals — that is, how to be a good revolutionary. A purpose of the science of Marxism-Leninism is to enhance the quality of our practice and provide a good example for others to follow.



CONTRADICTIONS IN ACHEBE'S SOCIAL REALISM AND HIS POLITICAL ATTITUDE

Anthills of the Savannah, by Chinua Achebe. (Nigeria: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1988)

This latest product from Achebe's writing mill is a significant departure from his earlier works. Like these works, particularly *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer At Ease* and *A Man of the People*, it is the story of Africa (or a part of it — Nigeria) at a certain stage of socio-political development. However, it differs significantly from these works because it not only attempts to show the contradictions in a neo-colonial African society which Kangan — the imaginary African State which carries the burden of the story in *Anthills* — represents, but also gives to us a glimpse of how Achebe thinks our society can (or cannot) achieve genuine liberation. (This, of course, is in spite of his strong belief that an artist has no business making any prescriptions about how society should be run). Indeed, *Anthills* is significant to us because by recording what we can call Achebe's philosophico-ideological testament, it provides an occasion for the continuation of the debate on what should be the nature of the politics of African liberation.

But, while we may congratulate Achebe for this new element in his artistic output, it does not appear that we can say that he has explored the idea on which his philosophico-ideological testament is based — the idea of "A New Radicalism" — with sufficient rigour.

Anthills is the story of an imaginary African state — Kangan. This story revolves around three principal characters — Sam, the president, Chris Oriko, the Minister of Information and Ikem Osadi, the fiery poet and journalist. These are the three characters (the “three green bottles”) whose views and activities constitute the lens through which we see the contradictions in Kangan society. For instance, Chris Oriko gives us an insight into the precarious nature of the military government that had taken over power from the civilians in Kangan when he wrote of His Excellency, the Head of State thus:

His Excellency came to power without any preparation for political leadership — a fact which he being a very intelligent person knew perfectly well and which, furthermore, should not have surprised anyone. Sandhurst after all did not set about training officers to take over the majesty’s throne but rather in the high tradition of proud aloofness from politics and public affairs. Therefore when our civilian politicians got what they had coming to them and landed unloved and unmourned on the rubbish heap and the young Army Commander was invited by the even younger coup-makers to become His Excellency the Head of State he had pretty few ideas about what to do. And so, like an intelligent man, he called his friends together and said: ‘What shall I do?’ (p.12.)

Any keen observer of the nature of many of the military coups (barrack revolts?) in Africa, or at least in Nigeria, would admit that this provides an adequate characterization of one of the contradictions in contemporary African societies.

Also, Ikem gives us an insight into the low level of political consciousness of the people of Kangan when in his response to questions, after the public lecture at the University of Bassa (Chapter Twelve), he informs us of the economic nature of trade-union consciousness in Kangan and the inability of students, who are supposed to be active participants in the struggle for social change, to rise above the problems of society — ethnicity, religious intolerance, electoral merchandising and so on. Indeed, he captures the essence of this low level in the political consciousness of the people when he describes them as “people who laughed blatantly at their own humiliation and murder” (p. 41).

However, while Achebe is able to give a realistic portrayal of the contradictions in Kangan society, his ahistorical and subjectivist approach to socio-political analysis appears to have militated against his being able to see the kind of things that the resolution of these contradictions would require.

For instance, Achebe, through Ikem, tells us — and we agree with him — that the prime failure of the military government in Kangan is to be located in “the failure of our rulers to re-establish vital inner links with the poor and dispossessed of this country, with the bruised heart that throbs painfully at the core of the nation’s being” (p. 92), yet he does not ask why this is so. Whereas, if he had considered this question, he would have been able to see the socio-historical conjuncture that has generated, is generating, the kind of leadership we have in *Anthills*. And if he had seen this, he would have seen the difficulties involved in talking of politics and leadership in Africa without making reference to the structural link between imperialism and neocolonialism. Of course if he had seen this connection, it would not have been difficult for him to see that the problem of Kangan society is essentially that of the system, not that of “a basic human failing that may be alleviated by a good spread of a general political experience” (p.39) whose development is gradual. Finally if he had seen this, he would have seen that revolution, rather than reform, is “the most promising route” to social change in a neo-colonial society like Kangan.

Thus, Achebe’s socio-political testament, encapsulated in Ikem’s concept of “A New Radicalism” is faulty because it is not based on any enduring sense of history. Hence, despite the fact that he is able to identify, quite correctly, some of the contradictions in a neo-colonial African society, he has not been able to give us an adequate characterization of the kind of interplay of forces that can lead to the resolution of these contradictions. Small wonder then that he ends up recommending a socio-political practice — Bernsteinian reformism — that can only consolidate the very contradictions whose decisive resolution is one of the essential ingredients of the achievement of genuine liberation in a neo-colonial society like Kangan.

Yet, this is not the only result of the lack of an enduring sense of history in Achebe’s latest work. We have another outcome of this lack in his views of struggle. Here (pp.123-124), Achebe makes a distinction between those who sound the battle-drums of revolution, those who wage the war and those who tell the story afterwards. But we find this distinction between aspects of the struggle somehow superficial. Historically, it is not justified. Those who have played serious roles in sounding the battle-drums of revolution have, in many cases, been active participants in the waging of the war itself.

But this distinction is not only faulty historically, it is also conceptually unsatisfactory. For if a story, essentially at least, is the crystallization of an experience, whether personal or communal, and if this experience is a registration in consciousness of a concrete event, then it does not appear

that we can tell an adequate story without being actively involved in the process of its generation. Indeed, there is no way the impression or experience which gives birth to the story can be fully registered without active participation in the struggle, i.e. the event. So if our story is to be genuine, if it is to teach us and our children the right lessons, then it has to flow from the wealth of experience we have acquired as participants in the war, not as sanitized observers. And, we believe, it is because many African story tellers have been mere observers of the war, not participants, that they have not been able to tell stories which can teach the right lessons and prepare the ground for genuine liberation.

On the whole, we want to say that some of the flaws (substantive and formal) in Achebe's *Anthills* — for example the ending of the novel appears to us forced — are closely connected with the contradictions we notice, to use Ngugi's words, "between the social realism of the reflected image on the one hand and the weight and sympathies or the conscious attitudes to what is reflected".¹ This, we suggest, is the case because Achebe's sympathies are yet to be fully for the oppressed people, in the struggle for African Liberation.

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NOTE

1. Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, Conversation on "The Role of Culture in the African Revolution", *The African Communist*, Number 113, Second Quarter, 1988, p.44.

AN OVERSIMPLIFIED APPROACH

South Africa: What Lies Ahead? by Boris Asoyan. (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1989.)

The author of this book has spent many years in East and Southern Africa as a Correspondent of the *New Times* magazine. He has also published many books on the problems of present day Africa. I will review this book and also refer to an article he wrote for the influential journal, *International Affairs* Number 9, 1988, which is provocatively entitled 'Time to Gather Stones Together'.

The book and the article gives some indication of the thinking of some Soviet academics who may well influence the thinking of the Foreign Affairs Ministry. What impact such thinking will have on the Soviet view of our conduct of the struggle against the apartheid regime is of interest to us. This becomes more important given recent speculations in the bourgeois media that the Soviet Union is beginning to move away from its support for armed struggle in favour of a peaceful political solution, i.e., negotiations.

The View from the Laager

Asoyan attempts to outline the state of affairs in South Africa at the moment. He first tries to explain the history of white domination and the ascendancy of the 'Afrikaner' Nationalist Party as the governing party in South Africa's parliament. He tries to explain what he sees as the mentality of Afrikaners. A mentality inculcated in them by their leaders:

Its leaders have always preferred to keep old wounds open, thus keeping every Afrikaner ever-ready for battle. Beginning in childhood they prepare him for isolation, inculcate in him the idea that [he is] are surrounded by enemies — and not only in [his own] country, but worldwide. Inside this besieged fortress, which many Afrikaners still believe to be impregnable, tales are told about "chosen people" — *herrenvolk*, about the invincibility of the white man. It was in such an atmosphere that Afrikaner nationalism was forged, and this nationalism eventually developed into one of the world's most acute conflicts. And it is to their leaders, the keepers of the sacred racist ideology, that the Afrikaners owe South Africa's being a world outcast for the last several decades. (p.15).

Further explaining the mentality of the Afrikaners, he says that the doctrine of the superior "predetermined race" in which all other nations of the world are inferior, forms part of the "real" Afrikaner. And not only are other people inferior, they are also enemies: "enemies are everywhere, one has to be vigilant and ready to strike first" (16). The Afrikaners proudly consider themselves the 'white tribe' of Africa, determined to stay in Africa because they have no other home to go to (16).

He discusses the white political parties and the various struggles they are involved in to maintain or reform white minority rule. On the side of the forces of liberation, Asoyan shares the opinion that the ANC is "the leading force of the liberation process" (48). He explains the existence of the Freedom Charter which he calls "the main document of the African National Congress" (8). In this connection, he says that "Most blacks do not consider whites to be racists or enemies. Even in periods of violent reaction and abstruseness the black majority leaders have emphasised that they are struggling not against the whites, but against the unjust social system...." (8).

He develops this non-racialism of 'most blacks' to conclude that blacks generally have the following vision of a free country. "They see it as being born as a result of a long and hard struggle which will free the nation [?, I will deal with this usage of nation below] from the evil of the apartheid system and lay down the foundation of a unified state" (8). However he says, there are some blacks who do not want the fundamental change that many are fighting for given the present benefits that they enjoy as a result of the apartheid system. Amongst these blacks who do not want change, he lists the middle-class who take very little interest in the political scene, the black bourgeoisie, those in the army, police and local authorities. These he calls the 'right wing' of the black population who "would prefer to preserve the current status quo for the sake of their own prosperity" (8-9)

A Misreading of the Forces

Asoyan tends to over-simplify and generalise class questions thus ending up with inaccuracies. Whilst it is true that not all black people are in favour of fundamental transformation, it is incorrect to lump together all middle and upper class blacks as being against liberation and thus satisfied with the present status quo. Within the various classes in the black community are to be found differing political perspectives on the question of fundamental change.

There are 'national democrats' as well within the black middle and upper classes in South Africa. Contradictory as their relationship may be with the main force for liberation (i.e., the black working class), many of them can be classified as broadly anti-apartheid and a significant and influential percentage of them identify themselves with the Freedom Charter. After all, the Freedom Charter does 'promise' some form of private enterprise in the post-apartheid period.

The theme of Asoyan's book is to sketch a scenario for the future: hence the title of his book. He sets out this scenario as follows: "At the present time all the roads leading to South Africa's future seem to be obscured by clouds whose rose lining resembles the colour of blood more than that of calm sunrise. Too much pain and hatred has been accumulated in the nation [see below] split by the apartheid regime for the situation to change without any violence or destruction... No one knows when the main battle will take place or how long it will last, whether the sides will meet at the battlefield or at the negotiations table. But no one has any doubts that the main battle is imminent" (7).

I assume that by 'battlefield' Asoyan is referring to armed struggle but with a conception of some kind of military overthrow (toppling) of the apartheid state. Negotiation is clear. In this complex situation, there are those who argue he says, for an 'all-or-nothing' approach. These Asoyan calls the 'South African extremists' (7). Unfortunately he does not tell us clearly who these political groupings are. He mentions the AWB of Terreblanche and some unspecified black left extremists. He should have specified these left extremists for the benefit of the reader.

He sees an increased "polarisation of the forces in the white community" which reflects the deepening crisis. Accordingly, "the ruling class is no longer capable of leading the country." There is a "deadlock" (11). Concomitantly with this crisis of the ruling class and the unwillingness to dismantle apartheid, has been the ANC's "high degree of responsibility" in resolving the crisis. But the white community has rejected all legitimate demands made by the liberation movement and the international community (12).

To make matters more complicated, the "minority has concentrated all power in its own hands and has refused to accept the idea of giving up even part of its privileges..." (13). Despite this concentrated power of the minority, Asoyan correctly notes the schism that has emerged in the formerly monolithic-like Afrikanerdom. That today there can be Afrikaners who dare to hold meetings with the ANC is indeed a significant political development which cannot be ignored.

He cited specific developments in this direction to illustrate his point about divisions amongst Afrikaners. Significantly, the emergence of prominent Afrikaners such as Prof Sampie Terreblanche and like-minded Stellenbosch academics, Willem de Klerk (brother of FW de Klerk) former Editor of the influential Afrikaner newspaper *Rapport* and other "new Nats" is of paramount importance to the possible scenarios for the future (45-6). He singles out for praise the meeting in Dakar in July 1987 between the ANC and the group of Afrikaners organised by Idasa.

A Question of Peace

Asoyan says that there is no doubt that 'eventually apartheid will collapse'. I share that with him. But central to the book is a flirtation with the modality of this 'collapse' of apartheid. On the back cover of the book, Asoyan is quoted as saying that "South Africa has not lost its chance for a peaceful solution yet". This is key to his scenario. He is unhappy to see what he calls violence continuing in the region. I assume that he is referring to two types of violence here: the state of violence of the apartheid regime and the armed struggle

waged by the liberation movement. He says that this escalation of violence “would greatly endanger universal peace” (79).

That being the case, (and this is central), it becomes “so important to step up the search for ways of reaching a political settlement to the conflict, to display a new way of thinking, a way of thinking which corresponds to the realities of today” (79). The realities of today of course means in this connection, the solution of regional conflicts by negotiations. To emphasise this point, he says, “no matter how polarised these positions [i.e., those held by the apartheid supporters and those by the black majority] might appear, there is a growing understanding in both camps that compromise is possible and inevitable”. (79).

Certainly the liberation movement has indicated on numerous occasions its willingness to find a “political solution” to the conflict. The main obstacle to this is the apartheid regime. Evidence from South Africa indicates the unpreparedness of the apartheid state to find a peaceful political solution. Repression, banning of political opposition, execution of militants, imprisonment and detention of scores of activists, and so on, all point to the unpreparedness of the state to negotiate. The Nationalist Party is determined to hang on to power.

In this context Asoyan’s views on the relationship between wars of liberation and world peace are worrying. Asoyan seems to reduce the liberation struggle to some nuisance factor in the international fight for peace. This is unacceptable as our war of liberation is a part of the struggle for world peace.

Unfortunately among some political commentators there is very little understanding of the Colonialism of a Special Type (CST) which obtains in South Africa. It is usually taken for granted that the cause of the conflict in South Africa is “racial inequality”. yet that is not the case. There are many cases globally where racial inequalities exist but not to the extent which one sees in South Africa. The historical dispossession of the African people by imperialism and the continued denial of their self-determination cannot be equated to a ‘racial problem’. The institution of a “new” colonial context through the Union of South Africa in 1910 and the Republic later on, brought about the special form of colonialism in South Africa. CST is therefore the basis upon which the oppressed in South Africa are engaged in a war of liberation.

Asoyan’s lack of appreciation of CST leads him to a misunderstanding of the national question in apartheid South Africa. For him, there is a nation already formed in South Africa. He refers for example to the apartheid

system “tearing the nation apart” (7). He also talks of the prevalent view amongst blacks being that a democratic South Africa will come about as a result of a hard struggle “which will free the nation” (8). An indication of the single nation thesis and therefore a conclusion that the conflict is a “civil war”.

In the ‘Time to Gather Stones Together’, Asoyan comes close to accepting the many nations thesis.

At one level, therefore, Asoyan implies a one nation thesis and on the other a many nations thesis. This is because he does not appreciate and understand CST. Thus in analyzing the contemporary state of conflict and its possible resolution he will inevitably come to certain wrong conclusions.

This book gives some insight into the “new thinking” that is going on amongst certain Soviet “experts” on South Africa and the liberation struggle. This calls for a more vigorous approach by our revolutionary alliance to explain to these people our position, perspective, analysis and strategy and tactics. We should engage these comrades in comradely discussion and debate.

T.Z.





INVALUABLE AIDS TO THE LIBERATION MOVEMENT

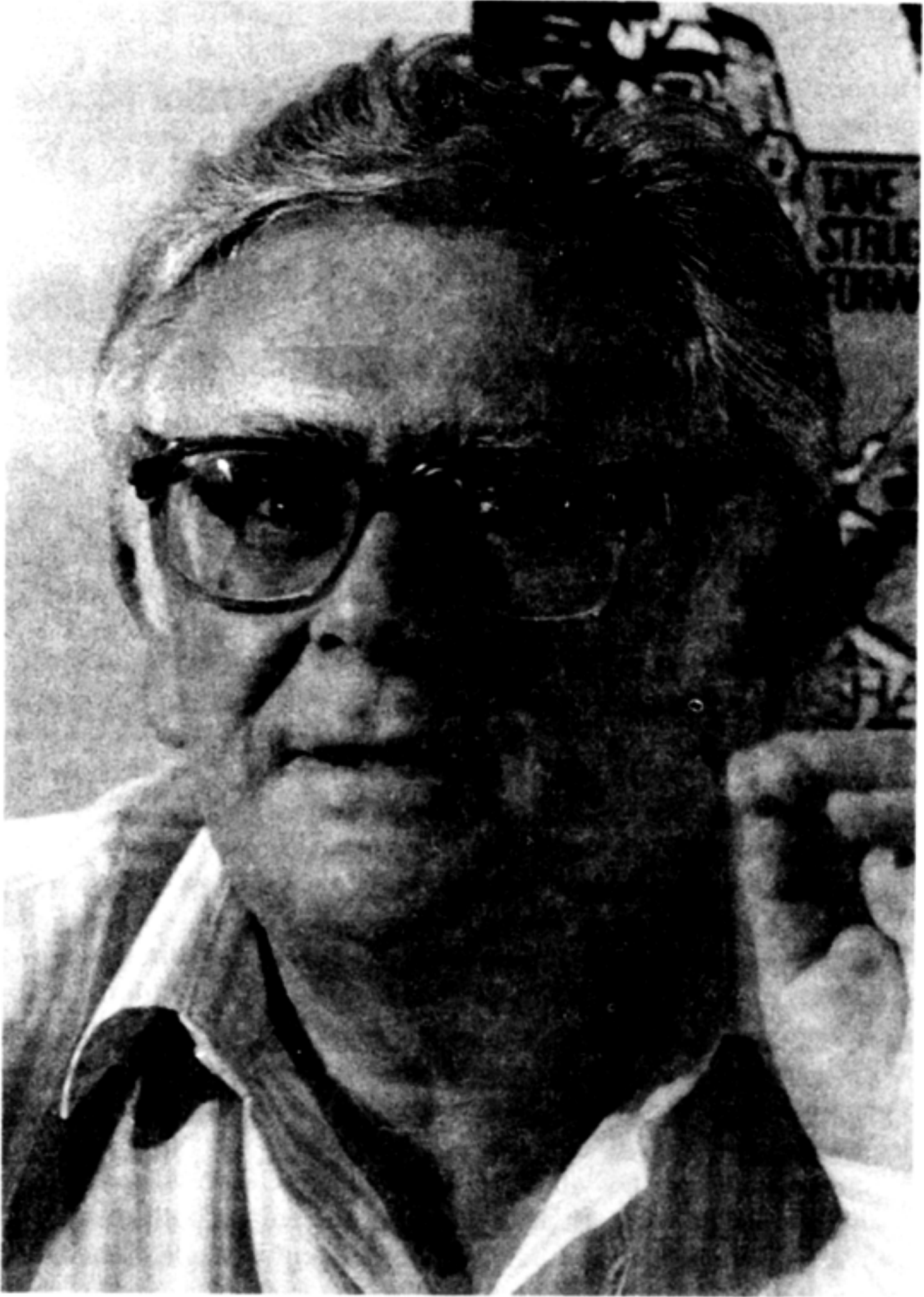
From A.M. Jibril, Aden, PDR Yemen

Dear Comrades,

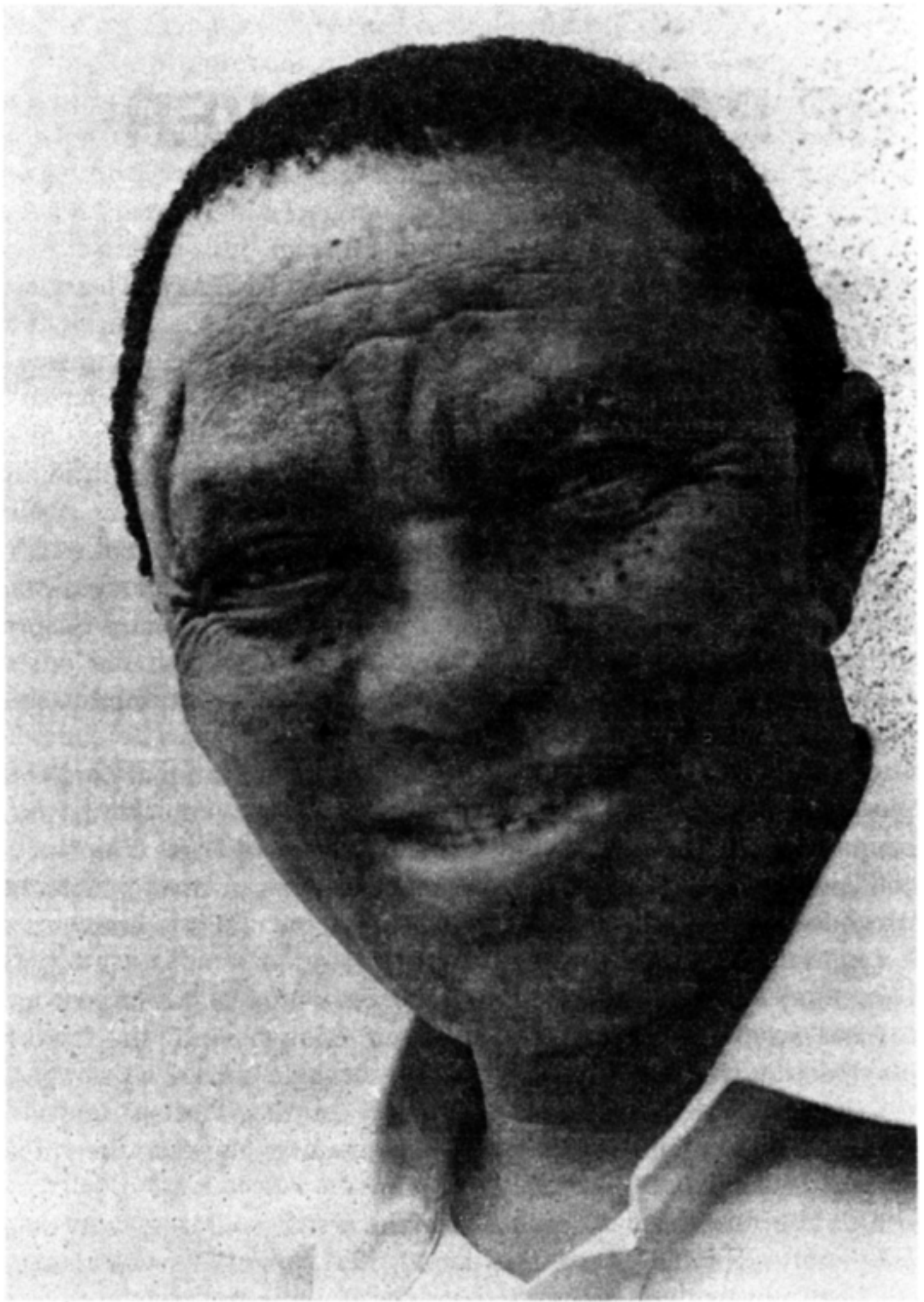
Please accept our heartfelt greetings for the year 1989, and also wish you new advances and successes in your just struggle which we always have it at our heart.

We would like to convey you (all the editorial and publishing staffs of SACP press) many thanks for your offering of SACP publications, such as *The African Communist*, *Umsenbenzi* and others that we have received from you. They are really invaluable teaching materials to our party cadres and people fighting for national sovereignty and democracy, as well as social progress.

Without overstating it, we have regarded the SACP press, notably the above mentioned periodicals, as of the Marxist-Leninist political school, embodying the very rich experience of the inherent struggle of the South African working class and people, as well as the entire African continent liberation movement, and theoretical and methodological guidance of the genuine national liberation movements and socialist objectives aimed at the indispensable social emancipation on our continent, and the world over.



Joe Slovo (above) and Dan Tloome (right) re-elected General Secretary and Chairman respectively at the 7th Congress of the South African Communist Party, 1989.



THE PATH TO POWER

Programme of the South African Communist Party adopted at the 7th Congress, 1989

INTRODUCTION

The prospects of achieving a revolutionary break-through in South Africa are greater today than ever before in our history. The apartheid regime faces an all-round crisis which results from our broad revolutionary offensive, together with the internal contradictions among the rulers. The crisis of racial tyranny cannot be resolved, except by the revolutionary transformation of our country.

The national liberation offensive is led by the African National Congress in revolutionary alliance with the vanguard workers' party — the South African Communist Party — and the South African Congress of Trade Unions. It is a national liberation struggle that combines many mass democratic contingents — the youth, women, students, civic and others — and the trade union movement.

The mobilisation, organisation and unity in action of this large front of forces has swept into every corner of our country, into the factories, townships, schools, and rural villages. Our struggle is known through the world, stirring freedom-loving people in every country. The building of this broad front of forces inside and outside our country has been the greatest achievement of our struggle.

The Communist Party of South Africa, the first Communist Party on the African continent, was formed on July 30, 1921. Our Party was rooted in South African struggles, and in socialist organisations and socialist thinking which had existed in various forms since the turn of the century. The formation of our Party was also directly inspired by the Bolshevik Party of Lenin, and its vanguard role in the world's first proletarian socialist revolution in Russia, the Great October Revolution of 1917.

One of the first attacks by the Nationalist Party regime on the people's rights was the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950, which banned the Communist Party of South Africa. This attack was the beginning of an assault on the whole democratic movement. In the 28 years before its banning the Communist Party had played a pioneering role in rooting the theory and practice of Marxism-Leninism in South African soil. In South African conditions this meant, above all, playing a leading role in building the national liberation movement. Party members also played a leading role in organising black workers into the trade union movement.

It was no accident that the apartheid regime made this Party and the ideas and practice of Marxism-Leninism its first target. Communism stands for the direct opposite of apartheid colonialism. Communism stands for the rights of the workers and oppressed people, against all forms of racism, privilege, colonialism and exploitation. Communism stands for peace, freedom, democracy, national independence and social progress.

The banning of the Communist Party and the persecution of individual communists have proved incapable of destroying us. Within a short time after the banning and dissolution of the Party, underground groups of communists were formed in several centres. In 1953 the first underground conference of the Party under its new name, the SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY, was held.

Today the influence and prestige of the South African Communist Party is greater than at any time in its history. Although it has been forced to operate in the underground for nearly forty years, our Party is one of the main pillars of the national liberation movement. The principles, the strategic objectives, and the organisational approach which our Party pioneered from the 1920s have come to be widely accepted among the broad masses within our country.

In the decisive period ahead, the SACP has a crucial role to play in the mobilising, organising and ideological development of all contingents in our revolutionary struggle, and in particular the South African working class. The struggle for national liberation, the destruction of colonialism of a special type and the transition to socialism in South Africa require a vanguard Marxist-Leninist party capable of providing a highly disciplined organisation and the guiding light of a scientific socialist outlook grounded in South African realities.

In 1962 the South African Communist Party adopted its programme, "The Road to South African Freedom". The 1962 programme has made an indelible contribution to the scientific analysis of the situation in

South Africa, and to practical revolutionary work for national liberation. It has proved to be a major guiding light over more than a quarter of a century of struggle, inspiring the work of party and non-party militants alike.

But after 27 years there have been major changes in the world, in our region, and within South Africa itself. The deepening crisis of racial tyranny in our country and the great wave of mass struggles over the last decade have brought our immediate goal much closer, and they have introduced a wealth of revolutionary experience. The period ahead is pregnant with revolutionary potential and challenges.

In this programme the South African Communist Party analyses the fundamental features of South African society and considers the main characteristics of the present international situation and of the region in which we live. It puts forward our strategic approach to the struggle to end national oppression and to advance to socialism, with the ultimate objective of building communism in South Africa. It outlines the main tasks of the Marxist-Leninist vanguard party of the working class, and the immediate path to power in the national democratic revolution.

The Communist Party is the leading political force of the South African working class. Together with our allies in the liberation front headed by the ANC, our immediate aim is to win the objectives of the national democratic revolution, whose main content is the national liberation of the African people in particular, and the black people in general, the destruction of the economic and political power of the racist ruling class, and the establishment of one united, non-racial, democratic South Africa in which the working class will be the dominant force.

The Communist Party has no interests separate from those of the working people. The Communists are sons and daughters of the people, and share with them the over-riding necessity to put an end to the suffering and humiliation of apartheid. The destruction of colonialism and the winning of national freedom is the essential condition and the key for future advance to the supreme aim of the Communist Party: the establishment of a socialist South Africa, laying the foundations of a classless, communist society.

1. THE WORLD REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS

The revolutionary struggle in South Africa is part of a world revolutionary process whose main tendency is the transition from capitalism to socialism, from societies based on exploitation to a new world free of exploitation and oppression by:

- competition between the two opposing social systems — capitalism and socialism — for the allegiance of humankind;
- more and more peoples taking the path to social progress;
- the struggle of the newly liberated countries for genuine, independent development;
- the struggle for the final liquidation of the colonial system.

Our period is also one in which the whole of humankind faces problems that endanger the very survival of our shared planet. The threat of nuclear war, the catastrophic problems of the developing countries, such as debt, famine and disease, all affect, directly and indirectly, the highly industrialised and developing countries alike. These problems require the broadest international co-operation for their resolution. While such broad co-operation is absolutely imperative, the only guarantee of a lasting solution to these problems lies with the deepening and consolidation of the main historical tendency of our epoch — the transition from capitalism to socialism.

This main tendency of world development does not take place without difficulties. Although imperialism has lost power over fully one third of humanity now in socialist countries, although it has lost its colonial empires and undergone serious crises, it remains a powerful and dangerous enemy of social progress. In its attempt to reverse the main trend of world development and to recapture the historical initiative, imperialism relies on its still vast economic, political, cultural and military resources.

The growing instability and internal crises of modern capitalism do not lead to its automatic collapse. In the present period a number of features have enabled international capital to prolong its existence and delay its end. A major scientific and technological revolution is occurring in both the advanced socialist and capitalist countries. In the capitalist countries this scientific and technological revolution has greatly accelerated the centralisation and concentration of capital, and spurred on the growth of giant transnational corporations.

In the 1980s transnational corporations accounted for over one-third of all the capitalist world's manufacturing output, more than one-half of its foreign trade, and for up to 80% of new hardware and technology patents. This high level of centralisation enables imperialism to manipulate material, financial and human resources throughout the non-socialist world. New centres of capital accumulation have been opened up in Latin America and the Far East.

Pursuing maximum profits, the transnational corporations are able to adapt promptly to changing conditions in the market, shifting their activities from country to country, and from one branch of production to another. In

the process they close down hundreds of factories, reduce production and employment possibilities, and ride roughshod over the interests and well-being of working people throughout the capitalist world.

The transnational corporations are the shock-force of neo-colonialism in the developing countries of Asia, Latin America and Africa. Unequal trade and the imposition of a massive debt burden on the developing countries are the principal means for maintaining and deepening neo-colonial subjugation. Through the control of commodity and money markets, the imperialists drive down the price of raw materials produced in the developing countries. At the same time the prices of commodities that the developing countries are forced to import are inflated. In 1987 the debt of developing countries to the imperialist banks was the equivalent of almost 30% of the gross annual product of the entire non-socialist world. Already Africa is transferring more capital abroad in debt service and other payments to the imperialists than it is receiving in aid and new loans. The imperialists, through agencies like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund use the resulting economic problems to impose policy directions on these countries that bring ever greater misery and mass starvation to millions of their peoples.

Militarism has always been an inherent feature of imperialism. In attempting to reverse the gains of socialism and national liberation, imperialism has entangled the world in a web of aggressive blocs and military bases. It has created hotbeds of tension at the borders of the socialist countries, and in strategic regions of the world. It supports the most reactionary and terrorist regimes.

The aggressive role of the apartheid regime in southern Africa is not just part of the struggle for survival by the last bastion of white colonial rule in our continent. It is also a component of a global imperialist strategy. The politico-military strategy of United States imperialism in regard to regional conflicts aims at defeating national liberation movements and undermining progressive, anti-imperialist governments in the developing world. It involves the export of counter-revolution, direct military intervention and the building up of regional military surrogates: either in the form of sub-imperialist states like Zionist Israel and the South African apartheid regime, or bandit forces like the Contras in Nicaragua, MNR in Mozambique and Unita in Angola. These regional forces act in the general interests of imperialism within their respective regions. There are, however, also internal pressures and tendencies that can lead, on occasion, to secondary contradictions developing between these regional forces and imperialism.

It is in the threat of world nuclear war generated by imperialism that the anti-popular nature of capitalism today is most convincingly demonstrated. In an attempt to restore their undermined international position, the most aggressive and reactionary circles in the imperialist world continue to whip up international tensions with anti-Soviet and anti-communist propaganda. They have also encouraged the massive build-up of arms by the most reactionary, regional regimes. With the assistance of imperialism Zionist Israel and the apartheid regime now both possess a nuclear capacity. The fact that two regimes, which are the source of continuing military and economic aggression against their respective regions, possess the nuclear bomb is a real threat to world peace.

In the present historical period the major issue that confronts all of humanity is the struggle against a nuclear war. A nuclear holocaust would obliterate our entire planet. In the light of these changing realities war is no longer inevitable. The consistent, peace-promoting policy of the socialist countries, and the world-wide anti-war movement play a leading role in the struggle to prevent the destruction of human civilisation. Internationally, it is imperative that the struggle against the squandering of enormous resources on weapons of mass destruction is linked to the struggle to overcome the intolerable sufferings of millions upon millions of people in the developing countries. In South Africa the all-round intensification of the revolutionary struggle for the isolation and overthrow of the apartheid regime is our main task in contributing to the overall struggle for world peace.

The Three Main Revolutionary Contingents

Of all the diverse progressive and revolutionary forces confronting imperialism in our time, there are three main revolutionary contingents:

- the world socialist system;
- the national liberation movements and anti-imperialist forces in the developing countries; and
- the working class movement in the developed capitalist countries.

Alongside these main contingents, a major tendency in the present period has been the emergence of mass democratic movements in the advanced capitalist countries. These movements mobilise millions of people around issues such as peace, the preservation of our environment, and the anti-apartheid struggle. While not necessarily being revolutionary in character, these broad-based mass democratic movements share important objectives with the three major world revolutionary contingents. They have contributed to the weakening of imperialism, isolating its most reactionary and dangerous circles.

The World Socialist System

World imperialism was dealt its first blow in 1917 — by the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia. After the end of the Second World War and the defeat of German fascism and Japanese militarism, the world-wide historical process of social liberation was marked by the overthrow of exploiters in several countries in Europe and Asia and then Cuba. Socialism has turned into a world system, asserting itself on vast expanses of the earth. Socialist countries today represent a powerful international force. Some of them possess highly developed economies, a considerable scientific base, and a reliable military defence potential. World socialism accounts for more than one-third of the world's population, in dozens of countries advancing along a path that reveals the intellectual and moral potential of humanity. A new way of life is taking shape in which there are neither oppressors nor the oppressed, neither exploiters nor the exploited, in which power belongs to the people.

There are three main ways in which the world socialist system contribute to the world revolutionary process. First, the existence of socialist countries, their growing might, and their foreign policies, based on working class internationalism, have brought about gradual changes in the world-wide balance of forces between imperialism and all the forces opposing it. The growing might of the socialist countries restricts imperialism's ability to export counter-revolution. Secondly, the advances of the socialist countries inspire the working people throughout the world to struggle for social and national emancipation, raising the level of their demands and programmes of action. Thirdly, socialist countries provide significant and many-sided support to revolutionary movements throughout the world. In short, the growing might of world socialism creates more favourable conditions for the working people of the world to attain peace, democracy and social progress.

Socialism has demonstrated its enormous potential for all-round progress. But the world-wide process of transition from capitalism to socialism has not been without negative features. In the Soviet Union itself socialism had to be built in a country with a low level of capitalist development, a predominantly peasant population, and many national communities with different levels of development, including survivals of feudalism and even earlier social systems. The new workers' state had to find its own way, without historical models to follow, and in the face of local counter-revolution and the invasion of armies from the leading imperialist powers.

The classical industrialisation pattern of the advanced capitalist countries, which took between 100 and 200 years, was based largely on resources

plundered from colonies. In contrast, in building its industrial base in less than 20 years, the Soviet Union had only its own resources on which to rely, not least the heroism and dedication of its revolutionary working class and Party.

These difficult origins help to explain, but in no way to justify the emergence of a party and government system of administrative command, leading to extensive bureaucratic control and criminal violations of socialist justice. These were exposed by the 20th and 27th Congresses of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. For a number of decades democratic procedures were neglected in the Soviet Union, and the cult of the personality dominated the leadership, the Party and the whole country. Given the pre-eminent position of the Soviet Union within the world communist movement, some of these negative tendencies also affected Communist Parties around the world, including our own.

Within the Soviet Union elements of stagnation and other phenomena alien to socialism began to appear. Since the 27th Congress of the CPSU an important process has been initiated for democratisation, restructuring (*perestroika*) and openness (*glasnost*), with the aim of ensuring the fuller realisation of the economic, moral and cultural possibilities opened up by socialism.

The South African Communist Party strives constantly for the strengthening of ties between all socialist countries and for international Communist unity at all levels. We regard such unity as essential for the progress of world socialism, the defence of peace and the advance of the national liberation struggle everywhere. The proletarian internationalism of the socialist countries has, amongst other things, played an outstanding role in the revolutionary victory of the Vietnamese people over US imperialism, and in the defence of the Cuban revolution. In southern Africa, progressive and revolutionary forces have a long and warm experience of the consistent, selfless assistance of the socialist countries. In particular, the contribution of the Cuban internationalist forces, the Soviet Union and other socialist countries to the defeat of apartheid and imperialist plans in Angola has been of decisive importance for our whole region.

The national liberation movement and the anti-imperialist struggle of the developing countries

The national liberation movement and the developing countries have played an exceptional part in the world-wide struggle against imperialism. They have contributed greatly to changing the balance of forces in the world in

favour of peace and socialism. As recently as the 1950s, almost one third of the world's population was ruled by colonial powers. In the last three decades the national liberation movement has dealt a major blow to colonialism. Today very little is left of the colonial system in its classical forms. This is an achievement of world-wide historical importance.

A major inter-governmental forum for the newly independent and other developing countries is the Non-Aligned Movement, which has emerged as an important force in world politics. The Non-Aligned Movement has an anti-war, anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist and anti-racist orientation. It also promotes the struggle for a new world economic order.

First put forward in 1973 by the Non-Aligned Movement, the basic principles of a new world economic order to break out of the present grave situation were declared to be:

- the sovereignty and equality of all states;
- the right of every country to choose its own road of development;
- the sovereignty of every state over its own national resources and economy;
- the right to control the activities of the transnational corporations; and
- economic aid without any political or military strings.

The crippling debt burden of the 1980s has made the demand for a new international economic order ever more relevant.

The governments of the developing countries pursue a variety of different policies. The most progressive among them have a socialist orientation, involving a gradual transition by economically under-developed societies to socialism. In these countries the foundations for social ownership of the means of production are being laid. Progressive and social and economic changes are being introduced to implement reform, stamp out illiteracy and involve the broad masses in building a new society.

The efforts of socialist-oriented countries to develop encounter fierce opposition from reactionary international circles. Imperialism considers vast regions of Asia, Latin America and Africa as spheres of its special interest. There it acts to trample on the rights and aspirations of the developing nations.

The anti-imperialist struggles of the developing countries are closely related to those of liberation movements struggling against the last remnants of the colonial system. In particular, Zionist Israel and apartheid South Africa are springboards to destabilise independent countries throughout their respective regions. The struggles of the Palestinian people under the leadership of the PLO, the Namibian people under the leadership of SWAPO, and of South Africa's majority under the leadership of the ANC, have an importance beyond their immediate context.

The working class movement in the advanced capitalist countries

The most organised detachments of the working class movement in capitalist countries are concentrated in Western Europe, North America and Japan. There are long traditions of militant class struggle in most of the major capitalist countries. In some there are mass Communist Parties that play an important role in social and political life. The Communist Parties, the progressive wing of the trade union movements, and progressive sections of social democratic organisations lead all democratic elements in these countries in the struggle against monopoly capital.

On the other hand, there have also been contradictory tendencies within the working class movements of the major imperialist centres. Reformism, class collaboration and even big power chauvinism have often reared their ugly heads. The material base for such negative phenomena has been the relative cushioning of sections of these metropolitan working classes, by some of the crumbs from the enormous wealth accumulated by imperialism through the super-exploitation of colonies and neo-colonies.

The working people of the advanced capitalist countries are now experiencing growing unemployment, and a rising cost of living. By the mid-1980s the number of unemployed in these countries had risen to more than 35 million. The transnational corporations and the regimes representing their interests have used mass unemployment to attack the material, social and democratic gains of the working class, and to undermine their trade unions. In the face of this offensive, the continuation of the class struggle is essential.

At the same time, the strategic orientation of Communist Parties in the advanced capitalist countries is towards broad, democratic, anti-monopoly coalitions. The possibilities of working in this direction have been greatly enhanced by the emergence, since the late 1960s, of various mass democratic movements. These mass democratic movements now constitute an important motive force for social development on a world-scale. These movements involve people of various political orientations and social status — often drawn from the middle strata. They tend to be non-partisan, mobilising around single issues such as peace, women's rights, the protection of the environment, and the anti-racist and anti-apartheid struggles. Their basic concerns and popular character inevitably bring them into opposition with monopoly domination and the policies of the most reactionary circles of imperialism.

These tendencies underline the need for, and possibilities of unity of all progressive forces in the advanced capitalist countries. However, social and

global problems can only be fully solved on the basis of the interests of the working class whose objective social position makes it central in this regard.

The South African Communist Party believes it is the task of all revolutionaries to grasp the interconnections between the world's revolutionary contingents, to learn from international experience, to apply this experience creatively according to concrete conditions, and to approach national problems in unity with international ones.

The South African Communist Party is part of the world communist forces. True to the principles of working class internationalism, the Party works for the unity of the workers of the whole world, and especially of the Marxist-Leninist parties. We work for the unity of all world anti-imperialist and progressive forces in the life-and-death struggle for nuclear disarmament and international relations based on mutual respect. This policy coincides with the fundamental interests of the people of our country. It is in harmony with the aim of independence and integrity for our country, and for regional and all-African co-operation and unity.

2. THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS IN AFRICA

The South African national liberation struggle is taking place within the context of important developments in southern Africa and the continent as a whole. These developments exert enormous influence on our struggle, as much as South African events have a bearing on the struggles of the peoples of Africa for full democratic and independent development.

The peoples of Africa share a common history which predates the colonial era. Subjected to various forms of colonial plunder by imperialism, their struggles for independence have always been seen as a common fight against a common enemy. This sense of collective responsibility forms the basis for a shared anti-imperialist sentiment, the most crucial and urgent of whose tasks is the complete decolonisation of the continent.

Although the social conditions within our country are, in many ways, different from the general situation in most of Africa, the root and essence of the system within South Africa differs little from the classical colonial system to which the rest of the continent was subjected. Our struggles and the destiny of African peoples are deeply interconnected.

The attainment of independence by the majority of African peoples constitutes the greatest political advance of the past three decades on the continent. From colonial subjugation, virtually the whole of Africa is today made up of independent states, with the political instruments to determine

their destiny. This achievement is a direct result of the heroic struggles of the African masses: the peasants, workers, intelligentsia and other forces.

While similarities abound, each country and each people have their own characteristics. The level of economic development differs from country to country and region to region. The paths to political power; the correlation and class forces in the national liberation alliances before and after independence; the colonial metropolis with which they have had to contend; and the immediate geo-political environment in which they are situated — all these have a profound influence on the political processes in each country.

Today, Africa is made up of a wide variety of political systems and forms of government.

In countries where the compradore bourgeoisie — underlings of imperialist forces — dominate the machineries of state, economic resources have been laid bare to plunder by transnational corporations, with some fringe benefits to the local ruling groups. In such countries, and those in which other sections of the bourgeoisie or aspirant capitalists took the reins of power, a parasitic variant of the capitalist class — the bureaucratic bourgeoisie — has emerged. This group feeds on corruption and is tied to international capital. Politically, these reactionary capitalists rely on force and progressive-sounding slogans to suppress the yearnings of the working people for independent development.

In some countries sections of the national bourgeoisie who, though aspiring for growth and prosperity as a class, came into power with the support of the working people: in particular the working class and poor peasantry. This group, relying on this alliance, and moved by genuinely patriotic aims, has taken an active part in struggles against imperialist domination, for independent national development. In these countries, restrictions have been placed on the involvement of transnational corporations. Industrial and land reforms including a relatively strong state sector have been introduced. In the fields of education, health and in the political system some reforms have been effected to benefit the people and ensure their participation — though limited — in the political process.

A decisive role in the development of socio-political forms in Africa is played by the middle strata, especially professional groups and sections of small businessmen. Numerically strong, and based in the urban centres, they are the social base that has fed the leadership layers of liberation movements and political parties. It is from these forces that the majority of the officer corps in the state apparatus and bureaucracy originate. These

strata have tended to ally themselves either to the various sections of the bourgeoisie or to the working people.

Over the decades since independence, many socio-political changes have taken place in the countries of the continent. The struggle between the forces of democracy and social progress on the one hand, and those tied to imperialism on the other, has assumed different forms and has been waged with different degrees of intensity. In a number of countries, these struggles have resulted in political coups of either a progressive or reactionary character. In other instances, the upheavals at the top and among the people result from the complex ethnic (and sometimes religious) relations inherited from the colonial division of Africa. This ethnic diversity has often been deliberately manipulated by the colonial and imperialist powers. At the same time, insufficient attention or incorrect approaches to the national question by the classes and strata in power have also precipitated social strife.

One of the most significant developments in this period has been the growth of the African working class and its increasing impact on social developments. The waged work-force in independent Africa has grown in number to over 34 million, 70% of whom are workers in industry and agriculture. The geographic distribution of the working class is uneven, with the majority concentrated in a few relatively industrialised countries. Though small in number, the African working class is crucial to any radical social transformations. But it can only play its revolutionary role to the full if it is conscious of its historic mission and is organised to promote and pursue its immediate and long-term interests under the guidance of Marxism-Leninism. Depending on the actual social and political setting in each country, the vanguard revolutionary forces will assume a variety of organisational forms, the highest expression of which is a Marxist-Leninist Party.

Despite the variety of ideological positions, African countries share the common scourge of the grim consequences of colonial rule: the lopsided economic structure, technical underdevelopment, mass starvation and vulnerability to natural disasters, the debt burden and so on. These real problems reinforce the joint struggles of virtually all independent Africa for an equitable system of international economic relations. It is the totality of all these common social problems and the desire to eradicate them that has cemented the bonds of unity, expressed in the Organisation of African Unity. Regional associations such as the Preferential Treaty Area for Eastern and Southern African States and the Economic Community of West African States also aim at strengthening the countries of Africa in their joint quest for

independent development. These organisations have not only reinforced continental and regional co-operation, but also significantly strengthened the voice and standing of Africa in the international arena.

The Transition to Socialism

Ultimately, the only viable choice for Africa's working people is the socialist path of development. This road holds out the possibility of resolving the many-sided problems afflicting all developing countries, to the benefit of the overwhelming majority of the people.

The main general tasks in the countries of socialist orientation are:

- to strengthen the state sector;
- to root out domination by foreign capital;
- to create the industrial and technical base for socialism and ensure planned economic development;
- to introduce progressive land reforms;
- to widen popular democracy and strengthen the vanguard revolutionary party; and
- to work for national cultural revival with socialist values.

But these tasks have to be carried out in a situation in which the old masters — local and international — put up stiff resistance. In particular, the most reactionary circles of imperialism and, in our region, the apartheid regime, have mobilised their resources for a vicious campaign against socialism. Reactionary terrorist and subversive interference have slowed down the development towards socialism in many of these countries. These actions have hindered the attempts to overcome such objective difficulties as the backward industrial and technological base and the numerical weakness of the working class.

In some of these countries, subjective mistakes have been made. The main error has been the drive to move ahead of objective conditions both in economic and political policy. For instance, premature attempts to eliminate all private property, including small enterprises, often narrows the social base of the revolution and can do incalculable harm to the quest for socialism. In a few cases, elements have emerged within the state apparatuses who amass wealth through corrupt practices and who seek to use their position to reverse the whole process of socialist orientation.

The path of socialist orientation demands unflinching reliance by the revolutionary movement on the working people, and a conscious effort to constantly broaden the social base of the revolution by patiently winning

over more and more genuinely patriotic forces to the side of social progress. It depends also, to a large measure on the strength and cohesion of the Marxist-Leninist vanguard party and systematic ideological work within the ranks of the party and among all sections of society. In foreign policy, strong, mutually-beneficial relations with socialist countries and other progressive nations is of fundamental importance.

The South African Communist Party supports the struggle of African patriots to achieve full national liberation, sovereignty and independent national development. The Party fully identifies with the efforts to organise and mobilise the working class and working people to play their deserved role in national and continental renaissance; and to cement the unity of workers, peasants and other progressive and democratic forces in the fight to eliminate the vestiges of colonialism and ongoing imperialist plunder. As part of this process, and in pursuit of the working class objective of a society without exploitation, the Party works for the deepening of the comradely unity and co-operation among Marxist-Leninist Parties of Africa.

The Southern African Region

Over the past two decades, southern Africa has undergone changes of epoch-making significance. These developments have had a profound impact on the struggle within South Africa. And they have themselves been influenced by this struggle. Our revolution is unfolding within this immediate environment, a region which is the foremost target of the racist colonial regime's acts of destabilisation.

The evolution of the colonial system of imperialism in southern Africa was such that the economies of the countries of the region were structured to be highly dependent on South Africa in terms of communication and transport, the supply of manufactured goods and, to an extent, even the employment of wage labour. South Africa emerged as a sub-imperialist centre, a junior partner of imperialism seeking to dominate the region on its own behalf and on behalf of imperialism. Today, South Africa accounts for about 77% of the Gross National Product of countries south of Zaire and Tanzania and approximately 90% of energy consumed. South African capital has been exported to many countries of the region.

The strategy of imperialism consists in ensuring its regional domination of southern Africa. In this regard, imperialism pays particular attention to defending the interests of monopoly capital especially within South Africa as its prime springboard into the region. In pursuit of the objective of regional domination, imperialism employs various tactics aimed at blocking and

reversing the struggle of the revolutionary masses, and maintaining the essence of colonial domination within South Africa and the region as a whole.

The achievement of independence by the peoples of Mozambique and Angola in the mid-1970s drastically changed the balance of forces in the region. A product of armed and militant popular struggles, these victories profoundly reinforced the struggles of other oppressed peoples of the subcontinent. These revolutions set the stage for development towards socialist construction. Slightly over half a decade later, and after many years of gruelling struggle, the Zimbabwean people also achieved their independence.

The strategy of the apartheid regime hinges on achieving all-round domination — economic, political and military — and turning the states of southern Africa into satellites of apartheid colonialism. In pursuit of this objective, economic enticement, persuasion, sabotage, direct military aggression and surrogate bandit movements are used interchangeably and in various combinations to bludgeon southern Africa into submission. The regime's acts of aggression are a product of the support Pretoria receives from imperialism.

But it is a policy that is meeting with major obstacles. Intensified mass and armed struggle within South Africa; the economic consequences of regional destabilisation; the cost of direct aggression in human lives and white morale — all these have a powerful weakening effect upon the apartheid regime. In addition, the states of southern Africa, the Frontline States in particular, have collectively taken consistent positions against apartheid. The Southern African Development Co-ordinating Conference and bilateral relations among these and other governments in the region, constitute a significant drive to reduce dependence on South Africa. The Frontline States themselves have sought to strengthen their defence and security to defeat Pretoria's plans.

It is against this background that in 1988 the South African war machine suffered an ignominious defeat in southern Angola. Combined with decades of heroic struggle by the people of Namibia under the leadership of SWAPO, this development has precipitated possibilities for the decolonisation of Namibia.

Within the centres of international capital, and between elements of international capital and the regime, there have always been differences of approach. To the extent that these contradictions are of benefit to the struggle, they must be used and deepened. But these conflicts should not be overestimated: the essence of the strategy of international capital as a whole remains that of defending and extending its economic and political sway.

The South African Communist Party stands by the governments and peoples of southern Africa in their efforts to defend their sovereignty and independence. Their sacrifices in support of our struggle shall always remain emblazoned in the hearts of our people and our working class in particular — with whom many southern African workers share the same workplace. The bonds among the classes and strata in the region leads to a natural alliance among African patriots against colonial domination. The task of isolating, weakening and defeating the Pretoria regime is the noble duty of all anti-apartheid forces in South Africa, the region and internationally. This is the ultimate guarantee of a just peace and social progress in our subcontinent.

3. COLONIALISM OF A SPECIAL TYPE

South Africa has a developed capitalist economy. In our country, and wherever it exists, the capitalist mode of production has the same basic characteristics. It is an exploitative system based on the extraction of surplus value from wage labour. But the universal features of capitalism occur within concrete societies, each with its own specific balance of class forces and particular economic, political and ideological features. In different capitalist countries the bourgeoisie exerts its class rule through different kinds of domination, ranging from bourgeois democracy to fascism.

Like many earlier oppressor classes, the bourgeoisie also exerts its class rule across frontiers. In the imperialist epoch, capitalism has extensively developed its own variants of colonial, semi-colonial and neo-colonial rule, underpinning the brutal super-exploitation of working people in the dominated societies.

Within South Africa, bourgeois domination and capitalist relations of production, which emerged within the context of colonialism, have been developed and maintained since 1910 through a specific variant of bourgeois class rule — colonialism of a special type. It is a variant of capitalist rule in which the essential features of colonial domination in the imperialist epoch are maintained and even intensified. But there is one specific peculiarity: in South Africa the colonial ruling class with its white support base on the one hand, and the oppressed colonial majority on the other are located within a single country.

On the one hand, white South Africans enjoy political power, racial privileges and the lion's share of the country's wealth. On the other hand, the overwhelming black majority of our country are subjected to extreme

national oppression, poverty, super-exploitation, complete denial of basic human rights, and political domination.

There are significant class differences within both the white colonial bloc and the oppressed black majority. However, the effect of colonialism of a special type is that all white classes benefit, albeit unequally and in different ways, from the internal colonial structure. Conversely, all black classes suffer national oppression, in varying degrees and in different ways.

The social and economic features of our country are directly related to its colonial history.

The Origins of Colonialism of a Special Type

From the time of the first white settlement, established by the Dutch East India Company over 300 years ago, the pattern was set for the ruthless exploitation of the black people of our country, the seizure of their lands and the enforced harnessing of their labour power. The Dutch made war on the Khoi people of the Cape, whom they contemptuously called "Hottentots", and rejected their appeals for peace and friendship. The San people, the so-called "Bushmen", were all but exterminated. Slaves were imported from Malaya and elsewhere. White settlers gradually penetrated into the interior. They drove the indigenous people from the best farm lands and seized their cattle. They subdued them by armed conquest and forced them into their service — at first through direct slavery, later through a harsh system of pass laws and taxation.

Colonialist propaganda has emphasised the negative features of traditional African society: the relatively low development of productive techniques, the illiteracy, inter-tribal conflicts and wars, superstitions and poverty. It is true that such features existed in traditional African society just as they did among all peoples at the period of early communal economies. But hostile propaganda has presented a distorted image. Prior to colonial conquest, the indigenous peoples had developed their own independent culture and civilisation. They mined and smelted iron, copper and other metals and fashioned them into useful implements. They had developed a number of handicrafts. Their system of government, though simple, was essentially democratic and popular in character. Private property in land was unknown, and food and shelter were freely shared, even with strangers.

But when the colonists began their ceaseless acts of armed aggression, the African people resisted bravely to defend their cattle and their land from robbery and their people from enslavement. They took up the spear against the bullets of the invader with his horses and wagons. But, tribal society and a

rural economy could not provide the material basis for successful warfare against an enemy with a more advanced economy and more destructive weapons. Disunity among the various African peoples prevented the development of a common front of resistance. Time and again in their wars of conquest against African peoples, the colonisers were able to play off one community against another and to enrol African auxiliaries.

In the last quarter of the 19th century, the development of capitalist, industrial mining on the Kimberley diamond-fields and on the goldfields of the Witwatersrand had profound and far-reaching consequences. British and European finance houses exported vast sums of investment capital to South Africa. To seize complete control over the goldfields, British imperialism waged a successful war against the Boers. The goldmining companies were now the real rulers of the country. They had only one interest in the Africans — to force them into labour on the mines at minimum rates of pay. The mine bosses found the harsh colonial policy of the Boer Republics admirably suited to this purpose. The poll tax and pass systems were speeded up. Not a single move was made to introduce into the northern colonies even the minimum citizenship rights which had been conceded to some blacks in the Cape. In the oppression, dispossession and exploitation of blacks, British imperialism and Afrikaner nationalism found common ground. This was the basis for the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910.

In that year South Africa was established as a political entity with a centralised state power. This established the political conditions for the construction and development of a national capitalist economy and the national institutions of bourgeois political domination. The economic power and political influence of British imperialism were not abolished with the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910. They were now exercised indirectly through the political structures of the new state monopolised by the descendants of European settlers. These new national structures were based on the effects of centuries of colonial conquest and land dispossession. They reproduced, in changed forms, the essential features of colonial domination that has existed before the Union of South Africa.

The new Union of South Africa perpetuated the inferior colonial status of Africans who were recognised only as the objects of administration, without any citizenship rights. In elected bodies, as well as in public administration whites occupied all positions of authority, skill and competence. Africans occupied only subordinate, unskilled positions without any authority over whites.

The form of domination developed by the Union of South Africa also perpetuated the racialised economic structures of the pre-Union period. There was a white monopoly of capitalist means of mining, industrial and agricultural production and of distribution. There was also a virtual white monopoly of skilled and supervisory jobs in the division of labour. Whites had privileged access to trading and petty commodity production. The 1913 Land Act, confining land ownership of the African majority to a tiny and arid proportion of the country, legally entrenched and intensified the result of centuries of colonial land dispossession.

The South African capitalist state did not emerge as a result of an internal popular anti-feudal revolution. It was imposed from above and from without. From its birth through to the present, South African capitalism has depended heavily on the imperialist centres. Capital from Europe financed the opening of the mines. It was the colonial state that provided the resources to build the basic infrastructure — railways, roads, harbours, posts and telegraphs. It was an imperial army of occupation that created the conditions for political unification. And it was within a colonial setting that the emerging South African capitalist class entrenched and extended the racially exclusive system to increase its opportunities for profit. The racial division of labour, the battery of racist laws and political exclusiveness guaranteed this. From these origins, a pattern of domination, which arose in the period of external colonialism, was carried over into the newly formed Union of South Africa. From its origins to the present, this form of domination has been maintained under changing conditions and by varying mechanisms. In all essential respects, however, the colonial status of the black majority has remained in place. Therefore we characterise our society as colonialism of a special type.

The Class and Social Structure of Colonialism of a Special Type

Since 1910 South African capitalism has developed enormously. From a typical extractive, colonial economy, whose core was gold mining based on cheap migrant labour and agriculture based on cheap forced labour, South Africa is now a relatively advanced capitalist society with the most developed infrastructure on the African continent. Today monopoly capital dominates every single sector of the South African economy. The development of capitalist forces of production has led to the extensive growth of a modern proletariat. Numerically the working class, of which the core is a large industrial proletariat, is by far the largest class in our society. Even in the South African countryside, the agrarian working class, and migrant workers and their families constitute the great majority of the population. Bourgeois

class domination is, however, still based on the colonial oppression of the black and, in particular, African majority.

The special colonial domination is based on an alliance of white classes and strata. The maintenance of this system, producing as it does increasing instability, violence and a growing isolation from the international community, is not in the overall long-term interests of the majority of South Africans, black or white. However, in the short-term all white classes and strata benefit from the oppression of the black majority.

Within the white colonial bloc, it is the bourgeoisie and in particular monopoly capital that is the leading class force. In every sector of the economy — mining, manufacturing, finance, and increasingly even in agriculture and services — monopoly capital is now overwhelmingly dominant. Enormous power is wielded by a handful of companies controlling vast economic empires. By the mid-1980s 2.7% of enterprises controlled over 50% of our country's total turnover; 6.3% of all enterprises employed over half of the national work-force; and a mere 6% had 85% of all fixed assets. Monopoly concentration of capital is a universal trend within capitalism — but the level of concentration in South Africa is virtually unprecedented. And the trend to ever greater concentration is increasing each year. By 1987, four companies (Anglo-American, SANLAM, SA Mutual and Rembrandt) alone controlled 80% of all shares on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. Of these companies, Anglo-American alone controlled 55%.

Over the last decades Afrikaner controlled monopoly conglomerates have developed, and their interests have interlocked and merged with those of the older monopolies traditionally controlled by English-speaking whites. A decisive role in the capitalist economy is also played by the state. State corporations in some of the key sectors — armaments, energy and transport — play a central role in propping up the entire capitalist economy. With all of these developments, the level of collusion between the state and private monopoly capital, and between English and Afrikaans big business has increased substantially on the economic and political fronts.

Faced with a deepening crisis and the prospect of a national democratic revolution, these monopoly interests are now calling for some restructuring of race domination. At the heart of the various political arrangements they are advocating is an attempt to keep South Africa safe for monopoly capitalism. Under the guise of protecting "group rights", they seek to perpetuate their monopoly control over the wealth of our country. In fact, their strangle-hold over the great bulk of our country's productive land,

machinery and capital is the accumulated result of more than a century of colonial dispossession, oppression and exploitation of the majority. There can be no true liberation from colonial oppression in our country, without transforming this fundamental economic legacy.

Although monopoly capitalism has now become dominant in every sector, there are also non-monopoly capitalists. In particular, there is still a large number of non-monopoly white farms. This is the most backward sector of the capitalist economy. The national farming debt in 1986 exceeded the gross agricultural income, and it was ten times the sum of annual profits to farming capitalists. A large number of white-owned capitalist farms are only able to survive as a result of the most barbaric oppression and exploitation of their black labourers, and extensive government loans and other forms of protection.

Among the white middle strata, particularly from the Afrikaans speaking community, large numbers are now integrated into the state bureaucracy. They are highly dependent for their positions on having in power a political organisation committed to a strong, racially privileged state bureaucracy. Other sectors of the white middle strata, professionals and particularly the intelligentsia, often feel least threatened among the white community by the prospect of a non-racial future. It is necessary to detach significant numbers of these sectors from an unquestioning support for white minority rule, and win them over to the struggle for national democracy.

The 2 million economically active whites mostly hold clerical, supervisory, administrative and technical positions. In many ways white wage-earners constitute a classical "labour aristocracy". Although their long-term interests lie in making common cause with their black working-class brothers and sisters, decades of racial privilege have brought them real material gains. These have instilled an extremely reactionary outlook within a significant proportion of white workers. It is from this stratum that the ultra-rightwing, neo-fascist parties receive their major support. With the deepening crisis of South African capitalism, and with the growing collusion between the state and the monopolies, the economic situation of white workers has deteriorated. Their trade unions, which have for a long time been in deep collusion with management, are now proving less and less effective in defending the interests of their members. While organising white workers into progressive trade unions, and winning them away from racism is not an easy task in the present situation, every endeavour must be made in this direction.

The alliance of white classes and strata is not without contradictions and counter-tendencies. Although historically all white classes and strata have united around the system of white minority rule, the different interests that draw them together in this alliance are not static. Monopoly capitalism now tends to secure its labour from a more stable, better qualified and higher consuming work force. From the perspective of monopoly capital these economic changes require a political and economic restructuring of colonialism of a special type. This restructuring is resisted by sections of the white working class and petty bourgeoisie, and by some of the non-monopoly capitalists in agriculture and manufacturing.

Above all, the growing revolutionary challenge, and increased international isolation are now dramatically weakening the cement uniting the white bloc. Today, the white community is more confused, more divided and more demoralised than in many decades. While certain sectors are in favour of reform to ward off revolution, others are increasingly swept into the ranks of the ultra-right and various neo-fascist groupings that propagate the most rabid race hatred. Generally speaking, these differences and conflicts within the white bloc are not centred around the abolition of colonial domination of the majority, but around how best to maintain stability and privilege.

However, with the deepening political and economic crisis, increasing numbers of whites are beginning to doubt whether apartheid is in their own long term interests, and whether it can ever bring them peace and security. White domination means more and more police and military expenditure to burden the taxpayer, diverting resources from useful production. It means enforced conscription of white males into the apartheid armies, to serve and even die for an unjust cause. It means more and more dictatorial police-state measures, and the extinguishing of civil liberties for whites themselves. It means a South Africa despised and shunned by the whole world, subjected to economic, sports and cultural isolation. It means a future of uncertainty and fear.

There are now many possibilities for detaching significant sectors of whites from at least an unquestioned faith in white minority rule. Indeed, increasing numbers of whites are now espousing an anti-apartheid position, joining the broad front of forces aligned against the Pretoria regime. There is also a long tradition within South Africa, pioneered in the 1920s by our Party, of whites renouncing colonial privileges and standing shoulder to shoulder with their black brothers and sisters in the revolutionary struggle for a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa. One of the features of the struggles of the

1980s has been the still small but growing number of whites actively making this fuller, revolutionary commitment.

Within the colonially oppressed black majority, the 6 million strong working class is by far the largest and most significant class force. Neither the profound economic changes that have occurred in South Africa, nor the restructuring that monopoly capital advocates, amount to an abolition of the special colonial oppression of the black working class. Despite the changes, black workers still occupy the less skilled and lower paid jobs. Inferior education, the unequal provision of resources and the denial of political rights all continue to reproduce a racially divided, colonial-type work-force. The system of national oppression has guaranteed a low paid black labour force, while allowing for changes in size and technical understanding. Until the 1960s there were relatively few black clerical workers and still fewer black employees who were formally described as skilled, semi-skilled, or supervisors, foremen and workers in service capacities.

By the beginning of the 1970s the present shape of the working class had been established. A more literate black work force entered occupations previously dominated by whites, although the apartheid educational system still limits the vast majority of African people to low levels of education. Colonial oppression of the black proletariat has been retained through the changes. Whites work alongside blacks who, at a lower wage and with a lower status, increase their capacity to run a modern industry. Job descriptions are redefined, as blacks move into them at wages only a fraction of that paid to whites.

Oppressed by the special colonial form of bourgeois domination in South Africa and super-exploited, black workers stand to gain the most from the immediate abolition of national oppression. It is also black workers whose longer-term interests are for the complete and final eradication of all forms of oppression and exploitation in our country.

The South African industrial proletariat, concentrated in the large urban complexes has emerged as the most organised and powerful mass revolutionary contingent in our country. Its proletarian class consciousness has been developed and deepened by decades of militant trade unionism. This tradition is today embodied in the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) and in the giant federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). It is a working class that has responded in its millions to calls for national stayaways, shutting down the mines, factories, shops, and bringing the capitalist economy to a grinding halt for days at a time. It is a working class from among whom increasingly large numbers are

actively rallying to the Marxist-Leninist positions of the SACP, openly espousing the perspectives of socialism. Within our own country this proletariat is gathering its forces to fulfill the historical role predicted over one hundred years ago by Marx and Engels for the working class movement on a world-scale. Assembled in millions within the very heartland of an advanced capitalist economy, and leading the struggle against national oppression, the South African working class is poised to be the gravedigger of capitalist exploitation itself.

Large-scale and chronic unemployment has now become a central feature of South Africa's capitalist economy. Some 300,000 new job-seekers enter the labour market each year, while a stagnating economy is only able to absorb an extremely small proportion. Official figures deliberately under-estimate the number of unemployed Africans by many millions. The most reliable estimates in the late 1980s were between 6 and 8 million unemployed Africans. Other groups, in particular the Coloured people, have been seriously affected by unemployment. This enormous wastage of the human wealth and potential of our country is characteristic both of colonial oppression and of capitalism, a system based on private profits and not on social needs.

Closely allied to the South African industrial proletariat, are the oppressed rural masses. There are some 1.3 million black workers on white-owned farms. Conditions for black workers on these farms are invariably bad. They are often treated with brutality, wages are extremely low, and they are not covered by labour laws in effect in other sectors of the economy. Malnutrition is common among black children on white farms, and many children are themselves also forced to work to supplement their family income.

The vast majority of about thirteen and a half million people in the bantustans are landless and without livestock or agricultural implements. While landlessness is acute, the land that is available to African peasants tends to be both overgrazed and barren. Among households with some land it is virtually only those that receive remittances from family members at regular intervals, in the form of wages or pensions, who are able to engage in any agricultural production beyond a garden plot.

The apartheid regime has tried to develop a stratum of middle peasants, so called 'bona fide farmers', in the bantustans. This strategy has generally failed because patronage and corruption have led to resources for development and the little effective farming land available falling into the hands of bantustan civil servants, and bantustan government ministers in particular. These collaborative strata do not engage in small-scale farming,

but set themselves up in commercial agricultural enterprises, often in joint ventures as junior partners to white farmers and commercial interests.

Within the economy of apartheid colonialism the bantustans serve as suppliers of cheap labour and as dumping grounds for the unemployed, the aged and the sick. Apart from migrant labourers and 'commuters', who are forced to travel many hours from dormitory townships, the vast majority of people in the bantustans are workers' families, unemployed workers and poor peasants. They are linked in many ways, direct and indirect, to the South African working class in their outlook and in their objective interests. Their demands are for land, for the right to settle where they choose, for secure and rewarding work, and for an end to the corruption and repressive actions of the bantustan authorities. In their struggle to achieve these demands the rural masses are the major social ally of the working class in the broad struggle for national liberation, and the longer-term struggle for the socialist transformation of our country.

Among the oppressed black majority of our country there is a fairly small but growing and relatively significant range of middle strata, made up of a commercial petty bourgeoisie, and various professional categories. These middle strata suffer, with their fellow blacks, under the brutal and humiliating system of colonialism. The majority of these middle strata, in terms of their living conditions, their social origin and their political aspirations are closely linked to the oppressed black proletariat. Despite the regime's attempts to woo these black middle strata, hoping to transform them into a buffer between the masses and the white colonial bloc, the overwhelming majority have rejected these ploys. Indeed, the active participation of black middle strata within the national democratic movement has been an important feature of our revolutionary struggle. This is not to say that there are no other, contradictory tendencies among sections of the black middle strata. The apartheid regime has not abandoned its attempts to win them over, and their continued allegiance to the people's cause requires active and ongoing work.

There is also a very small but emerging black bourgeoisie in South Africa. At present it controls means of production that are responsible for less than two percent of our country's gross national product. One fraction of this emergent black bourgeoisie is closely associated with the various apartheid collaborative structures — like bantustan administrations, community councils, management committees, and the tricameral parliament. Using its control of subordinate bureaucratic apparatuses and by patronage and corruption it accumulates some capital resources. Because of its dependency

on these apartheid structures, this fraction tends to be extremely reactionary, aligning itself to the colonial ruling bloc. However, its subordinate status and its very dependence upon the ruling bloc are sometimes the source of resentments and secondary contradictions which can be exploited by the liberation movement.

Other emergent fractions of the black bourgeoisie are developing out of petty bourgeois commercial activities, and also through the professional and managerial routes. Though growing in numbers, their entrepreneurial operations remain blocked by the economic strangle-hold of the monopolies and by racial oppression. These strata can be won over into the broad national liberation movement.

The black majority includes two sizeable groups, the Coloured and Indian peoples. They share with the African majority the bitter suffering and humiliation of racial oppression. There have been considerable social changes over the last 30 years within these communities, with a growing process of class differentiation. The apartheid regime has used these changes, in particular the growing affluence of some of their upper strata, to intensify its attempts to win active collaboration from these communities. These attempts by the regime have failed dismally, and the Coloured and Indian people in their majority have soundly rejected and isolated the few collaborators drawn from their midst.

The Coloured community, numbering some 3 million, is predominantly working class in character. This community is subjected to many forms of racial discrimination, reflected in low standards of living, education, housing, nutrition and health. The changes in the national economy, with increased capital investment in the manufacturing sector in the 1970s, led to a significant growth in the number of Coloured workers in white-collar and skilled jobs, and a declining relative share of Coloured employment in the lower manual and unskilled occupations.

Despite these advances the average Coloured monthly wage was still only 35% of the average white earnings in 1986. Another significant change in the last decades has been the movement of Coloured women out of domestic service and agriculture into semi-skilled manufacturing, sales and clerical work. Coloured farm labourers still work and live under wretched conditions. The increased mechanisation of agriculture has resulted in over 100,000 Coloured farm workers losing their jobs since 1960. They and their families have swelled the ranks of the unemployed in the urban areas.

Although the Coloured community has always suffered racial oppression, in the first half of this century it occupied a privileged position in relation to

Africans. The white ruling group extended various concessions — such as a qualified franchise, trade union rights, and property rights — in order to prevent the emergence of a united front of oppressed blacks against white colonialism. This policy was not without success. However, with the accession of the National Party to power in 1948, many of these relative privileges were removed. In the late 1950s and 1960s the Coloured community was subjected to brutal, mass forced removals under the Group Areas Act.

In the 1980s the regime's attempts to incorporate Coloured people within the tricameral parliament have failed miserably. Increasing numbers of Coloured people have now come to align themselves unambivalently with the broader struggle of the African majority. One of the most significant developments in the 1980s has been the militant, mass participation of the Coloured community in the national democratic struggle.

The Indian community, nearly one million strong, originates mainly from the indentured labourers who came to work in the Natal sugar fields a century and a half ago. From the earliest times all sorts of degrading and discriminatory restrictions have been placed on South African Indians, restrictions which they have resisted in many historic struggles. Today there is a substantial number of Indian industrial workers. Like their fellow African workers they face appalling problems of unemployment and overcrowding in slum conditions. There is also a significant stratum of Indian merchants, factory owners and small shopkeepers. Indian business people, and all sections of the community, are subjected to numerous disabilities, especially relating to land and property ownership and economic opportunities. Until recently they were not allowed to move from one province to another without special permits. The apartheid regime has applied the Group Areas Act with particular ferocity against the Indian communities, uprooting them from their homes and livelihoods.

On the other hand, the Indian community in general has advanced economically and socially much more rapidly than other oppressed communities. There has been a significant increase in the number of Indian people in professional, managerial and supervisory positions in the last twenty years. In addition, the rigid application of the Group Areas Act for over 25 years, which has seen the enforced separation of Indian and African communities has also had a political and cultural impact. Any negative tendencies resulting from these developments present special challenges to the national liberation struggle in the task of forging the broadest unity of action of the oppressed, while recognising real cultural and other differences.

In accomplishing this task it is necessary to build upon the long traditions within the Indian community of united struggle with the African peoples. In the 1970s and 1980s these traditions have been actively reasserted through the Natal and Transvaal Indian Congresses.

Work amongst the Indian people has to take into account the class differentiation within this community. While there has been some economic advance within this community, it has not been evenly spread. The majority of the economically active Indian people in our country are exploited wage labourers, toiling shoulder to shoulder with African workers. In particular there is a large concentration of Indian workers in the garment industry, many of them working in appalling sweat-shop conditions. Deepening the class consciousness of Indian workers, and strengthening their class unity with the majority of workers is a priority task.

The Crisis of Colonialism of a Special Type

Today, colonialism of a special type is in deep crisis. The crisis is the result of a combination of factors — the economic impasse of South African capitalism, international isolation, divisions in the ruling bloc, and, above all, the broad revolutionary struggle. The present crisis is more generalised, deep-rooted and enduring than those of the 1940s and the early 1960s.

The present crisis is intimately linked to the economic changes of the previous period, and to their interaction with the central features of colonialism of a special type. The development of an advanced capitalist economy, with its needs for a relatively settled and skilled work force and an expanding market, have been distorted by apartheid colonialism.

On the economic front the crisis has many features: a severe shortage of skills as a result of the cultural and educational oppression of the majority, the large-scale underutilisation of productive capacity, an increasing reluctance of capitalists to invest in fixed capital, and massive organic unemployment.

The capitalist economy is now stagnating, while the apartheid state itself sinks deeper into financial crisis. The state, with its large-scale investment in strategic industries and basic infrastructure, has in the past been a moving force for capitalist development. But it is now contributing directly to the overall crisis of the economy. Relying increasingly for its survival on naked repression and upon regional military adventures, the apartheid regime is squandering vast sums on its repressive machinery. In addition, the racial institutions of political control have spawned a huge state bureaucracy. There are numerous, racially separate administration departments,

bantustan apparatuses, and the tricameral parliament. These are a heavy drain on the regime's finances. The resulting fiscal crisis has, in turn, fuelled inflation and provoked severe difficulties in the repayment of foreign loans.

The ruling bloc's strategic objective of securing a manufacturing-led economic boom, to pull the economy out of its stagnation has not materialised. The oppression of the black majority, with low wages and massive unemployment, has resulted in a very restricted home market. On the other hand, attempts to compete on international markets with South African manufactures have also failed to live up to the regime's expectations. South Africa's manufactured goods are, generally, not competitive on world markets. The attempts to compete have resulted simply in a greater dependence on foreign markets for imported machinery and high technology. The southern African market is more accessible to South African manufacturers, but the military and economic destabilisation of our neighbouring countries impoverishes the whole region, thus restricting its market potential.

But, above all, the crisis of apartheid colonialism is a political crisis. The ruling class and its political representatives realise that it is impossible to continue ruling in the old way. Amongst their major strategies is the attempt to secure black participation and collaboration in a subordinate form of civil government. At the political level the essence of the regime's crisis is precisely the failure of this strategy. As long as significant black participation is withheld, the regime's crisis will continue to fester and, in one form or another, upsurge and revolt will continue with increased intensity and frequency.

Every racist constitutional and 'reform' initiative, designed to divert the revolutionary pressures, has landed on the rocks. Such initiatives have usually led to an increased tempo of struggle. The forced retreat from the concept that the bantustans would provide the 'final solution', and the self-evident ineffectiveness of the tri-cameral parliament, are among the most significant of these failures. The attempt to win black participation in the setting up of local ghetto councils — as a step towards the so-called 'Great Indaba' — has failed ignominiously.

The reform failures, the absence of any viable alternative political strategy, growing international isolation, the changing relation between racism and profit in important sectors, a bleeding economy and, above all, the unrelenting people's resistance, have led to significant splits and divisions at the top. Within the dominant race group the centuries-old confidence and belief in the eternal survival of white hegemony has begun to evaporate, leading to a significant shift in the traditional context of white politics.

The ideological cement which had for so long bonded the mainstream white politics together, has crumbled considerably and there is no substitute to fill the gaps. Afrikaner nationalism — the tribal pillar of white political power in the post-war period — is developing significant cracks. Its middle strata leaders had successfully exploited Afrikaner nationalism to win political office and with it access to the upper echelons of the economy. The embrace between English and Afrikaner capital is leading to a noticeable shift away from the purely ethnic divide within the white bloc.

The regime is less and less able to meet the expectations either of the capitalist class it represents or the mass of white workers who have, for over half a century acted as its historic political support base. Mounting international pressures are having a serious effect on the economy and could reach a point which can no longer be tolerated by the capitalist class as a whole. The search for a way out of the crisis is also leading to increased vacillation and divisions within the power bloc.

The deep-rooted crisis and conflict in South Africa cannot be resolved within the confines of the apartheid colonial system. Nor can they be resolved by the Nationalist Party regime or any other section of the ruling class. The basic aims of all sections of the ruling class revolve around maintaining the essence of the system of oppression, and monopoly control over the wealth of South Africa. Our struggle is not, and cannot be, merely for civil rights within the framework of the existing system. This system is rooted in the special colonial subjugation of the majority of the South African people and the denial of their basic rights.

4. NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

The immediate interests of the overwhelming majority of the South African people lie in the carrying out of fundamental change: a national democratic revolution which will overthrow the colonial state and establish a united, democratic and non-racial South Africa. The main content of this revolution is the national liberation of the African people in particular, and the black people in general.

The historical experience of subjugated peoples everywhere, and our own experience, have shown that the ruling class will not relinquish power of its own accord. It has to be removed by the combined force of the struggling people. Seizure of power by the revolutionary masses is the fundamental task of the national democratic revolution. This will entail the destruction of existing state institutions designed to maintain and defend colonial oppression. In their place, democratic institutions will be set up.

Already, in the course of struggle, the revolutionary masses have built various rudimentary forms of people's government in the localities where racist institutions are destroyed or severely weakened. The people's committees and related popular institutions such as people's courts and defence committees, as well as efforts to set up and strengthen alternative structures in the fields of education, culture, sports and others, constitute a creative advance of the aims of the national democratic revolution. As long as the ruling bloc still controls the central organs of power, these popular structures will always experience great difficulties. The masses themselves have yet to muster enough strength to sustain these structures. But any weaknesses and reverses experienced now cannot detract from the central importance of organs of people's power as a product and an effective weapon of struggle. These organs will help shape the content of national democracy in our conditions. The building, strengthening and defence of these organs, in the course of struggle, is a crucial task.

The main aims of the national democratic revolution are outlined in the Freedom Charter, which has also been endorsed by the mass democratic movement representing millions of the struggling people. South African Communists consider that the achievement of the aims of the Charter will answer the pressing and immediate needs of the people and lay the indispensable basis for the advance to socialism.

The foundation of the national democratic state will be popular representative institutions of government based on one-person, one-vote: universal and direct adult franchise without regard to race, sex, property and other discriminatory qualifications. These bodies will have to be accountable to the people and subject to popular control. For it to serve the people's interests, the new state machinery — the army, the police, the judiciary and the civil service — will be open to all South Africans loyal to democratic and non-racial principles. The state will guarantee the basic freedoms and rights of all citizens, such as the freedom of speech and thought, of the press and of organisation, of movement, of conscience and religion and full trade union rights for all workers including the right to strike.

It must be one of the basic policies and aims of the national democratic state to raise the living standards of the people, and in particular, eradicate the centuries-old injustices perpetrated against the black majority. This applies to wages and job opportunities, education, housing, health and other amenities.

In order to satisfy the needs of the people and ensure balanced and rapid development of the economy, it will be necessary to ensure popular control

over vital sectors of the economy. This will entail the continual strengthening of the state sector in the mining, heavy industry, banks and other monopoly industries. The national democratic state will define the general parameters of economic activity. In addition, it must ensure that workers in particular and the people in general play an important role in the running of enterprises, and that the necessary cadres are trained and deployed to serve the national interest. To fully eliminate the system of colonial domination, it will be necessary to ensure democratic ownership and control over decisive aspects of the economy. At the same time, the state will protect the interests of private business where these are not incompatible with the public interest.

This applies equally to land distribution: there is an imperative need to restore land to the people. This will take a variety of forms, including state ownership of large-scale farms, redistribution of land among the land-hungry masses and state assistance to them, the setting up of co-operative farms, and guaranteeing the freedom of movement and settlement. It will also entail the task of overcoming the enormous economic underdevelopment of many rural regions.

The realisation of these objectives also constitutes the foundation to the solution of the national question in South Africa, a basic task of the national democratic revolution. The new state will accelerate the struggle to unite all South Africans into a single nation and consolidate the gains already made. The basis for such national unity is being laid in the course of common struggle of the overwhelming majority of South Africans — black and white — against the common enemy. This struggle has wrought havoc with the regime's age-old ruse of divide-and-rule. The popular offensive against the bantustan system and tri-cameral parliament is a reflection of the failure of enemy ploys. At the same time, more and more whites are joining the ranks of anti-apartheid forces. The struggle for a common nationhood is reinforced by the reality of interaction among the majority of the people in the workplace, within a single national economy and territory.

However, the process of nation-formation has to be backed up by a conscious effort on the part of the liberation alliance and the new democratic state. All discriminatory laws and practices will be abolished, and the preaching and practice of discrimination and contempt on the basis of race, colour or ethnic group shall be considered criminal.

National unification of our people will also recognise their diversity in cultures, customs and languages. It will be one of the basic tasks of the democratic state to develop and encourage the flourishing of the diverse cultures and languages of all the people. Such a policy, combined with the

effort to promote elements that are common to all South Africans, is not contradictory to the process of building national unity.

In promoting full equality, the new government will have to rid South Africa of the privileges currently accorded to the white community without undermining the rights of individuals. The white people, like all other South Africans, will have the right to develop those elements in their culture which are not based on racism and privilege. On the other hand, the call for group rights — as distinct from the rights of individual citizens — is fraught with the danger of perpetuating inequality and thus undermining the very tenets of democracy and national unity.

The tasks of the national democratic revolution are all interrelated. Both the national and democratic objectives hinge on the fundamental questions of state power and ownership of and control over the national wealth. In the words of the Freedom Charter, “only a democratic state, based on the will of all the people, can secure to all their birthright without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief”.

Only such a state can guarantee the national independence and sovereignty of our country, and ensure that South Africa plays its rightful role as an equal partner in the development of the region and the continent, and in promoting world peace and social progress.

Role of the Working Class in the National Democratic Revolution

The realisation of the basic guidelines set out in the Freedom Charter and their ongoing consolidation after the seizure of power, will be determined by a number of factors. Among the major ones are: the correlation of class forces within the liberation alliance, the strength of this alliance relative to the overthrown classes, and the international balance of forces. In the final analysis, this depends on the extent to which the working class, the landless rural masses and progressive sections of the middle strata assume decisive positions within the democratic alliance. Among these forces — which are objectively interested in thorough-going revolutionary transformation — the working class is the leading force.

The character of any revolution is determined by objective realities and not by the wishes of individuals or parties. In our situation, the unity in action of the oppressed and democratic forces around the basic national democratic demands constitutes the most powerful revolutionary weapon against the ruling class. To weaken this unity by placing the attainment of socialism on the immediate agenda would, in fact, be to postpone the very attainment of socialist transformation.

The demands for national democracy unite the overwhelming majority of strata and sectors of the oppressed: black workers, the landless rural masses, the intelligentsia, cultural workers, sections of black business, youth, women, religious communities, sports-people and others. These demands are also in the long-term interest of white workers, small farmers and middle strata who together make up the bulk of the white population.

The struggle for national democracy is also an expression of the class contradiction between the black and democratic forces on the one hand, and the monopoly capitalists on the other. The stranglehold of a small number of white monopoly capitalists over the great bulk of our country's national wealth and resources is based on colonial dispossession and promotes racial oppression. This concentration of wealth and power perpetuates the super-exploitation of millions of black workers. It perpetuates the desperate plight of millions of the landless rural poor. And it blocks the advance of black business and other sectors of the oppressed. This reality, therefore, forms the basis of the anti-monopoly content of the national democratic programme.

But, in our conditions in which national oppression and economic exploitation are inextricably linked, there can, at the end of the day, be no fundamental liberation without full economic emancipation; without the advance to a socialist and communist future. To achieve this, the South African working class — and black workers in particular — must play the leading role in the national democratic struggle.

Objectively, because of the numbers at their command, and because of their concentration and collective organisation within the strategic points of the economy, black workers are better placed than any other class or stratum among the oppressed to lead the national democratic struggle. Their actions affect the economic foundation of the system of colonialism of a special type. And it is black workers, a class with no property stakes in present-day South Africa, who are most capable of taking the national democratic struggle to its fullest conclusion.

Workers, more than any other class in our society, understand from their own lives the importance of collective solutions to social problems. Their very position within production and their daily struggles have schooled our working class in the need for organisation and united action. The existence of a large, class conscious proletariat is the greatest asset to our revolution.

The role of black workers as the dominant force in our struggle is absolutely crucial to ensure that the national democratic revolution lays the basis for a transition to socialism. Whether we will be able to make a steady advance in this direction depends mainly on the role that the working class

plays today. It is vital that black workers ally to themselves all classes and strata among the oppressed and all other forces who have a real interest in the creation of a united, democratic non-racial South Africa. By championing the interests of the oppressed people and all those who aspire to democracy; by strengthening the front of organisations struggling for national democracy, black workers are able to win the confidence of all democratic forces as the vanguard class in the national democratic struggle. If the workers were to reject broad alliances and “go it alone” then they would in fact be surrendering the leadership of the national struggle. “Working class purity” leads to working class suicide.

However, the alliance strategy does not mean that the working class should abandon its own class organisations. It is of crucial importance that the working class builds and strengthens its own independent class organisations while co-operating with, and indeed leading, the broad democratic forces. Nor does it mean that propagation of socialist ideas should be postponed until popular seizure of power in the national democratic revolution. The Communist Party and other working class organisations must ensure that the ideas of socialism are widely debated, spread and take root, especially among the working people.

The National Democratic Revolution and Transition to Socialism

Victory in the national democratic revolution is, for our working class, the most direct route to socialism and ultimately communism. The existence in South Africa of the material conditions for socialism — the relatively advanced technical level and a strong working class — and the achievement of the national democratic revolution, will not in themselves guarantee an advance to socialism. In order to create the conditions for such an advance, the working class will have to ensure that the national democratic tasks are consistently carried out. The working class must win for itself the dominant role in the new government, and see to it that the character of the national democratic state accords with the genuine interests of the people. The programme to eliminate monopoly control over the economy and to tailor economic policies according to the needs of the people will have to be scrupulously ensured.

In the period after the seizure of power by the democratic forces the working class will need to continue the struggle against capitalism. It will need to strengthen its organisations and build the bases of working class and popular power in the economy, in all sectors of the state and in the communities where the people live. A deliberate effort will have to be made to

prevent attempts by the bourgeoisie and aspirant capitalist elements — and their imperialist supporters — to dominate state power and divert the revolution. Constant mass vigilance will also have to be exercised and action taken against such negative tendencies as the stifling of popular democracy, the bureaucratisation of the state and corrupt practices in government or in society as a whole.

In order to prevent the emergence of a seed-bed for capitalist resurgence and ensure an advance to socialism, the working class must win to its side other sections of the working people, both now and after the popular seizure of power. The landless rural masses, sections of the intelligentsia, students, large contingents of youth and women (as social groups), some small businessmen and other forces stand to gain from the victory of the socialist revolution.

The transition to socialism will be neither completely separate from nor contradictory to the tasks of the national democratic revolution. On the one hand, consistent implementation and defence of the national democratic programme constitute a major guarantee for progress towards socialism. On the other hand, many of the major objectives of the national democratic revolution will be fully accomplished in the process of socialist construction. Among these tasks are complete national liberation and equality, elimination of sex discrimination, and, more significantly, the elimination of monopoly domination over the economy.

The Socialist Perspective

A socialist revolution differs from all other revolutions in world history. It sets out to abolish private ownership of the means of production and all forms of oppression. The systems of slavery, feudalism and capitalism are all based on the private ownership of the means of production and oppression of one class by another. Thus, capitalist relations of production developed even before the bourgeoisie had achieved political power. But the development of socialist relations, which will bring an end to the system of economic exploitation, cannot begin until the working class and its allies have won state power. While the material basis for socialism is created by capitalism itself, socialist relations of production are realised only after the political revolution.

The fundamental question of any socialist revolution is the winning of political power by the working class, in alliance with other progressive elements among the people. The working class then sets out to eliminate exploitation by achieving public ownership and democratic control of the

means of production. Fundamental to the socialist political system is the introduction of the widest democracy to the greatest majority of the people and the elimination of all forms of discrimination. At the same time, the workers' state should prevent the resurgence of the overthrown classes, both internal and external.

In a socialist society, there are neither exploiters nor the exploited. Public ownership of the means of production, means of distribution and means of exchange is the foundation of the socialist economy. Governing the distribution of income is the principle, "From each according to their ability, to each according to their work". A large and increasing portion of society's wealth is used to raise the living standards of the people by ensuring housing, low rents and transport fares, free education and health care, and other benefits. Socialism is a humane system which promotes the free and all-round development of all individuals in society. The chronic scourges of even the most advanced capitalist countries such as mass unemployment, inflation, cyclical crises and social waste are eliminated.

Through social ownership and democratic control of the means of production, the socialist economy is characterised by a qualitatively higher level of planning and co-ordination than is possible under capitalism. Development is not haphazard and spontaneous. It is not left to chance nor to the greed of a few exploiters. It is made to serve to the needs of society as a whole. In this way it is possible to ensure that the combined wealth and human energies of society are harnessed to benefit society as a whole.

Socialism is a transitional stage on the road to communism, a still higher stage of human society. Communism is a classless social system, with all-round public ownership of the means of production, accompanied by the growth of productive forces sufficient to ensure the abundance of goods, enabling the principle to be applied: "From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs". The building of socialism and gradual development to communism where workers' power has triumphed, the realisation of socialism is a long and often difficult process.

Basing ourselves on the creativity, motivation and organisation of our working class and people, on the lessons and experiences of our comrades in the socialist countries, and on the fraternal international relations that are a basic feature of world socialism, the South African working class possesses the weapons to develop rapidly on the road to a socialist and communist future.

5. THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT AND THE VANGUARD ROLE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

The system of apartheid colonialism will be overthrown by the oppressed and democratic forces led by the revolutionary movement. This movement has grown, developed in experience and maturity, and become steeled in many years of complex and difficult struggle.

The African National Congress is the spearhead of the national democratic revolution. The ANC was formed in 1912 to unite the African people in the struggle against colonial oppression. It has since developed to represent and lead all the oppressed and democratic forces in militant struggles. Today, despite many years of illegal and underground existence, the ANC — as head of the revolutionary alliance — occupies a virtually unchallenged place as the popular vanguard force in the liberation struggle. It has attracted growing allegiance and support from the overwhelming majority of the struggling masses.

The ANC does not represent any single class or any one ideology. As head of the liberation alliance and prime representative of all the oppressed, the ANC welcomes within its ranks all — from whatever class they come — who support and are ready to fight for the aims of the Freedom Charter. The overwhelming majority and most strategically placed of our people are workers. The ANC therefore, recognises the leading role of the working class. Workers' participation in its ranks is one of the important ways in which our working class plays its role in the democratic revolution. However, the ANC is not a workers' vanguard political party.

Another important organised contingent of the democratic forces is the trade union movement. A trade union is the prime mass organisation of the working class. To fulfill its purpose, it must be as broad as possible and must fight to maintain its legal public status. It must unite, on an industrial basis, all workers, at whatever level of political consciousness. But a trade union must be involved in political struggle. The capitalist state everywhere acts in defence of the bosses. It uses its power against workers and their trade unions. It does everything to defend capitalism. Reality has taught workers in every part of the world that it is impossible for trade unions to keep out of the broader political conflict.

In our country, where racism and capitalism are two sides of the same coin, it is even more crystal clear that a trade union cannot stand aside from the liberation struggle. The organised involvement of trade unions in the revolutionary struggle helps reinforce the dominant role of workers as a class.

However, this does not mean that a trade union movement can play the role of a workers' vanguard party. In fact, the basic character of a trade union means that such a trade union movement cannot play this role. Workers' political leadership must represent the working class in its relation to all other classes and to the state. The political party of the working class must ensure workers' involvement in all forms of struggle appropriate to the situation — armed and unarmed, above-board and underground, mass and vanguard. A trade union movement cannot carry out these functions to the full. If it attempted to do so, it would risk being destroyed.

Vanguard Role of the SACP

In South African conditions, a workers' vanguard political party must be made up of the most tried and tested representatives of this class. Its members must be committed revolutionaries with an understanding of Marxist theory and practice, an unconditional dedication to the workers' cause, and a readiness, if need be, to sacrifice their very lives in the cause of freedom and socialism.

A Communist Party does not earn the honoured title of vanguard merely by proclaiming it. Nor does its claim to be the upholder and custodian of Marxism-Leninism give it a monopoly of political wisdom or a natural right to exclusive control of the struggle. At each stage of its political life, guided by a correct application of Marxist revolutionary theory, a Party must win its place by its superior efforts of leadership and its devotion to the revolutionary cause.

The SACP works consistently to forge the South African working class into a powerful force, capable of playing the leading role in the struggle for national democracy and in carrying out its historic mission of abolishing exploitation and creating a classless society. The Party strives to spread the widest possible understanding of the ideology of Marxism-Leninism, particularly in its application to South African conditions. Its strategy and tactics consist in transforming the immediate struggles of the working class into an organised, class-conscious offensive against oppression and capital.

Through all developments and turns of events, the Communist Party always holds before the workers their long-term objective: the creation of a communist society. At the same time, the Party always links this long-term objective to the actual struggles of the immediate situation. It strives to forge and strengthen the broad alliance of oppressed and democratic South Africans for the attainment of national democracy on the path to the final goal.

The SACP plays its role both as an independent organisation and as part of the revolutionary alliance headed by the ANC. There is no contradiction between the multi-class leadership role of the ANC, and the working class

vanguard role of the Party. Both the ANC and the SACP have an important role to play individually and collectively for the attainment of national democracy. These organisations share common objectives and agree on strategy and all the key tactics in the National Democratic Revolution. Within this alliance, the Party works tirelessly to strengthen the liberation movement, deepen its revolutionary nationalism and ensure thoroughgoing revolutionary democratic transformations.

Despite the unending onslaught on this revolutionary alliance by the apartheid regime, by imperialism and by other reactionary forces, the alliance has grown stronger. It has done so precisely because the respective organisations are a natural product of the struggles of our people, and they represent their deepest aspirations. Communists have never sought to transform the national democratic movement into a front for the Party. Participation by communists in the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe and other revolutionary organisations is based on our class appreciation of their distinct but complementary tasks.

As part of this alliance, it is a vital task of the South African Communist Party to see to the widest possible organisation and mobilisation of the mass of the South African people into an active force to defeat the colonial regime. The Party therefore works tirelessly to strengthen and develop mass democratic organisations. Over the years, particularly in the 1980s, there has been a resurgence of mass democratic organisation and militant mass struggles. It is a tribute to the correctness of the strategic line of the ANC, the Party and the South African Congress of Trade Unions, that these forces have adopted the national democratic programme and act to realise it. Despite intense state repression the mass democratic movement has not only survived, but continues to play the central role in mass struggles.

The Vanguard Party and the Mass Democratic Movement

The emergence and development of the giant democratic trade union movement is one of the greatest achievements of the South African working class in recent years. Within this movement, South African Communists strive for maximum unity in action around the day-to-day demands of the workers, and for the attainment of national liberation and socialism. The organisation and mobilisation of workers into one non-racial democratic federation shall always be our guiding principle. In this effort, it is important to win over white workers into the ranks of the democratic movement.

The South African Communist Party works actively among all other sectors of the oppressed and democratic forces. The emergence and growth

of sectoral mass democratic organisations, and their organisational and political unity has had a profound impact on the South African political scene. The Party works for united and purposeful action among all these sectors, for the eradication of oppression and exploitation. These sectors do not stand apart from the working class; they are composed mainly of individuals who are themselves workers, or who have a working class background.

In the case of the majority of South African women, they suffer from triple oppression — as women, as blacks and as workers. Women cannot change the immediate conditions of their lives without fighting shoulder to shoulder with their brothers against colonialism and exploitation for a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa. Forced removals, bantustans and the migratory labour system are some of the key features of this system which tear families apart and trap black women into bearing the heaviest burden of oppression. At the workplace, women are subjected to various forms of discrimination. Yet all this is compounded and reinforced by subjective practices and attitudes within the male-dominated society.

The South African Communist Party struggles to ensure that the disadvantages suffered by the majority of South African women are eliminated in the context of the democratic struggle. This includes fighting sexism within the ranks of the Party and the broad liberation movement. In the long term, an advance to socialism — a society in which resources are in a planned and purposeful manner dedicated to overcome sexist oppression — is in the interest of all South African women.

The system of national oppression and capitalist exploitation blocks and frustrates at every turn, the aspirations and energies of our young people. For the black youth of our country, there is a serious lack of employment, educational opportunities and of sport and cultural facilities. It is against this background that the South African youth have displayed courage and militancy in many mass battles and within the ranks of Umkhonto we Sizwe. The Communist Party considers it a crucial task to constantly give strategic direction and theoretical depth to the militancy of the youth, in pursuit of national democratic and socialist tasks.

Millions of South Africans including black workers subscribe to various religious beliefs. The South African ruling class and its allies, like oppressors elsewhere in the world, have always tried to use religion as a tool to instill passivity and resignation among the working masses. With the development of the liberation struggle there has emerged an interpretation of religious doctrines which is in the interest of the struggling people. Moved by a profound rejection of oppression, countless religious leaders and believers

have taken up the battle against the colonial system. Many are to be found within the ranks of the liberation movement and the people's army. The ideology of the South African Communist Party is based on scientific materialism. But we recognise the right of all people to adopt and practice religious beliefs of their choice. We work for the involvement of all anti-apartheid forces in the common struggle for freedom and democracy. There is common ground between the immediate and long-term perspectives of the Party and a theology of liberation that identifies with the poor and oppressed. In actual struggle, this bond has grown and must be further strengthened.

Black cultural workers and sports-persons have endured vicious discrimination under a system designed precisely to stifle the all-round development of blacks. The regime has always trampled upon the culture of the majority. It has not spared its arsenal of repression in acting against the democratic cultural workers who portray and promote the struggles and aspirations of the people. The oppression and repression suffered by artists and sportspersons lie in the very system of colonialism which is based on the all-round subjugation of the majority of the people. The emergent and developing popular movement in culture and sport — in which the working class is playing a vital role — forms an important part of the liberation struggle. The Communist Party attaches central importance to work in these spheres. Militant struggle in these spheres helps to weld our people into a united democratic nation. We regard culture and sport as important instruments in forging the working class into a victorious force against capital.

All of these sectors, drawn together into the mass democratic movement, are the organised mass contingent of our national liberation struggle. The mass democratic movement together with the vanguard liberation alliance constitute the **FRONT OF REVOLUTIONARY FORCES**.

At the same time, more and more forces which do not belong to the vanguard and mass democratic movements are increasingly identifying with some of their democratic objectives. These forces must find a place in the broader anti-apartheid front. There can be no valid "revolutionary" reason for excluding from such a broad front any grouping which supports, and is prepared to act for the attainment of a united, democratic and non-racial South Africa on the basis of one-person, one-vote. The crucial question is whether an alliance or a joint platform will help to weaken the main enemy and advance the people's cause. As long as the revolutionary core does not abandon its independent role and does not dilute its own fundamental objectives, there is no danger whatsoever in acting with such broader **FORCES FOR CHANGE**.

South African Communists always strive for the strengthening of the revolutionary front for national leadership, the continuous building of a coalition of anti-apartheid forces, and the unity of Communists and non-Communists in the struggle for national democracy.

6. THE PATH TO POWER IN THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

The path to power lies with our masses. In recent years they have shown their immense resilience and strength. Nothing which the enemy has unleashed against the oppressed or their organisations has broken their morale or dampened their combative spirit. The harnessing of this mass political energy and the realisation of its enormous potential continues to be the dominant task of the liberation vanguard. It is a task which requires the firm rooting of the underground, consisting of political and military formations under political leadership, and the strengthening of all organs of the mass democratic movement. The prospects of a revolutionary advance are greater today than ever before in our history. The regime continues to face an all-round crisis which can only be resolved by a qualitative transformation of the whole economic, political, social and cultural system.

The people — headed by their revolutionary vanguard — advance on the road to liberation with a rich and varied tradition of struggle, both armed and unarmed. The tribally-based armed resistance to the colonial forces went on for centuries until the defeat of Bambata and his guerrillas in the Nkandle forest in 1906. This signalled the end of a phase. The liberation organisations of our country, including our Party, were born in conditions when the core of the former resistance in the countryside had been destroyed and the new forces were not yet fully developed.

In these conditions it was imperative for the liberation organisations to pursue a strategy of militant but non-violent methods of struggle for many decades after their foundation. But, already in the late 50's, evidence was beginning to accumulate which called for a departure from this strategy.

All remaining possibilities of advancing the struggle through *exclusively* non-violent means were, one by one, being blocked. A growing number among the oppressed sensed (perhaps sooner than some of their leaders) that a change had come about in the objective conditions of struggle. The strategy of non-violence and passive defiance were being questioned by more and more militants. Our working people, through their own experience, no longer saw much point in non-violent protest alone in the face of escalating

state savagery and were beginning to show a readiness to accept the sacrifices involved in the new methods.

The slogan of "non-violence" had thus become harmful to the cause of our revolution in the new phase of struggle. It disarmed the people in the face of the savage assaults of the oppressor and dampened their militancy. The movement was obliged to respond. The time was clearly ripe to combine mass political action with armed struggle.

A New Strategic Line

In response to this situation, our main strategic line in the struggle for people's power was radically reshaped in the middle of 1961. Joint measures were taken by the ANC and our Party to create MK as the armed wing of the liberation movement. Although there was no possibility of successfully challenging the enemy in armed combat, action could not be postponed. It became vital to demonstrate an organised alternative to unplanned and suicidal outbursts which were beginning to take place. It was also necessary to make an open break with the politics of non-violent protest which had dominated the strategy of the previous half century and which had unavoidably bred an ideology of pacifism among many leaders of the liberation movement. That open break was symbolised by the national sabotage campaign launched on December 16th, 1961.

This new approach did not imply that all non-violent methods of struggle had now become useless or impossible. Nor did it imply a retreat from agitational, organisational and educational work among the masses. Our Party, in its 1962 Programme, continued to advocate the use of all forms of struggle by the people, including non-collaboration, strikes, boycotts and demonstrations. We also placed prime emphasis on the need to make underground structures and illegal work more effective, more efficient and more successful in reaching the masses of the people and evading the repressive action by the authorities.

The adoption of armed struggle as an important part of the political struggle brought our movement into uncharted territory. We were unpractised in the art, techniques and skills of military organisation and combat, and lacked solid experience of clandestine work.

Apart from these subjective weaknesses we had to contend with a number of unique and complex objective difficulties. In contrast to armed liberation struggles in the rest of the African continent, some of the conditions in which we had to implement our new approach were particularly disadvantageous.

● South Africa's special form of colonial subjugation had withheld all

military know-how from the subject peoples and prevented any black person from being in possession or using any modern weapon or other instrument of war. Effective training could, therefore, only take place externally. The long term escalation of armed activity depended, in the first place, on the return of trainees and a minimum of weaponry.

● In 87% of the land there is no black peasantry and the rural working population is forced to live under conditions of the strictest control on the dispersed white farms. This reduces considerably the social bases which are needed for the survival, growth and manoeuvre of guerrilla and other combat formations in the rural areas.

● No effective rear base was available externally to facilitate the flow of either personnel or logistical material. South Africa was completely surrounded by a barrier of imperialist-controlled territories hostile to the liberation struggle, which deprived us of a friendly border.

● Our country lacks any extensive areas of classical guerrilla terrain.

● Most of the first crop of militants who went for training in the early 60's had been known activists from the legal period. This would make their return for political and military tasks especially problematic.

● The regime was in command of a highly centralised state apparatus including well-organised instruments of repression, powerful and highly mobile armed forces and a sophisticated communications network; anchored on a powerful economic base.

Despite these complexities and disadvantages, history left us with no option but to engage in armed action as a necessary part of the political struggle. It was a moment in which (to use Lenin's words) "untimely inaction would have been worse than untimely action".

Thus, we had to venture forth even at the expense of risking a degree of disorganisation. We could not refuse to fight. We had to learn how to do so. And, in many respects, we had to learn on the ground, in the hard school of revolutionary practice. In the process, a combination of inexperience, lapses in security and breaches of conspiracy rules, enabled the enemy to deal massive blows against the whole underground. Party heroes were among those who made enormous sacrifices in their courageous attempt to keep the underground going and to carry on with armed activities.

Despite these efforts, within a few years of the enemy's Rivonia breakthrough, the underground ceased to exist in any organised form. Leading ANC and Party cadres who were abroad on political and military missions reconstituted themselves as leadership collectives and, over time, took steps to help re-establish the movement's internal presence.

The task of rebuilding the shattered internal structures and rekindling the fire of organised struggle proved to be long and arduous. Undaunted by long spells in the enemy's gaols many ANC and Party veterans attempted to organise political life, immediately on being released. In addition, in the late 60's, the Party's external leadership organised propaganda units to spread the message of the movement once again. Leaflet bombs, street broadcasts, internal cyclostyled journals, made an appearance at a time when signs of political life were at their lowest. Many of the brave Party activists who pioneered this work were arrested, tortured, imprisoned and murdered.

But in general, for some years after Rivonia, a demoralising silence had descended upon the political arena. There could, however, be no retreat from the decision to combine armed with non-armed activity; indeed the massive onslaught on all expressions of black resistance underlined even further the inadequacy of a policy which did not include preparation for armed activity. The hundreds of ANC and Party cadres who had been sent abroad for training were, by 1965, both ready and anxious to go back home to pursue the liberation movement's politico-military objectives.

The unending attempts to advance these objectives in the next decade or more met with major difficulties. The pre-Rivonia political base made possible the launching of armed activities. With its destruction such activities could neither be sustained nor raised to a higher level. It was considered that armed activity was essential in order to help recreate the very conditions in which political structures could be developed. At the same time, without such political foundations, armed activity itself could not advance beyond a certain point. We were thus forced to find ways of hitting at the enemy at a time of relative weakness in the area of internal political organisation. Armed actions would play a role in helping to create the conditions which would enable us to remedy this weakness.

But in trying to carry this out, there developed a tendency to focus too exclusively on military activities. We did not always pay sufficient attention or devote the necessary resources to political work itself. We acted as if armed activity would somehow on its own spontaneously generate political organisation and mobilisation. And it took some time before attention was given to the balance between these two aspects of our struggle.

These tendencies grew during the many years of relative political lull when armed blows seemed to be the only way of keeping the embers of resistance alive. Even when attention began to be paid to the direct task of building the underground and spreading agitational and educational propaganda, the process was, at times, infected with a lack of coordination between the

political and military structures. This undoubtedly held back both the political and military objectives of our struggle.

Despite unending efforts it was not until the post-Soweto (1976) period that it became possible to successfully deploy armed combat groups whose activities have grown from year to year. There were some failures and weaknesses. But the unbroken efforts which the movement was seen to be making to challenge the enemy, even during the darker moments, made an indelible impact on the people.

The prestige of MK grew. It came increasingly to be accepted as the fighting organ of the oppressed who were stimulated by the spirit of "no surrender" and militant heroism of its cadres. Above all, the potential demonstrated through MK's armed challenge helped, more than any other factor, to overcome the feeling of impotence in the face of a powerful foe which had for so long, monopolised all the modern instruments of force. Armed actions helped considerably to create the atmosphere for political rejuvenation. The serious crisis facing our ruling class is, in no small measure, due to the impact of a strategy which included organised revolutionary violence. On the other hand it is the popular mass actions starting with the student and worker actions of the late 1960's and early 1970's which helped to lay the basis for the introduction of sustained armed combat actions.

Our Approach to Armed Struggle

What then is our approach to armed struggle in the current phase?

The military strategy of the liberation alliance has to take into account the concrete objective conditions prevailing in South Africa. We referred to a number of difficulties which we had to contend with when we embarked on the course of armed struggle. These difficulties and many others continue to face us: the lack of an extensive area of classical guerrilla terrain; the absence of a black peasantry in most of the countryside; the separation of residential areas between whites and blacks; the lack of friendly borders; the great mobility and fire-power of the enemy; an army whose main contingent benefits from the system of colonial oppression; and imperialist support to the South African regime. In addition, over the past two decades the South African regime, drawing on an advanced capitalist base, has greatly increased its military capacity, refining its counter-insurgency strategies.

However, the people and their vanguard liberation movement possess many strategic advantages for the conduct of armed struggle.

- The oppressed people, the social base upon which the armed struggle depends, enjoy both numerical and moral superiority over the enemy. We are fighting a just war which is uniquely supported by the international community.
- Though it commands huge resources, the colonial regime is situated within the theatre of struggle. While this might make the enemy more recalcitrant, at the same time, popular actions directly affect the base from which it operates.
- The 6-million strong army of black workers occupies a position within the economy which gives it the potential to deal strategic military blows to the entire system. The sophistication and complexity of the economic base and infrastructure of apartheid make them extremely vulnerable to sabotage and other actions.
- The people have a high level of political consciousness as well as a rich tradition of militant struggles — in both town and countryside — which, from time to time, flare up into partial uprisings. They are led by a vanguard liberation movement armed with rich experience and a grasp of revolutionary theory.
- The increasing reliance of the regime's army and police on recruits from the black community, especially in the bantustans, provides better possibilities for us to undermine the racist state machinery from within.
- Increasing international isolation of apartheid South Africa helps to weaken the economic and social base of the regime.

Given the enemy's military strength, we have to conduct a continuous armed struggle which progressively saps the enemy's strength over a relatively protracted period. *But, given the objective difficulties mentioned above, ours cannot be a classical guerrilla-type war primarily based on the winning, over time, of more and more liberated territory. Nor are there immediate prospects of inflicting an all-round military defeat on the enemy.*

Our armed struggle has to rely, above all, on the people in active struggle. The working class, in particular, possesses vast possibilities to take the war to the nerve-centres of apartheid colonialism. In mass action, the people create the conditions in which the armed struggle can be grounded. It is in these conditions that guerrillas can better survive, operate and work among the people. The popular uprisings have, from time to time, led to the emergence of mass revolutionary bases in numerous townships and villages, a reliable and secure terrain for the operation of combatants.

In many current upheavals the people make heroic efforts to engage the enemy using rudimentary weapons. Street battles and barricades take shape

where mass confrontation with the enemy becomes acute. At their initiative, the youth and other sectors set up Self Defence Units and combat groups. This creates the basis for the revolutionary movement to raise mass revolt to higher forms of insurrectionary activity, by popularising the skills of armed combat and giving all-round leadership and direction to the popular combat formations. In carrying out this task, particular attention should be paid to the formation and operation of combat groups in the industrial centres and white-owned farms.

In the rural areas, the growing mood of defiance and opposition, particularly in the bantustans, provides the soil for the creation and operation of rural combat formations. This popular ferment, and the relative weakness of the enemy in some rural areas, also hold out the possibility for the survival and operation of guerrilla-type formations. However, even in these areas, armed activity should be closely linked to, and progressively merge with, mass activity.

All the forces engaged in physical confrontation and in armed combat against the enemy constitute the revolutionary army of our people. The core of this army is Umkhonto we Sizwe, operating in both urban and rural areas. This core must draw in the most active contingents of the people, who are ready to take up arms. It is a vital and ongoing task of the liberation alliance to strengthen and engage all layers of the revolutionary army in action. Crucial to the fulfilment of this task is the development of underground structures in all areas and among all sectors of our people.

Relationship Between Military and other forms of Political Struggle

Our approach to the relationship between military and other forms of political struggle is guided by the theory of Marxism-Leninism, the experiences of other revolutionary struggles and, above all, our own concrete realities. We communists believe that the struggle must always be given forms appropriate to the concrete political situation. It is this situation which determines whether the revolutionary transformation can be achieved by military or non-military struggle or by a blend of both. A decision to include combat activity as part of the political struggle does not, in itself, imply that the military struggle has become primary or that the route to victory will be only through the barrel of a gun.

Organised combat activity undoubtedly continues to be an essential ingredient of our political strategy for revolutionary transformation. The racist state was founded on violence and survives on violence and terror. It

will not be destroyed or give way without an all-round revolutionary assault. A combination of growing political upsurge and escalating armed struggle is clearly vital in order to help create conditions in which People's Power can be won. Organised armed activity continues to be one of the most important factors in helping to deepen the regime's crisis.

But, as emphasised by the ANC's Kabwe conference in 1985, *without a well-organised underground linked to mass political revolutionary bases throughout the country, in both rural and urban areas, armed activities cannot grow significantly either in scale or quality. A mass movement organised at both national and local levels guided by an internal underground political leadership with structures in all the major localities, and at the point of production, is a pre-condition for the raising of the armed struggle to new heights.*

This does not imply that armed action against the enemy should be postponed until we have achieved a higher level of internal organisation. *The balance between political and military activities must reflect itself at all levels of our planning and in the way we use our energies and resources.* The need for specialised organs of struggle should not be allowed to undermine political leadership of all aspects of the struggle. *Organised combat activity must be primarily guided by the needs of the political struggle. It must be designed to weaken the enemy's grip on the reins of power and to reinforce political mobilisation, organisation and resistance.*

Seizure of Power

The situation has within it the potential for a relatively rapid emergence of conditions which make possible seizure of power. We cannot, however, be dogmatic about the exact moment and form of such a break-through. Conditions for a revolutionary transition will only emerge through a combination and interplay of objective conditions and subjective factors. In other words, it will depend not only upon what we do but also upon what the enemy does, not only on our strength but upon the enemy's weakness.

At the subjective level the key element is the build-up of nationwide popular ferment, resistance, all levels of organisation and the presence of people's combat formations. At the objective level it is a weakening of the enemy by circumstances such as a radical deterioration in the economy, intensified external measures against race rule, massive vacillations and divisions within the ranks of the power bloc, self-wounding enemy initiatives, and so on. When both subjective and objective elements converge, when mass activity is at its height and divisions and vacillations in the ranks of the enemy are at their strongest, the consequent crisis will signal the possibility of a revolutionary transformation.

But the development of a crisis, however deep, will not, in itself lead to an enemy collapse and a people's victory. The seizure of power will only be assured if the revolutionary movement has already effectively prepared the necessary political and organisational forces with the capacity to launch an offensive for the seizure of power at the right moment. *This at once poses the question of our approach to insurrection as a likely path to people's power.*

An insurrection, unlike a coup, is a mass revolutionary upsurge of the people in conditions which hold out the possibility of a seizure of power. It does not lend itself to blue-printing in the same way as a coup does. The call for an insurrection can only be placed on the immediate agenda of struggle if, and when, a specific revolutionary moment has emerged. However, the task of making adequate preparations for a possible insurrectionary "moment" needs attention even during the phase when it is not yet imminent.

An insurrection is an act of *revolutionary force*. But, it is not always an *armed* uprising. An all-round civil uprising could lead to an insurrection even when the armed factor is absent or secondary. History has seen successful insurrections of both types. Historical experiences are instructive but cannot provide us with an exact model. At the end of the day we have to find our own way. *In what sense then can we talk of an insurrection as a possible path to power?*

The crisis facing our ruling class will be aggravated still further by a combination of mass upsurge, in which working class action at the point of production will play a key role, mass defiance, escalating revolutionary combat activity, intensified international pressure, a situation of ungovernability, a deteriorating economy and growing demoralisation, division, vacillation and confusion within the power bloc.

When all these elements converge in a sufficient measure, the immediate possibility of an insurrectionary break-through will present itself. *Such a situation will, of course, not simply ripen on its own; its fruition depends, in the first place, on the work of the revolutionary movement.* But we must also be prepared for a relatively sudden transformation of the situation. In the conditions of deepening crisis, "events triggered off by the tiniest conflicts, seemingly remote from the real breeding-ground of revolution", can, overnight, grow into a revolutionary turning point (Lenin). The regime's grip on its reins of power could be swiftly weakened and the stage set for a sustained national uprising leading to an insurrectionary seizure of power.

The subjective forces — both political and military — must be built up so that when these seeds of revolution begin to germinate, the vanguard will be able to seize the historic moment. *In this sense, all-round mass action, merging with organised armed activity, led by a well-organised underground, and international*

pressure, are the keys to the build-up for the seizure of power. *Seizure of power will be a product of escalating and progressively merging mass political and military struggle with the likelihood of culminating in an insurrection.*

The revolutionary movement must place itself in the best position to plan for, and to lead, an insurrection at the right moment. This means, among other things, paying special attention to building factory, urban and rurally-based combat groups, popularising insurrectionary methods among the masses and winning over elements from the enemy's armed forces. The partial uprisings which have become a feature of our mass struggles must also be seen as a school for the accumulation of insurrectionary experience. The organisation of the industrial working class is of major importance; protracted national strikes and other industrial activity at the point of production will be a vital factor in the maturing of the "revolutionary moment". Above all, a political vanguard is needed to plan for, and lead, the insurrectionary assault at the crucial stage.

Prospects of a Negotiated Transfer of Power

There is no conflict between this insurrectionary perspective and the possibility of a negotiated transfer of power. There should be no confusion of the strategy needed to help create the conditions for the winning of power with the exact form of the ultimate breakthrough. *Armed struggle cannot be counterposed with dialogue, negotiation and justifiable compromises, as if they were mutually exclusive categories.* Liberation struggles have rarely ended with the unconditional surrender of the enemy's military forces. Every such struggle in our continent has had its climax at the negotiating table, occasionally involving compromises judged to be in the interests of revolutionary advance. But whether there is an armed seizure of power or negotiated settlement what is indisputable to both is the development of the political and military forces of the revolution.

We should be on our guard against the clear objective of our ruling class and their imperialist allies who see negotiation as a way of pre-empting a revolutionary transformation. The imperialists seek their own kind of transformation which goes beyond the reform limits of the present regime but which will, at the same time, frustrate the basic objectives of the struggling masses. *And they hope to achieve this by pushing the liberation movement into negotiation before it is strong enough to back its basic demands with sufficient power on the ground.*

Whatever prospects may arise in the future for a negotiated transition, they must not be allowed to infect the purpose and content of our present strategic

approaches. *We are not engaged in a struggle whose objective is merely to generate sufficient pressure to bring the other side to the negotiating table.* If, as a result of a generalised crisis and a heightened revolutionary upsurge, the point should ever be reached when the enemy is prepared to talk, the liberation forces will, *at that point*, have to exercise their judgement, guided by the demands of revolutionary advance. But until then its sights must be clearly set on the perspectives of a seizure of power.

The Enemy Armed Forces

It is unlikely that the enemy forces will, within any foreseeable future, come over in large numbers to the side of the people. The possibility of the army playing an *autonomous role* and attempting to impose an open military dictatorship to counter a revolutionary upheaval cannot be ruled out.

But these are not the only possible or inevitable options. There are a number of other factors which could have an important bearing on the precise role of the enemy's military at the crucial historic moment in the future. This applies particularly to its black contingents. The black component of the enemy's army and police force and those in the Bantustans grows bigger. It is a component which can, at the right moment, be won over to the side of their fellow-oppressed countrymen and women. The potential for making such an inroad is increasing.

The SADF is predominantly a conscript army. As a whole they represent the class and social composition of the dominant group. The conflict and its outcome is vitally bound up with their personal class and community connections. The army can hardly fail to reflect all the stresses and contradictions which develop in society as a whole at the crucial moment of confrontation. At such a moment a lack of cohesion and consensus within the army about its responses to the revolutionary upsurge, could delay decisive action and provide more space for a break-through. The uncertainties could grow if the black component of the army, including its bantustan contingents, turn towards the people. A significant minority among the white SADF might even be influenced to begin to accept the ultimate inevitability of majority rule and seek an accommodation with the revolutionary forces. Disaffection among the white middle strata, from which the bulk of the officer corps is drawn, is already at a high level. It is among these strata that resistance to the draft has grown impressively in the recent period.

The White Community and Armed Activity

In touching on these future possibilities, it is necessary to stress that one of the key factors influencing the ultimate responses of the army will be the work of our revolutionary alliance and the way its perspectives are understood by the white group as a whole. The opening declaration of the Freedom Charter that "South Africa belongs to all its people, black and white" must unconditionally continue to guide what we say and do. It is necessary to intensify efforts to spread this message in the face of an unending enemy campaign of misinformation about our objectives of people's power. This message must also emerge from the nature of our organised combat actions and the targets selected.

This approach is, in no way, inconsistent with decisions to take combat activity more and more into the "white areas". This is an imperative for a number of reasons. The overwhelming bulk of the enemy's installations (including military and police bases and assembly points) are situated in these areas and all the key army and police personnel live there. Pressure in these areas will prevent the enemy from concentrating all its forces in the black ghettos. It will also bring the reality of the conflict more sharply to those who constitute the regime's main political support base. Escalating action in these areas directed against the legitimate, non-civilian targets, will serve to eat away at the cohesion of this support base rather than pushing it further into the racist laager.

The Masses are the Key

The insurrectionary potential of our oppressed masses is growing. *While the "exact moment" of the seizure of power depends upon objective as well as subjective factors, there can be no doubt that what the masses do, led by the liberation alliance, influences the objective factors and hastens the arrival of that moment.* It is precisely this subjective factor which, in the last five years, has dramatically transformed the objective situation. The unique series of partial uprisings, the dramatic growth of the mass democratic movement, the emergence of giant trade union organisation, escalating armed actions and international mobilisation against the regime, are all inter-dependent processes which have changed the whole objective framework of struggle.

There is no aspect of the crisis facing the regime — whether it be the rapidly deteriorating economic situation or the divisions and vacillations within the power bloc — which has not got its primary roots in the soil of people's struggles. It is the all-round escalation of these struggles, combined with, and dependent upon, the consolidation and growth of mass and underground

organisation, which will lead to the revolutionary break-through. *Our working class is the decisive force to bring about the collapse of racism and victory in the national democratic revolution as a stage towards building a socialist South Africa.*

As always, we communists, together with our brothers, sisters and comrades in the liberation alliance, will remain at our posts however long the road to victory. The perspective of a protracted struggle can never be abandoned. *But, we are also convinced that the situation has within it the seeds of a sudden transformation.* We must prepare ourselves, and be ready. Our watch words are *unity, organisation and struggle.*

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