

Nos. 20/21 September 1986

Double issue—price R1.00

# **inqaba YA BASEBENZI**

**Journal of the Marxist Workers' Tendency  
of the African National Congress**



**INSIDE:**

Rent-strike

Kinross

CAYCO

Are big bosses  
'democratic'?

Soweto 1976

**Plus:**

Southern Africa

Nigeria

Vietnam 1945

Philippines

---

**PERSPECTIVES  
SUPPLEMENT**

South Africa's  
socialist  
revolution  
has begun

---

# Soweto rent-strikers fight back against police



*At the funeral on September 4, youth salute victims of the police attack in White City.*

The rent strikes which continue in up to 48 townships around the country are testimony to the determination of working people, despite the State of Emergency, to continue the fight against the poverty and oppression imposed by the regime and capitalism.

The withholding of rent infuriates the government and the bosses, who try one means after another to bring it to an end. To do so is one of the tasks of the semi-secret "Joint Management Committees" on which businessmen are sitting together with the police and military.

An *Inqaba* correspondent reports from White City, Jabavu, which on August 23 was on the front line of the regime's attempt to break the rent strike by force.

As one of the most organised communities of Soweto, the residents of White City, Jabavu, met the first taste of the consequences of not paying rent. More than 60% of residents in this area are pensioners, and this might explain why the administration police chose this area to charge in to evict those in arrears.

On the morning of the raid, 23 August, three residents were woken up by people they identified as Community Council/Administration police. They were ordered to vacate their houses because of not having paid their rent since before the rent boycott started. One woman, who asked not to be named, relates the story:

"We heard cars stopping outside our house. Then they were followed by two more cars within five minutes.

Men in green uniforms jumped out of the vans carrying rifles into my yard. They knocked badly on the door of the house. When we woke up to open they poured in like a swarm of bees. 'Pack your things and get out now and not later'. There was no way in which one could reason with them. They were absolutely rude and harsh.

"I was not scared of them, because I attended street meetings in our area where we were told to blow the whistle when confronted with these people for not paying rent. I asked myself why I should be the first one, why didn't they go somewhere else than come here? Before any answer could come to me I grabbed the whistle that was hanging on the wall. I opened the door to find an unfriendly police officer on the door with others behind him. I blew the whistle right in his face before he could say anything.

## "Pack your things"

" 'You are making noise woman, just pack your things and leave this house. Your whistle won't help anything, you're just wasting your time', he said.

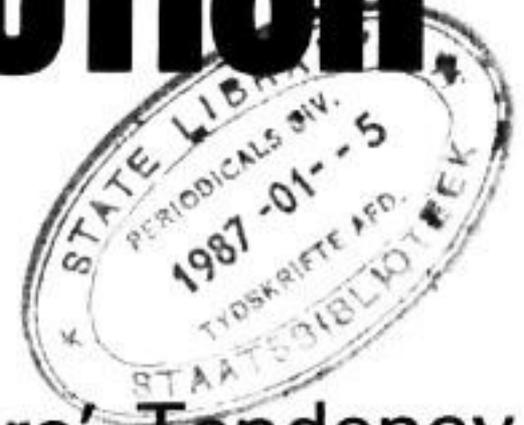
"Before long I heard another whistle being blown not far from where I stay. Then many more were blown. There were neighbours in my yard, some in their pyjamas and nighties. That was the only time I could speak to the police and hear what they had to say. Obviously scared, they told me they were sent by their seniors to come and evict me. The residents became mad when they heard all this. A serious confrontation broke out between us and the police. In the end a compromise was reached. The residents told the police to take me with them to their offices and hear my story before evicting me. The police had no choice but to concede. So I went to their headquarters in Dube.

"When we arrived there with others we were just dumped on the balcony and told to wait outside for the senior police who was apparently away to evict some other rent defaulters elsewhere. We waited and waited without any senior policeman coming back. It was very cold there and we were just waiting on the balcony and not even in one of the offices.

B159

50c

# South Africa's socialist revolution has begun



Perspective of the Marxist Workers' Tendency  
of the African National Congress

---

**Introduction**

**Part 1: *Bonapartism, reaction, and  
the crisis in white politics***

**Part 2 on the politics of the  
movement will be published later**

---

Supplement to issue 20/21 of



**November 1986**

## Editors' note

This document is intended to supplement the previous perspectives published by *Inqaba*, which have been borne out in all essentials.

Comrades are urged to reread *South Africa's Impending Socialist Revolution* (March 1982); *The Coming World Revolution* (published with issue 14 of *Inqaba*, June-August 1984); and particularly *Workers' Revolution or Racial Civil War* (published with issue 16/17 of *Inqaba*, May 1985).

The present document is submitted to our readers as a draft for discussion.

This is necessary because of the widening influence of *Inqaba* and the ideas of the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC within the

movement. It is essential to involve as many supporters as possible in the process of arriving at commonly agreed perspectives to guide our work.

It is necessary also because of the great complexity of the current situation, and the need to reflect adequately in our perspectives the insights gained from experience by comrades in different localities and fields of activity.

Systematic discussion in groups should take place round the document, and all points raised should be communicated to the Editorial Board. In the event that the discussion, or correspondence from readers, makes any fundamental changes to the draft necessary, it will be republished later in amended form.

To get the material into the hands of comrades with as little

delay as possible, we have decided to issue these perspectives initially in two sections.

The first section, printed here, contains a general *Introduction* followed by *Part 1*: an analysis of the situation of the ruling class, the regime, and the whites generally, entitled *Bonapartism, reaction, and the crisis in white politics*.

*Part 2* will deal with the politics of the movement against the bosses and the regime: the different trends within the mass organisations, the question of leadership, and the strategy and tactics needed in the present phase of our struggle to prepare the way for an ANC victory on a socialist program. It will be printed, either separately or as a combined pamphlet with this first section, as soon as work on it has been completed.

# Introduction

1. The 22 months from September 1984 to June 1986 form the opening phase of the South African revolution. It is marked out from the preceding decade or more of mighty struggles by the sheer scale of the mass movement of black working people which has engulfed all the industrial centres and spread to the most remote rural settlements.

Quantity has changed into quality, both in the outlook of the black people and in its effect on the whites. The ruling system is in the grip of a combined political, social and economic crisis which is clearly insoluble by tinkering with 'change'.

While hopes and illusions in peaceful and evolutionary 'reform' characterise the outpourings of the capitalist media and intellectual strata, the basis for reformism has, in reality, dropped away. Unevenly, not without reversions and swings, yet in an unmistakable way, the bulk of the population, black and white, have begun moving towards the conclusion that only forcible revolution or counter-revolution can provide a way out.

2. This marks a watershed, from the era of seemingly unchanging rigidity in the South African state and social system, to an era of sharp and sudden turns or shifts both in events and in consciousness.

To keep their bearings, it is essential for revolutionaries at each step to re-examine the underlying process in the tumult of events in which we are caught up—where we have come from, where we are going, and what stage we are passing through.

3. South Africa has been at the forefront of a whole series of revolutionary struggles gripping the

capitalist world.

The toppling of the dictatorships in Haiti and the Philippines; the advances towards revolution in Chile and Pakistan; the revolution in Central America and the upheavals throughout Latin America; the world economic crisis reflected in general strike movements also in Western Europe—in this age of instant mass communications international events penetrate to some extent into the consciousness of people even in the remotest areas.

The awareness is growing of a world revolution in process, with the ruling class and imperialism facing growing difficulties everywhere, and of oppressed and exploited people increasingly on the march.

4. That the revolution in South Africa has begun is shown in the apparently unbreakable spirit of defiance of black people despite the apartheid regime's unending murderous attacks.

This will to struggle is, on the one hand, a product of the depth of crisis in the system as a whole, sensed by the blacks, and on the other hand the result of their discovering through action the favourable relationship of forces (at least in the longer term) on their side.

The consciousness has taken hold within the black working class that the greater part of its forces have yet to be roused for the battle. The whites, and the bosses, appear increasingly isolated. The immensely strong state machine, impossible to conquer immediately, is nevertheless proving incapable of inflicting any shattering defeat.

5. The task of conquering state power has become

"Our captor came back and said that we can go because it doesn't seem the senior officer will come at that time. So we left for home to find curious residents waiting to hear. Others did not want to go to work without knowing what had happened to us. They were actually afraid to go to work and leave their houses unguarded. They left only after we had told them what had happened."

During the day a rumour went around saying that the people who didn't pay rent were going to be evicted by the police and army in the evening. In the afternoon most workers were back from work and had already been told that there is a possibility of mass evictions at night. Most residents adopted a wait and see attitude.

In the light of that day's incident, coupled with the unconfirmed rumour, the Jabavu area was tense. The youths in the area were milling around, in anticipation of an invasion by the Council police.

It could not be confirmed whether the police were on routine patrol of the township or not. Their mere presence at about 6.30pm exploded the already volatile situation.

The militant youths charged on them with stones and other missiles. Teargas was fired at the angry group and the entire atmosphere was soon engulfed by thick clouds of teargas, whistle sounds and freedom songs. The encircled police used live ammunition to disentangle themselves from the barricaded 'war zone'. Two people—a young man and a young woman, were killed in this shoot-out.

## Whistles

After the police had managed to free themselves from encirclement by the angry residents, whistles were heard from very remote parts of White City and Central Western Jabavu. After the police had left, the group that was there—about 5 000 or more—marched to the local Administration offices. Others joined in on the way. At the offices a few Council police were there. Seeing the coming masses they took positions in the yard of the semi-fortified offices. There was nowhere they could go to. They started shooting teargas at the enraged crowd who retaliated with stones and everything they were in possession of.

During the skirmish a loud bang was heard. But it is not known whether this was a hand grenade, as was later reported by the so-called 'Bureau of Information' in Pretoria. However, the following day the office structure was still intact.

The army and the SAP arrived in the company of the Council police. The defiant youth engaged this combination in fierce battle. At first only teargas and rubber bullets were used, but later when the battle became more fierce live ammunition was also used.

By this time pandemonium had spread to other areas of White City and Central Western Jabavu. Soldiers and police, in uniforms and plain-clothes, were marching the streets of White City. They were followed by their vehicles with big searchlights beaming and brightening the obscured corners of rows of houses in search of the combatants. Anyone in sight was shot instantly. The following morning the 'Bureau of Information' reported the death toll to be twelve, but the true numbers were much higher. Later in the day the Civic Association reported at least 18 dead and more than 60 injured.

## Killed

Among those killed were Themba Mazibuko and Bongani Mxotwa.

Themba Goodwill Mazibuko was a 19 year old student from Hlengiwe High School in White City. He was active in the struggle against high rents. Someone close to him told me:

"At the time of his tragic death we were standing outside on the gates and pavements, whistles and other things ready in our hands. We were actually brought out by the sound of whistles from very remote areas of White City, which is something like one and a half kilometers from us.

"While waiting there the police came, but we did not retreat to our homes. They asked us what was happening. People told them that they smelt teargas while in their houses, and that is why they came out to see what was happening.

"Another police Land Rover drove over towards us and fired a few teargas cannisters. People ran in all directions and took cover in the houses. Themba was standing at the

gate by this time. He was shot when police were walking on foot all over the area. He was found with a bullet in his left temple. His parents went to sit next to the body all night amidst tears and smoke and bullets. The police mortuary vehicle fetched his body the next day at 10.30am."

## Cartridge

Bongani Lucky Mxotwa was 19 years old. He was killed at Modise Street. Someone close to him said:

"Bongani was running away when he was shot. Next to him a bullet cartridge was found. I took that cartridge and kept it for evidence in case an inquest should be held, but a policeman came and took it away from me. He also asked what time Bongani went out and whether he was a 'comrade' or not. We told them Bongani was still very young to become a 'comrade.' He was left there by the police after taking a statement. He was only fetched the next morning about 10am."

In another street a hand grenade was reported used. According to residents in Ramaite Street, the police vehicle was badly damaged but no-one was injured. After the grenade explosion the police were on the rampage, shooting indiscriminately in all directions.

While Soweto was licking its wounds, the puppet "councillors", paralysed by fear, surreptitiously left the township to take refuge at a hotel in town. It was reported that another councillor was killed by residents in his area.

The Soweto Council issued a statement assuring the residents that they wouldn't evict anyone for not paying rent.

As a sequel to the massacre the Soweto Council removed a certain Mrs Del Kevan from her position as Council spokesperson on matters relating to housing and rent. She was notorious for her heavy-handedness with residents. Earlier she had warned residents that "the Council will not hesitate using the army to make sure that rents are paid." She is also an active member of the supposedly 'liberal' Progressive Federal Party.

central in the consciousness of millions. It has begun to be seen as realistic—as lying within possible reach.

This has been reflected in the creation and spread of organs of direct mass power—street, zone and area committees in the townships; people's courts; joint committees linking local shop-stewards and youth activists. On the one hand instruments for the mobilisation of whole communities in action, these form at the same time the embryo of a new authority to rival the established state.

Added to this has been the growing expression of the need for arms—most significantly now also by working-class women—and the beginnings of organised self-defence on the part of township youth and small but increasing numbers of workers.

6. Taken together, these features show that the revolution has opened now—although it will inevitably pass through many phases, including lulls and even sharp reverses as well as great advances, extending over five, ten or probably more years because of the great difficulty of defeating the state.

7. The second state of emergency imposed by Botha in June, while inflicting a setback, has plainly failed to crush the movement or re-establish effective government control over the townships, despite the detention of more than 23 000 activists so far. Nevertheless, it has marked an important turning-point and introduced a definite new phase in the revolution itself.

To understand this present phase, estimate its likely duration, and clarify the main immediate tasks, we need to re-establish and elaborate some of the fundamental ideas in our perspectives (although without going over all the old ground covered before).

### **An unusual feature of our revolution**

8. In previous material we have pointed to a peculiar paradox resulting from the unique make-up of South African society and the racist state—that, on the one hand, the revolution has clearly begun while, on the other hand, it cannot be said that a 'revolutionary situation' yet exists or is even close at hand.

Put another way, this means that all of the objective conditions necessary for victory do not exist at the outset of the revolution, but can only be brought into existence through an extended development of revolution itself over a number of years.

9. Probably in any other country, a revolutionary mass movement of the proletariat of the scale and calibre which has arisen in South Africa would long ago have toppled the regime. There would be a paralysis of the armed forces, reflecting the revolutionary pressure of the proletariat, splits in the ruling class and the radical polarisation of the middle layers ready for change.

State power itself could be swiftly conquered by the proletariat, depending mainly on subjective factors—namely, the degree of organisation and con-

sciousness of the class, the quality of its cadres and above all its leadership, and whether it was prepared to take bold advantage of the situation to draw the middle layers behind it in seizing power.

10. Trotsky pointed out that it was a virtual social law, shown in the revolutionary crises that gripped the European countries in the inter-War period, that the bulk of the middle classes swung initially to the left, and only when disappointed by the failure of the proletariat to solve the crisis by taking power did they swing right and become a social basis for reaction or fascism.

11. In South Africa, as we have explained elsewhere, the revolution taking place is likewise a proletarian socialist revolution in its essential character—although one in which tasks of national liberation and democracy stand at the head of the agenda.

Despite the essential likeness in its class character, however, the process of the South African revolution develops differently from other classical proletarian revolutions in certain crucial respects.

12. The apartheid state machine, on which the capitalist ruling class depends, is sustained essentially by the support of the white middle classes and working class (a labour aristocracy).

The gulf which has been systematically created between the races—the economic, social and political privileges of the whites adding to the historically derived differences of language and culture—leads to a situation in which, with the onset of revolutionary crisis, the initial gravitation of the main middle layers in society, namely the white lower middle class and workers, is not towards the mass of the proletariat, i.e., to revolution, but towards the right-wing of bourgeois politics, i.e., to reaction.

13. Thus, with the opening of the revolution, the black masses confront a state force far from paralysed internally in its ability to carry out murderous repression, but on the contrary straining at the leash to go even further than the bourgeois government and ruling class consider to be in their interests at the present time.

14. The essence of the task confronting our movement is to develop the means—through building revolutionary organisation of the black working class, through arming, but above all through the political strategy and tactics employed in action—to disintegrate and paralyse the mighty South African state machine, so as to open the road to power.

In South African conditions, to break the main middle layers from their adherence to the capitalist ruling class and the state is a daunting task. To many revolutionaries, it seems impossible that white workers and lower middle-class people can ever be won over in significant numbers to supporting the democratic and socialist transformation of this country. Yet it has to be done.

It is for this reason that we give detailed attention in this document to developments in white politics

# KINROSS DISASTER— MINE BOSSES ARE GUILTY

“A Thousand ways to die” is the title of a safety manual just produced by the NUM. Even before it was released, its message was horribly underlined by the disaster at Gencor’s Kinross gold-mine on 16 September, in which 177 mineworkers died.

The disaster highlights the callous lack of concern of the profit-grabbing mine bosses for workers’ safety. As NUM General Secretary Cyril Ramaphosa said, it was “completely unnecessary.”

A welding accident 1.6 kilometers underground started a fire—but there was no fire extinguisher to hand. The fire set alight polyurethane foam lining the tunnel—material known for more than 20 years to be a deadly hazard in mines and banned in, for example, Britain. It was the toxic fumes unleashed, and fanned 1.5 kilometres along the tunnel by the ventilation system, which caused all the deaths.

Gencor are guilty of murder, and must be held responsible.

Workers everywhere will endorse the NUM’s decision for a one-day strike on 1 October in protest.

The 100-year history of the SA mining industry is written in blood and sweat—of black workers slaving at starvation wages, separated from their families in overcrowded hostels, forced to gamble with their lives.

Since the turn of the century, over 48,000 workers have died in the gold-mines alone.

The Chamber of Mines churns out propaganda on how its safety record “is second to none”, and this is barely challenged by the capitalist media in SA and abroad. Yet the fatality and accident rate in SA mines is several times that in Britain or the United States.

Between 1978 and 1983 the death rate on UK coal mines was 0.1 per 1 000 miners; and in the US less than 1 per 1 000. Chamber of Mines reports analysed by researcher Jean Leger show a death rate of 2 per 1 000 in 1978 and 1.62 per 1 000 in 1984—no better than the rate of 1.96 per 1 000 in 1941.

Moreover, while in the US an ac-

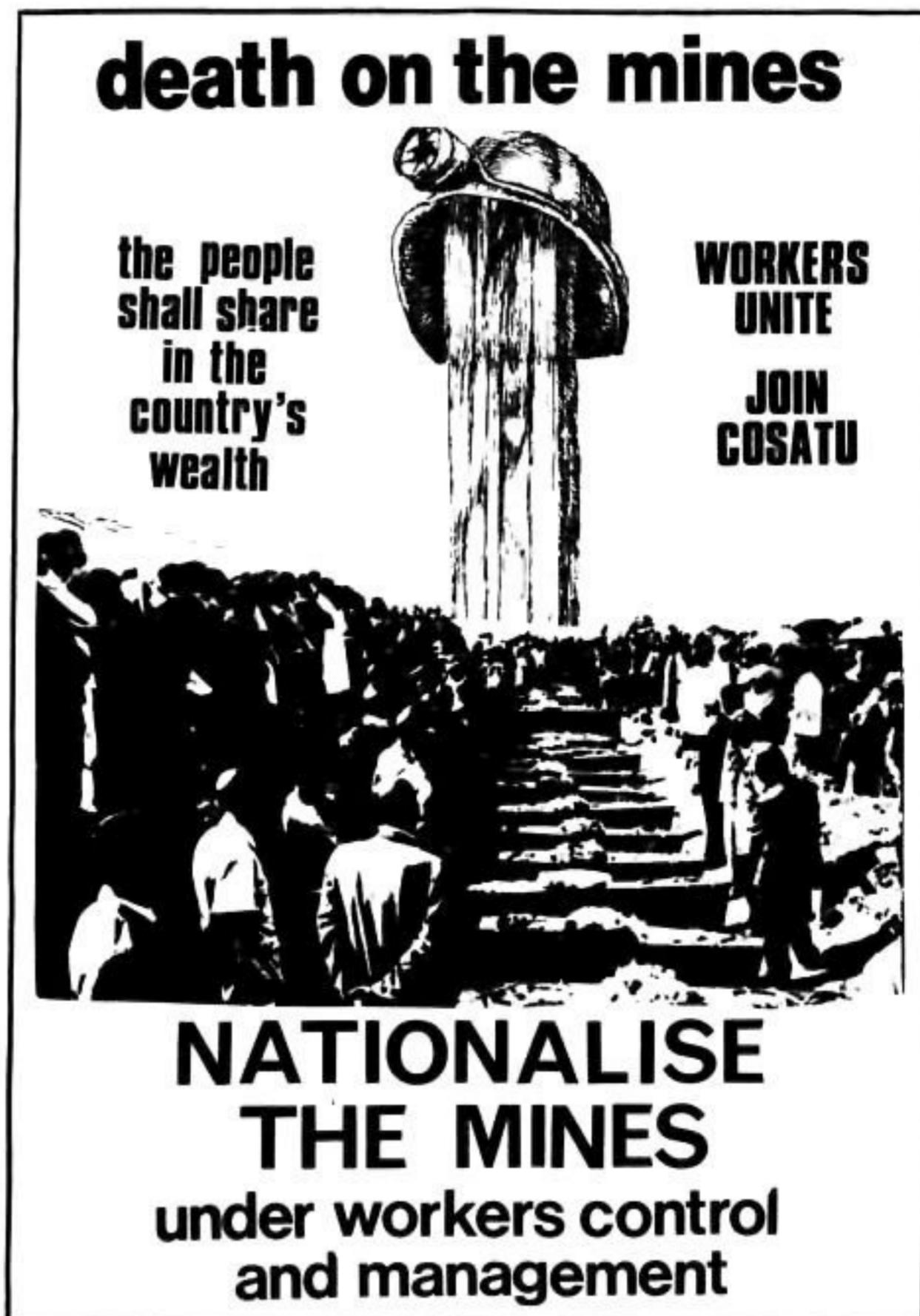
cident becomes ‘reportable’ if it prevents the miner from working the next shift, and in the UK if it prevents him from working more than three days, in SA it is ‘reportable’ only if it prevents the mineworker from returning to work within 14 days.

The system of paying white miners’ productivity bonuses is also an incentive for them to cut corners on safety.

Reactionary white miners’ ‘leader’ Arrie Paulus agrees with the

Chamber on the safeness of the mines. This will be small comfort to the colleagues and families of the five white miners who died. White miners should turn instead to the SA NUM—not, of course, in any hope of defending their past privileges, but for a way forward as miners together.

With the rand falling and the gold-price rising, mine bosses have been making record profits: R1900 million (£600 million) in 1985, and more this



Poster produced after the Kinross disaster by Youth Congress activists in SA.

and in the state. It is vital to identify the real social fault-lines of division or potential division among the whites—and see how events, taken together with the policies and actions of our movement, are likely to affect them.

15. Such analysis is necessary so that the leading cadres of the black working class can raise their own understanding, and then that of the entire movement, to the level of professionalism and political skill necessary for victory in the exceptionally difficult conditions in this country.

### **Assessment of revolution confirmed**

16. *Inqaba's* Editorial Board statement of 12 November 1984 (*South Africa—How close to revolution?*) did not clearly conclude that the revolution had indeed already begun; but it recognised that events from September of that year (the uprisings in the Vaal townships, the occupation of townships by troops, and the Transvaal political general strike) had “undoubtedly opened a new stage on the road to revolution”.

We saw that the stepped-up repression then taking place would not curb, but on the contrary would further inflame and spread the mass revolt. At the same time we argued that the objective conditions necessary for the defeat of the state were far from sufficiently developed. We warned then against illusions in imminent victory:

“The long-standing strength and rigidity of the system of white domination—the existence of a powerful, steeled state apparatus built almost entirely on the privileged minority—mean that the maturing of a revolutionary crisis, and preparation of conditions for the collapse or overthrow of the regime, is an unavoidably drawn-out, bitter and bloody process...”

“There cannot be a swift climax to the revolutionary struggle in South Africa; what is necessary are further well-prepared and thought-out actions building towards revolution.”

17. At the same time we proposed a number of concrete, realistic steps in that direction, and gave particular emphasis to the role that could be played by a national general strike of one or two days, over specific issues, in building the strength and momentum of the black working-class movement.

The aptness of this emphasis—and the error of conservative union leaders who claimed the workers were ‘unwilling’ to engage in further political general strikes—was to be confirmed later in the magnificent May Day and June 16th strikes of 1986.

18. On the other hand, we have also been proved absolutely correct in combatting the widespread illusions, cultivated, especially by the Congress leadership up to at least May 1986, in the possibility of an immediate insurrection and liberation by means of ‘one big push’—a complete disorientation which only added to the difficulties faced particularly by the youth in carrying forward the fight.

In contrast, *Inqaba* provided from the outset a realistic approach. This was systematically developed and clarified in our subsequent material.

19. Also in the November 1984 statement we anticipated greatly increased state repression in the future, on at least the scale of the two states of emergency which the Botha regime has imposed.

“If not immediately, at least in the period ahead it is quite possible that the regime may decide to ban the UDF and youth organisations, and carry out large-scale arrests of trade union and other leaders, as in the early 1960s.”

While the UDF has not so far been banned outright, COSAS has been, and the crackdown on all parts of the movement has certainly been more extensive than that of 25 years ago. This is likely to continue.

20. However, we explained in advance why, in today's conditions, this would lead only to “temporary complications” and, unlike the 1960s, would not amount to a defeat of the movement itself.

We concluded:

“Even wholesale arrests and bannings now would be unable to demoralise the movement and could not eliminate the basic structures of factory, school and township organisation.

“For these reasons, further desperate moves towards even more vicious repression by the state would prepare the way for new retreats by the regime and splits in the ruling class.

“But equally, every new lurch in the direction of further ‘reform’ will bear the hallmark: ‘Too little, too late’, thus stirring up the struggle still further, and promoting demoralisation in the bourgeois camp.”

It is hardly necessary to change a comma in this estimation after two years of the most turbulent events in South Africa's history.

21. The advantage for revolutionary activists of a correct perspective, wrote Trotsky, is the “advantage of foresight over astonishment”.

The basis of perspectives is an evaluation of the real relationship of the class forces in society—not a mechanical comparison of their inert weight, but how, as living forces, they act upon and restrain each other in struggle.

22. Realising that there was an overall stalemate prevailing between the opposing forces, we were able to conclude that, while the revolutionary movement could not break through to victory in the short term, neither could it simply be crushed.

From the assessment of a stalemate we also drew, correctly, the general conclusion that the forward momentum of the movement in its existing form could not be sustained indefinitely. As the realisation set in among the activists and the masses that it would not be possible to move directly to an insurrectionary overthrow of the state, some ebb in the movement would be inevitable, at least for a time.

Nevertheless, the situation would remain volatile, with many explosive struggles breaking out. The possibility would remain of vigorous national action campaigns on wages, on the pass laws, and other social and political issues, if they were well organised and boldly led. In this way a basis could be laid for further general advances, and fundamental changes in the relationship of forces which would weaken the ruling class and the state.

year. Gencor's R458 million (£143 million) share in 1985 was up 56 per cent on the previous year. Yet less than 2 per cent of the Chamber's R40 million a year research budget is spent on safety research.

The mine bosses refuse to reinvest in adequate safety measures—and also stand fiercely against black mineworkers' demands for a living wage.

This year they have conceded a 17-21 per cent increase (with inflation touching 20 per cent), and may increase this fractionally in the negotiations still to be concluded. This was in response to the NUM's original demand of 40 per cent, which is the level of increase that is required even to begin to lift the burden of poverty wages.

## Miserly

It is also these wage levels—R193 a month the starting rate on the gold-mines, and R177 on the coal mines—which will provide the basis for the miserly 'compensation' payments in the disaster: two years' wages lump-sum and 75 per cent of wages thereafter to dependants.

The NUM is campaigning for a Bill of Rights on safety, including the right to refuse dangerous work, to have access to management safety records, proper training, and worker representation on safety committees.

Acceptance of these by the mine bosses would be a step forward. But, as SA NUM policy affirms, poverty, migrant labour, and unsafe conditions can be ended for mineworkers only when the mines are nationalised under workers' control and management.

Even then, gold—unlike coal—is "useful" mainly as a store of wealth for capitalists and their governments. The risk inherent in deep-level gold-mining can be ended finally only through socialism world-wide—when gold's use will, in Lenin's words, become limited to 'decorating public lavatories' and goldminers can be redeployed in safe jobs.

Now, however, for SA mineworkers and their comrades internationally, it is the time to show anger, and determination to carry forward the struggle for safety and for an end to the chains of apartheid and capitalism that enslave them.

# Letter

Natal  
September 1986

Dear comrades,

I am a member of COSATU. In our union we practise non-racialism. We have African, Indian and coloured brothers and sisters who are members. Also Zulu- and Xhosa-speaking members. Our union is having a real impact on the racist white workers in our factory. It is the first time they see a real union fighting for workers' rights.

Recently some of them, about six, went to our union office to join. There our leaders told them you must agree with all COSATU policies before you can join our union. They told the workers you must agree with everything, also with sanctions, before you can join. The white workers were discouraged, they were not educated. They did not join the union.

Our leaders invite Inkatha members to join without telling them they must support all COSATU policies. They are soft on Inkatha members but very hard on white workers. We ask what is the difference?

Please discuss this in our journal.

Worker  
Empangeni

This letter arrived just as we were getting ready to print *Inqaba*, so we have not been able to discuss the important questions it raises as fully as we would have liked in this issue. Further contributions on these matters for future issues would be welcome. Meanwhile, a few guidelines:

COSATU's non-racial policy shows how clearly the organised black workers have understood that only a united working class can stand up to and eventually defeat the bosses and the state.

Unity of black workers irrespective of ethnic group or language is the basis for a strong workers' movement. But we will only be able to weaken the racist state enough to overthrow it and capitalism if we win over the white workers, or at least a good many of them, as well.

The trade unions can be strong only by uniting all the workers in each industry, and all the industries together. This is why COSATU says: 'ONE INDUSTRY, ONE UNION' and 'ONE COUNTRY, ONE FEDERATION'.

That means uniting workers from many different backgrounds, and with many different points of view, in the same unions. How can that be done without compromising the aims of our struggle or the effectiveness of the unions—especially in the political field? A union is not a political party—yet the unions have a major part to play in the political liberation of the working class.

We think there are three elements necessary for a correct approach to this problem:

1. COSATU unions should welcome as members workers willing to uphold the following principles:

(a) unity of all workers, irrespective of race, language or religion, in the struggle against the bosses;

(b) independence of the unions from control by the state or bosses in any form;

(c) democratic control of the unions by the members.

Other than this, workers should not be required to agree with particular policy positions held by unions before they join. It should not be difficult either for those workers presently in Inkatha, or for those white workers beginning to look towards COSATU unions as their salvation, to accept this.

2. The method of workers' democracy must be upheld in establishing and carrying out union policy.

The unions have a duty to make policy on **everything** affecting the membership—industrial, or political. Decisions are made by majority vote, after full discussion in which all points of view are aired. Minorities may continue to disagree, and express disagreement, but must abide by majority decisions at the same time. For example, when action is decided, no-one may break ranks.

Splitting from an established union over political disagreements almost invariably aids the bosses. A minority must be patient until it can convince the majority of workers of its views.

3. Because political clarity is vital for the unions, there should always be a vigorous effort to explain and campaign for correct policies among the membership.

Union leaders should lead this, and not seek some lowest common denominator in the hope of keeping everyone happy. Of course there is an art involved here, in patiently yet firmly persuading without ultimatums or provoking unnecessary splits.

There is no excuse for being soft on Inkatha. Worker members of Inkatha must be helped to see that Inkatha is doing nothing but splitting workers, strike-breaking, murdering activists, and aiding the Pretoria regime—because it is a tribal organisation whose leaders are allies of the capitalists.

Nor should we be soft on the racism or privilege of white workers. Through bringing them into unions firmly controlled by black workers, they can be taught that capitalism offers them also nothing but disaster, and that their future lies with us in the struggle for workers' democracy and socialism.

## A correction necessary

23. However, from the indisputable general conclusion that an ebb in the momentum of mass struggle was inevitable, we moved too swiftly to the particular conclusion, in early November 1985, that such a turn had in fact taken place—that the peak of that cycle had passed. This is reflected in some of the material printed in issue 18/19 of *Inqaba*. But the facts which had suggested this—and there were many—proved episodic.

While an ebb definitely set in in the Western Cape, and while much of Natal was torn and paralysed by the Inkatha reaction, countrywide the picture remained very uneven.

Detentions under the first state of emergency, aimed especially at the Eastern Cape, resulted in that area in a further hardening of the resistance, the emergence of seemingly inexhaustible new layers of working-class leadership, a firmer understanding of the need for arms, and the spread of embryonic organs of mass democracy on a wide scale.

24. It became obvious that, taking the country as a whole, the elemental process by which layer upon layer of the masses, in area after area, were still moving into action had far from exhausted even its initial impulse.

An even greater upsurge took place in the first months of 1986. Its depth, force and resilience showed, indeed, that nothing short of a revolution was taking place.

25. The launch of COSATU at the end of November 1985 (the single most important advance of SA workers in their history) had had an enormous effect in raising the combativity of the entire black working class. In the first quarter of 1986 industrial action reached unprecedented levels. The number of working days lost almost equalled the whole figure for 1985, itself double that of 1984. By mid-March, 100 000 mineworkers alone had gone on strike.

26. In the midst of this, Botha—judging that the insurrectionary wave in the townships was declining somewhat and that the spectre of the government possibly losing control altogether was no longer looming in the 'public mind'—decided to lift the first state of emergency.

This was in order to pursue again the tactics of so-called 'reform', and to try to draw African middle-class figures, such as Buthelezi, into the web of state. New steps towards 'negotiation' were promised; the pass laws were to be 'abolished' by a definite date; the possible release of Mandela was raised again—this time without the precondition that 'violence' must be renounced. That was the meaning of Botha's 'Rubicon II'.

27. Far from inducing the black masses to wait for change from on high, however, this merely gave a signal of lack of resolve on the part of the regime. Hundreds of thousands of previously passive black people moved into vigorous action, striving to drive home the advantage against the oppressor. Hopes of

a quick victory revived.

Most significantly of all, the revolt spread furiously through the rural areas especially of the Northern Transvaal. The determination of new layers revitalised those who had already borne fifteen months of unrelenting struggle on their shoulders. The townships were once again on the boil (with Alexandra, for instance, now prominent among them). Boycotts resumed. Factory occupations took place.

28. This momentum also built towards the May Day general strike, in which 1½ million workers and at least a million youth took part in a demonstration of working-class power unmatched in SA history. Indeed, the SA working class led the workers of the world that day.

## Overall stalemate led to an ebb

29. Nevertheless, the impossibility of defeating the state in the short term—the prevailing overall stalemate of forces at this juncture, which we had all along pointed out—brought this movement eventually up against its current limits.

The realisation began to set in that the regime would neither concede power nor simply collapse under the pressure of the mass movement. It became clear that the state could not be defeated in the short term and that this absolutely formidable task would require a much more massive struggle, stretching over years.

As this understanding took hold in different ways and to varying degrees, features of tiredness and bitter frustration (amazingly long delayed) began to show themselves among the active layers. At the same time, among the older and more passive mass of black people, elements of reaction began to find at least a partial foothold.

30. A process similar to this can be traced in every proletarian revolution, as a passage in the Preface to Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* describes:

"The masses go into a revolution not with a prepared plan of social reconstruction, but with a sharp feeling that they cannot endure the old regime. Only the guiding layers of a class have a political programme, and even this still requires the test of events, and the approval of the masses. The fundamental political process of the revolution thus consists in the gradual comprehension by a class of the problems arising from the social crisis—the active orientation of the masses by a method of successive approximations. The different stages of a revolutionary process, certified by a change of parties in which the more extreme always supersedes the less, express the growing pressure to the left of the masses—so long as the swing of the movement does not run into objective obstacles. When it does, there begins a reaction: disappointments of the different layers of the revolutionary class, growth of indifferentism, and therewith a strengthening of the position of the counter-revolutionary forces."

31. Most notably at Crossroads, but elsewhere too, the black 'vigilante' reaction—based on middle-class collaborators and gangsters funded, armed and organised by the police—gained an echo also among

# Fight the state of emergency!

**The detention of thousands of activists under the State of Emergency from June 12—which included the most serious assault on the trade union movement in recent years—was a challenge for the international labour movement.**

Workers around the world identify instinctively with the plight of black SA workers, and have an enormous respect for the magnificent fight being waged by them against the apartheid dictatorship and capitalism.

As a US Communications Workers union activist said recently, "My emphasis is not only on helping COSATU, it is on emulating their militancy."

Where appeals have been taken to the rank and file—for strike support for the SA NUM or BTR workers, for example—there has been an excellent response.

With the State of Emergency, the responsibility lay on the international trade union leadership to mobilise a huge campaign—calling on workers to implement sanctions to demand the release of detainees and the lifting of the emergency.

It was even necessary to fight censorship by the bosses' media. Particularly in Britain, they hid behind the SA government's restrictions, suppressing information on detentions, particularly of unionists—while giving a platform to SA ambassador Dennis Worrall.

**Unfortunately, although the facts were put at their disposal by the SA trade unions, the international union leadership sat on their hands. More than a week after June 12, the British TUC, for example, had not circulated names of detainees to its affiliates or to the press—on the excuse that this would "endanger" the detainees!**

It was left to socialists in the international labour movement to give a lead, and try to move the leadership to action. Within 24 hours of the declaration of the emergency, on the basis of information received from COSATU sources by the Southern African Labour Education Project (SALEP), a campaign was launched involving *Inqaba* and its Marxist co-thinkers in other countries.

The call was for maximum publici-

ty of the detentions, for protests, for aid to detainees and their families, and for urgent action by workers to halt SA Airways, stop SA trade in the docks, etc.

The campaign was taken up by trade unionists and labour youth wings in Britain, Sri Lanka, Italy, Denmark, Sweden, Greece, Spain, West Germany, Belgium, Holland, Ireland, and Spain—with street collections and petitions, with resolutions by trade unions, and pressure on the leadership for action.

The material reprinted on the following three pages appeared during this campaign.

In Britain, where trade and investment links with SA are largest, and where Thatcher's Tory government is one of Botha's strongest defenders, particularly vigorous efforts were made.

When BBC TV refused to publicise names of detained COSATU leaders supplied by SALEP—on the grounds that unionists were a "narrow, sectional interest group" and that anyway the names could not be confirmed by SA non-labour sources—the Labour Party Young Socialists mounted a picket of BBC Head Office. Only then was the news blackout lifted.

## Publicised

In Parliament, Marxist M.P. Dave Nellist spearheaded efforts to ensure that the names of all available detainees were put in resolutions and publicised.

The LPYS also organised two pickets of TUC headquarters to demand the leaders use their authority to call for the enforcement of workers' sanctions. The second picket was addressed by SA NUM leaders James Motlatsi and Cyril Ramaphosa—who had left SA at a time of crisis to impress the need for urgent action on the labour leadership.

The LPYS and SALEP approached dock and airport workers. At Heathrow, TGWU members supported their shop stewards' call for stopping loading SAA cargo jets. But

this breakthrough was unfortunately beaten back by a combination of management intimidation, and lack of support from the national TGWU leadership.

The Broad Left Organising Committee gave a platform at its national conference to former MAWU secretary June-Rose Nala, and former SACTU activist Nimrod Sejake—and, with a campaigning leaflet, spread the demand for workers' sanctions.

## Enthusiasm

The enormous enthusiasm among workers for taking up this issue—even where real sacrifice would be involved—stands in marked contrast to the timidity of the leadership.

A recent report by the bosses' *Economist Intelligence Unit* states "The unpredictability of (trade) union sanctions makes them very difficult to counteract and they could pose a very serious threat to (SA's) exports. They could eventually be far more significant than official sanctions in economically isolating the country."

Yet, after 3 months of the emergency, the British TUC, for example (despite a visit by General Secretary Willis and TGWU leader Ron Todd to SA, despite the urgent calls by COSATU leaders) is still responding with nothing more than token moralisms—and with a pamphlet for investors in SA warning them of the "risks" they are taking with their money!

SA workers will draw the lessons as to who are and are not their allies—and on the need for the transformation of the workers' organisations internationally.

**Workers around the world must step up the pressures on their leaders to mobilise a campaign for workers' sanctions. Also, all possible support and material assistance needs to be given to those in SA—in the unions and in the youth organisations—who are fighting against the emergency and to build a mass ANC on a socialist programme.**

parts of the working class who could see no hope of a revolutionary way out and began to demand the curbing of the militant youth.

Lumpen youths, whose fighting energy and cunning had earlier been subsumed in the forward momentum of the townships and of the working-class youth as a whole against the military and police, began in some areas to turn to extortion and terrorising of their communities—the phenomenon of the so-called 'com-tsotsis'.

In certain localities, features of degeneration and gangsterism made an appearance even in some of the street and zone committees, and around 'people's courts'.

The 'necklace'—initially an instrument of revolutionary terror against spies and collaborators which had played a definite part in building the confidence of oppressed people to smash all obstacles and carry *the fight to the end*—was more and more becoming now a tool of political division, vendettas and frustrated rage.

32. These were all symptoms of the general situation in an impasse, with events moving towards a turning-point and inevitable ebb of the kind we had earlier forecast (but prematurely identified).

33. To sustain and consolidate mass involvement in the movement at more or less its existing level across the country; to overcome swiftly the negative features emerging within it or at its edges; and to carry the momentum forward again after only the briefest respite—would have required a very high degree of conscious revolutionary organisation.

This would have had to embrace not only hundreds of thousands of workers and youth, but many thousands of disciplined cadres, working together as a team in every part of the country with a clear and unified conception of perspectives and tasks: in fact a mass revolutionary party of the working class with a decisive leadership acting on the basis of Marxist ideas.

34. But to build such an organisation—more specifically, to build and transform the Congress movement on these necessary lines—is an immense task, which, for all its urgency, requires time, experience, and the laborious clarification among the activists of theoretical ideas, strategy and tactics.

In reality, only the beginnings of an understanding of the necessity of this task have so far emerged, notably among the most militant black working-class youth in the first instance. This in itself signifies an advance of the utmost importance for the future—but it could not yet alter the prevailing situation fundamentally.

### Question of political leadership

35. In the period leading up to June 16th, it must be said, our movement had at its disposal a powerful banner of unity in struggle—the Congress banner—but had to carry that banner forward without national political leadership willing to address the real tasks.

36. In view of the failure of the UDF nationally to provide an active campaigning lead to the working class, and especially after the launch of COSATU, millions of youth and workers hoped that trade union leaders would give direction on the political plane.

That is why the call of COSATU President Elijah Barayi at the December 1985 launching rally for a campaign of pass burning (if the pass laws were not abolished within six months) gained such widespread support among the working class. We immediately backed that call with detailed proposals for mounting an effective and realistic campaign.

37. But not only did the ANC and UDF leadership fail utterly to throw real weight behind this initiative. Virtually the whole of the trade union leadership hurriedly combined to drag COSATU back from playing such a decisive political role.

The argument that there was 'no mandate' from the workers was essentially spurious. It is true Elijah Barayi made his call without a formal mandate. But the union leaders could have obtained the necessary mandate within weeks if they had had the will.

A dangerous vacuum of political leadership thus made itself felt, in which high expectations, particularly of the youth, began to be disappointed.

38. However, the strike wave of early 1986 drew the youth closer to the workers in COSATU, as they strove to link their efforts in every field of struggle to the enormous power and potential which the unification of the industrial unions represented.

The pressure from the workers and youth for political general strike action grew tremendously. This was reflected in the brilliant May Day strike. What was needed to follow that?

Workers do not see a point in merely taking the same action repeatedly when all that can do is demonstrate the same relationship of forces over and over again. They want to see their efforts and sacrifices geared to a plan of systematic advance, in which each action builds on the understanding, confidence and mobilisation generated by its forerunners.

39. Thus the one-day general strike, in showing its power, also began to reveal its inadequacy.

For some reformist leaders who had previously resisted all calls for national general strike action, the thought of one-day strikes (especially when tolerated by liberal bosses) now seemed to offer a relatively safe means of letting off political steam.

But the militant rank-and-file, as well as most of the activists, wanted to move forward from achievements already made.

40. The NECC's Easter conference call for a three-day strike on June 16th—as an alternative to extending the schools boycott—went a long way towards meeting the need of the youth and workers, particularly after May Day, to find a means of carrying the movement forward together, within realistic bounds.

However, concerted political leadership was needed to ensure the successful preparation of such an extended general strike through the explanation of

# Workers' sanctions now!

Shortly before being detained on his return to SA from a trade union visit to Sweden, MOSES MAYEKISO, general secretary of the Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU), and Chairman of the Alexandra Action Committee, gave this interview for publication in the international labour movement press. It was published in several countries, including Britain, the United States, Ireland, and Holland.

*In the light of the state of emergency and the national general strike what do you ask of the international labour movement?*

The message of the stayaway, which was the biggest in South African history, is that the workers in South Africa will not be crushed by Botha's state of emergency. The international labour movement must be serious and take action to turn the screws on the South African regime. Botha won't be moved by a mere slap on the wrist.

If the international labour movement came to the assistance of the workers in South Africa, Botha would not proceed with his rash at-

tacks against the workers and the trade unions.

The recent meeting of EEC foreign ministers once again failed to come to any agreements about what action to take against South Africa.

*Do you think that any of the capitalist governments can be expected to take serious action against South Africa?*

It depends on the extent of their investments. Some countries, like Denmark, have stopped trading with South Africa, but those with huge investments will scream and scream about apartheid, but they will not pull out their investments. Internationally, the workers of South Africa can rely only on the working class.

*Big business claims it is against apartheid, yet they oppose one man one vote in a unitary South Africa. Why is this?*

Big business would like to see apartheid reformed but they only want petty reforms. The capitalists can put pressure on Botha to bring about some changes. Botha is controlled by big business in the final analysis. The

capitalists oppose one man one vote because they are afraid they would lose everything.

Apartheid was created by capitalism, eg the pass laws and the migrant labour system. The capitalists don't want fundamental change.

The capitalists speak against apartheid because of pressure. They don't care about the suffering of the workers.

*On June 16 Tony Bloom of Premier attended a commemoration church service in Johannesburg and afterwards spoke out against the state of emergency and the policies of the government. Can the liberal capitalists ever be regarded as allies in the liberation struggle?*

Never. The capitalists are the exploiters and plunderers of the country. They are the enemy of the working class.

*What kind of society are South African workers fighting for?*

Everybody is talking about socialism.



*Moses Mayekiso (third from left) with Jeremiah Zulu, President of the Transport and General Workers' Union, at a press conference at the UK House of Commons in April 1986. This was held to publicise the Natal BTR strike the detentions of Alexandra Action Committee activists, and the forthcoming May Day and June 16 strikes.*

*Also present were (left to right), Fred Martin, TGWU branch secretary at BTR-Dunlop in Leicester, UK; Labour M.P. Dave Nellist (who hosted the press conference); Linda Douglas, representative-elect of the Labour Party Young Socialists on the Labour Party NEC; April Ashley, of the Socialist Links with SA Youth Campaign.*

its purpose in every factory and township.

But what happened was a retreat by both the COSATU and ANC leaders to a call for only a one-day action to take place on June 16th. (This modesty at a time when the ANC had still not abandoned the rhetoric of insurrection and liberation in 1986 or 1987. "Liberation now, or never in our lifetime!" was one of the incongruous phrases they used in print.)

### Change of line not explained

41. In fact, by late April or early May, it was becoming clear to the Congress leadership that a general and essentially spontaneous all-out insurrection such as they had repeatedly called for in broadcasts and leaflets—without preparation, without adequate arms, without prior division and disintegration of the state forces!—could not take place or succeed in toppling the apartheid regime. There was obviously no question of victory in the short term.

But they did not openly say so to the activists and the mass of people looking to them for leadership. For example, the slogan of "liberation first, education afterwards" was just quietly dropped without any explanation to the youth for the change of perspective. It is testimony to the magnificent calibre, self-reliance and resilience of the youth that, for all the confusion this created, it did not lead to any widespread demoralisation or defeat.

42. As though to substitute for their failure to provide leadership in the central arena of mass working-class struggle against the state, the ANC leaders stepped up the guerilla bombing campaign—basically as a fireworks display.

We can only repeat what we have argued many times: these actions contributed nothing to the revolutionary movement of the black masses themselves, but on the contrary (especially in the case of the land mines and the senseless slaughter in the shopping centres) only fuelled reaction amongst the whites. In other words, the movement got the worst of both worlds.

43. What would have added immensely to the struggle at this point, and really shaken the morale of the whites, would have been to begin systematically arming and training township youth and workers initially for purposes of self-defence.

The few grenades, AK47s and other firearms which have been appearing in the course of township confrontations with troops and police are not the result of any deliberate plan of the ANC leadership to arm the people for their own defence, but mainly the result of initiatives by militant youth in getting these weapons into their hands.

It is well-known that there are many caches of arms now in the country, intended for use in MK guerilla operations. The police claim to have found 55 of these in the past 14 months, with weapons valued at nearly R800 000.

Yet, for lack of arms, our communities have had to face a situation where sometimes a mere three or five armed white soldiers can disperse a meeting of

1500 and terrorise a street of 500 people or more.

44. If it had been the ANC and SACP leaders' policy to begin arming the working people for self-defence, we would have seen the effects in Crossroads at the end of May. The vigilante reaction brewed there over a lengthy period. For months, meetings in the townships had discussed the problem and tried to find ways of dealing with it. There was at least enough warning and opportunity to prepare defence before the second (most devastating) attack.

There was a clamour for arms in the areas under threat. Even five groups of ten young comrades, properly equipped with firearms and enough ammunition, and with a tactical plan, acting in conjunction with the mass of their fellow youth, workers, women and unemployed armed with whatever they could lay hands on, could have routed the 'witdoeke' completely.

It is true that a still more savage police or army attack may have followed. However, that would have shown clearly that responsibility lay on the white state. It would not have produced the severe political setback which occurred.

Much of the momentum would have been taken out of the whole 'vigilante' reaction. Indeed, a signal would have been given to black communities across the country of what needed to be done to deal with this threat. The necessary process of arming the people for self-defence would have gone forward by an important step.

45. It is apparent that the thinking of the ANC and SACP leaders had settled—not on a systematic plan to build the basis for a thorough-going mass working-class revolution ultimately to smash the state—but again on the old illusory hopes of advancing to democracy through pressure upon the regime by 'democrats of all classes' (a formula, in fact, for dependence on the liberal bourgeoisie, churchmen, some bantustan leaders, etc., etc)—coupled with continued guerilla actions.

A hint of their thinking was given by ANC publicity director in Lusaka, comrade Thabo Mbeki, to the journalist Allister Sparks: "We are talking not of overthrowing the Government, but of turning so many people against it that it would be forced to do what Ian Smith had to do"—namely accept a negotiated settlement and allow majority rule! (*London Observer*, 2/3/86.)

46. We dealt extensively in *Workers revolution or racial civil war* (May 1985) with the reasons why a negotiated settlement of the democratic issues is ruled out in South Africa. A Lancaster House agreement in respect of this country is impossible.

Here it is necessary only to point out how vividly the collapse of the initiative by the Commonwealth 'Eminent Persons Group' confirmed our perspective.

47. Initially the Pretoria government did contemplate making tactical use of the EPG. This front agency of imperialism—desperate to rescue capitalism from a workers' revolution in South Africa—was prepared to bend over backwards to meet Botha's requirements, if only he would make

# Fight the state of emergency!

**DAVE NELLIST**, a Labour Party Member of Parliament in Britain, wrote this front-page article in *Militant*, 20/6/86, calling for workers' sanctions to support the fightback against the State of Emergency.

Millions of workers and youth defied the South African regime's new state of emergency, in the magnificent 16 June general strike. Despite the detention of the strike organisers and army and police saturation of the townships, it was 90 per cent effective in the industrial heartland of the Transvaal.

Called by trade unions, community organisations and the African National Congress to commemorate the savage murder of protesting students in Soweto ten years ago, it was the largest political strike in the country's history.

Unlike the last state of emergency which was concentrated against the youth activists, this clampdown has been aimed at the democratic trade unions too.

Possibly hundreds of union leaders, from general secretaries down to shop stewards, have been detained—a fact which the television and the capitalist press in Fleet Street have suppressed, to keep British workers ignorant of the real intention of Botha's crackdown.

The South African state is determined to break the momentum which was building up after 1.5 million celebrated May Day with strike action. The combined force of the organised workers and revolutionary youth on 16 June was seen as a deadly danger by Botha.

The upsurge of revolution in South Africa and the worsening repression is building strong support for sanctions in Britain. The latest opinion poll shows 51 per cent in favour.

In Parliament last Thursday I put forward an Early Day Motion warmly supporting the general strike and the demands for a non-racial education system, for one-person one vote

and calling on the international labour movement to take action against the South African regime.

The labour and trade union leaders must make a clear call for solidarity action, and fully support any workers threatened as a result.

We must follow the lead of the Dunnes strikers in Dublin who struck to stop the sale of South African products and became a focus for union action. In the past few months Southampton dockers and Portsmouth hospital workers have also taken action.

## Suspend trade

We now need action at Heathrow against SAA, in BL, in the docks and elsewhere to suspend all trade with South Africa at the very least until all trade unionists are released, and the emergency lifted.

No confidence can be given to the capitalists' approach to sanctions. The Tory government is the main supporter of racism and exploitation in South Africa. Their only real concern is how best to safeguard the £12 billion British capitalists have in-

vested in apartheid and capitalist misery.

Whatever has been said by the Eminent Persons' Group (EPG) report, none of the Western governments have the slightest intention of implementing serious sanctions against South Africa.

The motives of the EPG—promoting a negotiated settlement in advocating sanctions—have become clear. Fraser, its leading member, warned of the consequences of Thatcher's and Botha's policies: "In 8 to 10 years, numbers will prevail and a radical black government is bound to emerge whose first action would be to nationalise all Western interests and Britain would lose all".

This is the real purpose of 'sanctions' talk by the capitalist states—not to cripple the South African economy and bring Apartheid to an end, but to sabotage the revolutionary demands of the youth and workers to expropriate capitalism and bring to power a workers' state to eliminate racism and poverty.

We must fight for a labour movement campaign of action against Botha: for union sanctions against apartheid!



Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze meets UK Prime Minister Thatcher on July 15, a month after the SA State of Emergency was imposed. He uttered not a word of public criticism of her determined resistance to sanctions against SA.

some dramatic gesture of concessions and begin moving towards negotiations including the ANC.

It seems that the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners—essential before even Buthelezi would risk openly co-operating with the state—was seriously considered by the government.

But, on working out the implications, the State Security Council had to reject such a move, at least in the prevailing conditions of revolutionary ferment. They recognised that an explosion of the mass movement, on a greater scale than anything yet seen, would have resulted.

This would have been all the more the case if the ANC were legalised, and troops withdrawn from the townships, as a necessary step in clearing the path to negotiations.

To black and white alike such concessions would have been seen as a considerable weakening on the part of the regime. While the white ultra-right would have gained very rapidly—indeed, the growth of the fascist AWB was already threatening sharp divisions within the army and police—there was no certainty whatever of ANC leaders being able (even assuming they might have wished) to halt or control the movement in the townships, schools and factories.

A very unpredictable situation would thus have opened up, and a turn to large-scale massacre of blacks by the regime, in order to meet the threat, would most likely have eventuated.

48. Contemplating all this, Botha drew back. The EPG mission was unceremoniously and publicly ditched by the device of SADF raids on Zimbabwe, Botswana and Zambia.

Having made this decision, the whole logic of the government's position was then to carry through a thorough turn towards greater repression in order to make clear, to the blacks and to the whites, that it would on no account gamble with losing power.

Its purpose was to try to bring the movement under control by these uncompromising means—and then, with the mass pressure supposedly eased and 'law and order' prevailing, induce collaborators like Buthelezi to enter into the regime's next stages in 'constitutional reform'.

## Second state of emergency

49. The centre-piece of this right turn by the regime was the second state of emergency, which (it was made clear) would not be lifted until its purpose had been achieved. Along with it went the decision to weather the sanctions storm, using 'defiance of the outside world' as an aid in regaining support from the far right. An early election would then be a possibility.

Botha's aim has been to try to consolidate a basis of stability from which later to renew attempts at so-called 'reform'. We shall deal more fully below with the obstacles and contradictions facing the regime in its attempts to carry through this course.

50. A subsidiary element in convincing the Botha regime of the need to crack down sharply was the growing confrontation between white youth (mainly

university students to begin with) and the riot police. The government feared that, if this developed further, the impression could be given to the blacks of a white population dramatically split, and so invite an all-out attempt at insurrection. (This is evidence of the vitally important role that will be played in the development of a revolutionary situation in future by the direct participation of whites in mass actions together with the blacks, in fighting the state forces.)

On the other hand, both the reluctance of the COSATU executive to give a firm political lead, and the retreat by the whole Congress leadership from the three-day strike call for June 16th, must have contributed to the regime's calculations that a harsh clamp-down at that point could succeed in setting the movement back. Timidity of leadership in a revolution almost always acts as an invitation to the enemy to inflict harsher punishment.

51. For the movement, June 12th, when the large-scale arrests under the second state of emergency began, marked a definite turning point in the revolution. In the course of a week or two, the great forward tide of mass struggle, which had been magnificently sustained over 22 months, turned into an ebb.

But it is important to recognise that the second state of emergency was not the cause of this turn. After all, an estimated 25 000 people had been arrested or detained during roughly the period of the first state of emergency without it having this effect.

While it is true that the attack now, especially upon the trade unions, was more systematic and severe than previously, the essential difference was that it accompanied a realisation within the movement that the path to victory was barred still by formidable obstacles, objective and subjective, which even the greatest effort and self-sacrifice by the activists could not immediately overcome.

52. However, this turn did not mean, in any sense, that the revolution was defeated, or that a fundamental shift had taken place in the relationship of class forces in favour of the ruling class and the regime.

This relative ebb, whatever its depth and duration, forms merely a phase in the process of the revolution itself—rather as the 'Two Black Years' of harsh reaction from 1934 formed an interlude in the Spanish Revolution, from which the movement recovered and went forward again on a higher plane.

53. This *Inqaba* supporters grasped clearly, as a result of thorough discussions during the tense and uncertain days surrounding the declaration of the emergency. With the aid of our fundamental perspectives, comrades were able correctly to assess the rapidly changing events—the arrests and their effects; the vigilante reaction and its limits; the continued preparedness of the masses for certain forms of action and not for others; the certainty of the unions surviving and eventually surmounting the attack; the various tactics needed to fight back.

As a result, comrades were able to carry their own understanding and sense of direction into the wider movement more effectively than ever before.

# Workers' sanctions now!

SA NUM leaders JAMES MOTLATSI and CYRIL RAMAPHOSA received two standing ovations from delegates to the British NUM conference in June this year when they called for workers' sanctions against the apartheid regime.

Their visit was a new step forward in the building of direct links between SA and British miners. A campaign for direct links was launched by the Southern African Labour Education Project (SALEP) after James Motlatsi visited the UK in 1984.

The campaign included the visit of striking British miner Roy Jones to the SA NUM in 1984—during which he came the first white member of the SA NUM, and brought back a donation for the UK miners' strike funds.

Taken up by the rank and file of the British NUM, the campaign led to the recognition of the SA NUM at the 1985 UK NUM conference.

To take forward the struggle for workers' sanctions and direct links, SALEP distributed James Motlatsi's speech as a leaflet in the British labour movement. We reprint the speech here:

"The workers of South Africa are calling on you. If Thatcher is against sanctions then we call on the working class in Britain to impose sanctions. We are the workers. We produce the wealth. We have the power to impose sanctions.

The very honourable Prime Minister, Mrs Margaret Thatcher, has said she is against sanctions because they will make blacks suffer. We've suffered for 300 years. We're still suffering now. We are prepared to make any sacrifice to win our liberation. We want sanctions implemented.

If Thatcher is so sympathetic to workers, why does she close factories in Britain? Why does she show no sympathy for workers in Britain?

The working class of the world are all exploited by imperialists and capitalists. We want the unity of the



Lobby of UK TUC headquarters for workers' sanctions. James Motlatsi, SA NUM President, greeted by Inqaba supporter Nimrod Sejake, general secretary in the 1950s of SACTU's metal union and secretary of the ANC branch in White City, Jabavu.

working class of the world. We want not just moral support. We are calling on the working class to take action.

In South Africa the British TUC has always been respected. But nowadays SA workers are starting to doubt the TUC. We were very worried about the British NUM in their strike. Where was the TUC then? We are calling on the British TUC. Before SA workers lose faith in you, go back to what you were years ago and organise support for us.

## Dominated

Workers are tired of being dominated by a minority, by the capitalists. We are against capitalism. We are fighting for socialism.

We think that it is vital to have connections with the British NUM and other British unions. We are fighting the same enemy. We are fighting the same multi-national companies who operate in SA for their own profits.

We will probably be arrested for coming here. But as leaders of the

working class we have to take risks whatever those risks may be. We are fighting apartheid. Apartheid is not about rugby. Apartheid is about trade union relations and economics.

Denis Thatcher is director of a truck-making company called FODENS. They pay the lowest wages in the auto industry. The South African Labour Court declared it guilty of 47 unfair labour practices. Perhaps it is because Denis Thatcher has shares in this company that Margaret Thatcher is not prepared to implement sanctions.

We realise that sanctions may make some unemployment in our industry. But our union has discussed this and we have decided we already have 3 million unemployed and we are prepared to make that sacrifice to liberate our country. We need your support now not just in words. We need action.

The British TUC is seen to have deviated from its revolutionary and militant perspective. We call on the NUM to point the right direction to the TUC. The support from the British working class will be decisive in our struggle."

54. The June 16th general strike, marking the 10th anniversary of the Soweto uprising, brilliantly confirmed that the essential fighting capacities of the working class were unimpaired. At least 3 million workers and youth together took action country-wide. This exceeded even the success of the May Day strike.

But it represented, in effect, the defiant demonstration of an heroic army about to retreat for a time when faced by an enemy too strong to defeat there and then—retreating in order to regroup and prepare to engage that enemy again in new ways, with greater forces, and with leadership more fully equipped for the tasks

June 16th was the high water mark of one-day general strike action for the time being. The priority was now determined self-defence against the crackdown—a struggle in which the organised workers at once showed their superior power.

55. Resistance to the state of emergency was mainly mounted through diverse tactics—lightning strikes at different times and places, go-slows, overtime bans, brief occupations—all serving to stretch the forces of repression and confirm that the essential fighting units of the class at the point of production were still intact. If the clampdown was like a squeezing fist, the defiant forces of the working class flowed out everywhere between the fingers.

The shop-workers and mine-workers were especially to the fore in this fight-back.

In every way we could, *Inqaba* supporters advocated and supported these actions, as well as the continued efforts of the youth to defend the townships as semi-'no go' areas for the security forces. All this played a vital part in sustaining general morale, and in ensuring that the ebb of the mass movement would not be very deep.

56. When COSATU decided to call for a day of action on July 14th, we gave full support. However, we insisted that this should be put forward as **additional to, and not a substitute for** the many and varied initiatives directly undertaken by the workers.

57. For years this tendency had argued that severe repression would inevitably fall upon the unions once they reached a formidable strength, and that underground organisation was needed parallel with the open union structures. This was largely scoffed at and ignored by union officials.

Now the unions found themselves almost totally unprepared for operating in illegal or semi-legal conditions, especially at regional and national levels. Particularly the lack of underground printing presses and of prepared secret networks of distribution and mass communication hamstrung COSATU—when time was of the essence and the legal media was gagged.

Moreover, many key union militants were detained, while the conservative or reformist elements among the union leaderships exhibited a distinct lack of will to engage in a political fight-back against the state.

All these factors meant that the organisation of effective national action for July 14th would inevitably run into serious obstacles.

58. Moreover, because it would obviously be impossible to match, let alone exceed, the achievement of June 16th, many workers would doubt the wisdom of a one-off demonstration strike now which might convey the signal that the workers' fighting strength nationally was in decline.

It is possible, in an acute situation, by an ill-judged move, or through a token call for action not seriously carried out, to open the way for more severe reaction than would otherwise have been the case.

In the event, and only because of the magnificent fight put up by the tens of thousands of workers who didn't wait either for July 14th or for any national lead, the failure of that particular day of action did not produce a sense of defeat within the working class or whet the appetite of counter-revolution.

59. In fact the overall determined response of the working class to the state of emergency expressed the real balance of forces prevailing in the country, which repression alone cannot alter fundamentally.

The resumed schools boycotts and other actions in response to ID cards and security-force presence in the classrooms; the maintenance of the rent strike—now embracing as many as 600 000 households—and the fierce resistance to evictions; the action by 325 000 mineworkers and 300 000 others over the Kinross deaths: these and many other instances show what a mammoth problem faces the regime in driving the back working class back from its conquests and entrenchments.

## Characteristics of the new phase

60. To sum up: the overall situation is essentially characterised by the fact that, while the revolution has begun, the state cannot be overthrown in the short term; that, while the state cannot yet be overthrown, the black working class cannot be crushed decisively by state repression at this point; that, therefore, a period of fairly protracted general stalemate confronts us now.

61. This does not mean calm, or the absence of change—but, on the contrary, probably a very volatile situation continuing, with partial advances and partial ebbs, with sharp or sudden turns and changes in events, with an underlying polarisation of the classes proceeding more rapidly than ever, with waves of repression bringing no conclusive result, with repeated eruptions of struggle, and with a speeding up also of shifts and changes in the state and party-political superstructure as all the forces in flux search for a way out of the impasse.

62. Among our class enemies, the state of emergency and the new phase it has introduced has served above all to confirm their fear that repressive measures alone cannot break the resistance of the black working class. A heightened sense of impasse grips the bourgeoisie, and induces deepening rifts among them.

Within our movement, the lesson has been drummed in that the ruling system will neither give way to fundamental change through negotiation, nor

# THE FREEDOM CHARTER AND THE WORKERS' STRUGGLE

World capitalism has reached an impasse. Capitalism can no longer even make full use of the productive forces which it developed in the past.

In times of 'boom' in the most advanced capitalist countries, only 80% of productive capacity is used, and in times of slump 60-70%.

High unemployment, wage cuts, cuts in social benefits, and inflation have become common features in all capitalist countries.

SA capitalism runs up against the same limits. SA has the capacity to produce 600 000 cars a year, but is turning out only 250 000. Only half of the 3,5 million tons of fertiliser production-capacity is in use—yet people starve for lack of maize.

In 1985 the economy shrunk by 1%, and this was accompanied by prices soaring by more than 18% over the year. Unemployment has reached the astronomical figure of 4 million!

There is a housing shortage of up to 800 000, not even allowing for new urban-dwellers or population increase. Yet capitalism cannot set the unemployed to work building houses—because it is "unprofitable".

The black working class has to bear the brunt of the crisis. In the richest country in Africa, poverty and malnutrition has no end in sight under capitalism.

## Cutting wages

The capitalists are now even forced to attack the living standards of the white workers—throwing them out of jobs, and cutting wages.

Yet the wealthy whites feature among the richest capitalists worldwide. This wealth has been built on the backs of the starving black working class, whose cheap labour has sustained the profitability of SA capitalism.

Under capitalism the bosses will continue to pay starvation wages, and the state will impose unbearable rents and taxes. Only the ending of

---

**By Yusuf Gamiet**  
**Youth Congress activist**

---

capitalism can free the workers!

In the past twenty-two months black workers and youth have shown their determination to fight the bosses and the state. They have waged an unprecedented relentless struggle against the crushing burdens of apartheid and the cheap labour system.

Factory struggles for better wages and working conditions, and political general strikes, now led by the mighty COSATU, together with the heroic struggles of the youth in the townships, have shaken the capitalist state to its roots.

This is still only the tip of the iceberg. When the millions of unorganised workers and youth become organised and move into action, no force in the world will be able to stop them.

In this rising tide of the mass movement, youth and workers are building organisation and uniting under the banner of Congress. ANC flags and slogans have become common features of the struggle all over the country.

Above all the Freedom Charter is looked to as expressing the aspirations of the masses for the South Africa of the future. It has become a living document in the struggle of the masses for democracy and socialism.

Is the Freedom Charter an adequate programme for this struggle? *This is a question discussed among activists.*

Even the most basic demands in the Freedom Charter cannot be secured under today's diseased system of capitalism.

The Freedom Charter demands a living wage. But whenever bosses are forced by workers' struggle to give higher wages, they do so very reluctantly with one hand, and then steal it back again through higher prices, taxes and rents with the other.

For SA capitalists to pay a living wage would undermine the whole basis of the cheap labour system on

which they depend. The use of armed police against mineworkers by "liberal" bosses like Oppenheimer and Relly shows their determination to keep the cheap labour system intact.

The state and the bosses, for this reason, have clearly stated their complete opposition to the demand for "one-person-one-vote in a united SA". To concede rule to the majority—overwhelmingly the black working class—would open the road to an unstoppable mass movement demanding the implementation of the Charter, which would place unbearable strains on the bosses' system.

## Divide-and-rule

It is no surprise that even the most "liberal" bosses favour a federal "divide and rule" 'solution' for SA.

SA capitalism is protected by one of the most powerful and brutal state machines in the world. In the final analysis the survival of capitalism will depend on the strength of the army and police. It is only this force on which the bosses can rely to keep the black working class in chains.

Over the past period the "liberal" bosses have openly criticised Botha. It must however be made absolutely clear that this is only because they fear the might of the black working class, and think that Botha is not being flexible enough in handling the situation.

They want him to implement "reforms" because they realise that baasskap alone is no longer workable. But, just like Botha, they have no intention of conceding real power to the mass of the people.

We must not be fooled by their public statements because they will always put their weight behind the state forces as their only reliable means of holding down the working class. "Their" taxes (which they pay from fruits of labour stolen from the working-class) are the biggest financial support of the military machine.

succumb simply to an unplanned and spontaneously spreading insurrection of the townships. While new illusions in both these courses will probably surface again to some extent under changed conditions later, it can at least be widely seen now that no short route to liberation exists.

This understanding leads to a new and much more problematic situation within the movement as a whole, but at the same time is indispensable in preparing the way for further advances. In this sense it marks a big step forward among the activists.

63. Among hundreds of thousands of the most advanced youth and workers, struggling loyally under Congress banners, a newly critical and questioning attitude has begun to surface. The sole object of this is to equip our movement with the leadership and policies necessary for its tasks.

It is thanks to the class opposition of the youth and worker activists, expressed through the Youth Congresses and COSATU, that the UDF leadership had to back away from their call for 'national unity' of all classes against apartheid—which meant class-compromise with liberal big business. (However, the leadership's alternative position of 'national united action' remains notable for its lack of any definite program of action, and the omission of key demands—on the franchise, and on dismantling the state, for instance—unpalatable to the bourgeois.)

64. Within the UDF's affiliates and within COSATU, there is an unprecedented flowering now of different opinions and tendencies. There is also a far more widespread readiness among the ranks of these organisations to consider the arguments of the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC about the need to build and transform the Congress movement on a basis of working-class leadership and clear socialist policies.

65. If the SA Communist Party were a genuine Marxist party, it would be organising the militant youth and workers without delay to build a mass ANC on a socialist program. It would, as we do, explain and develop the transitional and socialist content of the Freedom Charter, emphasising its promise to nationalise the monopolies, and linking it to a clear strategy for workers' power.

The SACP would be able, very rapidly, to organise tens of thousands of revolutionary cadres for this purpose—and we would support them in every genuine step.

66. But the SACP leadership, while using socialist rhetoric to maintain the widespread authority it presently enjoys among the active layers of the working class, at the same time expressly declares that the ANC must not become a working-class or socialist party, or advance a socialist program in the struggle for power.

As the predominant influence within the ANC leadership, the SACP therefore—contrary to the interests of the youth and workers who want the ANC to lead them to socialism—acts as a real obstacle to socialism in practice within the ANC and the Congress movement at large.

67. Consequently, it will take a very prolonged and tenacious effort to overcome the developing crisis of leadership within our movement. That cannot be done otherwise than by building—vigorously yet patiently—the influence of the Marxist tendency within Congress.

Our task is to unite and build the revolutionary cadre of workers and youth on a basis of clear ideas—so that they, in turn, can build and transform the ANC itself into a mass party of the working class on a socialist program, and so lead our struggle to victory.

Because, however, of the weakness still of the forces of Marxism compared with the vast tasks and problems now confronting the mass organisations themselves, it follows that an extended period of serious confusion within the movement—and hence of great political danger—now opens out.

68. The relatively straightforward first phase of the revolution is now behind us. That phase was one in which unity and a sense of direction were largely maintained by the momentum of mass awakening, by the spontaneous energies of a working class discovering its giant power, by some elementary guiding principles, and ... by expectations of imminent liberation cultivated by the Congress leadership.

Now that those expectations have been shattered, and the stalemate and consequent ebb and reaction are fully felt, signs of uncertainty and indeed disarray are becoming evident—perhaps most sharply reflected at the top.

69. The semi-paralysis of the UDF, nationally and at most regional levels (only partially explicable in terms of state repression), has been apparent for some time.

Whereas, in the past, the vacuum at the centre was partly compensated for by the tremendous initiative of the youth organisations at the base, even some of the strongest of these have now been reduced (though only for the time being) to relatively small numbers of the most resilient fighters.

The launch of the national youth organisation to link the Youth Congresses, already too long delayed, can play an important part in restoring a sense of overall direction to the youth—provided it is led on the basis of clear perspectives and links the organised youth closely to the organised workers. However, even this, under present objective conditions, could not suffice in the short term to restore the youth movement as a whole to the level of the immediate past.

70. What is especially dangerous now is the tendency among many of the most heroic township youth to look for a way out of the present impasse and bitter frustrations through individual armed actions directed, for example, at "carrying the fire of revolution to the whites". If that occurred on any wide scale, it could only result at this point in a still more savage reactionary backlash, the pointless destruction of many cadres, and the danger of more widespread demoralisation and even a sense of defeat.



At the Congress of the People, 1955: workers parade with their demands

SA can't be reconstructed along the lines of the Freedom Charter within the confines of a capitalist system. To secure the demands of the Freedom Charter requires the destruction of the state which defends the capitalists. This means the complete dismantling of all the forces of repression, namely the army, Koevoet, the police, the puppet bureaucracies, the present court system etc.—as a resolution of the UDF National Council in April 1985 recognised.

In place of the capitalist state, it will be necessary to establish at every level democratic organs of popular self-rule. Only with state power in the hands of an armed working class will it be possible to achieve and defend democracy in SA.

The SA revolution has as its central tasks national liberation and the establishment of democracy, but these cannot be separated from the tasks of a socialist revolution.

A primary demand in the Freedom Charter is the transfer of SA's mineral wealth, banks and monopoly industry to the ownership of the people as a whole.

The SA economy is dominated by three monopoly combines (Anglo-American; Old Mutual/Barlow-Rand; Sanlam). Already the state owns nearly 60% of the means of production. With the nationalisation of the monopolies by a workers' government, the commanding heights of the economy would be placed

under the democratic control and management of the working class. This would mean the end of the domination of the profit system, and the ability to implement democratic planning of the economy on the basis of need.

Trotsky explained that "he who holds power decides the form of property." With nationalisation under democratic workers' control, not only would the demands of the Charter be implemented, but they would be surpassed. A democratic workers' state could begin to lay the foundations for socialism.

## Nationalisation

In the past two years, shocked by the mass movement, the capitalists have set up talks with the ANC leadership. Unfortunately, in these discussions, the ANC leadership has shown a preparedness to retreat on the central demand of the Freedom Charter—for nationalisation. The Charter, Comrade Tambo has stated, "does not even purport to want to destroy the capitalist system." (*House of Commons, Foreign Affairs Committee, 29/10/85*)

The clear nationalisation clause of the Charter has now been deliberately replaced by vague talk of "restructuring the economy."

The ANC leadership seems to be

disregarding the demand for socialism put forward by workers and youth in struggle. They do not realise the seriousness of the slogan—"No Negotiation, Maqabane!".

## No retreat!

This does not mean that there can never be negotiation about anything. Trade unions negotiate constantly. At times, political leaders have to negotiate with the police. The point of the slogan, however, is that the central questions of our liberation struggle cannot be the subject of compromise. But for what other purpose do the bosses talk to the ANC?

Workers and youth have made it quite clear that they do not want to share power with the same bosses who finance the security forces which murder them daily. The demand by the masses for people's power shows they will settle for nothing less than elimination of the present state, and complete democratic control of their own state and the commanding heights of production.

The task of the ANC leadership is not wheeling and dealing with the bosses, but to openly proclaim and prepare the masses for a workers' revolution. The militancy of the workers and youth needs to be channeled into mass organisation. The task is to build a mass ANC of workers and youth.

In carrying this forward, the demands of the Freedom Charter—made concrete around the every-day concerns of working people—provide the basis for a program of action. The struggle for a living wage, rising along with the cost of living; the struggle for jobs for all; etc.—well-prepared national campaigns around these issues are the way to build the forces for the revolution.

The Freedom Charter reflects the democratic and social demands of the working people. But to turn those demands into reality—to make the Freedom Charter fully effective as a programme for victory—it must be clearly linked to the task of the revolutionary conquest of power by the working class and the socialist transformation of society.

**No retreat from the Freedom Charter!**

**Build a mass ANC on a socialist programme!**

The alternative to this is by no means passivity. The responsibility of the leadership—those with revolutionary authority still in the eyes of the youth—is to turn their energies to preparing systematically for the armed self-defence of their communities, deliberately limiting 'armed struggle' to this purpose at this stage, in order to consolidate strength for later going forward again as a mass force.

71. However we have to face the likelihood, given the policies pursued by the leadership so far, that such clear and firm strategic direction will not be provided. Many complicating and confusing features will therefore add to an already difficult situation.

It is not only in the field of community and youth struggles that the lack of definite political direction and leadership has become a real problem. Now, too, unfortunately, signs of serious division, discontent and infighting are beginning to surface within the active layers in some of the unions and in COSATU itself.

### **Firmly oppose splits**

72. *Inqaba* supporters will firmly oppose all splits of the UDF, its youth organisations and other mass affiliates, or of the established trade unions of COSATU. Whatever the frustrations, political differences in the movement must be argued out and resolved by the method of workers' democracy—in which all points of view in the struggle are given a thorough hearing, but the majority decision is binding in action.

It is necessary (now more than ever, because of the prevailing political confusion) to resist all pressures towards break-up which may build up within our movement.

The ebb which is occurring inevitably means an advance of reaction, and some defeats. The regime will take full advantage of any disarray in our camp to tighten the repression, in the hope of inflicting demoralisation. Only incorrigible opportunists and self-seekers will move to split the mass organisations now. We must show ourselves to be the hardest of hardliners against their antics.

73. But the established leaders of all the mass organisations need to recognise that it is impossible to build or maintain unity by attempting to stifle debate or silence discontent. That method only

guarantees splits. Bureaucratic or Stalinist methods used against critics of the leadership will therefore carry the main responsibility in that event.

In the final analysis, we can go forward together as a united, revolutionary Congress movement only through fearlessly clarifying ideas, perspectives, program, strategy and tactics on scientific lines.

74. The Marxists must undertake their work with the firm conviction that their ideas and methods—far from threatening division of the mass movement—alone have the power really to unite this movement for a revolutionary victory.

We have every interest in maintaining the unity of the working-class organisations, so as to draw the greatest forces to Marxism through them. We have no need of splits, for we are confident that our ideas correspond absolutely to the real material interests and needs of the working people, and with the socialist consciousness already forming through experience.

Once this becomes apparent, once a substantial basis of active working-class support has been won for our tendency and patiently consolidated, it will be possible to move forward rapidly to overcome all the barriers put up against us by our opponents.

75. In Part 2 of this document, we will examine in some detail the origins and ideas of the various trends which have appeared within the mass organisations, and the perspectives for their further evolution. We will also draw out further the lessons and conclusions we think necessary to defend the gains of the struggle thus far—and to prepare new advances on a higher level.

76. In this Introduction it is enough to point out in conclusion that, whatever difficulties confront our movement at this point, the problems besetting the ruling class and the racist regime are incomparably greater. Our problems are soluble; theirs are not.

To understand the contradictions in which our oppressors are caught up; to actively aggravate these; to weaken and divide the white social base on which the state rests—all this forms as much a part of conscious revolutionary strategy as to build the organised power of the black working class itself. In fact, it will be a very important element in finding a way forward out of the present impasse.

Part 1 of this document which follows—entitled *Bonapartism, reaction, and the crisis in white politics*—is intended to provide a general framework for working out this aspect of strategy.

# inqaba YA BASEBENZI

Journal of the Marxist Workers' Tendency  
of the African National Congress

8 September 1986

## UDF call for "national unity" with the bosses is wrong

*Inqaba* supporters urge fellow activists on the left in the UDF to combine in opposing the "proposed joint statement" of the UDF leadership on "national unity".

We call for united action by the UDF and COSATU to lead the struggle of black working people against apartheid and capitalism.

The UDF leadership has issued for discussion purposes a statement calling for "national unity against apartheid and the emergency". It says, "We are determined to campaign for national unity of all forces opposed to apartheid and the National Party".

This means that the black working class must seek unity with the bosses who criticise the Botha government, in order to carry forward the struggle against the system. How can that possibly be correct?

Have the comrades forgotten that the system which has created apartheid and led to the State of Emergency is the capitalist system? This system needs black workers to remain cheap-labour slaves so the bosses can take the profits at our expense. We cannot be free to build a decent life until we overthrow the Nationalist government, apartheid and the bosses' exploitation.

Have they forgotten that the 'reforms' which liberal big business urges on the government are **only** those changes intended to keep the black working people from achieving **power**?

A call for "national unity" with these bosses against the government misleads our people to believe it is real changes, genuine democracy, which the bosses support. That is not so. Black people need to understand this clearly. The task of the UDF is to ensure that they do.

Every actual step forward in the struggle against the apartheid regime has been achieved by the mass action of black working-class people.

Have the difficulties created by the emergency caused our leaders to forget that?

These comrades call on "all patriots" (including the bosses) to show "national unity by ... uniting in action at a regional and national level, with all other forces opposed to the emergency and apartheid."

When have the bosses ever taken **action** against their own state?

Working people go on strike, take part in rent boycotts, withhold service charges, and take many other forms of action which mean serious personal hardship and risk for the sake of the struggle. Meanwhile the liberal bosses pay for the upkeep of the murderous state and 'security forces' by handing over taxes to the government out of the wealth which workers produce.

If they really are "opposed" to our oppression, let them stop

paying these taxes to the state, so that it grinds to a halt.

Liberal words are cheap. Scoundrels can also call themselves "patriots", and frequently do. The suffering, struggling mass of black people gain nothing from declarations of goodwill and "unity" from the social criminals who say they "oppose" apartheid while sucking the workers' blood under the protection of the South African state.

If our leaders want "national unity" with the liberal bosses' Progressive Federal Party, have they forgotten that these charming friends of the black people are confirmed supporters of the SADF—and that their present leader, Eglin, called for the strengthening of the SA Police after troops first went into Sebokeng?

PFP member Del Kevan, Soweto's director of housing, 'unites' with us by trying to evict rent strikers—and now bears major responsibility for the state slaughtering up to 30 people there.

If our leaders want "national unity" with the likes of Van Zyl Slabbert, have they so soon forgotten that on 25 November 1985, in secret talks, he tried to advise Botha how to "pull the teeth of the ANC" (his actual words)? By that he meant to "pull the teeth" of the revolutionary black working class which looks for leadership to the ANC. Surely the comrades don't want to **help** any such teeth-pulling by presenting Slabbert as a friend?

We want the widest and most effective unity in action against the apartheid regime. But the foundation for that has to be the mobilisation and unity of the massive black working class, fighting for its own needs and for power.

We want honest middle-class support for the revolution. But that cannot be secured by pretending that they will not have to choose sides between the working class and the capitalists.

A cosy, classless "national" unity in words with capitalists and middle-class politicians only deceives the masses—and is bound to fall to pieces as the real struggle mounts.

The working class can draw behind it many ordinary middle-class people, so repelled by the state and by monopoly capitalism that they will join forces with a giant revolutionary force determined to overturn the system, to establish democracy and end exploitation.

While the UDF leaders concentrate attention on "unifying" themselves with all and sundry **outside** the working class, UDF activists have to ask the question: **Has everything been done which should be done to mobilise and unite black working people in a serious national action campaign?**

It has to be said that the UDF, since its launch, has not so far **used** its potential to link together youth and workers, to link together the social and political issues important to the working class, in a clear and sustained national **action campaign** which could mobilise this force of millions against the oppressor.

The fight is difficult, especially now. Leadership is difficult. Working people do not have unrealistic expectations of their leaders. Nevertheless errors have to be criticised, particularly when they reflect basically mistaken ideas.

The Western Cape UDF Executive, in its August Briefing Paper, fails to give any direction to activists. Instead it says: "Each person will have to work out our tasks—we cannot expect the executive or 'someone else' to come up with the answers"! This is a reflection of the rudderless drift within the UDF leadership in other regions also.

The national UDF leadership must give a clear lead. At the same time the activists cannot wait. The task is to build the UDF on the firm foundation of the working class, its needs and strength. Only in that way can we lay the basis for a mass ANC which will be able to take power, achieve national liberation, and go forward to socialism.

We must link the working-class Congress youth with the industrial workers in COSATU. Building the COSATU locals, organising the unorganised, and joining forces in local, regional and national action campaigns which unite the UDF and COSATU, the movement can take major steps forward even under the present repression.

## PART 1

# Bonapartism, reaction, and the crisis in white politics

## Class basis of the revolution

1. As the history of slave society shows, oppression in and of itself, however monstrous and cruel, does not automatically lead to revolution.

It is not in the first instance the horrors of racial oppression in South Africa, or indeed the crisis of capitalism, that have brought into being this titanic movement of the black masses. Rather it stems from the very success of capitalism in developing SA and in creating, as a result, a mighty modern industrial working class.

2. Through the racial bondage of the blacks established during 300 years of colonialism and perfected under modern apartheid, capitalism found the means for the rapid industrialisation of this country, especially during and after the Second World War. Basing itself on gold and cheap black labour, SA capitalism has become the 20th largest economy in the capitalist world, larger than six members of the OECD, and the economic giant of Africa.

It is the rise of the black South African industrial working class—a class demanding its admission to 'civil society', demanding equal political rights, demanding a social and political status corresponding to its role in production—which has brought on the crisis of the apartheid regime, and now invests that crisis, against the background of a diseased capitalism, with a through and through revolutionary character.

3. The black working class now comprises some two-thirds of the entire population. This is a weight in society without parallel in the colonial or neo-colonial world. It is a weight more akin to the working class in the advanced capitalist countries—but where the system has neither the accumulated economic fat nor the existence of adequate intermediate social layers and gradations to dull the revolutionary contradictions even temporarily.

This gives the conflict in SA its exceptionally sharp and brutal character. But it also shows the impossible odds facing the capitalist class and the ruling state system once this proletariat rises to its feet and begins to take the affairs of society into its own hands.

That is the essence of the historical process now taking place.

4. The success of apartheid as a hot-house for capitalism has meant the extreme accumulation and concentration of wealth in a few hands. The state owns nearly 60% of fixed capital. 95% of privately-

owned wealth is in white hands, and concentrated among a minority of them. Three South African monopolies (Anglo-American, Sanlam and Old Mutual) control more than three-quarters of the companies on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

The peasantry has been practically eliminated. The urban black middle class has been stifled in its development. It is incapable of acting as an effective social buffer between the black working class and monopoly capital.

Between the mass of the working class and the ruling class there is an unbridgeable social chasm. The black working class is held back from power by one real obstacle only—the military-police state machine.

5. The strength of this state (probably the most formidably difficult to overthrow anywhere in the world) derives from the ability of capitalism in the past to weld together, as a privileged racial elite, whites of all classes—the class antagonisms between them muted, while for mutual advantage they have combined to hold the blacks in chains.

The main instrument of this fusion, chiefly over the last 40 years, has been Afrikaner nationalism; the basis for its success has been the need and ability of the capitalists to pay the price in white privilege for the continued effective enslavement by these means of the rising black working class.

The loyalty of the white working class and middle class to the capitalist state has provided the necessary social foundation for the system of capitalist rule in SA for generations.

How the black working class is to mobilise and organise all the forces of revolution; how it is to divide the whites against each other and crack the foundations of the state; how then it is to conquer militarily and take the power—the fate of South Africa now hangs on these questions.

6. The onset of the revolution has not been sudden, but comes from the development of the working-class movement to a qualitatively higher level out of thirteen years and more of persistent mobilisation.

This, in turn, has been built on the legacy of previous generations of resistance, especially that of the 1950s, when the African working class really began to reveal itself in action as the revolutionary force potentially able to lead the national liberation struggle.

7. The movement of the 1950s ended in defeat; the 1960s were a period of dark reaction. But the reawakening of the black working class from that grim but temporary phase at once ushered in renewed crisis for the ruling system and has led directly

The UDF leadership must not alienate the working class by proclaiming unity with our exploiters. That does not 'broaden' or 'strengthen' the forces fighting against apartheid and the emergency—it narrows and weakens them.

Comrades, how can the mine workers of the NUM be mobilised in political campaigns linked to the UDF if you are fraternising with the mine bosses? How can the magnificent fighting forces of MAWU be rallied to the UDF if you are seeking unity with the so-called 'anti-apartheid' bosses within SEIFSA?

How can we expose Buthelezi before his own followers in Natal, and break the Inkatha mafia, unless we show to the Zulu workers how this 'warrior' is selling their skins to the capitalists, helping to hold down wages, weakening trade unionism, and frustrating their national and class liberation?

Yet how will we do this if you, the comrades of the UDF leadership, make friends with the self-same capitalists and proclaim them as our allies? Your method would only **strengthen** Buthelezi, the murderer of UDF comrades in Natal.

Indeed, from the wording of the statement, it would seem that Buthelezi and Inkatha could well be included in the proposed "national unity" against apartheid! Surely you don't intend that?

But should we not exploit the splits among our enemies? By all means, encourage the revolutionary confidence of the mass movement by highlighting these splits.

Should we not use the liberal bosses, the liberal judges, and so on, against the apartheid regime? Yes, where we can, in strictly limited practical matters—while always making plain our political opposition to them. **Seeking "unity" with them is not using them—it is inviting them to use us.**

Remember that the splits among our class enemies open up precisely as our movement gains in strength—because they fear revolution, and can no longer agree among themselves how to stop it. If some courts today pass judgements against the security powers, we should ask ourselves why they have suddenly discovered merit in legal reasoning which ten years ago they booted out of court!

Use the courts, but do not encourage trust in them, comrades! Promote the splits among the bosses—by subjecting them to the merciless revolutionary pressure of the black working-class movement struggling for power.

"Unite" with these bosses and you would only confuse workers and youth, blunting the cutting edge of the struggle.

The working class is tremendously loyal to the UDF and ANC, and with that loyal to the leadership. The leadership has a duty to show in its every action that it is loyal to the working class.

It must never be forgotten that the strength, courage and determination of the working class, young and old, has made the UDF and the ANC the force that they are today. Without massive, united and active working-class support, our Congress movement would be in real danger of being crushed by the enemy.

The comrades of the leadership ought to learn more from the history of the movement, especially the lessons of the 1950s.

Then, too, under pressure of increasing state repression by the Nationalist government, the Congress leadership turned towards the idea of an "anti-Nat alliance" of all classes. They encouraged black working people to have faith, not in their own class strength and the mass struggle for power, but in sections of the ruling class opposed to the government.

The uncompromising demand for majority rule gave way to talk of settling for less than full democracy. At the time of the April 1958 white elections, Congress merely put forward the slogan, "Defeat the Nats". This, wrote SACTU leader Dan Tloome at the time, was wrong and misleading, for it "led a considerable section of the people to believe that the Congresses were in favour of the United Party coming to power, as a party capable of solving our problems in SA."

Activists were divided and confused, and through policies like this the conditions were created for a disastrous split of the mass movement, frustrated at the barriers placed by the leadership in the way of decisive action.

The mistakes of the 1950s must not be repeated.

*Inqaba* supporters will do their best, along with other Congress militants, to prevent any split of the mass organisations. A divided working class is a cause for comfort only to the enemy. We are confident that the battle for Marxist ideas can be won within the Congress movement when the youth and workers who make up its fighting ranks see how these ideas meet their need for clear answers and a way forward to power.

Within Congress the SA Communist Party claims to defend Marxism and uphold the interests of the working class as the best guarantee of success of the whole movement. Why, then, has the SACP leadership remained silent about the UDF leaders' proposed call for "national unity" with the capitalists?

Why is it left to *Inqaba* and the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC to express the rank-and-file activists' concern about the rightward drift of the leadership in practice?

We do not believe the 'Communist' party leadership is communist at all. We believe they have given up communism in favour of utopian ideas of getting freedom through an allegedly 'popular' alliance with the liberal capitalists.

Those black working-class youth and workers, however, who look to the SACP do mean business. They want to build an ever more powerful mass Congress movement on Marxist ideas, with real communist or socialist aims. We are fully with them in that.

Let us join forces in the urgent effort to turn the UDF away from the mistaken plan of its leadership to proclaim "national unity" with our class enemy. Let us mobilise wider working-class support.

Youth whose slogan is "*Viva Tambo! Viva Socialism!*" must realise they will be expected to drop the call for socialism if the "national unity" idea takes hold. How can "unity" with the bosses and the socialist aims of our movement be proclaimed at the same time?

The Freedom Charter must be defended against the threat of this "national unity" call. How can the clause promising nationalisation of the mines, banks and monopoly industries be upheld by a leadership seeking allies among the monopoly capitalists and their agents in politics?

How can the living wage, homes for all and the entire program of social reforms demanded by the Freedom Charter be vigorously fought for if we are to have "national unity" with the capitalists whose profit system cannot afford these reforms?

The choice is clear: we can have **either** a mass movement of black working people determined to change society through action **or** an impotent "national" unity of sugary words and promises from our liberal exploiters. We cannot have both.

If we could get the changes we need with the assistance of the bosses, workers ask, why then was it necessary to go to all the trouble of building militant independent unions over the past 13 years?

Why was it necessary for youth to learn the bitter lesson that big business and the military-police state are "two sides of the same bloody coin"?

The direction we should take is clear:

- \* **Oppose the "national unity" policy proposed by the UDF leadership!**
- \* **For a joint action campaign of the UDF and COSATU on clear social and political demands to mobilise the black working class nationwide!**
- \* **Down with the apartheid regime and the bosses!**
- \* **Forward to an ANC government on a socialist program!**

Issued by the Editorial Board of  
*Inqaba ya Basebenzi*

BM Box 1719  
London WC1N 3XX  
Britain

towards revolution itself.

8. The key development opening the new period of revolutionary advance has been the rise of the independent non-racial trade unions of the black workers, from 1973 onwards, leading to the creation of COSATU which now unites over 700 000 workers.

Together with this, reinforcing the movement of the workers and being in turn reinforced by it, has been the movement of the black working-class youth. The Soweto uprising of 1976 marked the assertion by the school youth—the sons and daughters of the workers—of their predominance in struggle over the radical black university intellectuals who had anticipated their awakening.

Ever since, they have remained decisively in the forefront, providing the revolutionary cutting edge of the entire movement.

### The economic impasse

9. At the very same time as the workers discovered, through trade union organisation in the 1970s, an enormous industrial muscle only dimly realised previously, the South African economy entered a period of unprecedented crisis, linked to the world crisis of capitalism.

An advanced economy, yet weak in world terms, SA's advantage of cheap labour had begun to turn into an obstacle.

The limits of the domestic market increased the economy's dependence on exports, especially on manufactured exports if manufacturing industry was to advance. But world markets have stagnated and at times shrunk.

Even the advantages of gold revenues could no longer be turned into productive investment in other fields as in the past, because the local and world markets, strangled by capitalism, could not adequately absorb the products of an expanding industry.

With sharper competition in markets dominated by the giant monopolies of the major imperialist powers, South African capitalism could not free itself from reliance on cheap labour. But nor could it make do merely with cheap labour. At the same time the massive investments in new technology and large-scale production, necessary to compete, could not be undertaken in a country so far from the mass consumer markets of Europe, the USA and Japan, especially in a country where the domestic market is so limited, so narrowly based.

10. These insoluble economic contradictions, combined with the insistent demands of the awakening black working class, have limited the room for reformist manoeuvres on the part of the ruling class and the state in their efforts to delay and avert revolution.

On the other hand, the fact that SA capitalism has no way out through further driving down the wages and conditions of the workers tends to deprive bourgeois reaction of impetus to a certain extent.

11. The decline of South African capitalism has

become chronic, and the phases of revival in economic growth—such as the one we now appear to have entered—have the character of remissions in a mortal illness rather than of any underlying real recovery of health.

12. Between 1946 and 1974, South Africa's economy grew at an average rate of 7% a year; between 1974 and 1985, it averaged only 2%. Between 1981 and 1985 there was, overall, a fall of nearly 1% in production.

Economists estimate growth in 1986 at a mere 2%. From a depressed base, and with the gold price buoyant, there are now signs of the economic tempo picking up. Growth in 1987 is projected at around 3%.

But because of the structural barriers mentioned, the upturn in overall economic growth is unlikely to be sustained for long.

The Economist Intelligence Unit (which produces detailed reports for the strategists of finance capital internationally) has predicted generally slower growth in SA in coming years.

13. Unemployment, around 1 million at the onset of the crisis, is now an estimated 4 million (some estimate 6 million) and rising. There is an ongoing slaughter of jobs in the motor industry, in metal and in construction by the tens of thousands. Every sector is affected. On present trends, unemployment is expected to reach 50% or more of the black population over the next 15 years.

14. The revolutionary implications of these facts have been shown vividly in the Eastern Cape—a furnace of struggle in the past period—an area where de-industrialisation has led already to nearly 60% black unemployment and youth unemployment as high as 80%.

Such has been the intensity of the movement there that the police stated they could not quell it without bombing. The starkly proletarian character of the African population and the Congress movement in the Eastern Cape made it the pioneer in the organisation of embryonic soviets—working-class organs of power in the form of street, zone and area committees. In Cradock's Lingshale township, for example, all 24 000 residents could be informed by this network of a mass meeting within half an hour, when meetings were prohibited by the state.

The Eastern Cape has been the scene of the most effective general strike actions—repeatedly 80-90% solid, and 100% solid on June 16th; also of the first appearance of red flags at funerals; and of youth in mass formations with mock AK47s, demonstrating their understanding of the need for armed revolution.

15. The industrial devastation of the Eastern Cape will characterise wider regions in time to come as the crisis bites deeper. The proletariat countrywide, despite this or that regional peculiarity, and despite temporary phases when the economic crisis eases, will be thrown again and again onto the necessity of the socialist revolution.

Taking the movement on a national scale, we have so far experienced only the first stages in the engage-

# HOW 'DEMOCRATIC' ARE THE BIG BOSSES?

In the last two years millions of black working people have risen to their feet in struggle to end the miseries inflicted by apartheid and capitalism. If the State of Emergency has thrown our movement temporarily on the defensive, it has proved totally incapable of crushing the determination of the working class.

'It is Botha's apartheid government, with its murderous police and army, which stands between us and a decent life. It must go.' That is the overwhelming mood among the black majority.

At the same time, the visit of top SA businessmen to Lusaka last year for talks with the ANC has provoked considerable debate, and led to a certain confusion within our movement. Does it or does it not serve the purposes of our struggle for the ANC leaders to hold discussions with big capitalists, SA and foreign, and with their political spokesmen, if they say they are "against apartheid"?

During the recent strike at Pick 'n Pay, a worker said of his 'pro-

gressive' boss, Raymond Ackerman, he "likes to go around shaking hands with us, but this means nothing... management knows nothing about our shopfloor needs and problems." (*SALB*, II, No. 6) For such reasons, many are instinctively opposed to any such talks. On the other hand, there are those who say that it may help in isolating and weakening Botha. Still others say that it is hard to tell, since we do not know what the capitalists and the ANC leaders are saying to each other.

Even since the State of Emergency, more talks of this kind have been held. Comrade Tambo, for example, has held talks with British Tory Minister Geoffrey Howe, and has lunched in the City of London with big bankers and industrialists. ANC leaders are also discussing meeting with George Schultz, Reagan's foreign minister.

Now, for the first time, such discussions have taken place in a public way. On June 22 BBC Radio Four broadcast a one-hour "round

table" discussion among seven South Africans. It was also transmitted on the BBC World Service.

Those participating were ANC NEC members Thabo Mbeki and Mac Maharaj, as well as Chris Ball (Managing Director of Barclays National Bank), Neil Chapman (Chief Executive of Southern Life), and Tony Bloom (Chairman of the Premier Group), together with two Afrikaner academics—Deon Geldenhuys and Marinus Wiechers.

*Inqaba* here publishes a shortened version of the broadcast, to provide more opportunity for it to be discussed in SA. To reproduce it in full would require undue space, but we have attempted to give as complete as possible a treatment of the key issues. (Passages in italics are our summary of omitted parts).

Following the transcript, and in the light of what is said in it, RICHARD MONROE examines what attitude our movement should take towards the liberal capitalists and discussions with them.

ROBINSON (The presenter): ...I would like to start with you, Neil Chapman... what I want to know is what you hope to get out of a meeting like this...

CHAPMAN: I would think that lack of communication, lack of discussion, the very limited opportunities to talk one to one must surely rank amongst one of the greatest handicaps that responsible South Africans have in trying to establish what are the aims, what are the objectives, where does the common ground lie and how do we get to a point where people who would like to live together in an atmosphere of equality and of harmony can achieve this. This is a golden opportunity to come face to face and talk...

ROBINSON: Thabo Mbeki: your president Oliver Tambo has recently said that black South Africans must now prepare themselves for war. And if war is imminent, why are you sitting down here with your colleague? What do you hope to get out of this?

MBEKI: I think we would agree with what Neil is saying—we are very concerned to see as quick a resolution of the SA problem as is possible. And we would like black and white South Africans to come

together to resolve that problem. We would want to avoid destruction—more destruction than has taken place and deaths of people, and we think it very important that those of us South Africans who have come to the conclusion that the apartheid system needs to go, need to get together and discuss the question—how do we get it to go? And therefore I think however intense the conflict may be in SA, I think the ANC will always seek to build up that common understanding hopefully leading to common action to produce a kind of SA that would be acceptable to all its citizens.

*(The discussion continued by rejecting Botha's reform programme as a legitimate framework within which negotiation over a future SA could begin)*

BALL:... we have got to get to the point of agreeing the future constitutional framework of the country. I think we know what the definitions are of that future constitution.... in broad terms .... What in my opinion is fundamental is that we start to put flesh on these broad definitions... so that we can get at things

that are more tangible, so that we can make people comfortable about getting to the table to talk. That is why I think that meetings of this nature are of fundamental importance....

*(The participants agreed that the key issue was that of power, in a way which involved getting away from a racial framework.)*

ROBINSON: Can we move on from the question of power to what happens with that power.... for example when that's translated to what might happen to SA's economy.... is there a role for our three businessmen and financiers here—what do you see their place as in the future of SA? Do you want them at all—do you need them?

MBEKI: Yes, of course we do. It's very important that a free SA should have an economy as strong as possible, functioning as well as possible to generate the wealth that will be necessary to attempt many many huge problems that the community faces as a result of the apartheid system.

Certainly I think outstanding business

ment of the black proletariat in real revolutionary action. The depth and breadth of its mobilisation will yet exceed this many times over.

Even the first eruptions of the revolution have already filled the ruling class with dread for the future. This goes together with an economic outlook that is far from rosy.

### Capitalists' inability to invest

16. Not only now, but for some time already, the capitalists have shown the dead-end of their system by their own failure to invest in economic expansion.

Between 1981 and 1985 gross domestic fixed investment fell at an average rate of 0,5% a year in the private sector and a massive 3% a year in the public sector.

At current prices, overall net domestic investment has slumped from about R15 billion in 1980 to below R5 billion last year.

In the manufacturing sector there has been a plunge in fixed investment from R4,3 billion in 1980 to only R2,3 billion last year. Investment has been barely enough to replace worn-out capital stock.

The downward slide has worsened in 1986. Gross fixed investment dropped a further 13% in the first three months. A 'marginal' recovery subsequently brings the projected figure for the year to a fall of 8%. Forecasts for 1987 put the likely growth of investment at between 4% and 6%, i.e. to below the level of 1985.

17. Capitalism is incapable now of using even the productive forces already created, let alone of undertaking new all-round or sustained expansion of new capacity.

*Business Day* (23/10/86) revealed the extent to which a crisis of 'over-capacity' now grips the system:

"Major sectors of the manufacturing industry are working at less than one-third of full potential. While most figures show overall capacity utilisation of more than 80%, they mask a picture in which billions of rands are going to waste in under-used—and unused—machinery and technology. Published figures relate to capacity assessed on current production. If market difficulties force an industry to cut back from two shifts a day to one, its assessed production capacity is also halved to take account of single-shift capacity. To talk of 80% under-utilisation therefore is to talk of 80% to 50% of true capacity. And in those industries and corporations that have 'mothballed' unused machinery and production lines, that means 80% to 50% of reduced capacity. All this is without taking into account four-day weeks and that most modern manufacturing equipment is capable of round-the-clock, three-shift operation. At the end of the day, therefore, where an industry is reduced to single shifts, such equipment is being used at considerably less than one third of its true potential... Steel and Engineering Industries Federation sources say some heavy engineering sectors are operating at only 45% of capacity."

In this situation, and with domestic and world markets so confined, cyclical upturns in economic activity (such as the one we appear to have entered now), cannot result in a major or extended turnaround in the overall pattern of investment.

18. Reflecting the turn of capitalists away from productive investment towards a more and more parasitic role, finance has tended to become the only buoyant growth sector. But working people cannot live on the product of banking transactions, mergers, or stock exchange and property speculation. In production, SA capitalism falls further and further behind its rivals.

Inflation, currently about 15% officially, runs persistently at several times the OECD average, proving South Africa's uncompetitive position and worsening that position every year.

The rand has become a "fundamentally weak currency" (Economist Intelligence Unit)—languishing at 45 US cents or below.

19. There has been massive disinvestment by foreign capital; also an increasing export of billions of rands by the South African monopolies themselves. Altogether there was an outflow of R10 billion on capital account in 1985 alone.

Partly this has reflected the present global phenomenon of the transfer of hundreds of billions of dollars of capital-value from the less developed countries to the advanced capitalist countries, especially the USA, for greater security and more profitable avenues of investment and speculation. This is a feature of the crisis of the capitalist system world-wide.

Along with the weakening of South Africa's competitive position, the rate of profit on investment here has steeply declined, and to this is now added the international bourgeoisie's well-grounded fears of losing everything in a revolution.

20. The pull-out by US firms from SA has become a stampede—although in most cases this has involved selling to South African capital rather than outright closure. Licensing and other agreements are made to allow the multi-nationals concerned to continue to extract a profit from SA, but without the risk. Such arrangements are possible because of the power of these monopolies, because some market still exists for the products, and because of the quantities of otherwise uninvested or 'surplus' capital available here.

Following the withdrawal by Barclays, it is likely that a number of British companies will now follow suit.

21. There is no liberal principle in disinvestment—if they could safeguard their investment through counter-revolution, and ensure an attractive rate of profit, the capitalists would be satisfied. However, they can have no confidence in that.

In the 1960s, US firms in South Africa, for instance, were earning 25-30% return on capital. They could expect to recover their investment in a few years. Now the rate of profit has fallen and they have to make calculations about what is going to happen over 8-10 years. There would have to be exceptional reasons to risk a big investment in these circumstances.

22. The current upturn in the economy is crucially



Around the table at the BBC: from left to right, Neil Chapman, Chris Ball, Deon Geldenhuys, Marinus Wiechers, Michael Robinson (programme presenter), Comrade Thabo Mbeki, Comrade Mac Maharaj, Tony Bloom.

## ANC leaders 'round table' with SA capitalists

people like them would play a very important role in such an economy.

Of course the question arising is what happens to the property? Does the ANC nationalise if the ANC becomes the government?

Now what we've said about this is that of course that is the policy of the ANC as it is put, that the people shall share the wealth of the country. That the banks and the mines and so on should belong to the people.

But we're also saying that the restructuring—whatever the ANC's policy might say—the restructuring of the SA economy must depend on what gets decided democratically. We must get to a stage where a government of SA is elected democratically and presumably that party—all parties—will have in their programme an economic programme.

And if the people don't accept the ANC's positions, then people don't accept the ANC's positions, but the matter must be put to the people by the ANC.

**BLOOM:** I have some difficulty with the ANC's policy on economics and I've argued this with Thabo previously. I think there's a major difference that has to be stressed between exploitative capitalism, with which I'm not comfortable at all, and free enterprise, with which I'm terribly comfortable.

I think if one looks around the world today...at (as somebody characterised it) a list of winners and losers, the extreme forms of nationalisation and the extreme forms of socialism have simply not

worked.

And the graphic illustration for this, the empiric evidence, lies in Africa herself. I visit Mozambique very frequently. The economy there is in the most shocking state, as they themselves would most readily admit. And even if you look at the rest of the world and you see the lurch towards some form of free enterprise in China and in some parts of Eastern Europe, I very firmly believe you have to give the people something to reach for—some form of initiative, something to go for.

Because when the state gets its hands on industry they usually make the most unholy mess of it and that's happened in SA itself incidentally where the state has had its hands on a major proportion of the economy. They've done very badly with it and I worry about that and I think it's something that should form the basis of a very long debate and a very long negotiation between the ANC and their economic advisers and people in business.

### Inequalities

**MBEKI:** I think Tony would accept that there are gross inequalities in the ownership of wealth in SA. Take the question of land where the law says that 87% of the land belongs to the whites. I mean that surely must change. And so the issue

**ROBINSON (interrupts):** You're all

nodding. You all agree with that?

**MBEKI:** The issue of the redistribution of that wealth—whatever that means—I think is commonly accepted. Now the question is how to do this.

We are saying from our own point of view, a bigger state intervention would be necessary. It may very well be that the general opinion that emerges—as a result of discussion and of open political discussion in SA which you can't have today—it might very well emerge that the majority of people will say no, that's the wrong way.

But I think we can't run away from the central fact that we need to address very seriously the question of this, as I say, grossly unfair

**BALL (interrupts):** Thabo, can I say that I think that this discussion is a brilliant example of the very virtues of negotiation because we are able to take emotive terms such as 'people's power' and 'redistribution of land' and try to define more specifically what we mean so that people can understand clearly whether there is fear in the result of our discussion or not.

Now if one says that one has got to get some of the 80% of land away from some of the white people, then that of course concerns a lot of us white people who have the land.

In the matter of nationalisation of the mines, let us accept that something like three-quarters of the revenue of the mines goes directly to the state now. Now, what does nationalisation mean? It doesn't mean anything's very different from the

reliant on the gold price and on planned increases in government spending.

The impasse of capitalism through its own inner contradictions, coupled with the revolutionary social and political crisis, means that there is no possibility now of really regenerating investment and production on that basis.

SA capitalism will continue to go through cycles of 'boom' and 'slump', affected both by the cycles of the world economy and by particular local factors—but in the context of a general stagnation and decline.

The system is caught up now in a vicious spiral of decay, which may be interrupted by delays or weak recoveries, but which cannot be reversed.

This marks the conclusive entry of SA society into the realm of social revolution, from which there is now no escape.

### Political effects of economic decay

23. It would be difficult to exaggerate the deep-going change wrought in the outlook of the ruling class, and of all privileged layers, by the historical transition from the flourishing SA capitalism of the post-War decades, industrialising at a furious pace and proud of its achievements, to the new era of chronic economic decay coupled with the reassertion of power by the black proletariat.

The tap-root of white confidence has been cut.

24. In turn, both the decay of the system and its effect on the morale of the oppressors has communicated itself to the masses and deepened in them the conviction that the time for change must be at hand.

This has played an important part in sustaining the movement, and in its spread to all parts of the country.

At the same time the impact of the capitalist crisis on the conditions of the black masses has been barbaric. To the deprivation of generations under racist oppression and cheap-labour slavery is added the weight of economic decay, loaded as always onto the backs of the poorest.

Going together with a heightened sense of their working-class power, this acts as a whip, driving people again and again into the most heroic and tenacious struggles.

25. Already in 1980, an estimated 60-65% of Africans in South Africa (i.e. nearly half the total population) were living 'below subsistence'. Real wages of the black workers have been falling year by year. In December 1985, nine out of ten labourers' wages were lower in real terms than a year before. Half of labourers' wage rates set by the Wage Board had no cash increase at all in 1985, despite 16-20% inflation.

Fewer and smaller wage packets have to be spread over ever wider numbers of the unemployed, aged and destitute. The black four-fifths of the population spend less on food in total than the one-fifth who are white.

26. In these conditions—and especially now with

the way forward for the movement apparently blocked on the political plane—the economic upturn is likely to result in a further increase of industrial militancy, and so help to sustain general morale within the black working class. It will, in short, bring little comfort to the ruling class, and certainly no way out of its social and political predicament.

### Can they solve the housing question?

27. The sheer scale of deprivation inflicted by capitalism on the black masses is well illustrated in the sphere of housing—or, rather, homelessness.

It is perhaps here that the claims of the liberal bourgeoisie that capitalism can uplift the conditions of the people will most clearly be put to the test in the next period.

28. In Soweto, home for two million, 12 to 18 people on average are living in those matchbox houses. In Kimberley, up to 30 live in a 4-roomed house; in Uitenhage up to 42 in a 2-bedroomed house, and 3 to 4 families in a 1-bedroomed house.

Much was initially made in the bourgeois press of the increased allocations in the state budget (R750 million so far) for 'tackling' the housing problem. The truth is that the state would have to build more houses than it has done in the entire period since the Second World War just to cover the official waiting lists.

Eleven times the amount budgeted by the government would be needed to clear the 1985 backlog, while at least R27 000 million would have to be found by 1990 to keep pace with housing needs. Yet 76% of black households, official estimates say, have no money for housing.

Over-reaching its relatively narrow basis of tax revenue, government spending already piles up persistently inflationary deficits. It is out of the question that the houses needed now, or needed over the next four years, let alone the 3 million or more new houses needed in urban areas by the year 2000 can be built within the framework of capitalism.

29. The question has been raised whether this position would alter in the event that a world debt or currency collapse led to astronomical rises in the gold price—say to \$1000 or more per ounce. In that event, so the argument goes, the bonanza of gold profits to SA could provide the source of revenues for the state to build the necessary housing, and simultaneously, through the construction boom, set in motion a sustained economic upswing.

30. Firstly, this scenario would probably involve a slide into severe depression of the world economy, with effects on SA industry and non-gold mining far more serious than in the 1930s because of the economy's vastly greater intermeshing with the world market. Unemployment would increase, and the consumer market tend to contract.

For domestic and international reasons, therefore, a construction boom—while it would offset depression at least partially and provide jobs along with

current situation. We need to put flesh on that term.

And in economics generally I think that we've got to be careful to take these emotive terms, which are used in your economic platforms, and the platforms of a lot of other political parties, and...try to be specific about them.

Clearly in SA we will need a unique kind of economic environment. Because we have two fundamental issues: education, and infrastructural development in the form of housing in particular.

We're going to have to have an economic ideology which legitimises the economic aspirations of the community as a whole, for the economic community to be stable and viable. It's this process of discussion which enables us to try and put flesh on those issues.

ROBINSON: President Botha says the ANC is Communist pure and simple....Is he wrong on that?

BALL: Maybe Thabo can answer that. The ANC is very quick to....

MBEKI: (*interrupts*) I think Linda Chalker answered this question in the House of Commons the other day. We were very pleased to see that the British government has at last come to the conclusion that the ANC is not communist—the ANC represents a significant proportion of the SA population.

(*Discussion followed on whether and why the relationship of the Communist Party to the ANC should be considered a problem.*)

GELDENHUYS: I don't think its an unfair question. We are talking about the future of our country.... What kind of programme would the SA Communist Party offer to the SA electorate?

MAHARAJ: Exactly. That's what I was coming to. What does the Communist Party say then—what is its programme? What does it say in its publications to the people of SA?

Thabo has referred to the position of the ANC and those Communists, whether the asterisks (placed in SA press reports against names on the ANC NEC, to indicate which are CP members—*Editor*) are correct or not, have supported that position. They have supported loyally the positions and leadership of the ANC. That's their call.

(*After further discussion around this point, the participants agreed that the release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of the ANC were desirable ingredients in moving towards negotiations around a table over the question of power.*)

ROBINSON: Well who will choose then who sits at the table?

MAHARAJ: Well this is one of the problems we will have to work through in the situation in SA but together with

all.

This is our insistence—it must be together with all and we believe that as the ANC the position that we reached and the fight that we have waged all this time, and the leadership that we have given, is that it will be a part of our duty to handle this consultation. We believe that we are that force today.

Now to carry out that consultation—how it culminates is a question that will have to be worked out within the actual situation. For example, we cannot necessarily rule out a National Convention, but we are saying that the Botha regime has discredited itself.

ROBINSON: Are you saying that President Botha would not be at that table?

MAHARAJ: We are saying that he cannot preside over that process.

ROBINSON: But he could sit there?

MAHARAJ: Most certainly. He'll have to sit there.

## 'Referee'

(*Comrade Mbeki suggested, as a comparable framework within which negotiations might be carried out, UN Security Council Resolution 435 on Namibia, which the SA regime at one time accepted. There followed inconclusive discussion over whether the process might be assisted by an external mediating force or 'referee'—and the problems of reaching, out of the present situation, the point of letting 'the people decide'.)*

ROBINSON: Can I ask you from the ANC's side if there is anyone with whom you will not sit down? I mean for example would you sit down with Mangosuthu Buthelezi?

MBEKI: Depends in what capacity he comes. I mean, if you just say let us use the present structures of South Africa and have Botha on one side and the leaders of the Bantustans and so on, if you use that formula the ANC would say fine, let the leaders of the Bantustans come, but they are leaders by virtue of leading elements in the state structure. Therefore they sit on Botha's side.

ROBINSON: Would you sit down with Chief Matanzima of the Transkei?

MBEKI: He belongs to the same group.

MAHARAJ: And we would hope that Tony Bloom and Chris Ball would sit on our side. We would hope that Deon Geldenhuys would sit on our side—on the democratic side because as we are saying, we don't want to define the problem as a black/white conflict.

ROBINSON: You're talking about sides on a table? You see President Botha on one side and...

MBEKI:(*interrupts*) President Botha and Mangosuthu Buthelezi and Matanzima

and so on, fine, if that is what is thought is the negotiating structure.

ROBINSON: Andrius Treurnicht from the CP, he has a big constituency. Does he sit there? Does Eugene TerreBlanche of the AWB sit there?

MAHARAJ: I think that Thabo is making it straight. At the moment we are talking about the possibilities of a negotiating procedure and what we are saying is that there are two forces and we are saying we'll define who sits on one side of the table on the basis of their relationship to the current state and power structures. And we define the democratic forces in that way too and therefore we are saying that there are two sides...

(*It was agreed that the tricameral constitution provided no framework within which negotiations could take place. The ANC spokesmen indicated they did not see negotiations as possible at present; therefore, intensified pressure on the regime was necessary. There was debate about whether such pressures, including sanctions, etc., would be productive or counter-productive.*)

MAHARAJ: ...there is a logic in the idea that—and a historical truth—that this struggle needs to be escalated. If the regime refuse to acknowledge negotiation is a part—then its always open that as the escalation goes on the regime will change its mind. And change its position.

(*Did this mean escalating the armed struggle, and what Bloom referred to as a ratcheting up of violence on both sides?*)

BLOOM: .... What worries me is that at the end of the day we may be faced with a situation where we don't have a choice between P.W.Botha and the ANC, but we are faced with a choice between Andries Treurnicht or maybe something worse on the right, and some of those steely-eyed kids in the townships who are growing up with a heady diet of teargas and Molotov cocktails and who may even turn round to the ANC some day and say—where were you fellows when we were facing that struggle? The term that I would use in this context is that we are breeding a generation of Killing Fields—Khmer Rouge—kids whom nobody will be able to control in the end and that's what terrifies me.

MBEKI: But, Tony, that's exactly the reason why all of us who are saying that this apartheid system is destructive, has put us where we are. It's very important that all of us should act now to get rid of this system, to avoid exactly this eventuality which you are talking about.

You see, so we need to get hold of anything and everything that we can get hold of in order to get rid of this regime, to get rid of this system before we get to this rather terrible future.

(*Comrade Mbeki added that the armed*

significant stimulus to parts of industry—is very unlikely to translate into sustained all-round growth. The long-term general barriers outlined, which block a regeneration of production are now too great to be overcome fundamentally by an exceptional upturn in any sector.

31. Secondly, as already revealed in other albeit smaller 'gold bonanzas' of the past decade, the capitalist barriers to investment and expansion of industry result in excess liquidity in the economy when gold earnings suddenly rise. To limit inflation and try to find a profitable outlet (if there were any), much of the surplus capital would be channeled abroad, but much would also, as before, flow into stock market takeovers, property dealings and credit.

There would be a generally inflationary effect taking off from the already high level that has become endemic, and so threatening to get out of hand. Enforced rises in interest rates could rein in inflation only partially, and then at the cost of further choking investment and the market for capital and consumer goods.

32. Other conditions permitting, the state could certainly siphon off a substantial part of such a capital-surplus and begin an expanded mass housing program. This could have a temporary effect. However, the limit to this would still be the inability of the masses to afford the housing costs.

It is well known from the experience of many countries that the capitalist state cannot overcome depression by spending its way out—that results in galloping inflation. The difference with the hypothesis put forward in South Africa's case is that the spending would be from gold-derived tax revenues and not on the basis of printing money.

Nevertheless, particularly because the housing would have to be provided through subsidies, with 'uneconomic' rents (assuming rents were paid!), the ultimate effect would be the injection of vast additional sums of money into circulation without this involving a sustained carry-over into expanded production of commodities and consumption in every field.

Thus, combining with the general barriers and factors already mentioned, there would be a tendency for inflation to rise steeply—perhaps after an initial lag—so compelling the government to cut back its overall expenditure once more.

33. Particular circumstances might offset or alter this or that aspect of the general process we have outlined. But it is practically certain that even under the most favourable conditions conceivable, the mechanism of capitalism itself would rule out a solution of the housing problem by the SA state.

This despite the existence of the raw materials, labour and technique required to house the population—which would be quite possible very rapidly in a planned economy run according to social need and not hamstrung by the profit system.

As it is, bourgeois society and the state in South Africa is now engulfed on every side by economic, social and political pressures for which it can offer no release. These will mount up enormously in the

period ahead.

## Massive social forces ranged against capitalism

34. The current urban population of South Africa is estimated at 18 million or more, out of a total population of about 33 million. The number in urban areas is likely to reach at least 28 million within the next 14 years, 22 million of them concentrated in four metropolitan areas.

Despite the formidable armoury of apartheid laws and tens of thousands of brutal officials to implement them, the state has simply failed to stem the tide of black urbanisation, let alone "reverse" it as was once promised. Even between 1951 and 1970, the black urban population doubled.

Now influx control has all but collapsed. The partial repeal of the pass laws in favour of controls against 'squatters' and 'aliens' from so-called independent homelands is really a confession of impotence by the regime in the face of this social tide.

35. The urban black working class youth, without a future under this nightmare system, have proved themselves the vital yeast of social revolution.

The slaughter of youth from Soweto 1976 onwards, the endless raids, beatings, detentions and torture have produced a generation steeled in street combat and immensely hardened psychologically in preparation for civil war. Five and six year-olds are adept at making petrol bombs. Eight year-olds are arrested for 'political intimidation'. Thirteen and fourteen year-olds have been in the forefront of devising tactics and leading actions to take on the murderous armed forces of the state. The whole world marvels at the heroism of this youth.

As an Assembly of God minister in the East Rand townships commented to the *London Guardian* (11/11/85): "If you think that the country is on fire now, wait until these kids, the ones who are aged five and 10, grow up ... because they are already planning what they will do."

Whereas fewer than one million black youth were school-goers in the 1950s, the figure is more than five million now. Every school in the townships, taken under popular control, serves as a potential source of recruits for the revolution—an inexhaustible well-spring which the state can at most contain for a time, but which will not dry up.

Today, half of the black population of South Africa is under 15 years old. This fact alone expresses the absolute *cul de sac* and ultimate doom of the old order.

36. Capitalism, using apartheid as an instrument of its progress in this country, has ended up creating a vast sea of black dispossession and anger—which now laps everywhere at the rich havens of the whites.

Crossroads in Cape Town may epitomise the worst urban squalor, cheek by jowl with the vaunted wealth of the ruling elite; but in reality it is only a fragment of the whole picture. Round Durban alone there are 1,5 million shack dwellers. At the same time, 'hidden' in the vastness of the platteland, black working-class poverty and oppression stretches out on a staggering scale.

*struggle was only one of the forms of struggle)*

ROBINSON: Do you think that you could control now the people that Tony referred to—the active young comrades. I've met them. And do you think you could say to them "stop" and they would stop? Do you think you could say "negotiate" and they would negotiate?

MBEKI: Oh certainly. But if the ANC were to say 'stop' then the ANC would have to say 'stop' for a very good reason. To say: that it is now clear to those of us who are convinced that there's a resolution of the matter in this way, and therefore there's no need to continue this military offensive.

*(More discussion made clear that no-one could see an immediate way through towards de-escalation or negotiation.)*

ROBINSON: I'd like to ask you lastly... Has anything come out of this that makes any of you feel more hopeful?...

ROBINSON: Mac Maharaj?

MAHARAJ: Yes. I don't think this meeting of itself can be said to be such a great movement forward, but I think what this meeting has shown is the common ground and the most important thing I think is that this meeting has brought together a group of South Africans who are all saying that the fundamental question now is the question of political power for the people.

ROBINSON: And finally from the banker's point of view, Chris Ball?

BALL: Michael, it is of course a pity that a discussion of this nature is not available to the people of SA...

The presenter of the BBC broadcast spelled out its purpose clearly: "can these seven South Africans find common ground about what a blueprint for their country might look like...and...how that blueprint might be achieved."

The broadcast took place in the same period that the Commonwealth 'Eminent Persons' Group was seeking ways of bringing Botha's government and the ANC leaders together to negotiate. Its brief from the Nassau Conference of 1985 was to persuade the SA government to "initiate, in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides, a process of dialogue...with a view to establishing a non-racial and representative government." (*Mission to SA*, pp.142-4)

The climate for all these meetings has been created by—and only by—the enormous revolutionary upsurge of the last two years, an upsurge itself the product of more than a decade of rebuilding mass organisation.

In that struggle, our central and burning demand, in order to exercise the power to achieve a decent life, is for majority rule—one-person-one-vote in an undivided SA.

---

### Comment By Richard Monroe

---

Was it correct for Comrade Maharaj, in the broadcast, to say that, were negotiations between Botha and the ANC to take place, "we would hope that Tony Bloom and Chris Ball would sit on our side... on the democratic side"?

While Tony Bloom and Chris Ball—and other big businessmen, SA

or foreign—may have been occasional, even vociferous, critics of apartheid, what contribution have they made to the advance of democracy in SA? Can they play any role in securing a negotiated settlement? Is such a settlement with Botha's regime even possible?

Against the bullets of the state, and despite the bloodshed it has inflicted, elements of democracy have been built in practice only through the struggles of working people.

Never before, in generations of enslavement, has the black working class been able to come together so effectively to discuss grievances, formulate demands, plan action, enforce justice—and thereby gain confidence in its collective power. This has been wholly as the result of its own efforts.

These methods of democracy have been pioneered in the last thirteen years in the trade unions—above all in the factory committees and shop-



*Part of the crowd of 35 000 workers celebrating May Day this year in Orlando Stadium, Soweto.*

37. In the Bantustan slum settlements of the Northern Transvaal, for instance, where African families have been dumped in their hundreds of thousands by apartheid forced removals, the "serpentine stream of metal shanties and mud houses" (in the words of writer Joseph Leyveld) extends for more than 60 km.

From these the workers have to commute up to 160 km daily for the privilege of slaving in the service of the white capitalists around Pretoria, for a miserable starvation wage. This "nation of sleepwalkers" must catch their sleep on the move. Many must rise before 2 a.m.; board buses to work at 2.30; arrive home at 8.30 p.m. if overtime is not worked; sleep from 10 p.m. ... until it is time to rise again before 2. And this for six, sometimes seven days a week.

That is the underlying reality of black working-class life—the base of the pyramid on which white privilege and capitalist prosperity depend. The movement of the blacks towards liberation from apartheid rule can only mean a social upheaval of gigantic proportions, overturning all class relations. This fact has been hammered into the consciousness of every part of society.

38. The flaming revolt of these most downtrodden sections of the black proletariat stands out as a decisive indicator that the South African revolution has begun. It is the equivalent of the prisoners in a concentration camp rising up against their guards.

All the more determined because of the regime's retreat over influx control, the people of KwaNdebele refused to be pressed into so-called 'independence' under the tyranny of the local black gangsters and puppets to whom the functions of repression have been delegated by Pretoria. "We do not want to be ruled by the barrel of the gun, knobkerries, sjamboks and sticks."

Even the civil servants employed to run the machinery of KwaNdebele's 'independence' eventually went on strike against independence. The state on strike against itself! The puppets and gangsters had ultimately no choice but to give in (although there are signs once again of them trying to resume the offensive on this issue).

39. The collapse of KwaNdebele 'independence' in August—this signal defeat for the Botha regime inflicted after the second state of emergency had been imposed, with military-police repression and the vigilante reaction in full swing—really shows the depth of the predicament in which the apartheid system, and capitalism itself, is now engulfed.

It is a measure of the impasse of the ruling class, and of the overwhelming preponderance of social force, in the final analysis, on the side of the working class.

40. This underlying relationship of class forces, which the onset of the revolution has begun to bring sharply into focus, is the basic cause of the developing crisis of the regime, and of the ferment and divisions now evident in the white party-political field as a whole.

## Change and adaptation of bourgeois rule

41. In his writings on *Bonapartism and Fascism* in 1934, Trotsky pointed out:

"The strength of finance capital (*i.e. the strength of the big-capitalist class, nationally and internationally—editor*) does not reside in its ability to establish a government of any kind and at any time, according to its wish; it does not possess this faculty. Its strength resides in the fact that every non-proletarian government is forced to serve finance capital; or better yet, that finance capital possesses the possibility of substituting for each one of its systems of domination that decays, another system corresponding better to the changed conditions. However the passage from one system to another signifies the *political crisis* which, with the concurrence of the activity of the revolutionary proletariat, may be transformed into a social danger for the bourgeoisie."

42. Over most of this century, the main changes in the system of government in SA which the ruling capitalist class has been obliged either to make or to accept, have had as their underlying cause the need to adapt to and meet the challenge to bourgeois domination posed by the rise of the black working class.

Only after bitter battles between the big capitalists and the state, on the one hand, and white labour on the other hand, did the system seriously turn towards the incorporation of this class of whites into the ranks of the privileged and secure. Even the first major concessions to the white workers, in the mid 1920s after the defeat of the Rand Revolt, were induced mainly by the capitalists' need to reinforce the basis of their rule against the emerging, militant urban black proletariat.

43. The turn, in the late 1940s, to the apartheid regime itself is analysed in some detail below in the context of explaining the current developments in white politics. The point to make here is that this, too, marked a change and adaptation in capitalist rule itself when faced with the 'decay' of its previous methods of domination and their inadequacy to deal with the black industrial proletariat, now more vigorously than ever showing its growing power.

Today the ruling class, and the politicians who govern for it, have been compelled to attempt changes to the decaying system of apartheid. On the one hand the rigidities of that system have proved themselves in many ways unsuited to the needs of a modern industrial economy. But more crucially, the methods of unvarnished white *baasskap* have shown themselves inadequate now to hold down the black working class, rising to its feet and sweeping over the barriers of separation and control hitherto established.

44. The so-called 'reform' program of the Botha regime has resulted essentially from these causes. But this attempt of capitalism to substitute changed methods of rule takes place in conditions where it is impossible to stabilise bourgeois domination on any new basis—where, in fact, the activity of the revolutionary proletariat now confronts the bourgeois head-

stewards locals. They were taken up in the youth organisations. From there, in the last two years, democratic organs have been built in townships from street-level upwards—in Cradock and the Eastern Cape, on the East Rand, in Alex and elsewhere.

Overwhelmingly under the banner of the ANC, and fighting for the demands of the Freedom Charter, mass democratic organisation has become an **organising principle**, not only in the main industrial centres, but in every remote area to which the struggles of the last period spread.

Carried into practice by black working people who form the overwhelming majority of SA's population, the slogan of "peoples power", as Elijah Barayi underlined recently, is translated into **organs of working-class power**.

## Democratic power

The emergence and rapid spread of these organs of democratic power—bringing together elected representatives of working people at grassroots level to work out a collective plan of action—has been the clearest sign of the **revolutionary** character of the struggles that have begun.

Bodies of this kind have characterised every working-class revolution since the Paris Commune in 1871—from the soviets of the Russian revolutions in 1905 and 1917 and the German revolution in 1918, through the factory councils in Italy in 1919-20, the *juntas* in the Spanish revolution of 1931-7, to the *cordones* in Chile before Pinochet's counter-revolutionary coup in 1973.

Such bodies arose for a variety of immediate reasons—as *ad hoc* strike committees, action committees, defence committees, etc. But they became, as the Marxist Trotsky, Chairman in 1905 of the Petrograd soviet in Russia, wrote "a special revolutionary organisation capable of quickly getting hold of the popular masses and making them ready for revolutionary action under the leadership of the workers." (*History of the Russian Revolution*, p.35)

Such bodies are not merely fighting instruments of struggle against the ruling class. They are at the same time **embryos of a new state power**

**in the making—the democratic rule of the working class.**

In the course of 1917 the Russian working class led a struggle which overthrew the dictatorship of the Tsar, and took power into its own hands. The foundations of that new state power lay in the soviets which were established during the revolution.

Lenin, leader of the Bolshevik party through which the Russian workers took power in 1917, saw in the soviets those features which identified them as embryos of working-class rule.

Their source of power was "not a law previously discussed and enacted by parliament, but the direct initiative of the people from below, in their local areas".

Through them "the police and the army, which are institutions divorced from the people and set against the people," were replaced "by the direct arming of the whole people".

Officialdom was "either similarly replaced by the direct rule of the people themselves or at least placed under special control", becoming not only elected but also subject to recall.

Officials "are reduced...from a privileged group holding 'jobs' remunerated on a high, bourgeois scale" to "workers of a 'special arm of the service' whose remuneration **does not exceed** the ordinary pay of a competent worker."

In sum, soviet power was a higher form of democracy, a "revolutionary dictatorship... It is an entirely different kind of power from the one that generally exists in the parliamentary bourgeois-democratic republics of the usual type still prevailing in the advanced countries of Europe and America." (Lenin, *The Dual Power*, Collected Works, 24, pp.38-9)

## Embryo

Who cannot see the embryo of all these features in the democratic organs created in our recent struggles? Though not fully-fledged "soviets", they can be described as "semi-soviets".

Precisely because of these embryonic features of mass democratic power, these bodies are intolerable to the rulers of our society. As 'Law and Order' Minister Le Grange put it: **"Any efforts to erect alternative**

**structures would not be tolerated. Our enemies (i.e. the working-class majority—Editor) cannot be allowed to create the impression that they are capable of maintaining their own administration. The State's power and institutions must be protected and maintained."** (*Citizen*, 19/2/86)

## Obstacle

In our struggle for democracy, the main obstacle which stands in the way is the machinery of this apartheid state—its murderous armed forces, its callous bureaucracy, its prisons, its courts—still firmly rooted in the support of nearly 5 million privileged whites.

Under the hammer-blows of the state, foundations for a new democratic workers' state that have begun to be built can suffer reverses. But the experience of the 'semi-soviets' cannot be obliterated. Whatever setbacks they may suffer, they will rise again, the stronger, in the bigger upsurges to come.

Lenin, writing the above-quoted passages in April 1917, was identifying features of the Russian soviet power which were also as yet incipient. The working class took power only by smashing the remnants of the old state machine in a mass insurrection in October.

The 'semi-soviets' in SA of 1984-6 point **in the direction** of such an insurrection, **in the direction** of a new state of workers' democracy to replace the present apartheid dictatorship.

But what role can the liberal capitalists be expected to play in defeating the obstacle which stands in our way—this monstrous state machine?

Comrade Maharaj said in the BBC broadcast that "we'll define who sits on our side of the table on the basis of their relationship to the current state and power structures." On this basis he invited Bloom and Ball to the democratic 'side'. How does the ANC leadership see the relationship of such capitalists to the "current state and power structures"?

Journalist Howard Barrell, reporting "recent discussion with ANC sources", asserts that, in dealing with the 'progressive' capitalists and their spokesmen:

on with the inescapable 'social danger' (in Trotsky's words) of being overthrown.

## **Bourgeois 'reform' against democracy**

45. As everyday experience teaches, there is nothing democratic about Botha's 'reform' program—even while he abolishes the ban on mixed marriages, or partially removes influx control, or concedes a franchise to coloured and Indian people in separate so-called 'parliamentary' chambers, or moves towards incorporating certain Africans in central government.

The liberal bourgeois who urge Botha to reform "faster" maliciously sow the illusion that these steps of the regime are intended to form, or could form, the beginning of an evolution to capitalist democracy—of votes for all, civil rights, and so on. Nothing could be further from the truth.

No section of the capitalist class is willing to countenance *One Person One Vote in an Undivided South Africa*—the only democratic constitution through which the right of the black majority to determine their own future could be expressed.

46. All the 'reform' schemes of the bourgeois are designed to divide the blacks, to frustrate the social and political aspirations of the working class, to maintain the present capitalist monopoly of economic ownership and power, and to keep at all costs the present military-police state power fundamentally intact at the centre.

This is the whole meaning of the liberal bourgeoisie's 'federalism' and of Botha's plans for so-called 'power-sharing'. When they speak of 'universal franchise' now, they couple this with various devices to ensure the majority vote has no decisive power. This is simply capitalist dictatorship by another means; dictatorship in the cloak of democratisation; counter-revolution disguised as reform.

47. But the impossibility of overcoming even temporarily the explosive class contradictions built up within the system has been shown in the unviability of 'reform' schemes—in the way they are now discredited before they can even be implemented.

48. The idea of a general improvement in the conditions of life under the continued control of the present state and the bosses in any shape or form is refuted by the fact that the oppression and economic hardship of the black working class has increased parallel with every step and utterance of 'reform'.

When COSATU President Elijah Barayi, at Orlando Stadium on May Day, pointed to the teargas and asked sarcastically of Botha: "Are these your reforms? To hell with all the reforms!"—he spoke from the heart of the masses' daily experience.

The increasingly widespread conscious rejection of so-called "free enterprise" in favour of "socialism"—by more than 75% of blacks in some opinion polls recently—runs together with the growing certainty that political power itself must pass directly into the

hands of the majority or nothing significant will change.

This consciousness now forms the main stumbling block to the strategies of the ruling class, which they can find no means of getting round.

49. All the reform schemes, both of Botha and of the liberals, involve an attempt to develop, and then use against the black working class, a new layer of black petty bourgeois to bolster and mask the dictatorship of capital.

But the black middle class is historically squeezed out of any role in production and unable to stand on its own feet because of the pressures both of apartheid and monopoly capitalism. It can now be cultivated and used by the regime and the ruling class only as the most blatant, nauseating, corrupt and self-seeking stooges and collaborators.

This fact guarantees the unworkability of these schemes for any length of time. The uncompromising hostility of the great bulk of the black working class towards these schemes prevents all but a thin layer of the most disreputable petty-bourgeois gangsters and sharks from compromising with them.

Most of the black middle class, especially the lower layers, are impelled to go with the working class, although the middle class intellectual strata at the same time still hope to ride forward on the workers' backs.

## **Revolt of the least secure whites against capitalist 'reform'**

50. Meanwhile, the mere fact of government 'reform' of this paltry character awakens in the white working class and lower middle class well-founded fears that their special privileges of the past will be sold out—that they will be sacrificed on the altar of monopoly capitalist interests; that all concessions to the blacks must inevitably be at their expense.

The generations of 'white' supremacy have not hidden from these strata the capitalist supremacy that reigns in this guise. Class-descendants of white workers whose 1922 rebellion against the mine-owners was crushed by the white government of the time with bullets and aerial bombing; children and grandchildren of once-destitute 'poor whites'—these people sense their powerlessness to sustain themselves independently, pressed as they are on the one side by the rapacity of big business and on the other by the movement for equality of the blacks.

51. In the marrow of their bones they know that for decades their position has been secured only because 'the powers that be' needed them as counterweight politically to the growing force of black labour.

Thus even the first confession of the unviability of white supremacy by the regime, even the beginning of a turn by the ruling class towards political concessions to the blacks, has raised the vision of their disinheritance. The tenuous basis of their social privilege makes them react to the vision as though it were already real.

"it seems the ANC envisages a two-tier alignment around itself, based on a distinction between 'revolutionary forces' and 'forces for change'... (which latter) comprise those people and organisations (mainly white) beginning to overcome the classic SA liberal dilemma: They denounce apartheid but attempt to steer a middle course between that denunciation and direct identification with, or involvement in, mass mobilisation against apartheid."

Barrell cites the capitalist politician Van Zyl Slabbert, who resigned recently from parliament, as an example of those the ANC leadership had in mind.

"These 'forces for change' must, in the ANC's view, be weaned away from any residual confidence in the current government and state system and be drawn into as close an alliance as possible with the primary grouping, the 'revolutionary forces' ". (*Weekly Mail*, 21-7/3/86)

But, whatever their criticisms of the current government, can liberal capitalists or their representatives be "weaned away from any residual confidence" in the current **state system**? Can they become allies of a revolutionary mobilisation for democracy, however many 'tiers' such an alliance may have?

## Parliamentary democracy

In many advanced capitalist countries, the capitalist class rules on the basis of parliamentary democracy. Where this has been achieved on the basis of universal suffrage, it has been through the struggle of the working class. To the extent that it allows the working class to raise its material, cultural, and educational level—preparing it to assert its claim to rule—bourgeois democracy is beneficial for the working class.

But if democracy confronts the ruling class today in SA in its revolutionary 'semi-soviet' form—this is precisely because the **material conditions for bourgeois democracy have not existed, do not and cannot exist in SA.**

In the modern world, bourgeois or parliamentary democracy based on universal franchise has depended principally on the ability of the ruling class to secure a relative class peace (confine the class struggle within 'parliamentary limits') by making concessions which raise the

living standards of the working class.

Capitalism in SA developed late, when the world was already dominated by the big monopolies of the imperialist countries, basing their profits on competing in mass production of cheap goods for the world market.

To carve out a niche in this market, the SA capitalist class has depended on cheap labour, maintained through the enslavement of the black majority under white rule.

The capitalist class has based itself on excluding the majority from the right to vote for central government, and on sustaining or fostering **divisions** in order to rule: in the first place, on the division between privileged white and oppressed black, and, thereafter, on division upon division among blacks themselves.

Today, with SA capitalism squeezed even more tightly by the world crisis of capitalism—forced to attack workers' living standards—the economic scope for concessions on the question of democracy is less than ever. 'Theoretically', the Bantustan policy, the tri-cameral constitution, have been based on "extension of the franchise." In reality, what has been 'handed out' is a fictitious currency.

These "voting rights" for "parliaments" without real power merely serve to expose the **separation** of state power from popular control—and its increasing concentration in the hands of the white military and bureaucracy.

Its rule based on this grotesque machinery, and aided by gangster puppets in the Bantustans and townships, the capitalist class now confronts the spectre of democratic organs of workers' power, rooted in a black working class stronger and better organised than ever in SA's history.

The appearance of the 'semi-soviets' is living confirmation of the position consistently explained by *Inqaba*—that the struggle for democracy in SA is nothing less than a struggle for working-class power **against the regime and the whole capitalist class.**

Le Grange screams that the working class "cannot be allowed to create the impression that they are capable of maintaining their own administration." But the position of the so-called 'progressive' capitalists is fundamentally no different on this question.

"Sliding towards anarchy" wailed

the *Financial Mail*, (23/5/86) in an editorial condemning people's courts. In the same issue it quoted the comment of Transvaal Law Society President Edward Southey that "in any civilised country the administration of justice must be carried out by the State. The over-riding maxim, he adds, must be: 'No person can take the law into his own hands' a view most, including the *FM*, would endorse."

The majority must not "take the law into" its own hands! No—so far as the whole capitalist class is concerned, the majority must rather submit to the law as administered by the apartheid courts and bureaucracy, and enforced by bullets, whips and teargas—in the name of capitalist "civilisation."

## Watchword

"The State's power and institutions must be protected and maintained", says Le Grange. Is this not inevitably the watchword of the whole capitalist class, regarding the state which defends its property—a position from which it cannot be "weaned away"?

Hence—as Tony Bloom conceded recently—most businessmen "welcomed" the State of Emergency "as a forlorn hope of restoring stability". (*Star*, 24/8/86) Hence businessmen sit, together with the police and military, on the semi-secret "Joint Management Committees" responsible regionally for "security management" and controlled by the State Security Council. These bodies are now reportedly involved in the so-called "reabsorption" camps, trying to indoctrinate young ex-detainees, and recruit new spies and informers.

It is true that the liberal capitalists realise that the old *baasskap* machinery with its crude methods is now an insufficient means for holding the working class in check—indeed, merely an intolerable fetter on its aspirations.

Unable to rule in the old way, the ruling class searches for new ways to rule. In the process, under the huge pressures from below, splits inevitably open up.

Our movement needs to highlight these ruling-class splits, to show its

52. The economic crisis is now just beginning to affect the least educated whites particularly with unemployment. 'White, coloured and Indian' registered unemployment, previously low, rose by over 130% last year.

White workers, accustomed to protection of their jobs and wage levels without a fight, have been shocked at the cutbacks imposed on them, especially in the civil service. The white transport unions in government service, for instance, accepted staff cuts of 50 000 as necessary, and were then flabbergasted to find another 25 000 were to be cut.

While white civil service unions, licking their master's hand, have been accepting pay rises as low as 10% (i.e. a real fall) "because of the poor state of the economy", their members see cabinet Ministers this year take rises of 35% (to R115 000) and MPs of 22% (to R58 000)!

Now the government moves even towards the privatisation (i.e. the sale to the monopolies) of para-state corporations on which so many white jobs have traditionally depended. (Roughly 46% of the white workforce is employed in the public sector; among Afrikaners the figure is 60%.)

53. In fact, the long-standing social pact between capital and white labour, for which the Nationalist regime formerly stood guarantor, has been decisively broken, although the effects of this have only begun to emerge.

54. On the lower end of the social scale, hunger is setting in among the poorest whites for the first time since the 1930s. 28 white schools in Johannesburg, for example, are now providing feeding schemes and some have set up soup kitchens for pupils' unemployed parents.

In scenes which five years ago would have been considered impossible in South Africa, some unemployed whites can be seen lining up for casual manual work for as little as R5 a day—employers loading them onto trucks like 'kaffirs'.

These events, themselves wholly untypical of the condition of the great majority of whites, nevertheless stand out as the visible indicators of a deep-running process of polarisation within white society on class lines. The old social glue which held them together is dissolving fast.

55. White farmers and middle- or small-scale capitalists, who fear that concessions to the blacks will start an unstoppable avalanche which will destroy them, make up the main sponsors and supporters of the ultra-right. They draw behind them the least secure sections of the white working-class and lower middle-class, disaffected with the government.

But they will be unable to find any way out of their predicament on the road of right-wing reaction. It is this that will prepare the way, potentially, for the breaking up of the camp of reaction and for winning over at least part of the lower classes or strata of whites to revolution.

56. The process in which the white working class and lower middle class are now caught up must be

given meticulous attention by the leaders and activists of our movement.

If understood and approached correctly—if the consciousness of the entire organised black working class is raised so as to actively widen and take full advantage of the class rift now opening among the whites—then we can find the route to the break-up of the state, and an incalculable saving in black lives and suffering in the course of the revolution.

## Objective impasse in bourgeois politics

57. Both to left and to right, whether on the path of 'reform' or reaction, bourgeois society in SA is now caught in a blind alley.

It may be helpful to sketch further some of the essential features of this in bourgeois politics, before moving on to deal with the reflection of the contradictions in the various white parties.

58. In an article published in the *Sunday Times* (25/5/86), shortly before the second state of emergency, Carl Boshoff, former leader of the Broederbond and now of the Volkswag 'cultural' organisation aligned to the Conservative Party, set out in sober language the basic unhappiness of the right wing of the ruling class over the government's 'reform' strategy:

Botha's 1983 constitution, which claimed to reinforce white rule by including coloureds and Indians in a subordinate role and excluding Africans, had (he pointed out) proved a failure in this purpose. Now further reform was being proposed.

"It is not surprising that the exclusion of blacks (by which Boshoff means Africans) is now put forward as the main reason for this failure. However, the promises of 1983 are simply repeated: if we only accept the inclusion of blacks, then peace and quiet will descend upon us, outside acceptance will follow and economic recovery will ensue."

Although safeguards are promised, "one should face this matter realistically. Blacks cannot be added to the system on an equal footing without obtaining power at the expense of whites..." (and, he generously adds, "coloured and Indians.")

"And it would seem most unlikely that agreement will be reached on distribution of rights and power and privileges acceptable to all..."

"It should be kept in mind that black leaders have followers: followers have their expectations and they can bring all kinds of pressure to bear on their leaders to distribute the fruits of power in a more equitable way than that which prevailed under the old dispensation.

"The country is led to believe that some sort of magic formula will be found which will 'prevent one group from being dominated by others'.

"It will serve sound reason to realise that such a formula does not exist."

59. Leaving aside the humbug that the 1983 Constitution extends any real political power to coloured or Indian people, these arguments of the right wing of the bourgeois show the extreme danger they perceive in any move away from the maintenance of exclusive white supremacy towards changes which increase scope for the African masses to exercise any pressure whatsoever upon the government.

weakening and deepen its divisions. This will be achieved by strengthening the struggle of the working-class for democratic power. But these splits do not mean that the capitalists can become anything other than **opponents of the mobilisation of the working-class.**

In the search for a new way to rule, the liberal capitalists and their spokesmen are, in their own way, experimenting with the methods used by the ruling class in the advanced capitalist countries for maintaining control. As the working class has increased in strength in these countries, parliamentary democracy has rested increasingly on the capacity of **reformist** leaders of the workers' organisations to confine the class struggle within 'legal' and 'safe' limits.

No less than any other form of capitalist rule, parliamentary democracy rests in the last resort on the state machine—on a standing army, police force, and bureaucracy which (in Lenin's words), "stands above the people". In contrast to soviet democracy, parliamentary democracy "hampers and stifles the independent political life of the masses, their direct participation in the **democratic** organisation of the life of the state from the bottom up." (Lenin, *Tasks of the Revolutionary Proletariat*, Collected Works, 24, pp. 68-9)

In parliamentary democracies it is *principally on pro-capitalist leaders*

---

**STOP PRESS:** The PFP's education spokesman Horace van Rensburg, describing himself as a "classic liberal", has endorsed the DET's 'reabsorption camps' for young ex-detainees, and the DET's decision to close schools which students are boycotting. He believes the government has undergone a complete change of heart and "would sincerely like to improve black education as much as it is humanly possible and as fast as possible." (!) But it is being hindered by "revolutionary elements in pursuit of the deplorable aim of making the country ungovernable and replacing it by a 'socialist utopia' " (!) Eglin, the PFP leader, refused to repudiate this position outright. (*Weekly Mail*, 19-25/9/86)

---



The 'liberal' capitalists, like Gavin Relly (inset), Chairman of Anglo American, depend completely on the armed forces, like these members of the South African airforce.

of the workers' organisations that the ruling class depends to try and "stifle the independent political life of the masses".

Now the liberal capitalists who see revolutionary workers' power looming in SA, want to test whether the ANC leaders can be used to quieten the revolutionary movement of the black working class, in exchange for some economic and political concessions.

## Anxiety

This is what lay behind, in the BBC broadcast, Tony Bloom's desperation that "we are breeding a generation of... kids whom nobody will be able to control" and the anxiety expressed to the ANC spokesmen as to whether they would be able to "stop" the youth.

Even the support of these capitalists for the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners does not proceed from genuine democratic or humanitarian motives. We want the release of all these leaders, both for their own sake, and because such a retreat by the apartheid regime would raise the confidence and fighting spirit of the black working class.

The so-called "progressive" capitalists, however, have a different

purpose. Chris Ball, writing in the *Sunday Star* a few days after the BBC broadcast, concluded that "Nelson Mandela and his colleagues should be released from jail as a matter of extreme urgency and, while there are no guarantees, I am influenced by the arguments which indicate that he will be a moderating force in the community." (29/6/86)

In May, veteran PFP politician Helen Suzman, after a two-hour visit to Pollsmoor, said that releasing Mandela was "our last hope". Commenting on this, the British *Financial Times* (13/5/85) said: "The danger is that unless black leaders are released, and exiled leaders allowed to return, a new generation of radicalised blacks, already emerging, will take control and demand not only political power but the socialist transformation of the country."

The Commonwealth 'Eminent Persons Group' claimed that Nelson Mandela had said to them in jail that, if troops were removed from the townships, bans lifted on political organisations, and negotiations begun, "He and his colleagues would have to take on the active role of persuading people to call off violent activities and to respect the negotiating process", and that, were he released, "the unity of all black leaders, including Gatsha Buthelezi" could be achieved. (*Mission to SA*, pp. 68, 72).

A recent editorial in the *African Communist* (No. 105, 2nd quarter,

These fears are not fanciful, but a reflection of the real relationship, not simply of racial numbers, but of class forces confronting each other in South Africa now. (In its current move, at least for the time being, away from the rhetoric of 'power-sharing' and 'reform', the Botha government has made its own confession of the formidable class obstacles to the success of its declared strategy.)

60. But when the right-winger Boshoff turns from the dangers of change towards the other side of the bourgeois dilemma—when he addresses the fact (and thus admits) that the old system of white supremacy has begun to break down before the unstoppable rise of black demands for political freedom—his sober realism suddenly deserts him.

He advances, instead of so-called 'power-sharing', the equally unworkable idea of further partitioning South Africa, into 'nation-states' for every national group that might want to rule itself. The Afrikaner must go it alone in a separate territory! Where? How?

61. One of the outstanding features of the ultra-right is the proliferation among its spokesmen of such reactionary-utopian schemas. None of them would ever be possible to implement.

The rise of South African capitalism, with its immense concentrations of mining, industry and large-scale agriculture in or around the metropolitan centres, has forever ruled out any viability in the Balkanisation of the country. That has been demonstrated already in the collapse, or rather semi-collapse, of the Bantustan policy.

The conflict in South Africa is really about who controls these means of production—the land, the mineral and industrial sources of wealth—and the mighty labour force which alone can put them to social use.

62. Marx wrote: "As in private life one distinguishes between what a man thinks and says of himself and what he really is and does, still more in historical struggles must one distinguish the phrases and fancies of the parties from their real organism and their real interests, their conception of themselves from their reality."

In the 'best' traditions of parliamentary cant, the debate between the white parties presents itself as a pious argument over how the conflicting claims of racial and language-groups in SA to 'self-determination' can best be reconciled, so as to ensure the maximum freedom of all!

63. Stripped of its deceptive wrappings, however, the real program of every section of the bourgeoisie (from the liberals to the far right) is to defend the capitalist monopoly of SA's productive wealth against the black working-class challenge at all costs.

The conscious program of the working class must be to take that wealth and power into its own hands. This is not some optional 'extra' as far as the liberation struggle is concerned, but the cornerstone of a scientific approach to the revolution.

64. Conquest of power by labour itself presents the

only viable solution. This is because, on the one hand only a workers' government, by taking the commanding heights of finance, mining, industry and large-scale agriculture into state ownership and implementing a plan of production, can use the productive forces to the full (including the labour of the unemployed), and can devote the surplus to productive re-investment and other social ends, freed from the fetters of the private profit system.

And because, on the other hand, only a workers' government representing no exploiting minorities but the great labouring mass, can uphold effective guarantees for the protection of all races against discrimination, as well as the language and cultural rights of all national minorities.

65. Thus the working-class solution resolves the economic impasse, the problem of unemployment, poverty and inequality, and the root causes of national division and oppression together.

In contrast all the bourgeois 'solutions'—all the old and new-fangled methods of divide-and-rule—are showing themselves unviable, capable only of inflaming the explosive national and social contradictions already built up. The exponent of each can at best prove only the stupidity of the others' schemes.

That is a measure of the blind alley in which the ruling class now finds itself.

66. We have the situation that the capitalist class can no longer rule South Africa on the old lines, nor can it find a way to switch to new lines without the train coming off the rails.

Out of this contradiction, we have the paradox very important in general perspectives: that a bourgeois regime to the right of Botha—even a Treurnicht regime aiming to roll back the wheel of history—would find itself with no choice but to try to carry out also some program of 'reform'; while a regime going further than Botha in the direction of 'reform' and concessions to the blacks would be obliged at the same time to step up the military-police repression still further.

67. Reform and repression; a zig-zag between these; attempts to combine reform and repression; all the time a descent into social and economic disintegration and turmoil—that is the general pattern, the general course on which SA capitalism is embarked.

68. Along with this, the regime has already assumed—and will inevitably more and more assume—a bonapartist character in order to preserve the system of capitalist class domination in crisis.

Not only are we faced with Presidential rule, raising itself above the checks and balances of even the white parliamentary system of the past. The military-police apparatus, as the essential basis of the state, has begun to become, and will yet more openly be revealed as, the hub of government itself.

The Marxist concept of 'bonapartism', and a grasp of its specific characteristics in South Africa, provides an important tool in understanding the evolution of the regime so far and its likely future development. It is to this that we now turn attention

1986, pp. 6-7) points out that it is the overwhelming rise in support for the ANC inside SA that has:

"forced many elements that are otherwise hostile to the national democratic revolution, including sections of the monopoly bourgeoisie inside and outside our country, to seek contact with the ANC and to promote the idea of a negotiated settlement of the SA problem.

"It is, however, clear"—it continues—"that these forces are seeking a resolution of the struggle in favour of the bourgeoisie. They would like to see a bourgeois democratic transformation which would leave the capitalist system intact and create the possibility for the rapid emergence of a small and medium African capitalist class which would ally itself with the local monopoly bourgeoisie and international capital against the masses of the working people of our country."

Certainly the capitalists are talking to the ANC leaders because of the mass support for the ANC in SA. Certainly they are promoting the idea of "negotiated" settlement.

Certainly they are very concerned that the small and weak African business class is totally inadequate to hold back the force of the black workers. Its development has been held back not merely by the constraints of apartheid, but by the domination of the monopolies, which leave scant room for the rise of 'small or medium' capitalists.

## Taken in

But is the *African Communist* correct in saying that the monopoly capitalists "would like to see a bourgeois-democratic transformation" in SA? Not at all. It seems the SACP leaders are completely taken in by the 'democratic' claims of these so-called 'progressives'. The truth is they are not progressive at all. **Their aim is new divide-and-rule schemes to dilute the strength of the working-class majority, and maintain the central state machine outside its control or influence.**

In a major speech in August 1985, one month before he visited the ANC leaders in Lusaka, Anglo American Corporation boss Gavin Relly maintained that SA consisted of:

"a number of different constituencies... whites, coloureds, urban blacks, Zulus, homelands that have achieved a degree of viability and places like Natal where racial integration is already

relatively far advanced...If the black attitude was that there could be no discussion unless it was about one man one vote in a unitary state then any (negotiating) forum would not go far.... He envisaged a federal system in which everyone had the vote within these different constituencies—some white, some black, and some already integrated—but not directly for the central authority." (*Financial Times*, 12/8/85)

How does this position, which reflects the **material interest** of the ruling class, differ **qualitatively**, from the position of Botha?

## Deflated

In the same speech Gavin Relly even deliberately deflated the popularity of Mandela. If the government were to initiate real negotiations, he said, "a black leadership would emerge and express itself, perhaps including Bishop Tutu, Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, the Zulu leader, and Mr Mandela—though he wondered whether Mr Mandela would discover a constituency if he was released." (*FT*, 12/8/86)

To 'divide and rule', the big capitalists must treat the ANC as merely 'one force among many'—rather than as the organisation overwhelmingly supported by working people in the struggle to transform society. In all their manoeuvres their lasting favourite is Gatsha Buthelezi, the ardent defender of capitalism, who once again at the recent Inkatha Congress indicated his support for federalism: "All over the world there are demonstrations that federal solutions provide an alternative to the Westminster model in a unitary state." (*Business Day*, 7/7/86). He mentioned the "Swiss canton system". Perhaps soon he will be echoing Botha's lunatic ideas about township "city-states."

Clinging to Buthelezi, the big capitalists reconcile themselves as well to his state-supported counter-revolutionary reign of terror in Natal. "You can't expect us to run away from the one black leader who says exactly what we think", said 'progressive' Gavin Relly recently. "I've been told that Buthelezi plays a rough game in Natal. But SA is not for the faint-hearted." (*Business Day*, 2/5/86).

At the same time, on the BBC broadcast, these reactionary blood-

suckers, grown fat on the oppression of black workers, patronisingly refer to the ANC leaders by their first names, and lecture them on the need for equality and harmony! Chris Ball dismisses the fundamental demands of the majority for people's power and the redistribution of wealth as "emotive terms", and Tony Bloom tells them that capitalism gives "people something to reach for"!

To preserve their power and wealth, moreover, the capitalist class depends utterly—for all its 'disclaiming' of this—on the cement of group privilege and racism which holds the ranks of the whites in support of the capitalist state machine.

When Botha shifted firmly onto his right foot, and declared the June State of Emergency, it was not merely to try to reassert the grip of the state over the black working class, but to try and restore confidence and cohesion among the whites, the only basis for the strength of the state.

As the British left reformist weekly, the *New Statesman* recently explained (for once, with some insight): "A SA government that showed any inclination to make concessions of power to the Black majority in the country would instantly lose control of the white political machine.... If senior police officers collectively came to think that 'liberal' Afrikaners were 'going soft' on the Black issue, there would almost certainly be a coup." (27/6/86)

The emergence of the AWB and, more immediately important, the growth in support for the Conservative Party, are signs of the drift to the ultra-right which is the inevitable response of the majority of the whites, **in the first instance**, to the insecurity imposed on them by the unfolding SA revolution.

The emergence of white reaction, outside and inside the state machine, is an additional provocation to the black majority—and to that degree unwelcome to the big capitalists. 'White minority rule', for so long the best guarantee of their profits, is increasingly an albatross around their necks. But, because it provides the basis of the only state machine they have got, they cannot dispense with it.

What the 'progressive' capitalists will reconcile themselves to, as a defence against the revolution, was recently summed up by the *Financial Mail*: "Just which would be a worst-

in these perspectives.

## Parliamentary democracy and bonapartism

69. Looking around the world, it is plain that many different types of capitalist or bourgeois government exist. The classical form of bourgeois rule, however, is **parliamentary democracy**, evolved originally as the representation of the **propertied classes** in an elected assembly exercising control over the state.

Every state machine can be reduced, in Engels' words, to "armed bodies of men". The primary role of the capitalist state is to maintain the property system and laws established for the orderly exploitation of the working masses. For this purpose, to the police and military forces are added courts and judges, prisons and prison warders, tax collectors and a more or less numerous permanent bureaucracy dedicated to preserving the *status quo*.

While the bourgeoisie requires the state to sustain its position as ruling class, it resents the state at the same time whenever the latter encroaches, as it must do, on the bourgeoisie's private interests. To ensure, as far as possible, cheap government, and to check the inherent tendency of the state to raise itself as an autonomous power, the bourgeoisie prefers a parliamentary system—at least so long as the level of struggle between the classes makes this feasible.

70. The bourgeoisie may be 'democratic' as far as its own rights are concerned; its concern for the rights of others is never more than tactical. In other words such rights become altogether dispensable when in conflict with the bourgeoisie's own interests.

This is essential to bear in mind when considering the 'democratic' pretensions of the liberal bourgeois, which is always and everywhere ready for treachery against the working people.

71. What is today viewed internationally as the norm of bourgeois democracy—the right of every adult to vote in the election of a parliamentary government ('universal franchise')—was historically won through the rise of the working class and its demands for political rights, backed by its own organised class power and action.

But this 'norm' has been sustainable on a stable footing only in conditions where the bourgeoisie could concede, together with the franchise, social improvements to make the lot of the proletariat bearable under capitalism, and thus temper the class struggle within parliamentary bounds.

Not accidentally, parliamentary democracy has found its most stable equilibrium, and gained the character of a settled tradition, in the states of advanced, industrialised capitalism which have long dominated the world.

Here the bourgeoisie—after narrowly surviving (especially in Europe) repeated periods of social crisis, revolutionary storms, wars and civil wars—was able to keep to and consolidate parliamentary government over the past generation and more, essentially thanks to the economic upswing of world capitalism after

World War 2, plus the heightened neo-colonial exploitation of the under-developed world.

72. In the latter countries, strangled in their development by international finance capital and the giant multinational monopolies, social crisis has been endemic and parliamentary government has proved to be the exception, not the rule.

While the political hold of the old colonial powers weakened to the point that their colonies were able to wrest independent statehood from them, this has led not to any flowering of bourgeois democracy in the 'Third World' capitalist states, but in the main to unstable dictatorships reflecting economic and social impasse.

Weak bourgeois democracies giving way to states of emergency and suspension of democratic rights; one-party civilian dictatorships with some parliamentary trappings, alternating with outright military-police rule; coups and counter-coups, giving way to the temporary 'restitution of democracy' when military regimes succumb to crisis themselves; then the same cycle over again—this has been the prevalent pattern of capitalist government in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

73. In the advanced countries themselves, as the world has passed from the 25-year upswing of capitalism into a new period of deepening recessions, weak booms, and generalised crisis, so the class struggle has intensified, the polarisation within society has become fundamental in a way not seen for forty years, and (although dimly still at this stage) the limits of parliamentary democracy have begun to come once again into view.

74. In conditions where the bourgeoisie can no longer safely rule by means of parliament, or where at least it proves necessary to restrict the prerogatives of parliament in favour of unleashing the executive power, the state apparatus and its professional commanders gain a relative autonomy, rising above the nation and its warring classes.

Although increased relative autonomy has long been a feature of every capitalist state, in conditions of extreme social tension this tendency assumes qualitatively greater proportions.

The crisis of society becomes reflected in a regime which, for the sake of preserving capitalism, must free itself to a greater extent from direct bourgeois control in order to have the necessary freedom to balance and manoeuvre between the class pressures. At the same time it rests its power essentially on the military and police forces of repression.

Such a regime, whether personified in an individual dictator or presided over by a clique, we refer to as a **bonapartist regime**—a name derived from the dictatorship of Napoleon Bonaparte, established in the aftermath of the great French Revolution of 1789.

75. Marxists distinguish, however, the bonapartism (such as that of Napoleon I) which reflected the turmoil and crisis in society in the course of capitalism's early rise and the consequent first consolidation of bourgeois rule, from the later, and certainly the modern-day, bourgeois bonapartism which

case scenario—a dictatorship of the Left or one of the Right—is open to conjecture. Few, however, who have any insight into the ideological drift of the ANC Freedom Charter and its talk of nationalisation have any doubts on that score. **Anything would be preferable to seeing SA's economy decimated by such crude attempts at 'wealth redistribution' implicit in the doctrine of the Charter.**" (6/12/85; our emphasis—*Editor*)

And if Gavin Relly today reconciles himself to the counter-revolutionary terror of Inkatha, what horrors of white or black vigilanteism will the 'progressive' capitalists not be prepared to countenance in the future, in defence of their system?

We must look behind appearances—look behind the claims that liberals make about themselves—to grasp the underlying truth. In the social crisis that is unfolding it is the anti-democratic character of **all** sections of the capitalists that is the fundamental reality. It is the illusion that any section of the capitalist class can play a democratic role that lies at the root of all the false hopes entertained that there can be a 'negotiated' settlement of the democratic question.

Such an illusion—fed equally by Comrade Maharaj's invitation to Ball and Bloom to join the democratic camp, and by the *African Communist's* seemingly radical 'exposure' of the intentions of the big monopolists in seeking a "bourgeois-democratic transformation"—disarms our movement of the understanding of what is needed to achieve democracy.

## Revolution

Majority rule will be achieved only through a revolution led by the working class—armed with a conscious programme for dismantling the capitalist state machine and establishing in its place a democratic workers' state, organised from bottom to top around the features that Lenin identified in the Russian soviets of 1917.

This will provide the basis for implementing the Freedom Charter, including immediately nationalising, under workers' control and management, the big monopolies—banks, mines, factories and farms—and organising the economy around

democratic planning to serve needs and not profit.

'Big business and the state are two sides of the same bloody coin'. Standing together, they will fall together—that is the overwhelming demand and aspiration of workers and youth, in respect of Ball, Bloom and company.

Together with the struggle of workers in other countries, this will open the road to socialism.

In fact the question as to what role the liberal capitalists would play in a *democratic revolution* was already settled in the Russian revolution of 1917.

In the Russian workers' movement before 1917 it was the Mensheviks, who argued—in the name of 'socialism' and 'Marxism'—that, because the tasks in the impending revolution were 'bourgeois democratic', the liberal capitalists could be allies of the working class in that struggle.

The Mensheviks attributed to the liberal capitalists a progressive role. That view was resolutely opposed by Lenin, Trotsky, and the Bolsheviks—who would eventually lead the working class in taking power in October 1917.

"The social relations of Russia have ripened only for a bourgeois revolution" said Axelrod, a Menshevik leader, at the Unification Congress of the Russian worker's party in 1906. "While this general political lawlessness persists, we must not even so much as mention the direct political fight of the proletariat against other classes for political power.... It is fighting for the conditions of bourgeois development. Objective historical conditions doom our proletariat to an inevitable collaboration with the bourgeoisie in the struggle against our common enemy."

Lenin always saw the need for the working class to identify, expose, and make use of, any splits among the rulers of society. But he entertained no illusions as to what their fundamental significance was. Thus in 1905 he explained that:

"We must be perfectly certain in our minds as to what real social forces are opposed to 'tsarism' (which is a real force perfectly intelligible to all) and are capable of gaining a 'decisive victory'

over it.... The big bourgeoisie, the landlords, the factory owners, and 'society'... cannot be such a force. We see that they do not even want a decisive victory. We know that owing to their class position they are incapable of waging a decisive struggle against tsarism; they are too heavily fettered by private property, by capital and land to enter into a decisive struggle. **They stand in too great need of tsarism, with its bureaucratic, police and military forces for use against the proletariat and peasantry, to want it to be destroyed.**" (*Two Tactics*)

## Justified

The position advanced by Lenin and Trotsky against the liberal capitalists was fully justified by the events of the 1917 revolution.

In February 1917 the Tsar's regime was overthrown. This was in no way due to the liberal capitalists, but as the result of the movement of the working class. In fact, in the months preceding the overthrow, the allegedly 'progressive' capitalists were pleading unsuccessfully with the Tsar to bring them into a government to forestall the revolution. Miliukov, one of their leaders, said: "We are treading on a volcano... The tension has reached its extreme limit... A carelessly dropped match will be enough to start a terrible conflagration... Whatever the government—whether good or bad—a strong government is needed now more than ever before." (Quoted in Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*, p. 47)

The key factor in the collapse of the Tsar's regime in February was the desertion of his troops—oppressed peasants-in-uniform—who spontaneously took the side of the working class movement. Workers and soldiers together established the soviets—the embryos of a new state. Power was there for the taking in their hands—if they went ahead to dismantle the remnants of the old state machine.

But at that point the power was in the hands of the Mensheviks and other leaders with similar illusions in

---

**"The big bourgeoisie, the landlords, the factory owners... stand in too great need of tsarism, with its bureaucratic, police and military forces for use against the proletariat and peasantry, to want it to be destroyed."**

**Lenin, on Russia, in 1905.**

---

reflects the decay and disintegration of the capitalist system.

It should also be noted that the term 'bonapartist' does not refer to a single structure of government, identical everywhere, but rather to particular qualities or features which may prevail under a variety of outward forms.

Although bonapartism is a polar opposite of parliamentary democracy among bourgeois regimes, it does not at all follow that a bonapartist dictatorship cannot co-exist with, or use, parliamentary forms.

76. In this connection, it is useful to quote the analysis made by Trotsky (in the above-quoted work) of the Doumergue government which came to power in France in the crisis of February 1934:

"the Doumergue government appeared on the scene between the rehearsal of the civil war by the fascists (6 February) and the general strike of the proletariat (12 February). As soon as the irreconcilable camps had taken up their fighting positions at the poles of capitalist society, it wasn't long before it became clear that the adding machine of parliamentarism lost all importance.

"It is true that the Doumergue government, like the Brüning-Schleicher governments (in Germany—*Editor*) in their day, appears at first glance to govern with the assent of parliament. But it is a parliament which has abdicated, a parliament which knows that in case of resistance the government would dispense with it.

"Thanks to the relative equilibrium between the camp of counter-revolution which attacks and the camp of the revolution which defends itself, thanks to their temporary mutual neutralization, the axis of power has been raised above the classes and above their parliamentary representation. It was necessary to seek the head of the government outside of parliament and 'outside the parties'.

"The head of the government has called two generals to his aid. This trinity has supported itself on its right and its left by symmetrically arranged parliamentary hostages. The government does not appear as an executive organ of the parliamentary majority, but as a judge-arbiter between two camps in struggle.

"A government which raises itself above the nation is not, however, suspended in air. The true axis of the present government passes through the police, the bureaucracy, the military clique. It is a military-police dictatorship with which we are confronted, barely concealed with the decorations of parliamentarism. But a government of the sabre as the judge-arbiter of the nation—that's just what *Bonapartism* is.

"The sabre by itself has no independent programme. It is the instrument of 'order'. It is summoned to safeguard what exists. Raising itself *politically* above the classes, Bonapartism like its predecessor Caesarism, for that matter, represents *in the social sense*, always and at all epochs, the government of the strongest and firmest part of the exploiters; consequently, present-day Bonapartism can be nothing else than the government of finance capital which directs, inspires, and corrupts the summits of the bureaucracy, the police, the officers' caste, and the press.

"The 'constitutional reform' about which so much has been said in the course of recent months, has as its sole task the adaptation of the state institutions to the exigencies and conveniences of the Bonapartist government. Finance capital is seeking legal paths that would give it the possibility of each time imposing upon the nation the most suitable judge-arbiter with the forced assent of the quasi-parliament."

77. Finance or monopoly capital rules through

economic pressure essentially, thus keeping a whole variety of forms of capitalist government to heel. This predominant section of the bourgeois—amongst them the 'liberal' bourgeois in South Africa—are thus generally the least dependent on a parliamentary system, in fact, to represent their interests.

Nationally and internationally, the whole bourgeoisie has become a thoroughly reactionary class. For the mass of society, the real alternative to the nightmare of bonapartist dictatorship and repression does not lie in bourgeois democracy, which has outlived itself, but rather in linking the struggle for democratic rights to the need for workers' democracy—an entirely new state system necessary in order to carry through a transition from capitalism to socialism.

78. Marx pointed out that bonapartism is "the only possible form of government in the epoch in which the bourgeoisie has already lost the possibility of governing the people, while the working class has not yet acquired it."

79. Today, in one form or another, bonapartist regimes rule over the greater part of the world.

On the one hand, as already outlined, there are the bonapartist regimes of the capitalist countries gripped by economic crisis and social turmoil, where the bourgeoisie has lost the capacity to rule directly, but where the working class has yet to rise, in organisation, consciousness and leadership, to the task of taking power.

On the other hand, however, there are bonapartist regimes in a number of countries where capitalism has collapsed or been overthrown, but where the proletariat has not been able to take into its own hands, or has been unable to hold, control of society and the state. All the so-called 'socialist countries' today—from the Soviet Union and China, for example, to Cuba, Ethiopia and Vietnam, have governments of a bonapartist type. They are regimes governing, not capitalist states, but workers' states where the working class nevertheless does not directly hold power.

80. Analysing the regime of Stalin in the Soviet Union after the Russian Revolution had degenerated, and workers' democracy had succumbed to bureaucratic dictatorship, Trotsky wrote:

"Caesarism, or its bourgeois form, Bonapartism, enters the scene in those moments of history when the sharp struggle of two camps raises the state power, so to speak, above the nation, and guarantees it, in appearance, a complete independence of classes—in reality, only the freedom necessary for a defence of the privileged. The Stalin regime, rising above a politically atomised society, resting upon a police and officers' corps, and allowing of no control whatever, is obviously a variation of Bonapartism—a Bonapartism of a new type not seen before in history.

"Caesarism arose upon the basis of a slave society shaken by inward strife. Bonapartism is one of the political weapons of the capitalist regime in its critical period. Stalinism is a variety of the same system, but on the basis of a workers' state torn by the antagonism between an organised and armed Soviet aristocracy and the unarmed toiling masses." (*The Revolution Betrayed*, pp.277-8)

81. Whether in the form of bourgeois or proletarian

the liberal capitalists. As Trotsky later explained:

"It had not been seized by them accidentally by way of a Blanquist coup; no, it was openly delivered to them by the victorious masses of the people. Those masses not only did not trust or support the bourgeoisie, but they did not even distinguish them from the nobility and the *bureaucracy*. They put their weapons at the disposal only of the soviets."

But what did the Menshevik—so-called 'socialist'—leaders do with this power?

"...having so easily arrived at the head of the soviets, (they) were worrying about only one question: Will the bourgeoisie, politically isolated, hated by the masses and hostile through and through to the revolution, consent to accept the power from our hands? Its consent must be won at any cost. And since obviously a bourgeoisie cannot renounce its bourgeois programme, we, the 'socialists', will have to renounce ours: we will have to keep still about the monarchy, the war, the land, if only the bourgeoisie will accept the gift of power. In carrying out this operation, the 'socialists' as though to ridicule themselves, continued to designate the bourgeoisie no otherwise than as their class enemy." (*History of the Russian Revolution*, pp. 184-7)

On this basis, the Mensheviks supported the formation of a capitalist 'Provisional Government'—which included the same Miliukov who not many months before had been demanding of the Tsar "strong government" against the revolution!

Despite this class-collaboration by the Menshevik leaders, conditions were overwhelmingly favourable for the working class to carry the revolution to its conclusion—provided it was politically armed to do so. This was what Lenin, Trotsky, and the Bolsheviks did. Explaining that the bourgeois Provisional Government would be incapable of carrying out a single democratic task, Lenin and Trotsky mobilised the working class to prepare to dismantle the remnants of the capitalist state, and take power into its own hands.

"All power to the Soviets!" was the slogan which Lenin raised at this time. This was what was achieved in the October insurrection—around slogans which spelled out the fundamental mass demands, "Bread, Peace, and Land."

Had the working class not taken power, the paralysed Provisional Government would not have survived anyway. Looming instead were the forces of capitalist counter-revolution—which would have im-

posed a vicious military dictatorship.

In SA our movement faces a state machine more formidable by far than the Tsar's dictatorship.

The Tsar's armed forces were recruited from the oppressed and poverty-stricken peasantry. Between them and the revolutionary working class there existed no fundamental barrier. The SA state machine rests on privileged whites who have been taught for generations by their racist leaders to fear and hate the black majority.

In the face of economic crisis, and under the massive pressures on it from below, white society is already in the early stages of disintegration and decay. This will intensify as whites lose confidence in the ability of the ruling class to find a way out of its predicament.

But the SA military-police dictatorship will not collapse 'spontaneously', as did the Tsar's, under the pressure of a working-class movement still following a leadership with illusions in the liberal capitalists.

To defeat the state, the fundamental question is not whether or not liberal capitalists can be 'weaned away' from Botha—but whether the rank-and-file of the state machine can be weaned away from supporting the regime and the bosses alike.

The ultra-right demagogues who will play on the fears and anxieties of the whites as the revolution unfolds can, in reality, offer them neither security nor a guarantee of continued privilege.

The only real guarantee, for white working people as well as black, of a decent future for themselves and their children lies in establishing workers' democracy, and abolishing capitalism.

The rank-and-file of the whites have an instinctive mistrust of the big capitalists. They can be won away from conscious support for reaction not by concessions to the capitalists or white privilege, but only by a **conscious** movement of the black working class. This will need to have developed not only the mass power, confidence and determination, **but also the clarity of purpose**, to offer to the ranks of the whites this real alternative—of workers' democracy with no special privilege for anyone, and of a socialist future.

Disastrously, in the period which followed the 1917 revolution, the position of Lenin, Trotsky and the

Bolsheviks on the liberal capitalists was abandoned and buried by the rulers of the Soviet Union and by the Communist Parties around the world which depended on them.

This was the consequence of the usurping of power from the working class by a privileged bureaucratic caste in the 1920s—for reasons explained previously by *Inqaba*.

This Stalinist bureaucracy continued to rest on the basis of a nationalised and planned economy—and, for a whole period, took that economy forward. But, with its privilege over the masses dependent on the suppression of workers' democracy, it has been terrified of a democratic workers' revolution anywhere in the world.

## Resurrected

Hence it has resurrected—through the Communist Parties—the idea of a "progressive" role for one or other section of the capitalist class.

It pursues this without even an elementary regard for consistency. In some countries it supports alliances with "national" capitalists allegedly struggling against the imperialist monopolies. In SA it seeks to ally the workers with the liberal monopoly capitalists—themselves part and parcel of imperialist finance capital!

Whatever the situation, CP leaders always make a case for alliance with some section of the class enemy—and try to hold the workers back from a struggle for state power and socialist transformation. Even in the most advanced industrialised countries they argue for postponement of the struggle for socialism, in favour of an allegedly 'broad' alliance with capitalists.

In defeated revolution after revolution in the course of this century, it is written in the blood of the workers' movement that reliance on so-called "progressive" capitalists and the Menshevik "stages" theory is an obstacle in the way of the working class. Rather than even securing a victory for a 'first' democratic revolution—struggles fought on this programme have ended in victory for counter-revolution.

When, in the BBC broadcast, Comrade Maharaj on behalf of the ANC leadership invites the liberal capitalists to take their place on the 'democratic' side of a future

bonapartism (and there are numerous varieties of each), all bonapartist regimes today are features of the historical delay of the world revolution.

Considered from the point of view of the broad sweep of the historical process, they are regimes standing between bourgeois democracy and workers' democracy. They represent in no sense a necessary historical stage, however. The opening for them is created out of the contradiction between, on the one hand, the over-ripeness of world capitalism for replacement by workers' democracy and world socialism, and, on the other hand, the retarded progress of the revolutionary proletariat towards this goal.

82. Through the development of the modern world economy, there has been a tremendous shift in the objective relationship of class forces in favour of the proletariat. This is an international phenomenon, which has its reflection in every national situation to some degree.

On the one hand, that is the main underlying cause of the general crisis of bourgeois democracy, which, together with economic crisis, gives rise to the general tendency towards bonapartist rule today.

On the other hand, however, it confronts the working class nationally and internationally with the necessity of leading the struggle for even the most basic rights and economic needs of all oppressed people through a program for socialist revolution.

83. It is in this general context that we must view the development of the South African racist regime through its history; analyse the turn of the regime to ever more undisguised bonapartism today; and, along with this, work out the revolutionary strategy and tactics necessary for the black working class to bring about its overthrow.

## Historical character of South African regimes

84. The entire history of South Africa since colonial conquest has demonstrated the incapacity of the bourgeoisie to rule here by means of democracy. At the same time, the characteristic form of government in the past has not been the type of bonapartist regime seen elsewhere.

Rather than the state usurping all power and expropriating even the bourgeoisie politically, the governmental system historically established in South Africa (on the foundations of colonial rule) has involved a unique form of bourgeois-democratic control of the state by a parliamentary government elected solely by the white minority, running parallel with the total exclusion from 'civil society' of the black majority.

85. Bourgeois parliamentary democracy and associated rights for whites in South Africa have always rested on the subjugation of the toiling majority, the rightless, voteless blacks—much as ancient Greek democracy rested on the free citizens' exploitation of a slave majority.

Historical analogies, however, have their limits. It would be wrong to imply that all whites stand or have

stood in the same relation, either to the government, parliament and the state or to the mass of the black population. The history of the whites is a history also of class division and class struggle among themselves.

The racially exclusive 'parliamentary democracy' of SA served historically to incorporate whites of all classes into the constitutional system, for the purpose of holding down the black majority. More than this, however, the conflict among sections of the capitalist class and between the different classes of whites needed to find means of expression in a way which did not endanger the ability of the whole system to keep the black masses in check. The parliament of the whites has served this purpose, too, in the general interests of capitalism.

86. Nevertheless, even that limited democracy has been eroded with the advancing industrialisation of South Africa over the decades, the ever greater challenge of the black working class, and the general crisis besetting capitalist rule now.

The route to the present bonapartist Presidency—which is only the forerunner of even more exaggerated dictatorship—can be traced through the main phases in the history of the white parliament itself, especially in the last forty or fifty years.

87. Since 1948, government has been in the unchallenged hands of the National Party.

Politically, it is the cement of Afrikaner nationalism which has served to bond white workers and the lower strata of the white middle class to the capitalist state. Under Malan's, Strydom's and Verwoerd's governments, in a different manner from that of previous administrations, state policy was expressly aimed at protecting and advancing white privilege while holding the black majority in subjection.

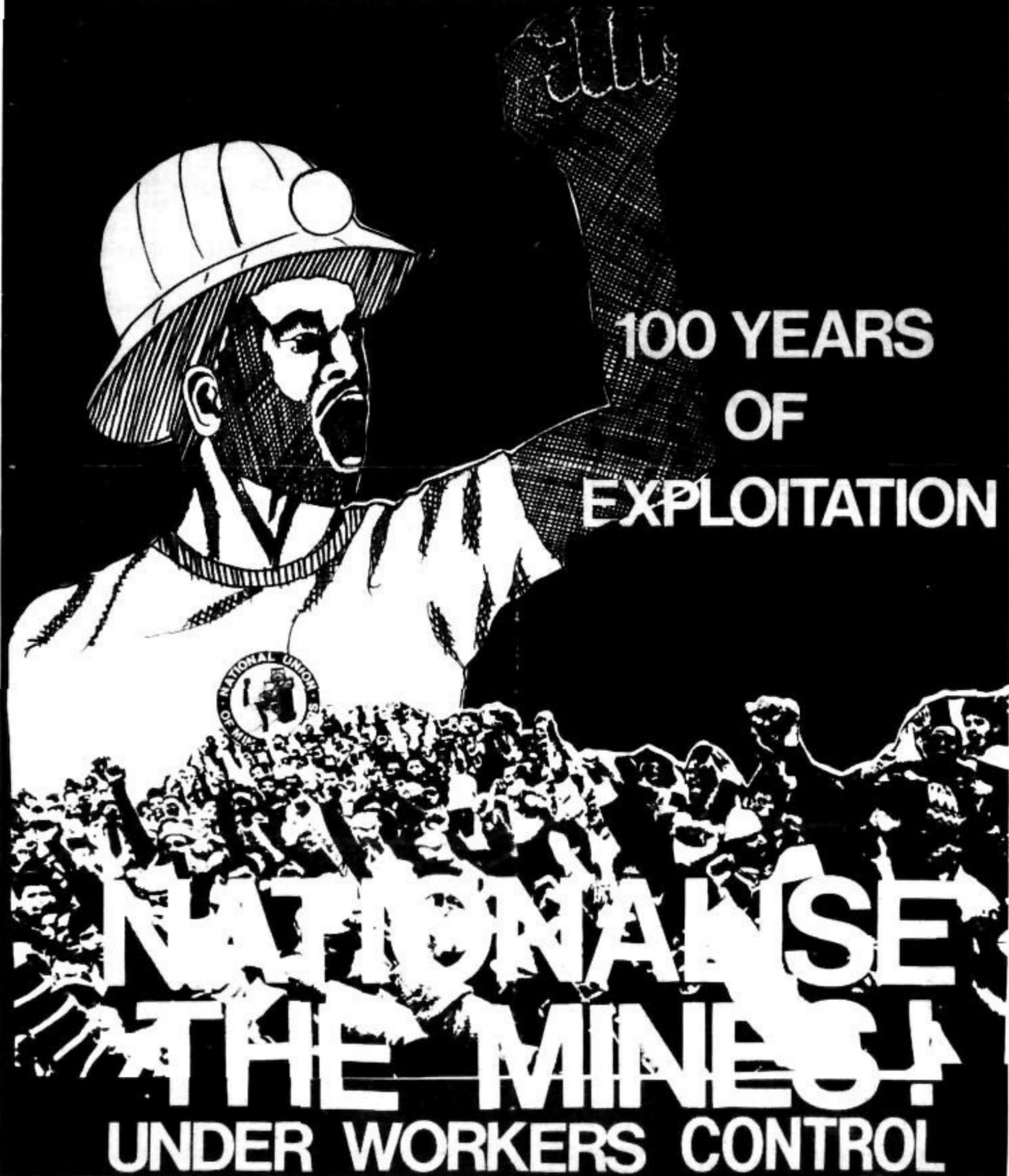
Economically, the domination of the white parliamentary scene by the National Party was underpinned by the unforeseen twenty-five years of post-War capitalist boom. The advance of production and profit-making provided the means for sustained material concessions to the lower ranks of the whites.

Not only did this blunt the class antagonisms among the whites for a whole generation, permitting an unprecedented social cohesion amongst them. It also enabled the Nationalists specifically to hold the support they had earlier won among the Afrikaner workers and lower middle-class people; and it provided a basis for this government to win significant English-speaking support as well among these strata.

88. However, over the last decade and more, with the rising pressure upon white capitalist rule exerted by the black working class, and with economic crisis at the same time setting in, the domination of the National Party over white politics has begun to erode. The breakaway of the HNP in 1969, the formation of the Conservative Party in 1982, and the increasing divisions still in the NP itself are all symptoms of this trend.

To understand adequately the social process that is taking place, and the lines along which white politics, the regime and the state are likely to develop, it is necessary to trace the threads back historically,

**1946: 70 000 MINERS STRIKE  
TWELVE KILLED  
1986: VIVA NUM**



**100 YEARS  
OF  
EXPLOITATION**

**NATIONALISE  
THE MINES!  
UNDER WORKERS CONTROL**

at least so as to see what the Nationalist regime has represented in the history of South Africa, and what the crisis of that regime really signifies for the future.

89. The victory of the National Party in 1948 over Smuts' United Party represented not merely an electoral change of government, but a qualitatively new phase in white South African politics.

The standard refrain of liberals is that 1948 brought a change from 'democracy' to 'fascism'; from enlightened and humanitarian government evolving towards ever-greater freedom and political rights for the blacks, to beastly authoritarianism and apartheid. That is a complete falsification and whitewash of pre-1948 governments, all of which maintained and extended segregation and white supremacy as their avowed policy.

We insist on the basic continuity between the pre- and post-1948 regimes in this respect.

90. Nevertheless the significance of 1948 as a watershed in SA history is indisputable: but its significance lies in the qualitatively different combination of social forces among the whites on which the new regime rested. This change, in turn, was necessitated by the rise of the African working class, particularly during the Second World War, now posing a challenge to capitalist power on a qualitatively new scale.

In reality a grave, potentially even fatal, crisis for bourgeois rule had begun to set in in South Africa, and the coming to power of the Nationalist government represented a decisive turn of the ruling system to meet that threat.

To understand this is to appreciate the full implications for the very survival of capitalist rule now that the NP regime itself is gripped by insoluble crisis and contradictions.

91. From Union in 1910 to 1948, successive bourgeois parliamentary governments had gained and lost office via constantly shifting political alignments between mining magnates, financiers, industrialists, commercial capitalists, farmers of different types and scale, urban petty bourgeois and workers. These relatively unstable coalitions ran in conjunction with constant divisions, realignments and reformations of the white parties.

These complex shifts in white politics were an expression of many elements in the relations between the classes, and fractions of classes, which it is not our purpose to elaborate here. Central among them was the conflict between the monopoly capitalists linked with imperialism, and the aspiring (chiefly Afrikaner) 'national' capitalist class. This, however, was fought out in the context—always decisive in the last analysis—of the overall struggle between capital and the mass of the proletariat. The divisions and shifting position of white labour, and the instability also in the politics of the white middle classes, was a feature of this period.

92. Such constant change and instability in white politics posed no serious threat to the survival of capitalism as long as the rising black working class had yet to assert its challenge to the bourgeois as

the paramount element over-riding all other class considerations. So long could the issues dividing whites be settled through parliamentary channels, and the governments themselves be made and broken on the shifting sands of the white parliamentary plane.

93. The 1939-48 Smuts government was the last of this general type. It directly represented big capital, mainly the English-speaking mineowners, industrialists and financiers linked to the British imperialist monopolies. But to hold office it had to balance and manoeuvre constantly in an attempt to hold together a contradictory combination of whites, comprising also rich landowners, professionals, traders, lower middle-class people and workers, both English and Afrikaans-speaking.

'Slim Jannie' was an acknowledged maestro of this balancing act carried out within a parliamentary framework.

94. J.B.M. Hertzog had broken with Smuts in 1913 over the latter's compromises with British imperialism. Leading the then National Party, Hertzog had thereafter come to power in 1924 in a Pact with the Labour Party. But the attempt of this government to promote the progress of 'national' capitalism in this way came to grief, partly because it lacked a firm enough social footrest at that point effectively to take on the monopolies, and partly because the world depression and consequent crisis of the SA economy cut across the development of domestic industry.

95. The 1934 coalition, and then fusion, of Hertzog's National Party with Smuts's SAP followed. From the angle of monopoly capital, this meant the return of its direct representatives to office, now with a broadened basis of rule. From the standpoint of the emergent Afrikaner capital represented by Hertzog, it was an attempt now to protect its interests, and hopefully advance, through a broader 'South African' alliance with the English and foreign monopolies.

The hardline 'Purified' Nationalists under Malan fought against this, seeking instead to promote the rise of an Afrikaner national capitalist class on independent lines, in opposition to the established monopolies and to British imperialism.

96. The outbreak of the Second World War required of the SA government an open declaration of its subordination to the interests of British imperialism, by entering the War. This Smuts was ready to do, but it forced the departure of Hertzog from the government, and at the same time accelerated the departure of Hertzog's supporters to Malan.

Smuts survived, now as Prime Minister, but the government's social base was considerably weakened. That, moreover, was not all that changed.

97. The War, and its aftermath, saw a qualitative development in the industrialisation of South Africa, and the growing strength of the increasingly combative black working class. The rising pressure of the blacks, accompanied by a weakening of the

negotiating table, it is the same incorrect conceptions of Menshevism and Stalinism which he is voicing.

Similarly, when Comrade Mbeki retreats, in the broadcast, from the promise of the Freedom Charter to nationalise the monopolies—even while conceding this is formally ANC policy—he does so in pursuit of an alliance with the liberal monopoly capitalists.

Even under the present repressive dictatorship, working people overwhelmingly tell opinion pollsters that they reject capitalism. Recently the managing director of Checkers' supermarket chain conceded that, in a survey, **not one** of his thousands of black employees supported free enterprise. (*Financial Times* 27/8/86). Yet, in the BBC broadcast, the ANC spokesmen speak only vaguely of "restructuring" the economy, the need for a "redistribution" of wealth, and "a bigger state intervention" in the economy. Even this is put over in almost apologetic tones.

Under pressure from Tony Bloom, Comrade Mbeki says, even regarding state intervention: "It may very well be that the general opinion that emerges—as a result of...open political discussion in SA which you can't have today...that the majority of people will say no, that's the wrong way"—and praises monopolists Ball, Bloom and Chapman as "outstanding business people" who "will play a very important role in a future economy."

Renouncing our programme will not turn capitalists into friends of the working class. They want the Freedom Charter renounced, so as to confuse and disarm the working class.

Many active workers and youth look to the South African Communist Party to advance, within the ANC, the standpoint of the working-class majority. They require from the SACP leadership the same clarity in guiding the struggle for working-class power as was provided by Lenin in *Russia in 1917*.

What is the present position of the SACP on the tasks which face the working class in the SA revolution?

In London recently, Comrade Joe

**"There are people who advocate 'workers' control' over production as the main objective of working-class organisation... The problem with people advocating 'socialism now' is that they expect those Blacks who cannot read or write to run socialist industries and mines... The result would be economic crisis."**

**"Nyawuza" in *African Communist*, 4th Qtr, 1985, pp. 56-8.**

**"The emancipation of the working classes must be achieved by the working classes themselves. We cannot therefore cooperate with people who openly state that the workers are too uneducated to emancipate themselves and must be freed from above by philanthropic persons from the upper and lower middle classes."**

**Marx and Engels, Letter to Bebel, 17-18 September, 1879.**

Slovo, recently-elected Chairman of the Party, ANC NEC member, and a leader of Umkhonto We Sizwe, made an important policy speech on the occasion of the 65th anniversary of the Party.

Workers and youth will be encouraged by his references to ending "the political domination of the old ruling class" and of constructing "a new state apparatus" which would facilitate the "continuing drive towards a socialist future".

Surely Comrade Slovo must mean the need to dismantle the capitalist state and establish in its place a democratic workers' state? These steps, together with nationalisation of the monopolies under democratic workers' control and management, and economic planning, are the essential preconditions for a "continuing drive towards a socialist future."

But, examined closely, what Comrade Slovo says is riddled with inconsistencies and contradictions.

"The main thrust and content of the immediate struggle", he says, "continues to revolve around the Freedom Charter, which provides a minimum platform for uniting all classes and groups for the achievement of a non-racial, united democratic SA based on the will of the majority." (*Guardian Weekly*, 17/8/86)

Here we have unity with the capitalists again, smuggled in under the cloak of the phrase "all classes."

How is the Freedom Charter, which promises nationalisation of the monopolies, to be a platform for uniting with the capitalists?

Comrade Slovo goes on:

"Implicit in such a democratic victory will be the immediate need to begin directing the economy in the interests of the people as a whole. This must obviously

involve immediate state measures on the land question and against the giant monopoly complexes which dominate mining, banking and industry."

What does Comrade Slovo mean by "state measures" against the monopolies? Does this mean **nationalisation**, without compensation except in case of proven need, under democratic workers' control and management? If so, what is to be lost by spelling it out?

Or does it merely mean—in Comrade Mbeki's words to Tony Bloom—that "from our point of view a bigger state intervention would be needed"? Does it misinterpret the Freedom Charter—as did Comrade Tambo to the UK House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee—as "not even wanting to purport to destroy capitalism". (*Report*, 29/10/85)

## "State measures"

"State measures" have been taken "against" monopolies in capitalist countries as different as the US and Britain on the one hand, and Zambia and Zimbabwe on the other. In the US—and even in SA—there is all manner of "anti-monopoly" legislation. But, without full **nationalisation** of the monopolies, their grip over the lives of working people is in no way ended, nor can the capitalist profit system be abolished.

"For some while after apartheid falls"—continues Comrade Slovo—"there will undoubtedly be a mixed economy, implying a role for levels of non-monopoly private enterprise represented not only by the small racial-

social coalition underlying the regime, obviously necessitated some change of course. But what change?

The post-War Smuts government faced this mounting problem without a coherent policy, and with the support of the white electorate slipping away from it towards the 'purified' Nats.

98. Combining harsh repression in the traditional manner of all SA governments against the black masses (as, for example, against the 1946 mineworkers' strike) with indecisive attempts to move in the direction of gradual concessions to the tiny African middle class, the Smuts government came in reality up against the limits of parliamentary juggling.

By 1948 it was divided among at least three 'tendencies'. On the right were hard-line segregationists; on the left a minority 'liberal' wing whose most prominent leader was the Deputy Prime Minister, Hofmeyr.

In the 1948 elections it lost power to Malan's Nationalists, who offered yet more savage repression, all-out apartheid, and undiluted *wit baasskap* to deal with the 'swart gevaar'.

99. In contrast to the image liberals have presented of this, the 'reforms' contemplated by those like Hofmeyr were mild indeed; even at that time they were constrained by the objective difficulty—even the impossibility—of capitalism making any significant concession of power to the black majority while protecting and stabilising the white state machine at the same time. This was an expression of the extreme predicament of the bourgeoisie.

Indecisiveness, however, rarely wins prizes in politics. The mooted 'reforms' were quite sufficient to be seized upon by the Nats as entailing a UP 'sell-out' to the black majority. The election was fought as an anti-Hofmeyr election.

100. It is worth citing one example to show how narrow was the scope for reform envisaged even by the liberal wing of the United Party in government—and how even the hint that state policy might set off in the direction of concessions to the rising blacks was enough for white reaction to be whipped up.

In 1946, debating a UP bill imposing group areas on Indians for the first time, and at the same time conceding them voting rights on a separate roll for one (white) representative in Parliament, Hofmeyr said: "I take my stand for the ultimate removal of that colour bar from our constitution", i.e. for the eventual ability of Indians to communally elect an Indian to represent them!

The response of Strydom was "to say to the Minister of Finance (Hofmeyr) that the white man will shed his last drop of blood to remain the master in South Africa. ...if the white man's rule in South Africa must come to an end—and it is clear that the Minister of Finance desires it—then I want members on the other side of the House and every white man in South Africa to review the future which awaits South Africa."

For their part not even the most 'moderate' of the black middle-class—let alone the black masses—could

have found satisfaction in the 'reforms' mooted by the UP liberals.

## Social character of the National Party government

101. The 'Purified' National Party had arisen on a basis qualitatively different from that of any other previous South African party, including Hertzog's National Party which it displaced.

It arose not as a merely parliamentary party, but through a whole social and cultural mobilisation of the 'Afrikaner volk' during the 1930s and 1940s—through bodies such as the FAK, RDB, etc—spearheaded by the Broederbond.

This movement was consciously organised to wean Afrikaans-speaking workers and 'poor whites' away from 'damaging' class allegiances and anti-capitalist consciousness and to place them under the control of the tiny emergent force of Afrikaans-speaking capitalists. The middle-class intellectual leaders of this movement were the political representatives, in reality, of the latter.

102. The professed aim of these Nationalists was to use the state to loosen the stranglehold of the English monopolies so as to allow an Afrikaner national capitalist class to rise. For this purpose it was necessary to unite all Afrikaans-speakers in a single, exclusive, political movement. It was promised that this would uplift the poor among the *volk*, and protect them from 'degradation' to the standards of cheap black labour at the hands of the monopolies.

103. Hertzog's National Party had put forward the policy of uniting Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking white South Africans on the basis of equality and mutual recognition of language rights: the 'Purified' National Party drove for exclusive Afrikaner power.

Hertzog had not hesitated to form a coalition government (in 1924) with the 'English-dominated' Labour Party. Now the task was seen as winning the newly proletarianised Afrikaner workers directly to the banner of 'purified' Nationalism.

Thus the professed aim of the Reddingsdaadbond was "the integration of the Afrikaner worker into the life of the volk as a whole, of which he forms an organic part, and from which we must not allow him to be sundered."

104. The essentially capitalist aim behind this was spelled out by Donges (in 1934): "The aim of the struggle against the capitalist system does not mean that you are opposed to capital as such. The movement is against the system which concentrates capital in a few hands."

On the other hand, the aim of thus dealing with the challenge of the black proletariat, was put by Malan in a famous speech at the 1938 centenary celebrations of the battle of Blood River. The new Blood River, he said, was in the city. And "the Afrikaner of the new Great Trek meets the non-white beside his Blood River, partly or completely unarmed, without the defenses of river bank or entrenchment defenseless

ly oppressed black business sector but also by managers and business people of good-will who have or are prepared to shed racism."

"A mixed economy, implying a role for levels of non-monopoly private enterprise..." Does this then mean that the monopolies have been nationalised? But then, why use the term "mixed economy"? This term is the currency of reformist labour movement leaders in the advanced capitalist countries to describe their notion of an economy where the state participates to some extent in the economy, but where capitalist monopolies continue their domination.

### Allegedly 'controlled'

The term is used precisely to distinguish this form of allegedly 'controlled' capitalism from an economy where the commanding heights of production, finance and (especially foreign) trade are nationalised, and the grip of capitalism thus broken.

That Comrade Slovo is using the term "mixed economy" in its reformist sense is reinforced by his reference to "a role" in such an economy, for "managers and business people of good will who have or are prepared to shed racism."

In a state-owned, democratically controlled, managed, and planned economy under a democratic workers' state it may be necessary to hire, *under workers' control*, former capitalist managers and administrators, to put their skills to service until they can be replaced. Moreover, in such an economy, in transition to socialism, there will be much scope also for "non-monopoly private enterprise", i.e. small business, freed from the grip of the monopolies, but subject to state controls. There would be no need to nationalise corner shops, or even small manufacturing, etc., firms.

If this is what Comrade Slovo has in mind, would it not be better to spell it out with absolute clarity? But isn't it obvious in fact that the "business people of good will" whom Comrade Slovo refers to are the very **monopoly capitalists**, like Ball, Bloom and Chapman, whom Comrades Mbeki and Maharaj, in the BBC broadcast, promised "a very important role"? **Why else do all**

**these comrades of the ANC and SACP leadership refuse to spell out that the monopolies will be nationalised?**

Clarity is vital, not only in defining the economic tasks of our movement, but in defining the political tasks.

"If the political domination of the old ruling class is ended"—continues Comrade Slovo—"and the new state apparatus is constructed within the framework envisaged by the Freedom Charter, the existence of a mixed economy "controlled" in the words of the Charter "to assist the well-being of the people," will facilitate rather than hinder the continuing drive towards a socialist future; a drive which, within a truly democratic framework, could well be settled in debate rather than on the streets."

The only way of ending the "political domination" of the ruling class in SA is by dismantling the existing state and constructing a "new state apparatus" based on the armed power of the mass of the black people. Within that genuinely democratic state, the power of the working class would be decisive.

But such a state would not rule over a "mixed economy". With such a state, the ending of the **economic power** of the capitalist class, exercised through the domination of the monopolies, would be a foregone conclusion. With this achieved, and only then, an uninterrupted drive towards socialism would become possible.

### Armed people

But, if this is what Comrade Slovo has in mind in terms of a "new state apparatus" why not spell out precisely what this means—a state based on the armed people, the election and right of recall of all state officials, paid at no more than the wage of a competent worker, as Lenin spelled out in 1917?

Between achieving this, and the continued domination of the present capitalist state machine, there is no middle road. And such a state—a democratic workers' state—is the precondition not only for a continuing drive towards socialism, **but also for achieving national liberation and majority rule.**

"In practice"—Comrade Slovo

says—"the question as to which road SA will begin to take on the morning after the liberation flag is raised over Union Buildings will be decided by the actual correlation of class forces which have come to power."

Comrade Slovo implies there is some choice in how we are to get to liberation. That is simply not the case. There is only **one** "actual correlation of class forces" which will ensure the conquest of power by our movement. The victorious flag of liberation will be raised by our movement when, and only when, the working class spearheads a mass armed insurrection which defeats and dismantles the state machine which is the means of political rule of the whole capitalist class.

Our movement can direct all its energies to preparing for this only if it understands clearly that the whole capitalist class is its enemy. The job of the leadership is to explain this—and bring an end to the confusion their speeches and conduct towards the capitalists presently create.

In the face of the formidable state machine, the SA revolution will develop over an extended period. It will pass through massive revolutionary upsurges, and periods of ebb, reaction and even temporary despair, before the working masses build the *necessary organised strength and consciousness* to carry through the insurrection.

In taking forward this struggle for democracy, workers' rule and socialism, the building of organs of *mass democratic power—when and where possible—will play a vital role.*

They will need to become generalised, in the major industrial centres, and in every area. They will need to be organically rooted in the factories, mines, docks, farms, etc—the centres of production which are the fundamental fortresses of workers' power.

They will need to become linked together, locally, regionally, and eventually nationally.

This will develop together with the mass arming of the people, in self-defence and in preparation for the conquest of power.

Working in the trade unions and the youth organisations, activists are laying foundations on which these democratic organs can rise to new heights in the future—and through which a future mass ANC on a socialist programme will also arise.

upon the open plain of economic equalisation."

105. The 1948 election victory of the NP meant that state power was removed from the more or less direct control of the big capitalists into the hands of Afrikaner petty bourgeois aspiring to big capitalist status.

But, for the big capitalists, there was no alternative but to accept this.

While whining and wringing their hands in lamentation for the poor suffering blacks, the big capitalists (the English-speaking liberal bosses) put up no real resistance to the apartheid regime. Elsewhere in the world the monopolies have repeatedly acted to bring down reformist governments. In South Africa, far from employing their economic power to sabotage the Nationalist reaction, these bosses busily got on with profit-making.

Strong government to deal with the black proletariat—that has been the basis on which the big bourgeois have lived in peace with the Nationalists from 1948.

106. The 38-year unbroken rule of the Nationalists has shown the lack of any real alternative for capitalism in SA.

In fact, no other parliamentary regime has been possible.

To put the responsibility for this on the racist attitudes of the white workers and middle class is the theme tune of the liberals and their echoes on the left. Anyone who accepts that is entirely missing the central point.

To hold the social support of the white population for capitalism and direct it against the aspirations of the black proletariat has been and remains essential to the domination of the bourgeoisie. For generations, the regimes of capitalism in South Africa have been constructed first and foremost on the basis of that necessity.

The capitalist class cannot face the challenge of the black working class with the whites warring against each other. Without the social cohesion of the whites, there is no cohesion of the state power. The pivotal thing for capitalism is the strength and reliability of the state.

107. By 1948 the United Party regime had become too divided and incoherent in policy to maintain this adequately. In fact, the 'old way' of governing South Africa was showing its exhaustion. In the form of the 'purified' Nationalists, a 'new way' presented itself. Whipping up and unleashing racism on an unprecedented scale, it succeeded in bonding the mass of the whites (that is to say, the middle class and the workers) to the government as a solid body politic on which the state (and thus the capitalist class) could safely rest—and so ward off the fast-growing threat to capitalism of the black proletariat.

The ruling class, lacking any real alternative, either supported or accepted or reluctantly had to come to terms with this change. It met their essential needs. It was to prove irreversible thereafter.

108. In 1942 Smuts had confessed that "segregation has fallen on evil days." Yet the divided UP

could construct no alternative policy towards the black majority. The National Party assumed responsibility for the further implementation of segregation, strengthened and developed as apartheid. In 1948, after Malan's election, Smuts declared: "This apartheid has always been our policy.... We stand and have always stood for European supremacy in this country."

This summed up the contradictory position in which the big bourgeoisie had found itself.

109. From the inadequacy of the old coalitions, from the necessity of securing strong government for capitalism against the blacks, there had resulted the opening for a party of monolithic character, in striking contrast with its predecessors, to rise to power.

Unlike Hertzog, the 'purified' Nationalists were able to cement together a really cohesive unity of (Afrikaner) workers, lower middle-class people and aspiring capitalists precisely because they were not compromised with the reigning monopolies in any way. They were convincingly able to employ semi-fascist demagoguery against big capital together with promises of protection of white privilege against the blacks which the white masses could trust.

Once in power, starting with a minority of votes and a slender parliamentary majority, they succeeded in extending and consolidating white support to an overwhelming preponderance. With the post-War economic upswing coming to their aid, they could fulfill their promises of job reservation, higher wages, social security, health care, housing and improved education to the whites.

They could thus hold the white workers and lower middle-class together around the state with an unparalleled cohesion, extending over more than three decades.

110. The NP regime has often been characterised as 'fascist'. Despite superficial resemblances, this is scientifically incorrect.

Fascism mobilises the petty-bourgeois *en masse* when this unstable class is driven beserk in the course of an unresolved revolutionary crisis in which its very survival is threatened. The proletariat having failed to win the petty-bourgeois for revolution, fascism organises this social frenzy for counter-revolution, using it directly as a battering ram against the organised working class, shattering and atomising the latter politically.

The National Party was not and is not fascist, despite its rise to power as the organiser of an essentially petty-bourgeois racist movement, rabidly hostile to any advancement of the blacks.

The NP leadership, in fact, contended vigorously with the fascist Ossewabrandwag for the necessary social support of Afrikaner workers and lower middle-class people. Employing many of the methods of fascism once in power, in illegalising and repressing mass opposition, the NP regime nevertheless did not represent a triumph of fascism.

Its intrinsic social aim was to provide a step ladder for the aspiring Afrikaner national bourgeois to gain by parliamentary means unfettered command of the state. This it achieved.

The social force commanded by the Nationalists

# ARGUING FOR A SOCIALIST PROGRAM

## —Trotsky's method in the mass organisations



In our movement today there is vigorous discussion on how to frame and fight for a program for the transition from apartheid and capitalism to democracy and socialism. The Freedom Charter, the resolutions at the founding conference of COSATU, the discussions around an Education Charter, etc. all provide many elements for this. But how can they be translated into a fighting program of action around which workers and youth can rally and organise to prepare for the conquest of power?

This speech was written by Leon Trotsky in 1935 together with a young Marxist, Alexis Bardin (a trade unionist and member of the French Socialist Party). It is a brilliant example of how Marxists put forward their ideas in the mass organisations—to gain an echo among the widest number of rank-and-file workers by showing that Marxist ideas are nothing more than the workers' own ideas, drawn from their own experience, but generalised in a scientific way.

The "plan" of measures for 'restructuring the economy' which the speech refers to was adopted by the leadership of the French trade union movement (the CGT) in 1934, under the pressure of the growing radicalisation of the workers in the face of capitalist crisis. But the "plan", reflecting at the same time the reformist illusions of the leadership, stopped well short of spelling out the revolutionary measures really needed. The key issues were masked by the use of deceptive, lulling phrases.

A new right-wing government came to office in 1934, partly as the result of rioting by Fascist gangs emboldened by the victory of Hitler in Germany in 1933. But within two years there was a massive swing to the workers' parties (Socialist and Communist). Supported by the CP, the socialist leadership participated in a bourgeois coalition government from May 1936, allowing their authority among the workers to be used to prop up capitalism.

The workers moved into action, in a wave of sit-in strikes and demonstrations involving two and a half million. Trade

union membership leapt from 1 million to 5 million. The workers were looking for a road to end capitalism and transform society.

In contrast the leaders of the workers' parties were putting forward a policy of a "Popular Front" of class-compromise with the so-called "progressive" capitalists against the Fascist danger. The 'Communist' leadership placed itself to the right of the 'socialists' in fact.

"The comrades of the Socialist Party" wrote CP leader Maurice Thorez (*L'Humanite*, 13/7/36) "wanted to introduce nationalisation into the program. We were unwilling to sow illusions. We took a stand (against it—*Editor*). We were right."

The consequence of these disastrous policies was that power slipped from the workers' grasp. Within two years the workers' leaders were excluded from government, and the way was prepared for the collapse of the French regime in the face of Nazi invasion in 1940, and the installation of a collaborationist regime.

It was in anticipation of these dangers for the workers if the movement remained under a reformist leadership that Trotsky and Bardin wrote this speech. Bardin delivered it at a national CGT delegate conference in 1935. They understood that, despite the radical phrases in the CGT "plan", its reformist leadership had put it forward without the intention of campaigning around it, or using it to mobilise and prepare the working-class to lead a struggle for power. At the same time, Trotsky and Bardin were aware that these leaders still enjoyed enormous authority among the mass of workers, who had not yet had the opportunity to test the leaders' credentials in struggle.

The speech is therefore valuable for activists in our movement—not merely because it explains Marxist ideas so clearly, but because of the way in which it puts them across. In this sense it is a model for Marxist tactics in the mass organisations.

The criticism of the leadership is expressed in a positive and constructive way—in stark contrast to the shrill and negative method of criticism practised by sectarian groups on the fringes of the mass organisations. At the same time the speech is unwavering in explaining, with crystal clarity, why it is the *capitalist system* which lies at the heart of the problems facing workers—and what is concretely involved in ending the rule of the capitalist class and opening the way towards socialism.

---

Comrades,

The CGT sets as its aim the "intensification of propaganda" in support of the plan. We can only congratulate ourselves on this. The best plan is only a scrap of paper if it does not have the militant masses behind it. It is to be regretted that in the year that has passed since the adoption of the plan, so little has been done to present it to the masses and win their support.

The notes "for the use of propagandists" that we received from the CGT some months ago stress the necessity for a "vigorous oral propaganda effort to be carried out even to the small, rural centers". I am sure that the departmental unions

was intended to be turned, and indeed was turned, not towards the direct crushing of the black proletariat with the armed force of the whites, but to reinforce the established state power, and state repression, with a monolithic loyalty and cohesion which the old type of bourgeois parliamentary alignments could not achieve.

## Evolution of parliamentary bonapartism

111. The greater relative autonomy of the state from big-capitalist control, characteristic of the NP regime, had become unavoidable for this purpose, while it served also as the deliberate springboard for the promotion of the economic progress of the Afrikaner bourgeoisie.

Within the framework of a Westminster constitution, on the basis of a constantly increasing NP parliamentary majority, the development of the superstructure throughout the 1950s, 60s, and 70s was in fact away from parliamentary control, towards unrestrained executive authority—towards, in short, a more and more bonapartist regime. (The packing of the Senate; the 'High Court of Parliament' to overcome resistance by the courts; the arbitrary powers of ministers; the range of security laws empowering detention without trial—these have been some of the milestones in this process.)

Essentially, this bonapartist authority was used for the suppression of the black majority. But its emergence simultaneously prepared the way for the NP leadership to act in defence of capitalist interests, as and when necessary, at the expense of the white electorate also.

112. The fundamental contempt of the Afrikaner capitalists and middle class leaders for 'the *volk*' was revealed in a declaration issued by the FAK, RDB, Ossewabrandwag and white Dutch Reformed Churches in 1941:

"Strongest emphasis must be laid on the purposive disciplining of the *volk*. The leaders must be able to expect complete obedience and faith from Afrikanerdom."

This declaration was circulated together with a draft 'Republican Constitution' which called for a State President "directly and only responsible to God over and against the people and altogether independent of any vote in Parliament."

113. The fact that the post-1948 Nationalist reaction was sustained for so long on the basis of a Westminster-type constitution, enjoying increasing support of the white electorate, resulted essentially from two causes: on the one hand, the economic advance of South Africa; on the other hand, the defeat of the revolutionary movement of the black proletariat in the 1950s and early 1960s.

It required the opening of a new period of revolutionary challenge by the black masses, this time on a qualitatively higher level, combined with the onset of economic crisis affecting also the whites, before the monolithic basis of the Nationalist government seriously started to crack.

114. All bonapartist regimes are a reflection of

social crisis. The trend towards a bonapartist regime in SA, distinctly identifiable from 1948 onwards, has been the reflection of the maturing crisis for capitalist rule produced by the rise of the black proletariat.

Viewed in this light, it can be seen in retrospect that the Smuts government—a government of no democracy whatsoever as far as the mass of black people were concerned—represented the most democratic bourgeois-parliamentary government possible in South African conditions.

Its downfall signified the impossibility of keeping the whites together through parliamentary juggling while moving at the same time in the direction of concessions to growing black power. A parliamentary system affords too direct an expression of conflicting particular interests. Thus, in effect, the point was reached where either rule by parliament had to go so that concessions to the blacks could be undertaken dictatorially, 'from strength'—or else concessions had firmly to be ruled out, and black demands blocked by a stronger, avowedly white supremacist government.

115. In the event, capitalism maintained itself from that time by further consolidating white minority rule on a racially exclusive parliamentary basis, and concentrating repressive power from that foundation against the blacks. This is the essential significance of the post-1948 period.

But that parliamentary government was in reality the mask behind which the underlying shift towards bonapartism proceeded, as the economy further industrialised and the hidden relationship of class forces further developed in the black proletariat's favour. The parliamentary rule of the National Party government, in other words, has marked a definite stage in the slow but inexorable exhaustion of parliamentary government itself in capitalist South Africa.

116. In opposition, the bourgeois 'progressives' and 'liberals' have never ceased their arguments for 'reform'. But, apart from the irrelevant and short-lived Liberal Party, it has never been the position of any bourgeois party in SA to extend political rights to the black majority within a parliamentary-democratic framework in which numbers could translate into political power.

The declining United Party moved to a policy of 'race federation' before its eventual demise—a policy of nominal voting rights for all races, but with state power constitutionally preserved in paternal white hands.

The Progressives adopted the 'qualified franchise', linking this to a blocking mechanism through the Senate for the hypothetical eventuality that a majority of blacks might one day, by such means, acquire the vote. Since then, they have evolved the allegedly non-racial 'federalism' of the present PFP, as a supposedly more workable means of keeping the black working-class majority's hands off the levers of central state and economic power.

The policy of every section of the bourgeoisie (from the most right-wing to the most liberal) demonstrates, in fact, the conclusive turn of the entire ruling class away from parliamentary

could mobilize sufficient cadres of loyal propagandists. But for their efforts to be really vigorous and, above all effective, the unions themselves must have a clear position on this question.

I must, however, acknowledge that the discussions on the plan, even in fairly limited circles, reveal a certain confusion. Perhaps we who come from the provinces are not sufficiently informed. In that case, the center must help us. For my part I want to take some advantage of this session of the CCN (National Confederal Committee) to ask some questions, express some doubts, indicate some weaknesses and demand some supplementary clarifications.

Many comrades in this room are too experienced in how the masses respond—certainly, much more than I am—for me to need to stress the idea that propaganda can strike home only when it is clear and concrete. That is why we propagandists ask you for a little more clarity and a little more precision about the plan.

In the different texts of the CGT, we often read that what is involved is a renovation of the national economy, sometimes counterposed to “economic and social reorganisation”, but sometimes also identified with it.

## Precise definition

Comrades, it is very difficult to say to the workers or peasants, “We want to renovate the national economy,” when everybody now uses the same expression: the (Fascist—*Editor*) Patriotic Youth, the Popular Democrats, the Peasant Front, sometimes even the radicals, but above all (the bourgeois Prime Minister—*Editor*) M. Flandin—all of them proclaiming and promising the renovation and even the reorganization of the national economy. Our plan must be distinguished from the class enemy through the precise definition of its goal. All the renovations and reorganizations that I have just spoken of seek to remain on a capitalist base, that is, to safeguard private property in the means of production. And the CGT’s plan? Does it aim to renovate capitalist economy or replace that economy by another? I confess to not having found the exact reply to that question. Sometimes we read in the same texts that what is involved is not a transformation of the present system but only emergency measures to alleviate the crisis. However, we also find it stated that the emergency measures must open the way to more profound transformations.

Perhaps all that is correct, but we never find the exact definition of the system we want to end up with. What sort of so-called profound transformations should there be? Is it only a question—I am just speaking hypothetically—of transforming a section of private capitalism into state capitalism? Or do we want to replace the whole capitalist system by another social regime? Which one? What is our final goal? It is astonishing, comrades, but all the statements and even the “notes for the use of propagandists” say absolutely nothing about it. Do we want to replace capitalism by socialism, by communism or by anarchy à la Proudhon (a French utopian socialist of the early nineteenth century—*Editor*)? Or do we simply want to rejuvenate capitalism by reforming and modernizing it? When I want to travel a distance of one or two stations only, I must still know where the train is going. Even for emergency measures we need a general orientation. What is the social idea of the CGT? Is it socialism? Yes or no? We must be told—otherwise, as propagandists, we remain completely disarmed before the masses.

The difficulties are increased by the fact that we are only partially acquainted with the CGT doctrine and its program and the “notes for the use of propagandists” do not indicate to us the literature that could enlighten us. The only doctrinal authority cited in the statements of the CGT is Proudhon, the theoretician of anarchy. It is he who said that the “workshop must replace the government.” Do we aspire to anarchy? Do we want

to replace capitalist anarchy by pure anarchy? It seems not, since the plan speaks of nationalization of the key industries. In practical terms, nationalization signifies statization. Now, if we have recourse to the state to centralize and direct the economy, how can we invoke Proudhon, who demanded only one thing of the state: that it leave him alone! And in truth, modern industry, the trusts, cartels, consortiums, banks, all that totally surpasses the Proudhonist vision of equal exchanges between independent producers. Why, then, invoke Proudhon? That can only increase the confusion.

## Transition from capitalism to socialism

To the present capitalist system, which has survived for a long time, we can counterpose only socialism. As propagandist for our trade union organisation, I believe I am expressing the idea of many militants in demanding that the plan for economic renewal be renamed the **plan of measures for the transition from capitalism to socialism**.

Then, before taking his place in the railway car, each worker and peasant will know where the CGT train is heading.

Comrades, for our propaganda to be effective, this clarification is absolutely indispensable.

The CGT plan stresses, above all, the fact that credit is the guiding lever of the economy. Comrades, I am far from being a specialist in questions of banking and credit. I mainly want to be able to educate myself in order to be able to explain the issue to the workers. But I confess that I have not found the clarifications that I need in the documents of the CGT. They speak of “nationalization of credit” and “control of the banks.” It’s more by way of exception that the same document speaks of “nationalization of the banks”. Can you control credit without having nationalized the banks? You can control only what you hold firmly in your hands. Do we want to nationalize the banks or not? I suppose yes. Then it must be said openly and clearly. Unfortunately, instead of this being the case, we find vague formulations, for example: “The bank must be at the service of the economy and not the economy at the service of the bank” (p.6 of the statement). A worker asked me to explain that nebulous phrase to him. Seeing my perplexity he remarked: “But the bank always remains in the service of the economy, like the trusts, the railways, etc.... They all serve capitalist economy in robbing the people”. This harsh remark seemed to me much more correct than the formulation that I cited above. The capitalist bank serves the capitalist economy. We should say therefore: We now want to seize the bank out of the hands of the capitalist exploiters in order to make it a lever of socialist transformation, that is, of socialist construction. I would very much like to see this clear formulation in the text of the plan.

## Nationalisation of the banks

The nationalization of the banks could naturally be carried out only to the detriment of high finance. As for the small investors, their interests must be not just spared but protected. We must choose between the interests of the financial sharks and the interests of the middle classes. Our choice is carried out by the expropriation of the former. We will create for the latter conditions much more favourable than the present.

But nationalization of the banks is not enough. After nationalizing the banks we must proceed to their complete unification. All individual banks must be transformed into branches of the national bank. Only this unification can transform the nationalized banking system into a system of bookkeeping and direction for the national economy.

democracy. The differences between them are over one or other, more or less disguised, scheme of constitutional bonapartism set against the democratic aspirations of the majority.

## Historical exhaustion of apartheid —and of parliament

117. The long ascendancy of Afrikaner nationalism, through decades of NP rule, has not at all displaced the English-speaking monopolists. But it did succeed in raising into the ranks of the big bourgeoisie a layer of Afrikaner entrepreneurs. Their interests became those of finance and monopoly capital; their '*volks-eenheid*' with white workers and petty-bourgeois quickly dissipated, once its usefulness was spent.

The regime itself has shifted increasingly towards a centre of gravity in finance capital. This has reflected, on the one hand, the influence of the Afrikaner big bourgeoisie at the top of Party and government, and, on the other hand, the relentless pressures exerted upon the government by an economy increasingly industrialised and integrated with the world market.

118. More than this, however, the shifts in government policy towards the 'ending of old-style apartheid' have been the consequence of the policies of Malan, Strydom and Verwoerd coming to the end of the road.

The irresistible rise of the black proletariat, and its concentration in the great metropolitan centres, demanding its rights ultimately broke through the barriers erected by apartheid. 'Separate development' through Bantustans was becoming a demonstrable failure. A state power founded merely on the support of the white minority was beginning to show its inadequacy, certainly in the longer term, as a defence for capitalism against the massive modern proletariat.

Recognition of this began to show itself in the NP and the government in various forms while Vorster was Prime Minister; under Botha it became absolutely stark.

119. In this dialectical way, the development of SA capitalism under apartheid led to a situation which reproduced the very dilemmas facing the Smuts government after the Second World War. But the NP government has been confronted with them on a higher and more acute level.

History repeats itself, but never in quite the same way. The quantitative relationship between the social forces confronting each other had changed to such an extent that their qualitative relationship was now entirely different. **Unable to satisfy everybody, the capitalist system was now entering a period in which it was becoming politically unviable to satisfy only some.**

This marks the opening of the terminal crisis of bourgeois rule in South Africa.

120. The exhaustion of parliamentary juggling and coalition-building along the lines of the Smuts and earlier governments had given way to the new

'solution' of rallying the whites behind a single dominant party to maintain exclusive rule. But this could base itself on the perspective of 'uplifting' Afrikaner capitalist and worker alike—a perspective achieved only thanks to the post-War economic boom.

Any new attempt to unify the ranks of the whites would take place in quite different conditions: not only of the qualitatively greater challenge of the black proletariat, but of the accumulated privilege of whites, and the class gulf that had become enlarged between the white workers and Afrikaner bourgeoisie. Such attempts could not hope to achieve the same 'moral' authority, but would inevitably be based solely on a reactionary defense of the *status quo*.

The political 'achievements' of the 'Purified' National Party after 1948 are, in that sense, historically unrepeatable. The splitting up of 'Afrikanerdom' is a reflection of the exhaustion of this second—'monolithic'—phase of white minority rule, which cannot be reproduced.

121. On the other hand a democracy incorporating all the people of SA on an equal footing has become all the more ruled out as an option for capitalism. Nevertheless—because of the unprecedented assertion of the power of the black majority—it has become unavoidable for the bourgeoisie to make moves in the direction of concessions and reforms towards the blacks, to try and divide them and incorporate black middle-class layers into support for the state system.

But, just as the Smuts government had been obliged to ponder, how could this be done without losing the support of the majority of whites, essential to maintain the strength of the state as the basic defence of capitalism against the black majority?

Thus, with the beginning of the exhaustion now of the 'apartheid' phase of white rule, the bourgeois system has had to move back to a policy of 'reform' and repression, combining and manoeuvring between these—but now in a situation where a **parliamentary basis for doing that is unsustainable.**

In Marx's words, the bourgeoisie has "lost the possibility of governing the people" in the direct way which a parliamentary system affords.

122. We are not talking here about the exhaustion of fully developed bourgeois parliamentary democracy, and the turn of a capitalist regime towards increasingly bonapartist methods. That process we can see today, with the onset of crisis, incipient in even the most advanced industrialised countries of the West, where bourgeois democracy has had its fullest flowering.

We are talking, in South Africa, of a new stage in the exhaustion of even the stunted, twisted, pseudo-democracy of the white minority parliamentary system, ruling over the virtual enslavement of the blacks.

This shows that capitalism can continue only through an even more monstrous dictatorship raised above and set against society.

123. Put at its most general, this development in

In the "notes for the use of propagandists," I find some very valuable statistics concerning the organization of the dictatorship of finance capital in our country. Basing themselves on a 1932 investigation, the notes state the following: "In practical terms we can say that ninety persons own and control the economy of our country." **There** is a statement that is precise and overwhelming in its precision. The welfare or misery of a hundred million human beings—for we cannot forget our unfortunate colonies, which the ninety sharks bleed even more than the metropolis—the fate of a hundred million people depends on the wave of the hand of ninety all-powerful magnates. It is they who are making a mess of the national economy in order to preserve their miserable, bloody privileges and power. Unfortunately neither the text of the plan nor the commentaries on it indicate what must be done with these ninety monarchs who control us. The response should be clear: we must expropriate them, unseat them, to return to the plundered people what belongs to them. This would be a good beginning toward accomplishing the plan. I move, in the name of the departmental union of Isere, to inscribe this measure in the text of the plan. Our propaganda will then become more vigorous and much more effective.

## Nationalise key industries

In the text of the plan, we find an important paragraph under the heading "Industrialized Nationalizations." This heading appears very strange. We understand what nationalized industry means, but industrialized nationalization leaves us in a quandary. Permit me to say that such contrived terminology complicates the task of the propagandist by obscuring the most simple things. The "notes for the use of propagandists" don't even mention the nationalization of industry. Perhaps these notes preceded the last editing of the statement. Unfortunately, we seldom find dates on CGT documents, an important weakness that must be overcome if our work is to be facilitated.

We may congratulate ourselves in any case on the fact that the latest edition of the plan poses the following thesis: **the nationalization of certain key industries is necessary.** However the word 'certain' seems superfluous. Naturally we cannot hope to nationalize with one blow all industries, small, middle and big. On the contrary the regime that we establish must show the greatest indulgence towards small manufacturers and artisans, as well as small merchants and peasants. But the text speaks explicitly of the key industries, that is, the powerful trusts and cartels, the combines like the *Comite des Forges* (Association of Heavy Industries), the *Comite des Houilleres* (Association of Coal Industries), the *Compagnies des Chemin de Fer* (railway companies), etc., etc. As key industries, they must all be nationalized, and not only 'certain' ones. It even seems to us in Isere that we should add to the plan the list of these key industries with some precise statistics on their capitalization, their dividends, the number of workers they exploit and the number of unemployed they throw on the scrap heap.

To speak to the people, it is necessary to be concrete, to call things by their name and give exact figures. Otherwise the worker and even more so the peasant will say, "This is not a plan, but the platonic dream of some bureaucrat."

Under the heading "Conditions of Acquisition," the text of the plan speaks of the conditions of nationalizing the key industries and obviously the banks also. We are accustomed to thinking that nationalization should take place by expropriating the exploiters. However, the plan speaks not of expropriation but of acquisition. Does that mean that the state must simply buy from the capitalists the firms created by the workers' labor? Manifestly so. At what price? The statement replies: the price will be calculated "according to the real value at the time of purchase." We learn later that "the amortization (payment of compensation, with interest—*Editor*) will be calculated over a period of forty or fifty years". There, comrades, is a financial

deal that will hardly appeal to the workers and peasants. What is this? We want to transform society, and we begin by total and complete recognition that capitalist property is sacrosanct!

The Chairman of the council, M. Flandin, was correct when he said in Parliament recently, "Capital is accumulated labor." And all the capitalists in Parliament applauded this formulation. Unfortunately, it is not complete. To express the truth, it would be necessary to say: "Capital is the labour of the workers accumulated by their exploiter." Here is the time to cite Proudhon on capitalist property. You are acquainted with the formulation: "Property is theft." In this sense it could be said: "The property of the ninety magnates who control France is accumulated theft." No, we don't want to buy back what has been stolen from the working people; we don't want the new regime to be burdened with debts from its first day when it will have many tasks to resolve and many difficulties to surmount. Capitalism is bankrupt. It has ruined the nation. The capitalists' debts to the people exceed by far the real value of their enterprises. No! No buying back! No new slavery! Expropriation pure and simple or, if you wish, confiscation.

I really hope that in this assembly, which represents the oppressed, the exploited, no one is moved by sympathy for the tycoons threatened with unemployment and poverty. In any case, they are farsighted enough to cover themselves on all sides. And if one of them really found himself without resources, the state would provide him the same pension as retired workers. We have enough of sick and poverty-stricken elderly people and youth, permanent unemployed and women condemned to prostitution. To put an end to all this human misery, we will greatly need the amounts that the plan is all too generously prepared to confer on the exploiters and their descendants over half a century. That provision of the plan, comrades, would have us bringing up two new generations of sluggards! No, that paragraph alone is enough to compromise the entire plan irreparably in the eyes of the starving masses. Comrades, strike out that paragraph as soon as possible. That is another proposal from our departmental union.

## Workers' control and management

The "notes for the use of propagandists" inform us, "Fiscal fraud is raised to an institutional level." Very well said. This is correct and clear. But it is not just fiscal fraud. The Oustric and Stavinsky affairs remind us that the whole capitalist economy is based not just on legalized exploitation but also on general cheating. To hide the cheating from the eyes of the people, there exists a magnificent method called business secrecy—necessary, they claim, for competition. This is a monstrous lie. Flandin's Industrial Agreements Act demonstrates that the capitalists no longer have secrets among themselves. So-called business secrets are nothing but the conspiracy of the big-capitalists against the producers and consumers. The abolition of business secrets must be the first demand of the proletariat as it prepares to direct the national economy.

Strictly speaking, the CGT plan is not yet a plan; it contains only general directives and not very precise ones at that. A real economic plan requires concrete statistics, figures, diagrams. Naturally we are very far from that. The first condition for a first outline of the plan consists in setting forth everything that the nation possess in productive, material and human forces, in raw materials, etc. We must be acquainted with the real costs of production like the "incidental expenses" of capitalist fraud and for that we must abolish once and for all the fraudulent plot that goes under the name business secrecy.

The plan speaks, albeit rather briefly, of workers' control (see "Administrative Council"). In Isere, we are staunch advocates of workers' control. We often meet this objection: "Control is not enough. We want nationalization and workers management." However we do not in any way counterpose the two slogans. For the workers to take over the administration

the political superstructure reflects the extreme alienation of finance capital from the population, black and white; the social isolation, in fact, of the monopoly-capitalist ruling class; the essentially precarious basis on which it now rests.

With the necessary understanding and skill, applying the lever of revolutionary force in the right way, the black proletariat of South Africa will be able to bring it toppling down in the historical period which we have now entered.

### Decisive shift towards bonapartism

124. In 1948 there was a road open for capitalism to the right, manifested in the whole phase of political development of the apartheid regime which followed. But with the onset of the crisis of apartheid rule, with the *status quo* unsustainable, the roads both to left and to right are now equally roads of crisis.

This accounts for many paradoxes. One is that a former die-hard of the fascist Ossewabrandwag and admirer of Hitler, B.J. Vorster, who made his name in government as a vicious represser, presided over the initial shift of the NP regime away from Verwoerdian orthodoxy towards so-called 'reforms'.

With Treurnicht and Mulder in his cabinet, Vorster manoeuvred blindly under pressure, going far enough to discredit himself on the right, and then recoiling to the annoyance of the big bourgeoisie and 'verligtes'. Paralysed by the contradictions, vulnerable on both flanks, he and his closest confederates were brought down by the 'Muldergate' Information scandal, drummed up for the purpose by big business and their press.

125. The opening for P.W. Botha to emerge as Prime Minister in 1978, with promises of more far-reaching reform, was created on the one hand by his carefully cultivated alliance with important heads of the military, and on the other by the fact that the failure of the HNP to develop, coupled with the Muldergate defeat, produced an inertia of the right wing within the NP at that stage.

126. For reasons already outlined, the parliamentary regimes, of Malan, Strydom and Verwoerd had seen a steady growth of executive powers on bonapartist lines. Now, however, the crisis of the NP regime had to be reflected in a **qualitative further development of bonapartist features relative to the white parliamentary system.**

Such features first became pronounced under Vorster's premiership. An increased role for heads of the police (most notably General van den Bergh of BOSS) in government was one of these. However, it was P.W. Botha who grasped, in a way Vorster had not, that a decisive shift was necessary towards a regime of manoeuvre relying on the military-police apparatus for its stability, and raising itself above direct white parliamentary control.

Thus Botha 'succeeded' where Vorster had failed.

127. Two parallel developments have accompanied Botha's ascendance: a shift of the controlling echelons of the military and police forces towards a more conscious recognition of their role as defenders

of capitalism; and a shift of political power from (white) parliamentary towards military-police control, most clearly shown in the role of the State Security Council.

The 1983 Constitution, endorsed by two-thirds of the whites in a referendum, marks the qualitative turn to a bonapartist regime. Adding coloured and Indian 'Houses' to parliament without real power, its purpose has been to spread the illusion of an extension of democracy while elevating ultimate decision-making authority to the President, functioning through the President's council. Here more parliaments mean less parliament in effect.

The present position is a semi-parliamentary bonapartism, even as far as the whites are concerned. While it is not yet the case that the House of Assembly can be disregarded (for reasons we return to below), the real underpinning of the regime is not in fact parliament, but the military-police machine. This shift to bonapartism is irreversible in South Africa under capitalism.

128. If the changed relationship of class forces has meant an impasse for the parliamentary system from the standpoint of capitalism as a whole, it has also circumscribed the development of the ultra-right as a force in bourgeois politics.

This can be seen in the way the break-up of the National Party began, and in the contradictions within the ultra-right. This is evidence of their inability to create a new unity and cohesion of the whites in the way the Nationalists did in the past.

129. In 1969, splitting from the ruling National Party to form the HNP, Albert Hertzog hoped to repeat the process which had allowed Malan to triumph over his father, and over Smuts. Breaking from those Afrikaner capitalists who were selling their nationalist souls to the English monopolists and foreign imperialists, the HNP appealed to the Afrikaner farmers, lower middle class and workers against the NP traitors to the *volk*.

Any concessions to the blacks, they argued, would only jeopardise white survival. To gain working-class and lower middle-class support, they resurrected the semi-fascist rhetoric of the rise of Afrikaner nationalism, with its denunciation of monopoly capitalism and its pseudo-socialist phrases to dress up rabid racist ideas.

However, the HNP failed to gain its hoped for mass echo.

Partly this was an expression of the fact that economic crisis had not yet seriously been felt by whites, and the 'reform' moves of the NP hardly went beyond hints initially.

The main forces of the far right continued for more than a decade to adhere to the NP, their leaders (Treurnicht, Mulder and others) forming part of Vorster's and later Botha's government. Even when major forces of white reaction did begin to form, there was no immediate unification of these forces around the HNP.

130. The particular reasons for this are numerous. But there is an important general reason, which affects the thinking of the bourgeois right. This is the

of industry—which is absolutely necessary, and as soon as possible, for the well-being of civilization—we must immediately demand workers' control, as well as peasant control over certain banks, the fertilizer trusts, the milling industry etc.

For nationalization to operate in a revolutionary way, not bureaucratically, the workers must participate at every stage. They must prepare themselves for it, beginning now. They must intervene, beginning now, in the management of industry and the entire economy in the form of workers' control, beginning with their factory. The plan envisages this control in a class-collaborationist form, by subjecting the workers' representatives to the majority control of the bourgeois (see "Industrial Councils"). Moreover, it stipulates that the delegate from each category of producers must be nominated by the "professional organization". We cannot accept that proposition. Our trade unions, unfortunately, encompass only a twelfth or a fifteenth of the wage force; the union is not an end in itself; its mission is, on the contrary, to draw the mass of workers into the administration of public affairs.

## Forty hour week without loss of pay

The strike will benefit the workers, organized or not, only on the condition that the trade-union vanguard draws the entire mass into action. For workers' control to be effective, the same condition is fundamental. That is why the control committee in each plant must not be composed only of delegates from the trade union, that is, from a fifteenth of the workers. No, it must be elected by all the workers in the plant, under the leadership of the union. That would be the real beginning of free and honest workers' democracy, in contrast to bourgeois democracy, which is corrupt to the core.

The plan calls for the application of the forty-hour week with no reduction in wages. There can be no debate about that slogan. But we know only too well that the ruling class and its state are turning in the opposite direction, that is, they want to lower wages without reducing the number of hours of work. What means, then, can we use to achieve the forty-hour week? The "notes for the use of propagandists" inform us that "an action has been undertaken for the materialization of an international agreement," and they continue: "It may materialize soon." It may... This is not very precise, and, given the international economic and political situation, we are rather more inclined to conclude: it may not. If we are mistaken, our representative at Geneva will correct our pessimism. Until something new happens, the unemployed of Grenoble—and we have some!—don't expect much from the Geneva agreements.

## Support the peasants

And what is proposed to us, apart from the early materialization of a diplomatic agreement? The "notes" continue: "Propaganda must be carried out throughout the country to explain the social significance of this workers' demand." Simply to "explain"? But all workers, even the most simple-minded, understand very well the advantage of the forty hour week with no reduction in wages. What they are waiting for from the CGT is its indication of the means by which this slogan can be implemented. But it is precisely here that the great weakness of the plan begins: it makes proposals; it offers suggestions; it formulates slogans; but it is completely silent on the means of fulfilling them.

However, before passing on to the question of how to fulfill the plan, we must pause on a particularly serious question: the peasant question. Everyone talks about it, everyone proclaims the necessity of improving the situation of peasants, but there

are lots of rogues who would like to prepare an omelet for the peasants without breaking the eggs of big business. This method cannot be ours.

Commenting on the plan, the "notes for the use of propagandists" say: "The peasants must be freed from the dual grip of the fertilizer trusts at the point of production and the consortium of big mills and the milling trade at the distribution end."

It is all very well to say: "The peasants must be freed," but you know very well that the peasant does not like vague and platonic formulations. And he is damned well right. "Must be freed." But how? Here is the only possible reply: We must expropriate and nationalize the fertilizer and milling trusts and put them truly at the service of the farmers and the consumers. The peasants cannot be aided without going counter to the interests of big business.

The plan speaks of the "general reorganization of agricultural production," but it does not specify the direction or methods of this reorganization. The idea of expropriating the peasants or violently forcing them to take the road of socialist production is so absurd that it is scarcely worth the trouble of criticizing; no one, moreover, is proposing any such measures. The peasantry itself must choose the road of its salvation. Whatever the peasants decide, the proletariat will promise its sincere and effective support. The peasant cooperatives are the most important means to allow the freeing of the agricultural economy from the excessively narrow partitions of the agricultural plot. The commentaries on the plan say: "Peasant cooperatives for production, stockpiling and sales must be encouraged and helped." Unfortunately, we are not told by whom and how they must be encouraged and helped. At every stage we find the same failing. The demands of the plan often have the appearance of dead letters.

## Which class holds power?

Who is it who will nationalize the banks and the key industries? Who will come to the aid of the peasants and introduce the forty-hour week? In one word, who will apply the programme of the CGT? Who and how? The question, comrades, is decisive. If it remains unanswered the whole plan remains hanging in the air.

In the paragraph on "Industrialized Nationalizations," we find in passing an indirect and completely astonishing reply on the question at hand. Here is how the very objective of the plan is defined in that paragraph: "It is a question of establishing...the technical details of a programme that can be applied **independently of the political regime.**" One can't help rubbing his eyes once or twice on reading this unreal formulation. So, the plan that is to be directed against the bankers, the magnates of the trusts, against the ninety dictators of France and the colonies—the plan that is to save the workers, peasants, artisans, small businessmen, employees and civil servants—this plan would be independent of the political regime? To put it otherwise, the rudder of the state can remain, as it is presently, in the hands of the exploiters, the oppressors, those who starve the people—no matter, the CGT presents this government with its plan of economic renewal? Let us say it frankly and openly, this supposed independence of the plan with respect to the political regime totally destroys its real worth by placing it outside the social reality.

Naturally, at this moment we are not concerned with the constitutional or bureaucratic forms of the state regime. But one question dominates all others: which class holds the power? To transform feudal society into capitalist society, the bourgeoisie had to seize the power violently from the hands of the monarchy, the nobility and the clergy. The Third Estate (the bourgeois—*Editor*) understood very well that its plan for "economic and social renovation" required an equivalent regime. And just as the conscious bourgeois did not give (King—*Editor*) Louis Capet the task of abolishing the medieval

fact that a triumph once again of a Malan-type Afrikaner nationalist parliamentary majority could not perform any service in the development or support of capitalism not already performed by the post-1948 regime. On the contrary, it could now only further endanger the stability of capitalism itself. The Treurnicht-led revolt in the NP, leading to the breakaway and formation of the Conservative Party in 1982, is markedly different from the earlier HNP split. It is not a vehicle for the regeneration of Afrikaner bourgeois nationalism, whose 'moral' mission and real historical force is spent. It represents rather the conservative resistance of the right wing of the ruling class itself against the regime's unworkable experiments with change.

131. The Conservative split occurred only when Treurnicht and his lieutenants in the NP could leave it no later. Their hesitation itself showed the lack of a clear passage on the right as far as all sections of the ruling class are concerned.

However, the HNP was at last beginning to gather significant electoral support, at least in the Transvaal where it captured 25% of the vote in the 1981 general elections, mainly on the platteland. This was not on the basis of reconstituted Afrikaner nationalism, but in reality through an increasingly angry protest vote of many white farmers, petty-bourgeois and some workers against the effects of capitalist crisis and the regime's 'liberal' reformism towards blacks.

For the prominent 'verkrampste' leaders within the NP the need to turn back to the right, in order to hold together the Party's and their own electoral base on that side against the HNP challenge, was frustrated by their defeat within the apparatus at the hands of Botha—who was determined at that point to cross the Rubicon towards unfettered bonapartist manoeuvre and 'reform'. Thus the split became unavoidable.

However, this breakaway of the first 16 Nationalist MPs who formed the CP again left sizeable forces on the right wing still within the NP, where they currently remain.

### **Character and contradictions of Conservative Party and HNP**

132. The CP has at its core a substantial part of agricultural capital now finding it increasingly difficult to stay afloat. Farmers' debt stands at over R11 billion and rises constantly. Especially in the Northern Transvaal, many have abandoned their farms. In the more profitable farming sectors, and the more fertile areas, the corporate monopolies are steadily taking over. Individual farmers live under the sword of Damocles of suddenly falling agricultural commodity prices on world markets; of fluctuations in interest rates; and of the growing unreliability of the government (which they depend on for subsidy and economic protection) whenever their needs and those of finance capital conflict.

At the same time the spreading revolt of the black proletariat, as it runs through the rural areas and begins to touch the labourers on the white farms, rouses the land-owners' reaction to a furious intensity. Unable to concede reforms on the economic

plane, this section of bourgeois society intransigently opposes concessions on the political plane.

133. The CP represents a combination of interests of non-monopoly bourgeois—not only farmers but also many small and middling capitalists in industry, services and commerce—both English- and Afrikaans-speaking.

As a party based among sections of the bourgeoisie, defending their particular interests first and foremost, the CP leaders at the same time have to concern themselves with the maintenance of the most favourable general conditions for capitalism. The domination of finance capital is an irreversible fact of bourgeois society. While at odds with the 'reforming' big bourgeoisie, the CP politicians are simultaneously connected by an umbilical cord to the system of finance capital, which they cannot even aspire to break.

134. For electoral purposes, the CP has to look to a coalition of class forces similar to that traditionally relied on by the NP—i.e. white workers and lower middle-class people together with capitalists—but with the difference that English, Portuguese and other whites are essential now to provide enough weight.

28% of CP members are said to be English-speaking (while English-speakers make up about 37% of the whites). There are some 600 000 ex-Angolan and Mozambican Portuguese now in SA, forming an important constituency of reaction. At least one CP MP is reported to be learning Portuguese, in order to appeal for their votes. The CP also attracts a significant following among ex-Rhodesians.

135. The conspicuous feature of this party is that it does not depend on a clearly delineated positive program, but rather on the very amorphousness of the right-wing protest vote against 'reform'. It is not a radical but precisely a conservative party of the right. It lives by opposing the changes implemented or mooted by the government. Not for nothing, its leader is known as 'Dr. No'. This negative characteristic forms, at one and the same time, the strength and the weakness of the CP.

136. As a party emanating from the mainstream of bourgeois politics, with a significant parliamentary base and potential, and with manifold connections within the hierarchy of the state bureaucracy, the Conservatives were able to develop very rapidly as the main force on the right, at least in numerical terms. The point has been reached where most white parliamentary seats in the Transvaal rural areas, as well as some working-class and lower middle-class seats in urban areas are potentially within their reach.

Thus the CP has cut across the path of development of the HNP. However, the latter's 13-year headstart in the field, plus its fiery nationalist dogmatism, has enabled it to survive in competition with the lacklustre CP.

137. It suits the CP leadership to make electoral deals with the HNP on occasions, to avoid splitting

regime, so the proletariat cannot put Flandin or Herriot or other leaders of the bourgeoisie in charge of carrying out the plan that is to lead to the expropriation of the bourgeois itself. He who holds the power decides the forms of property, and all reform reduces itself in the last analysis to the abolition of private property and the establishment of collective and socialist property in the means of production. He who believes that the bourgeois is capable of expropriating itself is perhaps an excellent poet. But, for my part, I would not entrust him with the funds of the smallest trade union, because he is living in a dream world while we want to remain in the real world.

## Conquer power

It must be said in no uncertain terms: only a revolutionary government of the workers and peasants, prepared for implacable struggle against all the exploiters, can apply the plan, complete it, develop it and go beyond it along the socialist road. For the proletariat, that means to conquer power.

Who is the plan addressed to? To the rulers, to soften them up, or to the dispossessed to direct them against their oppression? We propagandists have to know whom we are addressing and in what tone. Neither the plan nor the commentaries teach us anything in this connection. The official statement tells us that the plan launched by the CGT must be "met favourably by the general public." I ask you, comrades, and I ask myself: what does that mean, the general public? It is not, I suppose, the public of the great boulevards. In the trade union movement and the social struggle, we are used to first seeking out classes: the proletariat, the bourgeoisie, the different layers of the petit bourgeoisie. We are certainly hopeful that the proletariat and the lower layers of the petit bourgeoisie will accept the plan favourably, provided it is elaborated carefully, purged of equivocation and presented to the masses as a program of struggle. But the workers and poor peasants are not the general public. Do we mean, for example, that it is the big bourgeoisie who must accept the plan of the CGT? Obviously not, we don't want to make fun of ourselves. Consult *Le Temps*. Some weeks ago, this newspaper, which represents well the ninety business magnates, that is, the ruling oligarchy, was protesting vehemently against any participation of the trade unions in the industrial commissions.

I quote you two sentences which speak volumes: "The banning of all workers' associations was the price for obtaining social peace under the *ancien regime*." Behold the big bourgeoisie, its back to the wall, now seeking its inspiration in the *ancien regime*! And then the same article says: "Corporatism (special economic interest groups) here signifies trade unionism." *Le Temps* is, in this way demonstrating to us each day that the ruling class is not only not preparing to make concessions along the lines of the CGT plan but, on the contrary, envisages the possibility of crushing the CGT itself.

Jaures rightly said that *Le Temps* is the bourgeoisie in the form of a newspaper. Is collaboration possible with the bourgeoisie that now, taking inspiration from the *ancien regime*, prepares to outlaw any workers' association? To pose this question is to reply to it. Nothing remains but implacable struggle, and to the very end.

## 'Above the classes'

The observations, criticisms and suggestions that I am presenting here in the name of our departmental union are already quite extensive, and I am, unfortunately, far from having exhausted even the most important questions. It's all the more necessary, therefore, to indicate the fundamental defect of the

plan: its authors wish to place themselves above classes, that is, outside reality. Where they want to win over everyone they speak of the general public. They want to nationalize the banks, but without prejudice to high finance, and to nationalise the trusts, while luxuriously guaranteeing the big bourgeoisie three more generations of parasitism. They want to come to the aid of the peasants without violating the interests of the landlords, the fertilizer trusts and the big milling companies. They evidently also want to win over all possible political regimes since they state that their plan is neutral with respect to political parties and even regimes. It even seems to me that such labored and incomprehensible expressions as "industrialized nationalizations", etc., are chosen in order not to shock the delicate ears of the magnates of the trusts.

This procedure is not only useless, it is dangerous; it is not only dangerous, it is pernicious. He who seeks to embrace too much grasps poorly or takes away little. We will not win over the bourgeoisie—it has an unshakeable class consciousness; it makes fun of our advice; it is preparing to crush us. The more gentle, conciliating and obsequious we are towards the bourgeoisie, the less it respects us and the more intransigent and arrogant it becomes. This lesson, it seems to me, emerges from the entire history of the class struggle.

## Action program for entire proletariat

On the other hand, by running after the supposed general public with our entreaties and by making concession after concession to appease the capitalist idol, we risk displeasing the underprivileged who are already beginning to say to themselves: "These are advisors of the ruling classes and not the leaders of the oppressed classes." We will never win the heart of the class enemy, but we risk losing permanently the confidence of our own class. The misunderstanding of this fundamental rule constitutes the main weakness of the plan. We must reshape it. We must address ourselves directly to the wage earners and the exploited. We must use clear and firm language. We must transform the plan into an action program for the entire proletariat.

The "notes for propagandists" enjoin us to "crystallise all those of goodwill". This is vague. Where are they to be found? We are acquainted with classes and class organizations, but above all we know the bad will of the bourgeoisie. To smash it, we must counterpose the revolutionary will of the working class. As for the middle classes, they will put their confidence in the proletariat only if the latter demonstrates in action its confidence in itself.

It is absurd and even criminal to look for goodwill in the bourgeoisie by breaking down and paralyzing the revolutionary goodwill of the proletariat. The united front of our class is necessary at any cost: unity of action of all the workers, trade-union, political, cooperative, educational and sports organizations and, in the first place, trade-union unity, with a specific goal—the application of the plan for nationalization and socialization through the conquest of power.

We must mobilize all the worker militants for a vigorous campaign throughout the country. The peasants in the most distant hamlets must be convinced that the proletariat is this time seriously getting ready to overthrow the bourgeoisie, to take the power into its hands to transform our country, to make it habitable at last for the working people.

**Either the plan is transformed into a plan for the conquest of power by the the proletariat, for the establishment of a workers' and peasants' government, or the people will put it down as null and unworkable. The departmental union of Isere is for revolutionary action. If you call on us in that sense, we will respond: Present!**

the anti-government right-wing vote. In Klip River recently, because there had been a swing of support back to the government, it cost the CP nothing to stay out of the race and back a losing HNP candidate. More difficult to negotiate, though possible, would be a comprehensive share-out of constituencies to fight in the event of a general election.

Even independently, with any overall swing of whites to the right of the NP, the HNP could possibly make some further gains, especially in areas where it was first to consolidate a base. But it is ultimately a bird without wings. On its own it cannot amount to more than a petty-bourgeois Afrikaner nationalist sect, rigid and fanatically ideological, for which history now affords no real room for development.

138. That is why its leaders have been moving reluctantly towards exploring merger with the CP. The road to this is rocky, with no certainty of achievement, because of wide policy differences between the two, reflecting their different class characteristics.

However, it is significant that, in recent months, the HNP has pitched its propaganda less in terms of 'Afrikaner' and more in terms of 'white' unity and supremacy, in the hope of widening its electoral appeal. This course, if it were pursued consistently, for any length of time, would lead to a dilution of the HNP's sustaining ethos, and would end with this party becoming a Mark II version of the CP.

Where there are two parties of essentially the same character, social role and program, it is a general law that the smaller loses out to the larger. Thus, on the basis of maintaining their independent existence, the HNP leaders are facing Hobson's choice.

Within the CP, however, they could form a magnetic pole on the right-wing and begin gathering to their side a great part—perhaps even a majority—of the active layer of CP supporters who are moving well to the right of the party leadership now in their demands for ferocious reactionary measures against the blacks.

139. Looking into the murk of the white reaction, it may seem that all right-wing cats are grey. However, the differences on the far right are real, and not unimportant: they provide indicators of the ways in which the reaction is most likely to develop, and the weaknesses within it which will make it possible to defeat.

Unlike the process in the 1930s and 1940s, the split-off of the ultra-right cannot lay a new basis for overall unification of the whites, but represents their political disintegration.

140. The fragmentation of the right is one of its outstanding characteristics. The CP itself is riddled with contradictions. These are symptoms of crisis of the political-economic system and the revolutionary pressure of the black proletariat which there is no evident means of stopping; the process of break-up of white society on class lines under this pressure; and the impossibility of re-cementing the old alliances on any stable foundation now.

141. Electorally, the CP is capable of gathering the votes of most of the disparate forces on the far right.

This is not because of any unifying vitality in its program, but simply because it seems to hold out the best prospect of a parliamentary overturn of the Botha government from the right.

The CP's fire is concentrated against all specific 'reform' measures taken or mooted by the government. However, the Conservative leaders know that, if they were in power, they would themselves require flexibility to try to come to terms with black 'leaders'.

142. (While it is unwise to base too much on anecdotes, especially concerning buffoons, there is an irresistible incident mentioned in Van Zyl Slabbert's book, *The Last White Parliament*, which indicates how lacking in confidence Conservative MPs are that their own promises of reversing all the 'reforms' could in fact be carried out.

One afternoon in Parliament a CP Member came and sat next to Slabbert after getting into an altercation with Nationalist MPs.

'He shook his finger at the Government.

' "You see those bastards? We are going to break them, I promise you that!"

'He paused awhile, sneaking a sideways glance to his colleagues, and winked at me.

"But once we have broken them, you fellows had better take over, because our plans are not going to work either!"')

143. Although merger with the HNP is a prospect (and one which, if not carried through now, would probably recur later), we should bear in mind that the difference in aims between the CP leadership and the HNP is considerably wider than that between the CP and the NP right wing.

144. Unlike the HNP, Treurnicht has been careful not to attack the government for 'weakness' or 'holding back' when it comes to the military-police repression of the blacks. On foreign policy issues, he likewise tail-ends the NP, pointedly saying, for example, that he was not necessarily demanding military action against South Africa's neighbours after every land-mine explosion in the Northern Transvaal. This reflects the policy of a thoroughly reactionary, but nevertheless sober spokesman of a wing of the bourgeoisie.

The maniacal petty-bourgeois HNP knows no such constraints. Jaap Marais, for example, has demanded a permanent curfew on all blacks, with curfew-breakers to be shot on sight. From the standpoint of capitalism this is at least a little ... premature! A turn to civil war against the blacks—which is what measures like this would amount to—is considered madness by all the serious strategists of the bourgeoisie at this still relatively early stage in the development of the revolutionary crisis.

145. A pillar of the HNP policy has been no retreat from the '1966' prescriptions of Verwoerd. Undiluted apartheid; no rights for Africans outside the Bantustans; no form of representation in central government for coloured or Indian people—the carrying through of this manifestly unworkable program to the bitter end, on the insistence that any departure from it is certain suicide.

Louis Stoffberg, the Sasolberg MP, summed up

# Building working-class power— the role of youth

**BRENDA ADAMS, a CAYCO activist, talks to *Inqaba* about the youth movement in the Western Cape, and the way forward for it.**

After 1980, as a result of the school boycott and the mass upsurge, Western Cape youth established local organisations—supporting workers' struggles (the red meat strike, Wilson-Rowntree, Leyland), organising sports, and building the local civic organisations (handing out pamphlets and selling *Grassroots*).

By 1982/3 the Cape Youth Congress (CAYCO) was formed, because activists saw the need for a centralised structure, to instil a direction in the youth movement. CAYCO was the first of the regional centralised youth organisations: PEYCO, SOYCO, etc., were formed after this.

This was a huge step forward in uniting youth. Township youth identified with CAYCO strongly.

Yet so far CAYCO has failed to really build organisation and draw the mass of working-class youth into it.

To attract and organise the youth in the townships it's a question of developing a program of action reflecting the aspirations of working-class youth. Also we need to unite the youth with the organised workers—the parents of the youth—along proper lines, to strengthen both sides.

But the present leadership of CAYCO are essentially middle-class youth who are not really interested to orient the organisation in these ways. Rather than do that, some would even prefer that the organisation remains undeveloped.

CAYCO leadership must be based on the understanding that we are fighting a class struggle—that the working-class are the people who will make the revolution; that only the working-class can ensure that the state and the capitalists are overthrown.

Because of the present problems, many youth in the branches who are serious about building CAYCO have

became frustrated. On their own, they do not feel they have the understanding, the resources, and the skills to know how to take CAYCO forward. We must work to remedy this.

In 1983 the UDF was formed. All the youth saw the importance of this and the need to build it. In the Cape, and in other regions too, the campaigns of the UDF—the anti-elections campaign and the million signature campaign, for example—were carried at grassroots level by the youth.

## UDF

While much was achieved, the real problem was not confronted during this activity—how to build mass youth organisation on a class basis, and how to link this with the organisation of the workers.

This has shown itself more sharply since the mass of youth in the Cape exploded into struggle in the national school boycott and uprisings of 1984-5. At grassroots level different CAYCO branches and their members were involved fully in these struggles. The CAYCO leadership could have been giving a political direction to the youth; but, to a large extent, they were silent.

In these battles the youth took their lead from the UDF leadership. They were inspired by the idea that the UDF leaders were propagating, that we were on the brink of freedom in 1986 or 1987. Just one "big push", and Botha will fall, they were saying; and therefore 'liberation before education'.

The problem with this position is that our forces are not yet sufficiently organised and prepared to defeat the state. The youth well know that liberation will not come without armed battles and uprisings against the state. But the UDF leadership has not based itself on mobilising and organising the working-class to lead the struggle on class lines.

Instead they used every opportunity to whip up the youth to get out into the streets against the police, and continued to do this, even after the second State of Emergency. They just went on saying, "if you must lose your life, that's all part of the struggle."

As a result, the youth have learnt many lessons. On June 16 people were taken aback by the way that the police moved in, sealing off whole areas, with massive Casspir patrols, police in private cars, raids on homes and offices and so on.

It made many youth realise that Botha and his government are not going to give up so easily, but will do everything they can to cling to power and smash legal organisation.

This period has exposed further weaknesses of the UDF too. Because of the idea of "one big push"—and that then they could negotiate with Botha and we would get freedom—they have failed to prepare proper underground structures.

Now many more youth see the need for serious and regular political discussion, to look at the current situation, at the balance of forces between the state and the working class, and at the nature of the struggle.

It has become very clear that the idea of "freedom tomorrow" is out.

Yes, we are responsible for defending our organisations and our activists. But, even youth who earlier had been at the forefront of the barricades are saying that, to achieve freedom, more is needed than just going out, burning tyres, throwing stones at the police.

## Class struggle

Many youth are looking with new eyes on the UDF leaders. They say, the leadership aren't in touch with the communities. They just give orders. They don't understand the mood.

More are seeing the need to unite the youth and the workers, and to base our actions on the class struggle that is actually being fought. This

their standpoint trenchantly in the No-Confidence debate in February:

"There is nothing permanent between Malan, Strydom and Verwoerd's ideal of separation and, on the other hand, a Black communist dictatorship. If, from a policy of racial separation as the NP originally stood for, you first begin to place your foot on the slippery slope of reform, you will slide on your behind right into Black majority rule."

146. In contrast, the CP adheres to the '1977' reform proposals which fathered the present constitution, and which the HNP hysterically denounced as a sell-out of the whites. The CP leaders concede that the policy of Verwoerd could not be sustained; they were in the Cabinet in 1977 and bear co-responsibility for those proposals.

The basis on which they attack the 1983 Constitution is that the coloured and Indian chambers are not notionally separate 'parliaments', but separate Houses of a single parliament together with the whites. Also that it adds to the 1977 plan a multi-racial Presidents' Council with legislative power in the last resort, and a multi-racial Cabinet which the State President is required to 'consult' in the exercise of his powers.

This allegedly gives away white 'meaningful self-determination' over the 'white fatherland' (the bulk of South Africa).

147. The Conservatives' argument is nonsense, of course, for the 1983 constitution ensures that, in the election of the President, the party commanding a majority in the white House of Assembly has decisive say and, together with the President (who appoints his Cabinet), also determines the majority of the President's Council.

Doesn't that conform in its essentials to the Nationalists' original 'new dispensation' plan—to add a cosmetic tint to white supremacy, and at the same time free the regime for manoeuvre on bonapartist lines?

While protesting piously at the 'undemocratic' devaluation of parliament in the new structure, the CP leadership conveniently forgets that the 1977 proposals would have permitted the legislative powers of the present President's Council to be exercised by the President himself. Their opposition to bonapartism is only speech-deep.

148. In regard to the constitutional system, Treurnicht concedes (*Hansard*, 17/4/86):

"It is very clear that the *status quo* could not be maintained.... We are not opposed to progress, or at least to moving away from the *status quo*; what we are indeed opposed to is the course that is being adopted or the proposals for such a course."

What course, then, in place of Botha's schemes? Here the CP finds itself in real difficulty, because, from its bourgeois standpoint, it must uphold the 'idea' of some reform while appealing to an electoral constituency interested only in the crushing of revolution.

149. The CP's plan for 'homelands' for the coloured and Indian people is so absurd as to be ridiculed even by the HNP. It is an essentially formal invention, for the sake of sustaining intellectually their argument

that the coloured and Indian chambers should be separate ('sovereign') parliaments.

That may serve them in debates with Afrikaner intellectuals, but could hardly gain much echo on the stump. It could be dropped overnight by the party leadership if that appeared convenient to attain their real goals.

150. In relation to the African majority, whose political containment within the Bantustan system is plainly hopeless, the contradictions of the CP position stand out most sharply: It is necessary to change, but ... no particular change is acceptable!

F.W. de Klerk, Transvaal Nationalist leader and heir-apparent to Botha, made effective use of this against the CP in the No-Confidence debate:

"The hon member for Waterberg waxed lyrical in his speech about how strongly they felt about the self-determination of all peoples in South Africa.... The way he put it was that all peoples in South Africa had to have full self-determination, as well as their own sovereignty in their own territory.

"In the PWV area this is not attainable, and he has already conceded this to me in previous arguments..." It was "not attainable to untangle the interwoven communities."

"Now I wish to ask the hon the Leader of the CP who, of the several million Blacks and the several million Whites in that area should in future live there without full self-determination? In terms of their concept, someone simply has to fall short, in spite of the fact that he terms the policy workable."

To this Treurnicht could offer no reply.

151. The real difference between the CP leadership and the government is not, in reality, over the details of the Constitution. (They could come to terms with this Constitution if they could gain power.) Rather it is the nightmare of the bourgeois right, articulated by the Conservatives, that the 'reforming' Botha government might be prepared, under pressure, to move to the point of abandoning the predominance of the white chamber in favour of more unrestricted manoeuvres and negotiations with black leaders, which they fear might open the way to a collapse or surrender of power itself.

Thus the Conservatives perform essentially the same role externally, to the right of the NP, as is performed internally by the NP's own right wing. Both are there to act as a brake upon 'reform'. The NP right performs this role within the government; the Conservative Party has to hold to capitalism and the state those whites breaking away from the NP on the right.

In other words, as far as the right wing of the bourgeoisie is concerned, there is a **division of labour politically** between the CP and the NP right. The two are organically linked. This fact is likely to play a central role in political developments.

152. The increasingly savage right-wing rhetoric of the CP leaders in public (most notably Hartzenberg, who is busy making a name for himself as a rival to Treurnicht) does not confound this assessment, but confirms it. The CP leaders have to appease the rabid bigotry of the whites gravitating to the extreme right.



*Youth at CAYCO's founding conference in 1983.*

should be a two-way process, between the organised workers and the youth, strengthening both together.

The CAYCO leadership needs to take initiatives to link the youth with COSATU—even though the trade union leadership have not made efforts to build links between their members and the youth.

In the strikes after 1980 the youth put in a lot of work—going door-to-door collecting food parcels and money, approaching also small businessmen and professionals. They went to the rallies where the workers explained why they were on strike and why the community should support them.

The workers appreciated the help of the youth very much. They felt they were not alone in facing the nightmare of how to support their families each week.

It made it clear for both youth and workers that these were more than just strikes for higher wages, factory issues, but that they were struggles which meant something for the whole community—it broadened the meaning of the struggle.

But, for the trade union leaders it was only a question of the youth doing the donkey-work, while they remained in the offices receiving the food parcels and the money. So it seemed to us. When the strike was over, the union leaders could have come back to the youth, with their members, to continue contact and strengthen the links. But their attitude was that the youth have helped, now it's over, and there's nothing more for them to do.

Now, since COSATU was formed, and particularly since the second

State of Emergency, the more serious CAYCO members see the need for the youth to be working together with COSATU—to establish the shop-stewards locals, to help unionise the unorganised factories, and so on.

What can be done when the organised workers and the youth unite was shown in the mass stay-away in the Transvaal in 1984, and in many other stay-aways since then, even when unfortunately the trade union leadership has not always been at the fore.

We must ensure that the problems in the factories don't just stay factory issues but are taken into the community, and that problems faced by youth and workers in the community are taken into the factory.

Through campaigns and struggles of this kind, more and more workers and youth will see the need for the socialist revolution—and at the same time be building the forces which can defeat the state and the bosses.

## Unemployment

Take the issue of youth unemployment. Every time we go door-to-door on campaigns, we find unemployed youth in every house. Many would respond to a campaign on youth unemployment.

Campaigns on issues like this would be the way to reflect the aspirations of working-class youth and bring them into the youth organisations. Parents, too, would welcome such a campaign. The parents don't talk about the "world crisis of capitalism", but they know

that factories are closed, that people are being retrenched or working short-time.

They know that the bosses prefer to take on older workers rather than the youth—because the youth are *more militant and more political*, while older workers have to put up with the worst pay, and can't refuse easily, because they have family responsibilities.

CAYCO needs to take up such a campaign, together with COSATU. This could bring together unemployed youth who now just sit in the house. It could develop all their skills and talents. We can explain why there's such a big crisis of unemployment. We can organise demonstrations against unemployment, to make the capitalists and the state know what we think of their policies, and make demands on them.

We can work together with the workers to take up demands in the factories for no overtime, for a shorter working week with no loss of pay—for sharing out the work so that more workers can be taken on, with a fair proportion of youth among them.

We can link up this struggle against unemployment with the struggle for a living wage for all working people.

Then there are two other things which we as youth in CAYCO must take up.

Firstly, CAYCO should be producing a regular newsletter or paper. Since CAYCO's formation, it has brought out only two newsheets! Through producing and distributing a newspaper we can attract membership and build our contact with the community.

Also, there is a need to work towards a national youth organisation. Up to now the youth in each region—CAYCO, PEYCO, SOYCO, etc—have done things on their own, with no coordination, and not much opportunity to share experiences and work out the most effective ways of campaigning.

We see that in some areas—on the East Rand and in Alexandra, for example—youth and workers are uniting in struggles. We need to discuss these experiences, to know what will help to build proper working-class organisation.

For these reasons we must have the establishment of a national youth organisation as a goal.

If we can do all this, then we will be closer to freedom.

At the same time, however, the cranks' medley of petty-bourgeois fanatics on the right are an obstacle to their necessary freedom of manoeuvre as serious contenders to govern for capitalism. This can become a serious embarrassment for them if they lean too far in that direction, and then have to swing suddenly back.

Once sure of a monopoly of votes on the right, their aim would have to be to win over wavering supporters of the NP, who were prepared previously to give 'reform' a chance, but who are becoming increasingly disillusioned with the failure of the government to tame the black resistance struggle.

Together with this, the CP leadership has to orient towards the right wing of the National Party and to take advantage of any possibility of a parliamentary division and realignment with them.

153. It will not have escaped the notice of the Conservative leaders that the 1983 Constitution, which they vehemently repudiate, is skilfully entrenched legally, so that it would be very difficult, and probably impossible, for a Conservative government to alter its structure fundamentally by lawful means. This is because a majority in all three Houses is required for a whole range of Constitutional amendments—which cannot be carried through by the President's Council.

Thus it could be a choice for the CP of either living with the Constitution under protest (which the leaders would secretly prefer to having to carry out their own program, as it would give them many a welcome alibi in front of the voters), or else tearing up the Constitution and, in effect, governing on the basis of a *coup d'etat*.

It is not likely that we shall have a civilian or party government operating by such means.

However, the consequence of coming to power (even through a realignment and coalition with the NP right) and then not carrying out the program of outright reaction would rapidly exacerbate tendencies towards split-up within the Conservative Party itself.

154. This whole situation shows the contradictions that now impede the development of a really unified, or internally cohesive movement of white reaction against the government on a mass scale. Expressed in shorthand, this is the result of the balance of class forces, nationally and internationally, impressing itself in economic, social and political terms on every part of society.

It is in this context that the rise of the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging—the organisation of outright fascism in South Africa today—has to be analysed, and its limits understood.

## Rise and limits of the AWB

155. The social basis of the AWB lies among the Afrikaner farmers, urban petty-bourgeois and workers driven to fury by the economic crisis; by the 'betrayal' of the NP government of their interests; and by the movement of the black proletariat to revolution.

This is the same constituency, in other words, to

which the HNP has always appealed, and which the CP, for electoral purposes, must also aim to satisfy. Some 80% of AWB members are said to vote Conservative. But there is an essential difference between the role of the AWB and that of the CP/HNP.

Probably, of the AWB's claimed 60 000 to 80 000 members, only a fraction would be uniformed 'storm-valke'—nevertheless, the AWB embraces the activist core of the ultra-right, impatient of leaving their demands to parliamentary politics.

156. The opening for the AWB to develop has resulted from the contradictory position of the CP as a bourgeois-conservative party which, while it opposes the Constitution, is obliged to honour constitutional government (at least so long as constitutional government best serves capitalism).

The CP has to confine its challenge to Botha basically within the framework of parliament—when parliament is losing its powers to the Presidency, and when it forms an impotent minority in that forum!

The CP leaders' first priority is the maintenance of cohesion and loyalty of the state apparatus, as the necessary defence of capitalism against the black proletariat. They dare not mobilise an extra-parliamentary revolt of the right, for fear of where that might lead. Right-wing opposition to the government, once it reached the point of open rebellion, would divide the state and could provide a rift for the black revolution to burst through.

157. They fear, moreover, the sharpening of conflict between black and white, recognising that, if full-scale civil war were to develop, there would be no guarantee the whites would win—and even if they did, the spoils would be a wasteland.

Thus Treurnicht told a *Guardian* interviewer (13/12/84):

"I've repudiated the idea of taking up arms in the literal sense of the word, in the sense of a rebellion or something like that, because I've also warned that any group of people among the whites who claim the right to do such a thing must remember that just around the corner there are large numbers of other people who say, 'If you do that, we can do it too'."

158. While AWB leader Terre'blanche also 'repudiates' any intention of armed rebellion against the government, his speeches are peppered with threats of murder and mayhem against the liberation struggle of the blacks. Whipping up and playing on the reactionary clamour for direct action against the threat to white supremacy, the AWB is able to exploit the drab passivity of the CP, confined as it is to toothless parliamentary debating.

The AWB's basis of success is therefore that it has provided the missing extra-parliamentary vehicle for white reaction.

155. The HNP, while employing semi-fascist demagoguery, has always made clear its purely electoral aspirations and opposes extra-parliamentary action. But for reasons already outlined, its prospects of development as a force in parliament have been cut across by the Conservatives.

Simultaneously, it is challenged on its right flank

# THE SOWETO UPRISING OF 1976



## Ten years of heroic struggle

**At about 7am on June 16, 1976, thousands of African school students in Soweto gathered at pre-arranged assembly points for a demonstration. They launched a movement that began as a local expression of opposition to the imposition of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, and developed, over 20 months, into a country-wide youth uprising against the apartheid regime.**

This movement cost the lives of more than 1 000 youths—shot by the police. But, like an earthquake, it opened up a huge fissure in SA history, separating one era from another. It politicised a whole new generation of youth, and consigned beyond recall the era of defeats in the 1960s. It announced the determination of the youth to end one of the most barbaric examples of modern capitalist slavery.

Since February of 1976 anger had been mounting over the attempt by the regime to enforce Afrikaans as a medium of instruction—an anger

---

### By Basil Hendrickse

**who was active in Black Consciousness youth movement in the Transvaal in 1976.**

---

very rapidly directed against the whole system of 'Bantu Education.'

First introduced in 1955, Bantu Education was designed not merely to place every possible obstacle in the way of the intellectual development of Africans, but consciously to create an enslaved proletariat exploitable as cheap labour.

But the enormous expansion of the capitalist economy brought the need for skilled labour and the need to maintain a cheap labour force directly into conflict with each other—producing serious crisis in the schools.

Under Bantu Education, African poverty and the cost of school fees combined to produce a high drop-out rate. By 1975 less than 10% of African students were receiving a secondary education and 0,24% were in Form 5. The skills bottleneck forced the government to introduce some changes. The length of the school career was reduced from 13 to 12 years. The pass mark for admission to secondary school was reduced from 50% to 40%, increasing the intake.

Against the background of a general shortage of accommodation, the result was chaos. A survey in January 1973 revealed that a quarter of all registered schools in Soweto had no buildings of their own, but

by the AWB, which steals its rhetorical thunder and combines this with an appeal for direct action.

Hence we have the paradox that the HNP leaders are far more hostile to the AWB than are the Conservatives, expelling any party member who signs up with *Terre'blanche*. Unable now and unwilling to match the fascists at their own game, the HNP leaders are therefore impelled towards rapprochement with the CP.

156. The CP leaders, on the other hand, can afford to be more open to association with the AWB—at least at this juncture. It poses no threat to them electorally, for it eschews parliament and elections. Indeed, it provides an outlet for frustrated CP supporters to 'let off steam' without abandoning the Party.

On the other hand, however, as would be the case following a merger with the HNP, this inter-relationship is likely to prove an albatross round the CP leaders' necks in the event that their entry into government becomes a prospect

157. The AWB leader has clearly made a study of the methods and tactics of Hitler. This is evident not only from the 'mesmerising' oratory and blood-symbolism, or from the systematic recruitment of lower-ranking army officers and police. It appears also in the care *Terre'blanche* takes to cultivate a co-operative relationship with the CP and show his readiness for the same with the HNP.

The purpose in associating with the broader right-wing opposition is to acquire respectability among the bourgeois right, to offer his followers some hope of eventual success, and at the same time to exploit the inability of his 'allies' to lead action.

He is cautious to refrain from embarrassing them with their febleness in too provocative a way.

158. However, there are more than just tactical reasons in the narrow sense underlying this approach. It flows from the fact that a serious fascist rebellion against the constitutionally established government would most likely, in today's conditions in South Africa, provide an overture to insurrection by the blacks.

For this reason the fascists are unable to gain the backing of any decisive section of the bourgeoisie, nor is their potential base among middle-class and working-class whites anything like adequate for an independent victory.

159. Hitler himself, let's recall, resisted after 1923 all thought of a forcible coup against the established state—even when it was more or less paralysed and he had millions of votes and hundreds of thousands of storm-troopers behind him.

He feared, on the one hand, the potential of the German proletariat to turn such an attempt by the fascists, especially if its success proved incomplete, into an opening for revolution. (In fact the insane policy of the Stalinists in opposing a workers' united front of Communists and Social Democrats to act against fascism is what allowed the triumph of Hitler and the smashing of the workers' movement in Germany.)

On the other hand Hitler worried that the capitalists, army generals, etc., fearing the proletariat also, might feel compelled to take vigorous repressive measures against him and his forces, if he threatened to move against the state.

160. In fact Hitler was able to gain power in 1933 with the financial and political backing of the big financiers and industrialists. Power was handed to him constitutionally, and he consolidated it by making his peace with the heads of the army against his own stormtroopers.

He decisively defeated that wing of his party which sought to turn the petty-bourgeois demagoguery of 'national socialism' into action against the capitalists. Instead, he relied consciously on the capitalists' need for a counter-revolution of blood and iron against the working class, when the conservative parties and regimes of the bourgeois right proved impotent.

In fact, wherever fascism has gained power it has been with the support of the capitalist class; nowhere has fascism triumphed except as the instrument of capitalism.

161. *Terre'blanche*, even as his fascist movement develops momentum on the basis of frenzied white petty-bourgeois and workers, has to try to find the favour of at least important elements of the bourgeois and its strategists—but in objective conditions which make it impossible for state power to be conceded to the fascists by the bourgeoisie.

162. Internationally, the failure of fascism to develop in this period of economic, social and political crisis is the result of the decisively changed relationship of class forces.

In the 1930s, a mass petty-bourgeoisie, driven mad by depression, inflation and unending revolutionary turmoil, provided the spring for fascism's rise—and the social battering ram with which fascism could pulverise the workers' organisations in the interests of capitalism.

The enormous further development of international monopoly capitalism since the Second World War, the erosion of the old petty-bourgeoisie of town and countryside, and the change in the characteristics of the middle classes and their relationship to the much more powerful working class, makes this generally impossible today.

163. Added to this is the experience of the bourgeoisie of losing half of Europe to 'communism' as the end result of handing over power to fascist maniacs; the post-War decades of the colonial revolution and the irreversible rise of black peoples to nationhood; the revolutionary volatility now of the whole under-developed world, which includes the bulk of the world's population; the crippling liabilities, economically and politically, for any capitalist class openly depending on racism or virulent chauvinism (which is essential to fascism)—all these factors rule out any rerun of the 1930s, as far as any international growth of fascism is concerned.

164. In South Africa it is obvious that the white

congregated in church halls, tents or classrooms "borrowed" from other schools in the afternoon. In 1976 the government expected 149 000 students to enrol for secondary education—but had accommodation for only 38 000. In the event more than 250 000 enrolled!

This state of affairs caused enormous bitterness amongst parents. Many of these regarded education (despite its deficiencies) as the hoist with which their children could be lifted out of the misery and poverty that seemed to be the unavoidable lot of the black workers.

In these conditions, the attempt to impose Afrikaans in the schools—the language of the apartheid state—added insult to injury. It sparked off opposition even amongst the conservative elements on the school boards created by the state to oversee Bantu Education—who began negotiating with the government for redress.

Beginning with boycotts of Afrikaans classes, the students rapidly began boycotting all classes. By early June several thousand pupils from a total of seven schools were on strike.

On June 8 two Security Policemen visited Naledi High School. From here the South African Students Movement (SASM), which was organising high school students, had written a letter to the South African Students Organisation, its black university student counterpart, asking for assistance in the campaign.

## Resentment

The policemen were trapped in the principal's office, the telephone wires cut off, and their car burned after compromising documents were found in it. Re-inforcements were fought off by the students although the captured two police managed to get away. The story of this incident spread like wild fire through Soweto. Like the small stones which roll down a mountain side before an avalanche, it was a sign of the resentment and hatred that was to be unleashed against the police.

At this stage SASM called a meeting at the Donaldson Community Centre in Orlando on Sunday 13th. Between 300 and 400 students, representing about 55 schools, decided to stage a mass demonstration on June 16.

An action committee, later known as the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC), was elected to lead the campaign. It consisted of 2 delegates from each school, meeting in secret and using pseudonyms.

On June 16 columns departed from selected assembly points at a specified time, in order to maintain discipline and to stretch police forces as much as possible. A dozen schools served as rendezvous points, with the final destination Orlando stadium for a mass rally. Despite brushes with the police en route, most marchers managed to reach the last meeting point in Orlando West.

However, as hundreds were still marching into Orlando, a large contingent of police arrived in police vans and spread out in front of the marches in the form of an arc. Defiantly, the students kept on singing freedom songs.

Suddenly a white policeman threw a tear gas cannister in front of the crowd of students. The pupils retreated slightly but stood their ground, singing and waving placards, reading "Away with Afrikaans", "Blacks are not dustbins", "Afrikaans is a tribal language" etc.

Then a white policeman drew his revolver and shot straight at the unarmed, singing students. Hector Peterson, the first victim of the uprising, fell in front of his comrades. Other police then opened fire.



*Hector Peterson is killed.*

The students, many of them girls as young as 10 to 12 years old, were stunned at first and stood looking at the bodies of the dead and wounded. Then their rage and fury erupted. Picking up stones, bricks or any missile they could lay their hands on, they advanced towards the police lines and threw them at the police. As one journalist commented, "What frightened me more than anything else was the attitude of the children. Many seemed oblivious of the danger. They continued running towards the police, dodging and ducking, despite the fact that they were armed and despite the fact that they continued shooting."

The Soweto uprising had begun.

## Retreated

The police retreated, pursued by the youth. All buildings associated in any way with the state—administration board offices, post offices and especially beerhalls—were attacked. The youth requisitioned, in the name of the revolution, petrol from garage owners to set fire to these buildings and to make petrol bombs. Bottle stores were attacked and the liquor emptied into the streets.

By midday, two army helicopters circled over Orlando West, dropping teargas. Two special counter-insurgency units from Pretoria and Johannesburg (created only a few months earlier) were brought into action.

By that evening, 14 personnel carriers, known as Hippos, arrived in the townships. Designed to withstand landmines in the guerilla war zone in Namibia and Zimbabwe, they were now to become a natural part of the township environment. Their real purpose—to defend the regime against the working class internally—was beginning to be exposed.

The lay-out of the townships was based on military calculations to suppress working class revolt. Provision was made for the marshalling of armoured cars at convenient vantage points. Houses were built in low-lying areas where they could be kept under surveillance.

In 1957 a group of young white architects were told by the Durban Ci-

middle class and labour aristocracy cannot crush and atomise the black proletariat with their own social force, even if organised on fascist lines. On the contrary, the rise of white fascism beyond certain fairly narrow limits would lead inevitably to the blacks arming, and to civil war.

This the whole ruling class shrinks from, and with it the majority of whites. For these reasons it will be impossible for fascist leaders to generate a movement embracing the greater part of the whites.

The bourgeoisie in South Africa, the bourgeoisie of the imperialist powers, the bourgeois politicians as well as the generals and police chiefs will under no circumstances permit power to pass to the fascists, for that would not strengthen the existing state but would, on the contrary, split white society from top to bottom and hasten the state's disintegration.

For all these reasons together, the attainment of power by the fascists is ruled out.

165. However, it by no means follows from this that the fascists will disappear, or play an insignificant role in the development of reaction. Indeed, it will probably prove impossible to eliminate the fascist menace this side of the victory of a workers' revolution.

The Ossewabrandwag, which claimed about 400 000 supporters at its peak in 1941, was supplanted by the rise of the Malanite Nationalists, and disappeared within a few years after the latter's victory in 1948. This was despite the Malan government lifting the ban on state employees belonging to the OB. The reason for its disappearance was that its essential social purpose was, in effect, carried out by the Nationalist regime, although by a different route. Now that cannot be repeated.

166. Support for fascism is likely to rise and fall in the coming years in relation to the zig-zags to left and to right which will characterise the bonapartist state and Presidency.

However, once the AWB begins to come up against the limits of its development, we could expect to see divisions and power struggles surface within it. The 'fuhrer' is not god-ordained, and there are always other aspirants waiting in the wings to challenge a failure.

Moreover, there is bound to be plenty of material around for financial and sexual scandals to erupt and muddy these gangsters' uniforms, either spontaneously combining with political rifts among them, or when it suits the government or the Afrikaner capitalists to play such cards.

167. The fascist's objectively limited prospects are shown in the fact that they dare not at this stage attack black workers' meetings (whereas the Nazis directed their street action from the first against the German workers' organisations), but instead break up meetings of the main bourgeois party, the NP!

However, the AWB is making very considerable gains among the lower ranks of the police and permanent force of the army. At the same time, the effort they are putting into the building of vigilante 'Brandwag' units—already on such a scale in the

Eastern Transvaal that Defence Minister Malan has warned them not to compete with the SADF!—is an extremely ominous warning to our movement that the ground is being prepared for direct attacks on black communities and on strikes, demonstrations and so forth in future.

168. It is essential for the UDF, COSATU and the Youth Congresses to make this a central issue for discussion, preparation and propaganda. It can be used both to advance the working-class movement towards a higher stage, and to drive a wedge among the whites terrified of escalating violence.

It must be emphasised at every possible opportunity that the fascists represent open preparation for civil war against the black people. The warning should be clearly given, so it sinks in among the whites, that if the fascists are not stamped out, disarmed and illegalised by the government, then the only response we can make to this threat is to begin arming in self-defence, to ensure that South Africa is not turned into a racial blood-bath.

In this way we can also build up enormous international support for a mass-based armed resistance struggle, which could develop from that towards a successful insurrection.

169. In fact, it is extremely difficult, probably impossible, for the regime to move decisively to crush the AWB, mainly because of the extent to which it has struck roots within the state (especially the military and police forces), and the dangerous rift that would be revealed there if serious measures were taken against them now.

Botha's dilemma over what to do to curb the fascists was shown in his recent offer to meet Terre'blanche—an extremely foolish step by an ordinarily astute manoeuvrer. Although Botha subsequently drew back from this, the AWB leader was able to exploit it in any case. It added to his 'respectability' and standing, while giving confidence to fascists in the police and army 'illegally' belonging to the AWB.

170. However, the Potgietersrus 'confrontation' also showed the dilemma of the fascist leaders. Terre'blanche prudently kept his forces at the braaivleis, rather than let them attempt (as they wished) to break through the razor wire round Botha's meeting and defy the 'boereseuns' in the security forces to shoot them. This showed a recognition on his part that an offensive against the Presidency on this scale, although it might bring a brief 'success', would backfire politically, provoke the wrath of the whole bourgeoisie (including the Conservative leaders), and expose the ultimate social weakness of his movement. Yet to disappoint his own hardliners by holding them back from action indefinitely will likewise rebound.

The likelihood is that the fascists, while not being able to win power, will (as in Latin America and elsewhere) play some kind of role as vicious auxiliaries to reaction based upon the state machine, as jackals running at its heels.

171. The revulsion of the majority of whites

ty Engineer a number of conditions to be observed in township layout. Three which particularly struck them were: (1) the width of the roadways had to be sufficient to allow a Saracen (armoured car) to execute a U-turn; (2) the distance between houses had to be kept above a given minimum and the houses aligned so that firing between them would not be impeded and there would be no shelter for a fugitive; (3) the distance between the boundaries of the township and the main highway had to be beyond the range of a .303 rifle (*Year of Fire, Year of Ash*, p.184).

Estimates for the death toll of that first day, June 16, vary from 25 to 100 people shot dead.

By the second day 1 500 police armed with sten guns, automatic rifles and hand machine carbines, were called into Soweto and army units were placed on standby. The casualties were higher than on the previous day: possibly hundreds dead. Indiscriminate shooting was the order of the day. Raising a clenched fist and shouting of the slogan *Amandla!* was sufficient to warrant a bullet in the head.

## Parents

Many parents had returned home the previous evening to find the townships in flames and their children either dead or missing. Many spontaneously stayed away from work on June 17. White students at the University of Witwatersrand staged a demonstration, with, as one of the slogans: 'Don't start the revolution without us'.

In Soweto itself the schools were closed on Thursday by the Minister. By Friday, Soweto was effectively sealed off, saturated with police in armed convoys, firing at any group of people they saw on the streets.

In the meantime, clashes had broken out in Tembisa, Kagiso and elsewhere along the Witwatersrand. At the tribal universities of Ngoye and Turfloop there were solidarity boycotts. Turfloop was closed on June 18.

Thus took place the political baptism—with teargas and bullets—of a whole new generation of working-class youth in struggle.

In Alexandra the youth rapidly realized that by themselves they could not face up to the police, and had to appeal to their parents the workers to support them. On Friday June 18, they tried to persuade workers to stage a strike by mounting pickets at bus terminuses and railway stations. Without proper preparation, these first efforts were not very successful.

## Strike

After a relatively quiet week-end, the townships near Pretoria joined the struggle. By June 22 over 1 000 workers at the Chrysler factory near Pretoria had stopped work. This was the first conscious strike action in support of the students.

In revolutionary periods, the working class learns in days and hours what it takes years to learn in periods of class tranquility. The ban on public meetings imposed by the government was circumvented by the organisation of mass funerals, which took place on June 22 and were used as political rallies.

As in Alexandra, the working-class youth of Soweto quickly sensed the need to involve their parents. They also saw that to confine the battle-front against the state to the townships was a limitation.

Consequently, the SSRC took on the responsibility of organising simultaneously for August 4 a student march into Johannesburg and the first political general strike in South Africa since 1961—called for three days.

Such was the mood in the townships that the regime's concession on the language question on July 6 made absolutely no difference. The revolt was now directed against the government itself.

To ensure the success of the stay-away a key signal box was sabotaged, and all Soweto trains came to a standstill. The youth mounted pickets at bus stops and railway stations in many instances trying to force workers not to go to work.

Between 20 000 and 40 000 marched towards Johannesburg, but were dispersed a few kilometres outside of Soweto. The stay-away over all three days was 60 per cent successful.

Encouraged by this the students prepared to organise a second three-

day stay-away, to begin on August 23.

Meanwhile the revolt spread to students in the Western and Eastern Cape for the first time. The regime tried new tactics: a nation-wide clampdown was unleashed against the student leadership with scores placed in indefinite detention.

To prevent the success of the second stay-away, the regime tried to sow disunity. Using leaflets and loud hailer, the police told the Zulu migrant workers—housed in hostels, and physically and socially separated from the townships—that the youth were about to attack them. They encouraged them to carry knobkerries and sticks to fight the youth. On the second day of the stay-away, one of these hostels was burned, probably by an *agent provocateur*. The police blamed the students.

The workers charged into the townships, chasing and attacking the residents and burning their houses, raping and looting—all under police protection.

This was an anticipation of tactics used on an even larger scale in 1985/6.

In the second stay-away, quickly learning from the experience of the first one, the youth, instead of physically preventing the workers from going to work, conducted an intensive house-to-house campaign explaining the issues to their parents.

The consequence was an 80-90% success rate. Moreover, while the first stay-away was confined to Soweto, the second one received support in other areas of the Witwatersrand. Although the second and third day were less successful, it was an important conquest for the youth.

A third stay-away was called, the most successful of all. In the Transvaal a solid 75-80% support was sustained for three days. In all, three-quarters of a million workers participated in this near-national action.

## Migrant workers

This time the Zulu migrant workers gave almost total support. The youth had approached them beforehand, explaining that they had been used by the state previously, and appealing to them to support the struggle.

towards the fascists must be turned to our advantage. The inability or unwillingness of the ruling class and the government to smash them must be highlighted on every possible occasion. The responsibility of capitalism for the bloody mess into which South Africa is descending must be tirelessly repeated, and the point explained that only the organised black working class, by taking power, can resolve this and every other problem central to this country's future.

In the final analysis the basis for fascism can only be eliminated if the working class and the lower middle-class white people who now adhere hysterically to it for 'salvation' from the social impasse in which they find themselves, can find an alternative way out in the transformation of society through socialist revolution.

### Basis for breaking up fascists

172. Fascism has always embraced a class contradiction. To gain power it demagogically appeals to the fears and prejudices of the petty-bourgeois and other precariously privileged layers under threat. But serving as the counter-revolutionary agent of big capital, it is obliged to act once in power to the detriment of its own social base, the petty bourgeoisie.

Referring to Italian fascism, Trotsky wrote:

"We speak of the 'dictatorship of Mussolini' and at the same time declare that Fascism is only the instrument of finance capital. Which is correct? Both are correct, but on different planes. It is incontestable that the entire executive power is concentrated in Mussolini's hands. But it is no less true that the entire actual content of the state activity is dictated by the interests of finance capital." (From *The Workers' State and the Question of Thermidor and Bonapartism*.)

Such a situation cannot fail to lead to the systematic undermining of the position of the petty bourgeoisie. The triumph of fascism in Germany, for example, led not to the salvation of the petty bourgeois, but to their even more rapid crushing by the giant monopolies.

This contradiction within advancing fascism came to the surface, of course, only after the fascists were in power, when they betrayed the mass of their supporters. As Trotsky explained at the time, this meant inevitably the evolution of the fascist regime towards bonapartism—from a monolithic stability towards instability once again on a divided social base, once the working class could recover from its savage defeat and draw the disillusioned petty-bourgeois layers once more to its side. (This precise route to the eventual overthrow of fascism was, in the event, cut across by the Second World War.)

173. If Hitler had not come to power when he did (we should remember), the likelihood was of the rapid decline and break up of the Nazi party. The inability of the AWB to come to power in SA will by no means save it from inner tendencies towards disintegration.

174. Although in a different form from German fascism, South African fascism, too, has an incurable class contradiction within it, which it is important

to understand if we are to see the opportunities that will open up in future for the black working-class movement to defeat reaction and bring about the division and disintegration of the state.

175. The rise of the AWB is a symptom of the radical breach which has occurred between monopoly capitalism on the one hand and the white lower-middle and working classes on the other. We have outlined the general causes of this breach.

So long as there appears to these latter classes some way of defending their threatened privileges through turning to the politicians of the far right, that is the route, to a greater or lesser extent, that most of them are bound to travel at the outset.

176. However, the class core of the ultra-right in South Africa is composed from among the white capitalist farmers (who also provide the indispensable backing for the AWB). The frenzied reaction taking root among this class comes from the fact that it is inevitably doomed, and sections of it at least are beginning half-consciously to realise that.

On the one hand it is being ground down under the pressures of monopoly capital (from which it is irretrievably alienated, economically, socially and politically). On the other hand, in the event of revolution, the land will be seized from it by force of arms by the rural proletariat.

Unlike the financial, mining and big-industrial bourgeoisie, it cannot manoeuvre with concessions to meet the revolutionary threat. In the main, it is compelled to pin its fate entirely upon rampant reaction.

177. However, for the reasons already analysed, an independent racist or fascist reaction—against the blacks and against monopoly capital and its rule of the state—cannot develop beyond certain limits. The main form of reaction will be bonapartist reaction, inevitably racist in character but revolving round the state machine, combining with repeated manoeuvres of 'reform', and linked in the final analysis to the defence of finance/monopoly capital.

That will not satisfy the white farming class; but with the failure of fascism to develop, it will have nowhere else to turn. That is not the case, however, with the white working-class and lower middle-class people who provide the 'cannon-fodder' for fascism.

178. These are not doomed classes in the same way that the capitalist farmers are doomed. They are squeezed, yes, by the pincers of capitalism on the one hand and the demands for equality of the blacks on the other. But they have a way out—not of their liking, no doubt, but a possible way out nonetheless—if they come to terms with the revolutionary transformation of South Africa on socialist lines. That alone can guarantee them and their children a stable future, without fear of discrimination or oppression, together with the blacks.

For them there is, ultimately, a choice: either to go down with alien capitalism and white reaction, or to survive by joining or at least not resisting the revolutionary movement of the black working class. In our own interests, our tactics must assist them

A fourth stay-away, called for five days, failed to materialise. The youth had over-reached themselves and the workers could no longer see the point. Despite this setback the youth remained undeterred.

In October, the SSRC declared a period of mourning in solidarity with the dead, the detained, and workers who had lost wages in the stay-aways. This included the first (and successful) calling of a consumer boycott, and a campaign—in Soweto and the Western Cape—against alcohol consumption.

## Shebeens

A press statement issued by the SSRC on November 4 rejected the pleas of shebeen owners that they should be allowed to stay open because they were supporting students at school from their liquor sales. It said:

"there can never be any celebration and drinking of any kind while the whole black community has gone into a period of mourning for their brave sons and daughters. These children our colleagues have died not because of their delinquency but for the struggle for liberation of all blacks in this country...

"Our daily experience and that of the whole of Soweto residents is that nothing good has ever come out of shebeens, many of our fathers and brothers have been killed in and out of shebeens, thousands have been robbed of their pay packets after drinking in shebeens, many of our black sisters have been raped and or murdered by drunkards and thugs from shebeens.

"Hundreds of our colleagues have become delinquents, beggars or orphans as shebeen kings and queens become capitalists...."

In April 1977 the SSRC launched a campaign taking up a grievance of their parents, the workers. The puppet 'Urban Bantu Council' decided to raise rents. The SSRC forced the UBC to suspend the increases, and then achieved the resignation of all UBC councillors by June. Then, in Soweto, Alexandra, Mamelodi and Atteridgeville, the youth forced the resignation of the school boards.

The last wave of the upsurge followed after September 17, when students came out nation-wide in reaction to the news of the death in prison of Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko. Riots spread throughout the country, and particularly in the Eastern Cape.



*Paramilitary police shoot at Soweto youth during 1976*

By late August, however, twenty members of the SSRC had been arrested and the last declared president of the SSRC, Tromfomo Sono, had fled into exile. On October 19 the government outlawed seventeen organisations, most of the organisational structure of the Black Consciousness movement.

The 1976/77 uprising had come to an end. Leaderless for the moment, the youth movement receded and the reaction gained a temporary upper hand. But, unlike the 1960s, the ebb which the movement entered did not at all indicate a decisive victory for the state and reaction. This new generation of working-class youth were merely hardened and steeled by the barbaric actions of the regime. The lull setting in was merely the prelude to even bigger confrontations between the classes in the future.

## Background

The generation of youth who led the 1976/7 revolt displayed an almost unparalleled heroism.

But the Soweto revolt of 1976 did not occur like a bolt from the blue. The militant defiance of the black youth of Soweto—an indispensable ingredient for sustaining the revolt over 20 months—reflected the changes which had taken place in the objective situation in SA, in particular in the balance of class forces.

These changes were taken forward even during the movement's darkest hours of defeat in the 1960s. Indeed this defeat, in the conditions of world-wide capitalist boom, provided the SA ruling class with the opportunity to engage in unparalleled economic expansion in a period of relative class peace.

While the benefits were reaped in the form of huge profits by foreign and local capitalists—and while the living standards of white workers soared—this period also saw an enormous expansion in the productive forces: the number, the size, and the mechanisation of the factories, mines, and farms.

Correspondingly, there was a huge growth in the size and strategic placement of the black working class. An average growth rate of 5.5% between 1961 and 1974 led to a doubling of the number of African workers in manufacturing. By the end of 1974 African workers formed 70.4% of the economically active population.

These conditions set in motion (in that marvellous phrase of Trotsky's) "molecular processes" in the consciousness of the African working class, healing its wounds, and restoring its confidence to resume the battle against the bosses and against the regime.

Despite the economic growth, living standards of the African working class stagnated or fell. Unemployment increased from half a million in 1962 to one-and-a-half million in

to make that choice.

179. First and foremost, our movement must build the strength to smash fascism, without compromise, by force of arms; but there is also more to it than that.

Though it may seem contrary to 'common sense' at this point, we must raise the understanding of our fellow activists in the movement to see that the turn towards fascism of white workers and lower middle-class people is not the same as that of the capitalist forces behind it. Instead it is the monstrously distorted, blind groping of these people towards the necessity of socialist revolution.

We must lose no opportunity to drive a political wedge between the white workers and lower middle class, on the one hand, and the land-owning and other exploiting-class elements of the fascist camp, on the other hand.

180. The inability of fascism in South Africa to gain or sustain a momentum towards power will bring the class contradiction within it to the surface, probably in a very explosive or volatile way. This could well provide crucial opportunities, if we are alert to it, for the black workers' movement to win over working-class and lower middle-class whites from fascism directly to the proletarian revolution.

The impact of that upon the whole psychology of white society, and its potential to produce splits right in the heart of the state, could be of incalculable importance. Indeed, it could significantly clear the way towards the conquest of power.

## The cul de sac of liberalism

181. If, in South Africa today, the road to the right is filled with such obstacles and pitfalls, then the road to the left presents an even sorrier prospect for capitalism.

182. Opposing the government from the standpoint of the liberal left wing of the bourgeoisie, the Progressive Federal Party is able to base itself on the objective, unavoidable necessity of reform—and on the government's glaring failure to carry through any decisive reform program to cut across the development of the working-class revolutionary movement even temporarily.

But however 'enlightened' may be their presentation of themselves as democrats and reformers, they remain committed to the preservation, at all costs, of the military-police apparatus of repression. They can do no other—the capitalist class interests which they are there to defend depend ultimately on this apparatus, however much the big bourgeoisie may grind their teeth at the loss of direct control over it.

183. They believe there is no alternative to negotiations with the ANC leaders—but their aim in this is to try to find a means of neutering the ANC as a revolutionary mass force.

Van Zyl Slabbert, shortly before resigning from parliament, tried to give Botha private lessons in how to "pull the teeth of the ANC" (his exact words!).

Colin Eglin, now PFP leader again, said in parliament on 17 April:

"... the State President must understand—in fact I think he will agree with me—that, whether we like to admit it or not, to date the Government has not been able to counter effectively some of the work of the ANC. That is the reality. The tactics the Government has adopted so far have not been as effective as they might or should have been...."

"... we must recognise that the ANC does enjoy widespread support, and for all of these reasons, I believe it is necessary to explore tactics which we can use in trying to counter the activities of the ANC."

(Eglin's 'we', quite obviously, is the PFP and the government together.)

184. In the traditional manner of ruling-class hypocrites, Eglin roundly "condemns violence as a political instrument"—the liberatory violence of the slaves just the same as the repressive violence of the slave-masters.

"We condemn the planned and organised violence of the revolutionary and the terrorist. We condemn the mindless violence of the mobs. We condemn the violence of repression; and we condemn the violence that is inherent in some of the laws which we know are wrong..."

Tut, tut! But the mask of liberal piety hardly lasts three sentences before it slips. Longer than that, Eglin cannot even appear to remain neutral as between the masses and the monstrous killer state.

185. "In these circumstances," he continues—in the current "cauldron of violence" that exists in South Africa—"we believe that there must be action to deal with violence, and we believe that action must be tough."

Tough action to deal with state violence? Oh no! "Any government of the day has a duty to act"—toughly, i.e. violently, of course—"against anarchists and terrorists who kill and bomb and burn in an attempt to impose their ideology or to satisfy their lust for power." What are these but the conventional terms used by the bourgeoisie in all its sections to describe revolution, and the need to crush it?

To make counter-revolutionary state violence more effective (explains Eglin, but in other words), a more far-reaching program of reform is necessary, or the people will feel no stake in the system that oppresses and exploits them. That sums up the standpoint of the liberal left wing of the bourgeoisie.

186. Anglo American executive Zac de Beer, who puts the same position as the PFP, reflects in a recent article (*Sunday Tribune*, 28/9/86) the extreme political difficulty in which the reformist wing of the bourgeoisie is placed by the power of the black proletariat and the vigour of its democratic and social demands.

"For many years, my friends and I argued that the basic need for democracy in South Africa could be met by means of a qualified franchise, which gradually would have admitted new voters to the roll. Had the method been tried when we proposed it, it might well have worked: but now time has passed it by. There is just no prospect of getting any black leader of any standing to agree to any constitutional proposal which involves anything short of equal rights—and this involves universal suffrage."

187. The blacks, he says,

1974—by 1976 it was rising at the rate of 30 000 a month. The buying power of the rand declined between 1963 and 1971 by at least 24%.

For African workers, further social crises included a rapid increase in rent and transport fares and a drastic reduction in government spending on housing.

In 1957/8 the Johannesburg City Council built 11 704 houses for Africans. In 1975 it built 575—out of only 9 808 houses built for Africans in the entire country. Yet in Soweto alone 2 500 houses were needed annually by the early 1970s to meet the needs of newly-married couples, *without touching the backlog*.

At the very point at which the confidence of the African working class was recovering, the post-war upswing of world capitalism came to an end. In 1974/5 there was simultaneous recession in all the major capitalist countries. In 1975 the SA growth rate fell to 2%; in 1976/77 it was under 2% and in 1977/78 there was an absolute drop in production of 0,2%.

## Durban strikes

The effect of all these changes on the consciousness of the African proletariat are shown in strike figures. Between 1962 and 1968 the average annual number of workers involved in strikes was a mere 2 000—reflecting the sense of powerlessness arising after serious defeat.

The first of signs of change came from April 1969, when 2 000 dock workers in Durban struck for higher wages. Defeated, they struck again in September/October 1971, and this time achieved a victory. There followed the month-long general strike in Namibia in December/January 1971/1972. Though the demands of the workers were not met, it was much discussed in the SA townships as a demonstration of the power of the working class.

But the decisive turning point occurred in the strike wave which started on 25 January 1973, with a strike of 7 000 workers at Frame group textile factories—and spread rapidly throughout Natal and to other provinces. In February alone, 60 strikes took place involving 40 000

workers. By the end of March, the figure had risen to 60 000 workers in more than 150 firms. Nationally, at least 100 000 workers went on strike action. Largely successful, these strikes drew a clear line of demarcation between the era of defeat and passivity and a new era of militant defiance.

Thus the volcanic eruption of June 1976 was preceded and prepared by the necessary subterranean shifts that had taken place within the African proletariat.

## Black Consciousness

The youth of the 1970s entered the struggle fresh. There was no tradition of genuine Marxism. Nor had the ANC or the SA Communist Party created or preserved an underground cadre to explain the lessons of the defeat of the 1950s in class terms, to channel the mood of the new generation, and to provide them with a bridge straight to the working class.

Many participants in the struggles learned of the traditions of the previous generation only when they went to jail or into exile.

For such youth, Black Consciousness (BC) seemed an ideology that provided explanations for the oppression and exploitation suffered by the black people under apartheid.

An important impetus to BC was the need to break with the debilitating influence of liberalism under which the feeble opposition to the regime was being mounted at the time by organisations such as the National Union of SA Students (NUSAS).

The campaigns conducted by such organisations did not at all meet the needs of the black students or the community from which they came.

Thus when NUSAS set up a "Freedom in Society" commission to examine laws which infringed on human rights, a black delegate asked pointedly: "What is the use of an African talking about the erosion of freedom in SA? We have no freedom and one or two laws more or less makes no difference to our situation." Similarly, of what relevance to blacks was the old liberal song-and-dance about the "rule of law" when only whites could vote—for a white parliament and white supremacist regime?

The youth concluded that

liberalism must have contributed to the defeats suffered by the working class at the end of the 1950s. Though their break with NUSAS did not take place consciously on a class basis it represented unconscious conflict between two irreconcilable class tendencies. It was a distorted form of the clash between the white bourgeoisie and the black proletariat.

Correctly the youth understood the need to establish the unity of the oppressed before the struggle against the regime could be victorious. BC seemed a vehicle for such unity.

It also provided black students at the universities, where the movement began with the connection to the oppressed black majority from which they came.

To a generation who had spent their formative years observing with increased frustration what they saw as the acquiescence of their parents to the system, the attraction of BC was that it enabled them to assert themselves with defiant pride against a system that fed the blacks with a daily dose of humiliation.

BC also provided a banner under which the ethnic barriers within the African population and between African, coloured and Indian people could be broken down. As Marx explained in relation to the subjugation of the colonial peoples by imperialism, this could continue only for as long as a sense of nationhood had not developed amongst the oppressed.

## Collaborators

Moreover, despite the fact that BC distinguished enemy from friend on the basis of skin colour, it provided a means by which a penetrating criticism could be made of the black petty bourgeois stooges who were prepared to participate in the government's schemes of divide and rule over the black working class.

At a time, for example, when the reactionary role of Gatsha Buthelezi had not yet come to be understood the youth forced his unmasking, compelling him to establish himself very rapidly as the enemy of the working class.

The fact that BC provided no clear perspectives, policies or program, however, was revealed only through the experience of the struggle itself.

"have the bit between their teeth, and they will never stop fighting for equal human dignity. Unless the whites concede this, the only prospect is continuing strife, further economic decline, even more unemployment, heightened international hostility, more sanctions, an accelerating brain drain, and some form of revolution at the end of it. There is simply no light at the end of that tunnel."

Thus the best that can be done is to concede universal franchise and try to get, by agreement with "black leaders", a constitution on federal lines with a bill of rights and other guarantees of bourgeois property.

So far De Beer's reasoning takes him; so far and no further.

188. The fact of the matter is that the classes in South Africa have polarised beyond the ability of the liberals to reconcile them in this manner, even for a time.

The real question is not of an abstract human dignity, nor could there be any satisfaction of the black majority now through nominal voting rights, hedged about with federal formulas to preserve the domination of the bourgeoisie. The issue now is who has the state power? For the working people, the point of striving for the vote is to gain this power, nothing less.

It is this—together with the fear of all sections of bourgeois society of making concessions which may open the way to the irretrievable loss of power—that makes a negotiated compromise impossible to achieve in South Africa.

189. During the Treason Trial in the 1950s, Nelson Mandela said in evidence that he would be prepared, in order to settle the conflict in South Africa by negotiation, to accept an initial 60 seats for Africans in parliament; call off the struggle for five years; and then negotiate further gradual steps towards majority rule after that. (See *The Struggle is My Life*, IDAF, 87-8.)

What if, today, ANC leaders were prepared to negotiate some compromise on the question of one-person-one-vote in a unitary South Africa, and accept (say) a federal arrangement on the lines proposed by the PFP? The ANC leadership constantly pledges, of course, that full democracy is not negotiable; the active youth and workers are in any case determined to hold the leadership to this pledge—but let us assume this kind of compromise for argument's sake. Let us assume it was accepted by, or could be imposed on, the right wing forces also. Assuming all these miracles, what then?

190. The question for the masses, the 'morning after' the agreement, would be: 'Can the police and troops still come into the townships to kill us, or have they been dismantled? Who controls the state? Who commands the guns?' That would immediately be tested out through action.

If the repressive state apparatus was still in business, there is no way whatsoever that any political compromise could stick. The revolutionary struggle would continue unabated. And if, by some further miracle, the state was paralysed or disarmed, does anyone imagine now that the mass movement

would fail to press home its advantage? The demand to take the fruits of revolution—jobs, houses, land, education etc— would be unstoppable. To this end the working people would feel the need to press forward their struggle for direct control of the key levers of wealth and power.

The consequence, very rapidly, would be the takeover of the land, mines, factories etc by the working class. No political leadership could stop it. The existing embryonic "soviets" would undergo an enormous spread and development. The compromise with the liberal bourgeoisie would not be worth the paper it was written on.

Either way, therefore, the question of power would come to be settled by force. That is the inevitable consequence of the huge social weight of the black working class in South Africa and its increasingly conscious leading role in the struggle to transform society.

191. By sketching such a hypothetical scenario, it is possible to see why the situation will not unfold in that way. The class forces are not completely blind.

There is already a deep-running polarisation taking place, in which the black working class (especially the youth at this stage) are driven towards the conclusion that a 'fight to the finish' is unavoidably required. On the other hand, the majority of whites are driven towards reinforcement of the military-police basis of the state. The 'middle ground' is occupied, in reality, by hopers and dreamers (still very numerous, unfortunately), who will suddenly jump one way or the other when harsh necessity nips their ankles.

192. The *cul de sac* of 'reform' presents the liberal bourgeois with an insoluble contradiction: They are compelled to seek settlement with 'leaders' of the blacks who may be willing to compromise; but they cannot bring off any settlement because the matter of the state power is above compromise in South African conditions.

This contradiction accounts for the deep-seated division within the PFP, with one wing drawn towards the government and state, the other repelled from it in the direction of the black middle-class opposition.

193. The political evolution of Van Zyl Slabbert is instructive in this regard.

He was promoted to leadership of the PFP in place of Eglin basically because it was thought that he would be more successful in winning over Afrikaner middle-class support from the Nationalists. For this purpose he, like Eglin, oriented the PFP towards the 'verligtes'. He hinted at, and then articulated, conditions for coalition with the NP's left wing, prepared to move faster than the government in the direction of reform.

But the pressures exerted by the revolutionary movement of the black proletariat mounted ever faster. As he tacked right, so also he was obliged to tack left.

As Leader of the Opposition and servant of big capital, Slabbert had to show his loyal support of the state, the SADF and police, while at the same time

The entry into struggle of the primary and secondary school youth radically altered the social composition of the BC movement. Overwhelmingly proletarian, the school youth took the slogans of BC out of university debating chambers and tested them in the field of the living struggle, accelerating debate about the adequacy of BC as a guide to action.

## Joint struggle

Before the youth turned to the workers in 1976, they considered themselves a sufficient force to lead the revolution. Khotso Seathlolo, one of the chairmen of the SSRC, said at the time:

"We are not carbon copies of our fathers. Where they failed we will succeed. The mistakes they made will never be repeated. They carried the struggle up to where they could. We are very grateful to them. But now the struggle is ours. The ball of liberation is in our hands. The black student will stand up fearlessly and take up arms against a political system."

In the struggles of 1976/77 the youth discovered that the fierce pride and uncompromising determination that BC had instilled in them were not enough by themselves to overthrow the regime.

Face to face with the murderous power of the state, and the capitalist system which it defended, the youth came to understand that their anger needed the piston engine of the movement of workers in production to concentrate their struggle into a material force. At the same time they came to see that, while they had special concerns and interests, they were themselves an integral part of the working class.

In doing so they discovered from the workers themselves the limitations of BC. BC could remain a force with a national hold over the black youth movement, in fact, only for as long as the youth remained separated from the movement of the black workers.

The reasons for this were explained at the time in the Marxist publication *Militant International Review* (Autumn 1977):

"It is important that we do not overstate the extent of the influence of black nationalism on the African proletariat and that we distinguish clearly the

'nationalism' of the workers from that of the radical petit-bourgeoisie.

"From the standpoint of the African proletariat, their class exploitation is the primary fact of life. The very institutions of apartheid (foremost among them the hated pass laws) press upon the African workers essentially as class measures designed to maintain the slave-conditions of their labour.

"In years past, the mass mobilisation of the African working class in struggle against the apartheid regime has been achieved on the basis precisely of working class slogans and working class demands. Hence, for example, the heavy reliance on anti-pass law campaigns and wage demands ('pound a day' etc.) in the late 'fifties and early 'sixties. The African workers have not, in general, responded to the empty slogans of 'pure' nationalism—nor have they done so in recent months. Their launching of political strike action in the aftermath of Soweto (after long weeks of slow, thoughtful stoking-up) does not signify any deep excitement among them over 'black power' slogans. It signifies rather their half-conscious but absolutely decisive movement as a class, in the course of a near-revolutionary social crisis, into the role of the revolutionary force within society—the only force capable of achieving the national and the social liberation of the black masses.

"Inevitably, a certain amount of racial feeling, a certain response to nationalist fervour, is current within the ranks of the black proletariat. But it is necessary to say of these workers what Trotsky wrote in another context: their nationalism is only the outer shell of an immature class consciousness.

"On the whole, the racial feelings are stronger the less the worker's experience of factory life, i.e., the less the worker has come face to face with the actual condi-

tions of exploitation; has encountered state repression as an inseparable part of capitalist production; has experienced the connection between the economic life of society and its political forms. It is largely for this reason that (among the working class in South Africa) 'black power' comes most readily to the lips of students—this and the fact that within the educational institutions radical petit-bourgeois influences are most directly encountered.

"But when 'black power' evokes response among workers it does so only in that IN PART it reflects A PART OF the experience OF THE BLACK WORKERS THEMSELVES. It is not taken in holus bolus. When workers respond to a nationalist slogan they do so as workers, not as petit-bourgeois nationalists. The worker interprets the slogan, gives it meaning, according to his proletarian perception of life. The less developed that perception the more adequate the slogan will seem. The more advanced and experienced the worker, the more clearly he perceives the makeshift character of 'black power' as a weapon of the working-class struggle—and the more insistently he demands an organisation, a programme, a leadership that goes beyond it...

## Burning questions

'Black power' has no policy on the burning questions of the South African revolution: the control of the land, mines and factories; the organisation of production and distribution; the class character of the revolutionary state. For the working class, black power can serve as no more than a vehicle for the expression of



Soweto youth in 1976 defend themselves against armed police.

trying to build bridges towards negotiated settlement. After all, once negotiated settlement is seen to be impossible, what room would be left for reformists and liberals?

194. Eventually it became impossible for Slabbert to straddle the contradiction. He became convinced of the impossibility of negotiated settlement within the framework of the present state system. At the same time Parliament was becoming a sham, with the real decisions obviously made by a military-executive power group. He decided to absolve himself of further responsibility for defending the state.

Without warning, only days after defending in parliament the state's "monopoly on the legitimate use of violence" (provided it was done with "justice"!), he suddenly resigned. From a failing attempt at bourgeois *realpolitik* he retreated to bourgeois utopianism, hoping to give himself a career instead as a peace-broker between capitalism and the ANC ('You can trust me, comrades!') in the developing crisis.

The realists in and behind the PFP shook their heads at Slabbert's abdication. Didn't the man understand the existing state cannot be dispensed with? No wonder Oppenheimer gave him short shrift! Leadership of the PFP passed back to the more hard-boiled Eglin.

195. To the extent that a pattern is detectable in by-elections, it seems that the PFP is capable of making some gains from the Nats in urban seats where there is no serious threat to the government from the CP/HNP right.

Where, however, such a threat exists, the tendency is for the English middle-class supporters of the PFP themselves to swing behind the government. In this there is more than superficial significance.

196. The current headline-catching initiative of the PFP involves a campaign to increase their seats in the House of Assembly from the present 26 to 50 at the next general elections. With the Nationalist majority cut also from the right, so the argument goes, the PFP would hold the balance of power and be able to negotiate a coalition with the reputed 35 or so dissatisfied Nat MPs on the left of Botha.

This would then permit a vigorously reformist government to come to power, and prepare the way for a negotiated settlement with the ANC, Buthelezi, etc.

Of such stuff the liberals' dreams are made.

197. The basis for this strategy is the discovery that, while only about 16% to 18% of whites currently vote PFP, the party's policies receive endorsement by some 30% of white voters in opinion polls.

However, what this difference really indicates is that there are many more whites who would like to see a settlement of the conflict in South Africa through far-reaching reform than actually believe such a settlement can be brought about, with safety. It is one thing to like what comes in Christmas stockings—entirely another to believe in Santa Claus.

198. *The Star* (2/10/86) expresses the point in this

way: "The PFP is perceived as a party which cannot guarantee stability..."

It has always been the case that many whites who vote PFP do so to ensure what they call 'a strong opposition', but only on condition that this opposition does not threaten the grip of the government. 'Even more than a strong opposition, we need a strong government', they tell canvassers. As revolution further rears its head, the urban upper middle classes to which the PFP appeals demand strong government more than ever.

The present PFP strategy, if it could succeed, would entail the break-up of the government which has ruled South Africa for 38 years; the replacement of a previously 'strong' government, ruling with an overwhelming parliamentary majority, by an unstable coalition holding office by the skin of its teeth.

Paradoxically, therefore, the PFP's own targeted constituency as well as many present PFP voters could back away from the party if it appeared to make headway with its new strategy!

199. In any event, the PFP can expand its vote only by demonstrating its own complete commitment to the state, and its own preparedness to employ harsh repression (alongside 'reform') in dealing with the blacks' revolutionary movement.

Thus the propensity of the PFP to travel right is far greater than the propensity of Botha's secret 'verligte' critics on the NP benches to travel left. Loyalty to the state is the latter's first rule of survival; to hold on to their constituencies (where many of them would be vulnerable from the right), they can least of all show 'irresponsibility'.

200. The more the PFP draws towards the NP left, the further it will alienate the mass of black people from itself, increasingly exposing the organic link of bourgeois liberalism to the racist state and to bonapartism.

This will increasingly undermine the proclaimed purpose of existence of the PFP—to function as a trusted marriage broker for future settlement with popular black leaders.

Thus the class polarisation of society in the course of the developing revolution generates insoluble contradictions in the political forces attempting to occupy 'middle ground'.

201. The continuing rightward evolution of the PFP, which seems inevitable, will open up the underlying rift which already exists within it, between its humanitarian-liberal left wing, repelled by state repression of the blacks, and its 'pragmatic' wing angling for a share in state power.

The closer the PFP appeared to get to its goals, the more it would become vulnerable to splits and disintegration.

202. The shedding of its left wing would be a possibility at some point, with the youth section either breaking up or splitting away. That would hardly enhance the PFP leaders' waning credibility with blacks.

rage and frustration... It does not show the way forward" (page 23).

The inability of BC to provide a coherent lead to the struggles of the working-class youth became clear after the 1977 crackdown: by 1979 BC was in serious decline. The youth were turning increasingly to the Freedom Charter and Congress, the tradition to which the workers still adhered.

Already by June 1977, in his presidential address to the SASO annual conference, Diliza Mji articulated the beginnings of a class understanding that was developing.

"The call today from liberal and 'verligte' (enlightened) quarters to the Nationalist Government is that Blacks should be given more opportunity to participate in the so-called 'free enterprise system' so that they should identify with it and be able to defend it against 'advancing communist aggression that is now at the door-step of SA'. The need is therefore to look at the struggle not only in terms of colour interests, but also in terms of class interests...

'It is against this background that in a capitalistic set-up like it is in SA we have to align ourselves with the majority of working people.... You cannot lead people when you are staying in a R110 000 house, because you will not want to change the system because of your own class interests which shall always clash with those of the people. When houses are being burned, like it was happening in Soweto, the people will be saying 'we have nothing to lose' and you will be saying 'this is madness, what? my beautiful house!'"



*National Education Crisis Committee conference, April 1986: youth organisations and COSATU come together to call strike action on May Day and June 16 in support of student and worker demands.*

From 1976 the youth drew a further conclusion: the movement would have to be armed.

Throughout 1976/77 the youth had fought a hopelessly one-sided battle against the the shot guns, sten guns and carbines of the state.

The youth yearned for arms to defend themselves. But these were not forthcoming. Instead the youth had to rely on their own ingenuity. They quickly learned how to deal with teargas; that a dustbin lid held at an angle could, with luck, deflect buckshot or ricocheting bullets. They discovered that a tyre filled with petrol, lit and rolled down a hill towards police lines, could present the police with some problems; and that a tennis ball injected with petrol, lit and thrown into a building could be difficult to dodge. But this was hopelessly inadequate.

### Caught by surprise

The ANC leadership may have been caught by surprise by the events. But the uprising lasted for 20 months and still arms were not placed in the hands of the youth. This flowed not from the inertia of the leadership but from its pursuit of the bankrupt policy of guerillaism which, despite the heroism of the cadres of

Umkhonto we Sizwe, was no more than an irritant to the regime. The preparation of the mass movement itself was subordinated to the policy of guerillaism.

### Youth and workers

*Inqaba* has explained the fundamentals of its position on guerillaism and the armed struggle elsewhere. The point here is that the immediate consequence of the policies of the leadership was to perpetuate the separation of the 'armed struggle' from the mass movement. Thousands of youth crossed the borders for arms and training, hoping to return and liberate the oppressed through guerilla war. They were needlessly diverted from the essential task of mass organisation of the working class.

Inside SA, COSAS was born in 1979—the first national organisation for school students. AZASO (African Students Organisation) broke with BC. The 1980 school boycotts heralded a new era of struggle among the youth, linked from the start more closely with the workers, preparing and steeling them for the revolutionary upsurge of 1984/6.

The outlook of the youth became firmly anti-capitalist, linked to a clear realisation that the main arena of struggle was in the industrial centres of SA. In 1984/6 the demand for arms was more widespread and urgent than in 1976. Yet the youth did not cross the borders. Instead the cry was "Umkhonto We Sizwe, we are waiting for you here. Arm us!"

The revolution of 1984/6 was led by the youth. The present generation could not have built for the pioneers of 1976 a better monument—not of stone, but of commitment to the ideals they had laid down their lives for.

Today, as a result, the tasks in front of the working class are posed more sharply than ever before:—to **build a mass ANC on a socialist programme to overthrow apartheid and capitalism together, to smash the state and bring about the socialist transformation of society under a regime of workers' democracy.**

At the same time, individuals or groups on the right wing of the party, convinced of the need for closer association with government and state, could increase their own rightward velocity beyond that of the party as a whole, and break away on that flank. This is especially likely if career openings develop, in conjunction perhaps with fresh reformist zig-zags of the regime.

203. PFP education spokesman Horace van Rensburg, for example, describing himself as a "classic liberal" and therefore "an implacable opponent of communism in all its forms", has defended the DET 'youth camps' which are used for selecting and training informers, and has supported the closure by the authorities of certain Transvaal schools.

This was necessary to deal with "revolutionary elements in pursuit of the deplorable aim of making the country ungovernable and replacing it by a 'socialist utopia'." The government, he said, had undergone a complete change of heart. "The government would sincerely like to improve black education as much as is humanly possible and as fast as possible," but the revolutionaries were not allowing them to do so! (*Weekly Mail*, 19-25/9/86)

In this way the development of the revolution reveals that the wall separating liberals like Van Rensburg and the government is only paper thin. The fact that Eglin felt unable to repudiate Van Rensburg shows the extent to which the PFP's internal centre of gravity is shifting to the right.

204. For all these reasons any entry of PFP MPs into government would take place, not in the context of a triumph of bourgeois reformism and bold advance to negotiated peace, but far more likely in the context of a break-up of liberalism, further compromise with state repression, retreat in practice from their more far-reaching reform proposals, and unbridgeable alienation from the black majority.

205. Even assuming that PFP-type politicians could, at some stage, form a significant component of a majority coalition in parliament, their first priority would have to be maintenance of the strength, cohesion and reliability of the state apparatus.

That depends, in turn, on avoiding any serious, open rebellion of whites which could split the state apart. If civilian politicians were to gamble with that by offering any real concession of power to blacks, the generals themselves would step in and put a stop to it.

From whatever angle the matter is examined, it is plain that the PFP strategy advanced by Eglin is incapable of success.

## Perspectives for the regime

206. It is the unviability of any concerted or sustained shift of bourgeois politics either to left or to right—and at the same time the impossibility of capitalism stably resting on the *status quo*—which will ensure a zig-zag course of the regime as the

revolutionary crisis deepens.

This also establishes the main lines along which the internal division and, indeed, tendency towards break-up of the ruling National Party will proceed.

207. F.W. de Klerk's speech on behalf of the government in the No-Confidence debate in February is worth examining. Not only did it effectively expose the fatal weaknesses in the policies of both the CP and PFP oppositions; more significant for our purposes here was the unintended clarity with which it exposed the impasse of the government's policy also.

(It is plain that, contrary to what was said by the liberal press at the time, De Klerk was speaking not from the standpoint of the right wing of the NP, but squarely from the same standpoint as P.W. Botha, straddling the divisions within the party from the centre—the optimum position from which to manoeuvre in bonapartist style.)

208. It was impossible, said De Klerk, to base the government of South Africa on the "pure theory of separation". At the same time, it was impossible to abandon the ethnic basis of the system.

The policy of dividing South Africa on geographic lines (i.e. the Bantustan system) had to continue to be carried as far as possible (on a "voluntary" basis, without "inevitable" loss of SA citizenship). But in most of South Africa, the communities could not be separated and isolated "each of them in a watertight compartment". That fact had to be reflected in the constitutional structure—not only as far as Coloured and Indian people were concerned, but Black (African) people also.

Since there could not be a separate territorial basis upon which each racial group could exercise self-rule, there would have to be a compromise through some form of power-sharing. However, "Together with the NP the majority of Whites, too, are not prepared to place themselves on a slippery slope leading to domination by others."

209. How, then, would the conflicting claims of the different races be reconciled? The solution was "level-headedness" on both sides!

"There cannot be peace if the fair requirements of balanced Black leaders are not met.... Nor can there be peace if the fair requirements of the majority of Whites are not also satisfactorily fulfilled." (*Note how he contrives to avoid the fair requirements of the majority of blacks by limiting their entitlement to the requirements of "balanced"—i.e. boot-licking—black "leaders"—Editor.*)

"I have attempted to sum up these (*white*) requirements succinctly," continued De Klerk. "It is time Black leaders also gave attention to these requirements in their own minds and their planning. Success, peace, prosperity, stability—everything which all reasonable people in this country long for, can only be assured if an equilibrium is established between the demands and aspirations of all groups. This equilibrium can only be found if everyone is prepared to scale down their demands for the sake of achieving a permanent understanding among one another." (*Our emphasis.*)

210. Thus, in this most realistic of bourgeois

# inqaba YA BASEBENZI

Journal of the Marxist Workers' Tendency  
of the African National Congress

26 September 1986

## COSATU's socialist standpoint should be boldly publicised

"COSATU has renewed the hopes of millions of workers throughout Southern Africa on account of its potential to realize the as yet unfilled aspirations of the workers... Today as another State of Emergency engulfs the country, COSATU through its affiliates has shown that no matter how many people are detained, no matter how harsh the repression, we will not be silenced. For ours is the voice of a new society free from political, social and economic bondage."

—from discussion paper issued by the COSATU Executive, August 1986, entitled "The Way Forward—establishing tasks and priorities."

These words accurately describe the impact of COSATU's creation, and the enormous potential it has to grow into a force of millions, to overturn completely the present relationship of power in society.

To the black working class it represents more than simply trade union unity and greater bargaining weight against the bosses—it is a vehicle for building their political power also, turning the strength of mine, factory and shop organisation to the creation of a mighty working-class Congress movement which can defeat apartheid and capitalism.

COSATU leaders face a big challenge indeed to turn this potential into reality. The Executive's discussion document takes up this challenge in a very positive way, and lists many of the detailed tasks which must be carried out to build COSATU.

The foundation of the workers' strength is organisation in the workplace. This the document emphasises. It follows that the COSATU locals must link together the organised workplaces, through elected representatives, in the most direct way possible. That means locals based in the first instance on particular industrial localities. From here the links can be made with local youth organisations, as well as other community bodies, to develop working-class leadership in all the day-to-day struggles.

Workers become active in organisation according to practical need. Various overlapping structures have proved necessary: for example a national shop-stewards' council within an industrial union (as in MAWU); at the same time participation of the same shop-stewards in inter-union forums of COSATU at different levels; at the same time links with local youth organisations through joint shop-stewards' local committees or other similar bodies; at the same time street and area committees in the townships; civics; UDF locals, and so on.

This diversity is necessary because of state repression—but

it also shows how thorough and many-sided is the mobilisation now of the working class, beginning to take its fate fully into its own hands.

COSATU has to build from the industrial plane. The further it reaches beyond this, the more it reaches directly into the realm of politics within the communities, the more its relationship to the UDF and ultimately the ANC will have to be clarified in practice.

The clarification of COSATU's political direction through organisation and discussion round the workplaces, drawing in the local working-class youth, is the necessary foundation for that.

COSATU can build its strength and realize the hopes placed in it only if the maximum organising initiative is encouraged among the rank-and-file workers: "Every COSATU member a union organiser! Organise the unorganised!", the Executive's document declares. The target of a million workers organised can still be met in 1986.

The document correctly explains that vigorous national action campaigns by COSATU—for a living wage, for the right to work, to organise the unemployed, for democratic rights and an end to apartheid—will be the key in mobilising thousands of workers (and youth) to recruit hundreds of thousands and later millions more.

To make these campaigns a success, it will be necessary to have not only attractive slogans, but a clear and convincing explanation showing how the workers' demands can be achieved.

In this respect, the Executive's discussion document is weakest. While expressing COSATU's stand for a society free from oppression and exploitation—which means in reality a socialist society of workers' democratic rule—the document avoids referring to socialism at all, and fails to set out a clear socialist policy on the campaigning issues.

This is strange, since the debate concerning redistribution of wealth in a future South Africa at the COSATU Congress showed the delegates were united in the view that capitalism should go. COSATU President Elijah Barayi was reported world-wide as calling for a socialist South Africa where the monopolies would be nationalised under a workers' government.

Recently MAWU's conference, held under the State of Emergency crackdown, endorsed the goal of a "democratic socialist society". This is obviously what most workers want.

However, the Executive's generally excellent document calls only for "a democratic alternative to 'free enterprise'." It says that the cause of plant closures is "apartheid mismanagement of the economy" whereas it should explain that capitalism itself is the cause of the economic crisis. Yes, the recession is partly caused by black labour being cheap under apartheid, which further limits the market. But SA capitalism has no alternative to cheap labour; capitalism depends on the protection of the apartheid state to maintain cheap labour.

It is not merely a question of a struggle "for the redistribution of profits", but to end the system of private profit—and so to allow the resources of the country and the labour of its people to be put fully to use for the common wealth of all.

While we struggle for every additional rand in the wage packet, for every hour off the working week, and for every job that can be saved or created—we must explain that a living wage, the right to work, and all the other essential reforms needed by the mass of our people can be won and secured only by defeating apartheid and capitalism and building in their place a socialist system.

With that aim boldly declared and explained in detail, the rank-and-file workers, youth and all COSATU activists will grow immeasurably in confidence and determination, and fight with all the more conviction for the immediate goals which COSATU sets.

politicians, we have the resort to pure utopianism; water on the brain, it might seem, brought on by the impossibility of reconciling on a capitalist basis the interwoven class and national contradictions, now assuming revolutionary proportions. It is a simple matter for the ultra-right to exploit this.

However, neither De Klerk's brain, nor that of the big bourgeoisie, has gone as soft as the parliamentary speech-making and soul-searching newspaper punditry on reform and reconciliation might imply. They understand the social law that, where there are two 'rights', force decides.

The organisation of that force, for the purposes of capitalism, is the 'armed bodies of men', the courts, the prisons and associated bureaucracy—the state, boiled down to its essentials.

To maintain the power of the state against the black working class challenge requires, in turn, the maintenance of white domination in the political system, however much the bourgeois may contrive to disguise it.

Neither the government, nor any wing of the NP, nor in fact any section of the bourgeoisie whatever they may say, can abandon white supremacy when it comes down to it.

211. This reality is every day more clearly grasped by the black youth and workers on the receiving end of the regime's whips, gas and bullets. 'They will never concede power. We will have to take it by force.' That understanding has now gone beyond the active layer and is beginning to take firm root among the masses.

212. The former Information spokesman Louis Nel, in the same parliamentary debate (3/2/86) said: "... the Black people in South Africa are divided into the revolutionaries and the moderates, and we must choose sides between the revolutionaries and the moderates."

By this, of course, he meant that, to have any hope of avoiding revolution, the government would have to create conditions in which black 'moderates' (Natspeak for those blacks prepared to compromise with white supremacy in a very flimsy disguise) could be drawn in to hold up the state system.

However, it has been left too late for such a policy to work. The revolutionary movement, growing in strength, hardened under the blows of the state and bitterly conscious of the realities of power, will not accept compromise with white supremacy. That, in turn, will continue to mean that any 'black leaders' drawn into the constitutional system would lose whatever real popularity or respect they might have among the mass of black people.

Since without mass popularity and respect 'black leaders' are virtually (though not absolutely) useless to the ruling class; since black puppets cannot avert but on the contrary tend only to accelerate the development of the revolution—the basic unviability of the government's whole strategy will again and again be manifested, probably in even more farcical ways than we have hitherto seen.

210. They are compelled both to step up repression further and further, and to continue making the kinds of partial concessions and retreats from apartheid

which only drag them deeper into disrepute on all sides.

The present impasse of the regime has been shown in Botha's inability to get the National Statutory Council off the ground even with Buthelezi at this point; in the pledge to retain segregated Group Areas while at the same time empowering itself to declare particular localities, streets, or even buildings within a Group Area 'grey'; and perhaps most absurdly of all, Botha's idea of making African townships 'independent city states' so as to give self-determination to their inhabitants. Independent Soweto ... occupied by the SADF!

211. "Believe me, a party which does not have a policy ... can never govern this country," said De Klerk, referring to the parliamentary opposition. *De te fabula narratur*, the Romans used to say: the story you are telling applies to you.

We have in South Africa a regime without any workable way forward and, as an inevitable result, the increasing ungovernability of the country under it, repeated lapses into *stasis* or inertia at the top, and increasing division within the ruling party.

212. If there really was a way forward for the ruling class in a change of government, either on the left or on the right, then the division of the National Party, between those in desperate quest of negotiated settlement and those straining to turn back the wheel of change, would long ago have resulted in the complete breakup of this party and its replacement in government by some new alignment.

As it is the NP is riddled with contradictions, factions, confusion and doubts. It has lost its capacity to inspire whites. Its Congresses seem like gatherings of the political undead, every day resembling more the old United Party before its demise.

Nevertheless, the NP is still a considerable way from disappearing, and, remarkably in view of its inability really to satisfy anyone, can still command around 50% of white support.

213. This is because the whole of bourgeois society has a deep-seated fear of any change from a National Party government in charge of the state. It is entirely uncertain what would take its place, and with what consequences. If chaos were to set in at the top, the whites understand, their hold on power could be swept aside by the blacks and never regained.

The clinging of the electorate to the NP is, in this situation, a reflection of the *cul de sac* of the system itself—and of the objective necessity of change by means of proletarian revolution.

214. The consequence of the continued adherence of contradictory forces to the same government and party is that a bonapartist authority is necessary, not only over the state, but over the NP itself in order to hold its conflicting sides together.

215. We referred earlier to the evolution of the NP, through three decades of government, from a party representing the ambitions of the small Afrikaner

# Trade unions: their past, present and future

**By Karl Marx**

Marx wrote this brief statement on trade unionism 120 years ago, as part of a political report by its General Council to the September 1866 Congress of the International Working Mens' Association ('The First International').

The International had been founded in 1864, on the basis of individual members and affiliated trade unions and workers' societies from several countries in Europe, to fight for the international interests of the working class.

Marx's remarks on trade unionism were addressed in particular to conservative tendencies that existed in the leadership of the British trade union movement at that time.

The points it makes are still of relevance today.

## (a) Their past

Capital is concentrated social force, while the workman has only to dispose of his working force. The *contract* between capital and labour can therefore never be struck on equitable terms, equitable even in the sense of a society which places the ownership of the material means of life and labour on one side and the vital productive energies on the opposite side. The only social power of the workmen is their number. The force of numbers, however, is broken by disunion. The disunion of workmen is created and perpetuated by their *unavoidable competition among themselves*.

Trade unions originally sprang up from the *spontaneous* attempts of workmen at removing or at least checking that competition, in order to conquer such terms of contract as might raise them at least above the condition of mere slaves. The immediate object of trade unions was therefore confined to everyday necessities, to expediences for the obstruction of the incessant *encroachments of capital, in one*



*Workers in Britain in the 1870s.*

word, to questions of wages and time of labour. The activity of trade unions is not only legitimate, it is necessary. It cannot be dispensed with so long as the present system of production lasts. On the contrary it must be generalised by the formation and combination of trade unions throughout all countries. On the other hand, unconsciously to themselves, the trade unions were forming *centres of organisation* of the working class, as the medieval municipalities and communes did for the middle class. If the trade unions are required for guerilla fights between capital and labour, they are still more important as *organised agencies for superseding the very system of wage labour and capital rule*.

## (b) Their present

Too exclusively bent upon the local and immediate struggles with capital, the trade unions have not yet fully understood their power of acting against the system of wage slavery itself. They therefore kept too much aloof from general social and political movements. Of late, however, they seem to awaken to some sense of their great historical mission, as appears, for instance, from their participation, in England, in the recent political movement, from the enlarged views taken of their function in the United States, and from the following resolution

passed at the recent great conference of trade-union delegates at Sheffield:

"That this conference, fully appreciating the efforts made by the International Association to unite in one common bond of brotherhood the working men of all countries, most earnestly recommend to the various societies here represented, the advisability of becoming affiliated to that body, believing that it is essential to the progress and prosperity of the entire working community"

## (c) Their future

Apart from their original purposes, they must now learn to act deliberately as organising centres of the working class in the broad interest of its *complete emancipation*. They must aid every social and political movement tending in that direction. Considering themselves and acting as the champions and representatives of the whole working class, they cannot fail to enlist the non-society men into their ranks. They must look carefully after the interests of the worst paid trades, such as the agricultural labourers, rendered powerless by exceptional circumstances. They must convince the world at large that their efforts, far from being narrow and selfish, aim at the emancipation of the downtrodden millions.

capitalists and petty bourgeoisie, to a party more or less openly serving big-bourgeois interests.

Through the organised links of the NP with Afrikaner bourgeois, it is obvious that the various interests and opinions of the latter are most directly articulated through this party and its spokesmen. However, the leadership of the NP now serves capitalism not as the direct representative of a particular section or sections of the bourgeoisie, but as the arbitrator between conflicting bourgeois interests for the sake of the common bourgeois good.

The Botha government, raised above society as a bonapartist regime, is the agent of big capital in the last resort—even as it incurs the public condemnation of the big capitalists themselves. At the same time Botha, as the State President and leader of the NP, is raised as a bonapartist arbitrator over the party as well.

216. If Botha were to retire in the near future, the likelihood is that his successor would be a figure like De Klerk, able to balance and manoeuvre in the same way between the different factions and wings of the party as Botha does—a man with both a right-wing reputation for firmness plus the necessary flexibility in relation to reforms—rather than a figure from the avowed 'constitutional-reform' wing of the party such as Heunis. Elevation of the latter to the Presidency would be likely to accelerate processes towards a final split, which the whole party leadership would want to avoid.

217. With the shift from an essentially white-parliamentary to an essentially bonapartist-presidential regime, the NP itself has been turned to an increasing extent into an instrument of the presidency, serving the latter as a 'parliamentary' footrest and electioneering machine when required.

White elections from this point on, moreover, will be essentially plebiscitary in character—for or against the President.

Parallel with this, the tactic of the referendum has been brought to centre stage—a favourite device of bonapartism, used to gain a 'mandate' for the government's whole program by stampeding the white electorate into supporting it on some selected issue.

218. At the same time, alongside the established system of state administration, from the centre to the localities, which is supposedly subject to parliamentary checks and control, there has now been developed the National Security Management System as a hidden parallel network of government.

It comprises some 500 committees in five tiers, organised to gather intelligence at every level, pinpoint dangers to the state, carry out 'dirty tricks' propaganda against our movement, and advise the State Security Council (which governs it).

Combining officers of the security forces with administration bureaucrats, and reportedly involving local business people, this is designed to support also a future shift to government by presidential decree, or even outright military dictatorship, as and when that becomes necessary.

In every respect, the system in South Africa is preparing for civil war.

219. The declining significance of parliament, the increasing importance of the military-police forces as the hub of government, the change of the ruling party into an instrument of bonapartism, the lack of any viable alternative for the bourgeoisie, the untamed revolutionary pressure of the black masses, the impasse of the economy under any capitalist government—all these factors combine to hold the main forces of bourgeois politics, despite the contradictions among them, together round the President and thus around the National Party too.

220. We can see the magnetic appeal of the state and presidency in these conditions operating on the white electoral plane.

In 1983 Botha was able to get the support of two-thirds of the whites in the referendum on the new constitution, including large numbers of PFP supporters whose party leadership told them to vote against. Doubtful though many (perhaps most) whites were of the scheme's long-term viability, they were not willing to risk defeat of the government—with what unforeseeable consequences for the stability of white rule?—but on the contrary decided to give it a chance.

More recently, we have seen a similar phenomenon operating on the right.

221. In May, when Pik Botha's Pietersburg meeting was broken up by the AWB, all he was able to gather together in commiseration afterwards was a pathetic bunch of effete-looking bourgeois Nats. The bulk of middle-class and working-class NP supporters in the area—gravitating to the right, sympathising with the CP but not yet breaking finally with the NP—had been too disgusted with the government's tack towards compromise with the 'Eminent Persons Group', hints of the possible release of Mandela, and promises of further reform, to turn out in support. Indeed, they were probably pleased to see 'Pik Swart' humiliated.

But only a few weeks later, after the government's sharp turn to a right-hand tack had been confirmed by the imposition of the second state of emergency, Pik Botha was able, by means of a completely transparent ham's performance of *kragdadigheid* and defiance of the outside world, to bring a large meeting of exactly these people to their feet, stamping with enthusiasm. Their faces showed the immense relief they felt that, *dank die Here*, the government was back on the right track and wouldn't sell them out after all!

222. We repeat: there is a profound reluctance in the white electorate, both among existing NP supporters and on the left and right of the government, to see it removed from power for fear of what might ensue. This is the main factor still holding the NP together. (Conversely, if the NP were to cease being the party of government it would probably fall apart very quickly.)

P.W. Botha understands that it is still possible—by manoeuvring now this way and now that, by contriving sensations, and by using the various weapons in the armoury of bonapartist tricks which we have only just begun to see employed—to sustain his

# **SOCIALISM— the only way to peace and stability in Southern Africa**

---

**By D. Sikhakhane**

---

**Workers throughout the world were angered by the May 19 raids into Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana by the murderous South African forces.**

**In the minds of the masses in the rest of Southern Africa there is a general fear that similar attacks, perhaps on a bigger scale, are inevitable in the future. How can the people defend themselves?**

In the words of one worker: "We must be given arms, then we will show these boers who we are." Many believe that the African leaders in their countries will respond positively to this call and that then it will be a matter of time before liberation is achieved in SA, and peace and stability secured throughout the region.

But is this the case? Why is the SA regime making these attacks? What will be needed in order to stop them?

## **Attacks**

The attacks were not launched primarily to "destroy ANC bases", as claimed by the Pretoria government. While it wants to get rid of ANC guerilla supply lines through these countries, these have never posed a serious threat to the SA state.

Fundamentally the racist, capitalist regime is pursuing an imperialist policy of wanting to dominate the region economically and politically.

But the May 19 raids were meant to serve other purposes as well. They were a public show by Botha to the Eminent Persons Group and the big imperialist powers that he was not prepared to bow to their pressure on the question of dismantling apartheid, releasing Mandela and negotiating with the ANC. And they were an attempt at convincing the whites, especially the ultra-right in the AWB and the Conservative Party, that he would not 'sell-out' the whites by giving power to the ANC.

The Botha government finds itself in a deep political crisis. Over the last two years, the struggles by black youth and workers for democracy and an end to exploitation have reached revolutionary proportions. Neither repression nor 'reforms' has been able to halt this movement.

At the same time even the gestures of 'reform' have raised fears and anger amongst the whites. This has resulted in white support shifting away from the NP to ultra-right

organisations like the AWB and the CP.

The government is increasing its repression inside the country and its aggression on neighbouring states, hoping to retain white support.

The struggles of the black masses are bound to reach even higher proportions in the coming years. The crisis and contradictions will deepen. The masses in Southern Africa will be faced with more SA aggression as a result. Only the overthrow of that regime and the transformation of society can guarantee peace in the region.

But how can this be achieved? Can the leaders of the 'front-line' states play any role?

## **'Front-line' leaders**

The response of the leaders of Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Botswana to the raids was pathetic. Kaunda started off by crying. He was then brought to his senses by students who staged a demonstration against these attacks and demanded that he should give them arms to defend their country. He did not give them a single gun. Instead he diverted from this issue and threatened that he would withdraw from the Commonwealth if Britain refused to impose sanctions on SA.



*A room in a hostel in Mogoditshane, Botswana, hit by the SA forces on May 19.*

regime through white electoral support for some considerable time.

### Prospect of early elections

223. The last white general election was in 1981. The 1983 Constitution provided that existing white MPs would retain their seats as though elected to the new parliament (which commenced on 4 September 1984). The maximum life of parliament is five years. Thus the legal necessity of a further election was postponed to 1989. This was to allow Botha maximum freedom of manoeuvre, with an immense majority in the House of Assembly, without having to look for a mandate for unpopular policies for five years.

224. However, the recovery of white support for the government from the ultra-right following the second state of emergency opened the possibility of an early election. Some loss of NP seats to the CP/HNP (and perhaps a few to the PFP) would still be probable, the party tacticians reasoned, but not as many as could be expected after another three years of crisis.

Thus Botha came very close to calling an election for November, although at the last minute he drew back. It is still possible that an April election may be called next year, especially if the present upturn in the economy continues to make itself felt.

The longer Botha waits, moreover, the more the chances that his support will erode once again towards the right.

The threat of sanctions, initially a convenient issue on which the government could rally the whites, will tend to become just another fact of life in SA and so tend to lose its potency as an electoral prop.

The state of emergency has not succeeded in crushing the spirit of the blacks, and this has daily become more apparent. The movement has suffered a partial setback, and there has been a slackening in the scale of nationwide resistance. But the whites, who were initially so relieved at this, will soon take it for granted and hold any deterioration of the situation against the government. This could happen at any time.

Thus the balance of argument has seemed to favour an election without delay.

225. An examination of the Constitution, however, reveals the main reason why Botha hesitated in calling a November election, and why, indeed, he may yet decide not to go for one in April either.

Essentially, he wants a white election without the problem of having coloured and Indian elections at the same time. The reason for this is that he does not want to provide the UDF, and the movement as a whole, with a possible political rallying point to use as the highly successful boycott campaign over the coloured and Indian elections was used in 1983. That could well have the effect of souring, in the eyes of the whites, the claimed 'success' of the government through the state of emergency.

However, the terms of the Constitution mean that calling only a white election involves disadvantages

which would make it rather pointless at this stage.

226. Under the Constitution, parliament comprises all three Houses. Its life extends no more than five years from its first sitting after a general election of all three.

The State President may call such a general election at any time within the five years. That would result in a new parliament with a fresh term of up to five years.

An election of one or other House on its own is possible at any time on request of the Ministers' Council of that House. But that cannot extend the life of parliament beyond its five years.

Therefore, if a white election were held separately, i.e. without coloured and Indian elections being held also, then the effect would be that a general election (including another election of the white House) would still have to be held by September 1989.

Thus, through a whites-only election now, Botha would be inviting at least some reduction of his parliamentary majority, without gaining time. What would be the point in that?

227. If Botha intends to remain President for some years yet, then it is most likely he will be considering either a general election of all three Houses or no election at all at this juncture.

However, if his intention is to make way for a new President fairly quickly, then along with the above possibilities there would be more of a possibility of a whites-only election being considered as an additional option. Such an election would also be possible after a new President takes office, in order to demonstrate he has a clear mandate.

The factors in favour of holding an election soon also marginally increase the prospect of Botha resigning in the near future—although it is probable he has not yet made up his mind on this. There can be little relish in holding on personally in this situation of impasse and deterioration—especially since his pension will be 100% of his salary. However, he would not want to risk vacating the throne if the revolutionary ferment was really bubbling.

228. In the event of an early election, and if the government feels its victory (even with a reduced majority) gives a sufficient impression of strength, then the likelihood would be of an attempt to turn back fairly soon to new initiatives of 'constitutional development'. They would want to keep the screws of repression tight at the same time, with the aim of 'reforming' from strength without a renewed mass upsurge, though that inevitably complicates their efforts to draw in middle-class black collaborators retaining even a shred of dignity.

Also, in the aftermath of an election victory, it could not be excluded that Botha might decide to release Nelson Mandela (and perhaps other leaders) from prison, in order to relieve the government of this ever-growing embarrassment. But that would depend on his weighing up several factors—among them the volatility or quiescence of the masses at that point, and whether the prisoners could be exiled abroad, to prevent their presence becoming a focal point for a nationwide mobilisation in SA.

Clearly Kaunda feels weak and powerless against the SA state. He wants to rely on Britain and other advanced countries. Even then, as a reflection of his class standpoint, he appeals to the representatives of capitalism, notably Thatcher for support. He sees no role at all for the British working class, in the same way that his class position prevents him from giving arms to the youth of Zambia.

## Protect capitalism

Thatcher has always shown her preparedness to stand by Botha. She is driven by her class interests—the need to protect capitalism in SA and worldwide—the same interest that pushed her into joining hands with Reagan in the massacre of innocent civilians in Libya. Only the pressure of the British and international working class could force her to agree, reluctantly, even to limited sanctions.

But the imposition of sanctions will not mean an end to SA's aggression. On the contrary, the attacks will probably intensify—in the same way that Smith increased his attacks on Zambia and Mozambique while sanctions were in operation against Rhodesia.

The Botswana government is more pathetic. They respond to previous attacks by introducing the National Security Act. At the time of the May 19 raid, the President was out in the villages trying to convince people how this act would prevent attacks in the future. What a blow on his face!

The attack was convincing proof that this law is a useless piece of paper that cannot stop SA in any way.

Now the government will double its efforts at trying to prove to SA that it is willing to clamp down on people who use the country as a "launching pad". Already a number of ANC members have been put on trial for possessing arms. Police from SA have even been permitted to come and interrogate them. Some ANC members have been expelled. But this will not solve the problem. Despite the government's previous efforts, on May 19 the SA soldiers dropped pamphlets in Mogoditshane accusing it of collaborating with the ANC.

The 'socialist' Mugabe has called for the formation of an "All African

Army" that would go to war with SA. This is after he made statements to the effect that his country was prepared on its own to fight back against any attack by SA. He has now come to realise that he is weak. But is such an army possible?

When imperialism withdrew direct political rule from Africa, it left us divided and poor. Food production has been falling since. The outlook is one of absolute disaster, with millions of people expected to starve to death. This has forced the government of each small country to look mainly at advancing its own interests, even at the expense of others. As a result, there are always conflicts between different states.

State boundaries cut across living bodies of tribes and nations. The misnamed Organisation of African Unity has failed to bring any unity to the continent. In fact, it recognizes the boundaries imposed by imperialism. It has an excellent record of presiding over decades and decades of conflicts and wars. Not a single one of these wars has been resolved by the OAU; instead they have brought division. Two summits failed to take place in 1983: one because the member states could not agree on whether or not to accept Polisario as an OAU member, the other because they were divided on whether to recognise Habre or Oueddei as Chad's leader.

On this basis it is not possible to form an "All African Army". One cannot bring together the armies of countries that are at war. They will finish each other before war with the real enemy begins. The OAU understands this. That is why, in relation to Chad, it was French imperialism that was asked for 'help', not only by Habre, but by other countries that felt threatened by Libya at the time. Libya is a member of the OAU, remember!

## SA aggression

It has also not been possible to create any such army to defend Angola and Mozambique against SA aggression. Instead it is Cuban soldiers that are fighting on the side on the MPLA. Why? The OAU knows that it can offer the Angolan army no help itself.

Anyway, how would this army be financed. At present the majority of OAU members are in arrears with their contributions. The organisation has no money. Some employees of this organisation have had to be retrenched. Soldiers of the "Africa Army" would have to face retrenchment too.

The black states of Southern Africa are also divided. Kaunda's call for sanctions has not been supported by his 'African brothers' of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, all of whom are members of SADCC. These countries would totally oppose participation in a war with SA.

Even economically, the SADCC countries cannot co-operate. In 1985 Mugabe cut textile imports from Botswana, to protect Zimbabwe industries. This cost 1 000 jobs in Francistown alone. It is this kind of "co-operation" that these countries can afford in their struggle against SA! It is impossible for them to work together on the more serious question of war.

## Colonies

The black states of Southern Africa are more like colonies of SA. In the whole region SA produces 80% of GNP, 77% of the electricity, 77% of the maize, 87% of its coal, 98% of its iron ore, and 67% of its sugar cane.

It has 82% of the region's cars, 63% of the tarred roads, 57% of the rail lines and 84% of telephones. All these countries are dependent on SA for imports and exports, including, in some cases, trans-shipments of weapons, and Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland are almost 100% dependent.

Therefore a war with SA will be fought on the economic plane as well. In the end the black states would lose this war, with their economies devastated. Opposition would develop in these countries as a result.

It was mainly the economic war waged by SA against Mozambique that forced Machel to sign the Nkomati Accord. It was also on the same basis that Leabua was toppled in Lesotho by the SA-backed Lekhanya. This has not escaped the minds of these black leaders.

## Process from semi-parliamentary bonapartism to military-police dictatorship

229. Whatever decision Botha may make about the elections in the coming months, it is clear that the present regime has far from reached the end of the road in white politics, and that there is almost certainly room for a succession to the Presidency from the NP, whether now or within the next few years.

At the same time, however, in a way not seen for forty years, white politics are now extremely unsettled; the contradictions and divisions grow ever deeper and sharper; the regime is resting now on shifting sands.

While the NP majority is likely to be eroded in the event of elections from now on, perhaps very substantially, we are unlikely to see a complete overturn of the government in this way.

More likely will be a period of sharp changes and sudden turns in political alignments, in and out of parliament, both to left and to right, accompanying or possibly compelling changes of tack by the President. We can anticipate this from general considerations—it is impossible, however, to predict the developments in detail or the speed of the process. What seems clear is that an increasingly chaotic situation is beginning to open up in white politics, which will prepare the way for constitutional crises and a tendency towards the disintegration of the state itself.

230. Because it is a blind alley for capitalism in every direction, the situation as far as parliament is concerned could well become increasingly unstable. This can only fill all the captains of the ruling class with trepidation.

In Israel, for the sake of comparison, there is an extremely unstable position in the Knesset (parliament) with no party able to command an outright majority. The military very prominently plays the key role in the Israeli state—to hold down the Palestinians and keep the Jewish population in a condition of permanent preparedness for war with the surrounding Arab states.

Yet a system of civilian government on party lines has been maintained, even, as at present, by means of a very contradictory and precarious 'national government', with Labour and Likud taking it in turn to supply the prime minister. Could a similar arrangement, with short-lived unstable compromises, become the pattern of white government in South Africa?

231. The tendency of development may well be in that direction, but it is very unlikely to reach the same point. In South Africa, the relationship of class forces is entirely different from Israel.

The Jews are a majority in the State of Israel. Taking also the West Bank and Gaza into account, in contrast with the Palestinians the black oppressed in SA have an overwhelming preponderance—moreover, as a proletariat. Already formidably organised, the black proletariat is engaging (with ebbs and flows) in an increasingly conscious mass revolutionary struggle, which has precipitated the

crisis of the ruling system. In this situation signs of serious weakness or instability in government and state would be a virtual invitation to insurrection. This the ruling class understands, and so does the military.

Consequently, rather than rely on weak and changing bourgeois coalitions without any coherent policy, there would be a strong pressure on the bourgeoisie of all sections to accept the suspension of constitutional government in favour of a military dictatorship before the crisis in the present semi-parliamentary bonapartist structure developed too far.

232. However, in working out perspectives it is important not to telescope together too closely a process of development which is likely to work itself out through a number of phases, including delays and partial regressions, which can take a considerable time. On the other hand, it is also in the nature of a situation such as this that events can suddenly unfold very swiftly, and quantitative changes produce sharp qualitative turns without warning.

A perspective is not a blue-print, but a means of keeping a general orientation during shifting, seemingly contradictory events. It must be re-evaluated constantly, and honestly corrected in the light of developments not foreseen.

233. What we can say now is this: It is not at all in the interests of the ruling class to dispense with the parliamentary form of bonapartism in South Africa at the present stage. On the contrary, it is necessary for them to try and develop that form further. This is so for several reasons.

Firstly, they desperately need to include compromiser-'representatives' of Africans in some way in central government. Botha has not given up hope of achieving this through the National Statutory Council, probably intended as a first step towards cabinet responsibilities for Africans, coupled possibly with some combination of Bantustan legislatures and other African 'parliamentary' chambers yet to be devised.

Without the incorporation of Africans in at least such a form, the regime realises that it has no hope whatever of gaining 'legitimacy' even with middle-class blacks. We may demonstrate beyond doubt that the bourgeois regime can never gain legitimacy now whatever it does—but the bourgeoisie cannot give up the attempt. Even the incurably ill usually keep on struggling for life; the same applies to doomed classes.

234. Secondly, feeble though this has proved, the ruling class needs to try to maintain the coloured and Indian chambers at least as a pretence of 'extending democracy'. They still cling to the vain hope of dividing these communities fundamentally from the African majority, and also need to continue to employ the collaborator coloured and Indian 'Ministers' to do white supremacy's dirty work for it.

Political puppets don't always behave as their masters require. They have interests of their own—among these to keep a show of independence, at least occasionally. Token opposition has arisen from the



*The South African military on parade in central Johannesburg.*

Even on the military field, SA outpowers them. It has one of the best equipped armies in the world, better trained and more sophisticated than those of the front line states.

On May 19 SA forces landed at the main barracks of the Botswana Defence Force in Mogoditshane, where they dropped pamphlets advising them not to interfere because the attack was not being directed at them. The BDF was completely paralysed!

In Zimbabwe the SA forces escaped by road after hitting their targets in Harare. Where was the army—when it has been reported that they were warned of the attack in advance by SA?

These black leaders understand their weakness. That is why they have not allowed the ANC to have any operational bases in their countries.

The workers and youth of Southern Africa should not be deceived by any of these leaders, no matter how much they may shout. As a worker put it: "These leaders are like a small baby that needs to hold onto the mother's dress to stand up. When angry with the mother, it again holds onto the mother's dress and starts kicking her, hoping the mother will cry". They cannot hurt their master seriously.

An effective war can take place only on the basis of arming the workers and youth of SA together with those of Southern Africa—first of all with a socialist programme, as a step that will lead to arming for insurrection and the overthrow of the capitalist system in the whole region.

The leaders of these black states will want to use SA's aggression to divert the attention of the working

class and the rural poor from the problems at their own doorstep. As is already the case with Botswana, they will use SA's attacks to introduce drastic legislation to be used, ultimately, against their own workers. Without an implacable struggle to carry forward the revolution in these countries, the masses will remain oppressed.

All over the world today the only progressive class is the working class. There is nothing progressive about the bourgeoisie anywhere, including those in the black states of Southern Africa.

## Independence

The achievement of political independence in all the African countries was a great step forward. But, the failure to overthrow capitalism has meant the continued domination of these countries by imperialism. In Southern Africa it means the domination and exploitation of the region by SA monopolies. As a result, these countries have remained backward and have been unable to develop the productive forces beyond certain limits. On this basis, not a single one of the problems facing the masses has been solved. Instead, these problems have multiplied.

In Zimbabwe, Mugabe and ZANU failed to overthrow capitalism, despite the opportunities and the readiness of the masses. As a result the workers and peasants still lack jobs, land, houses, etc. Worst of all, the crisis of capitalism has led to the division of Zimbabwean society on tribal lines. The government resorted to brutally repressing the Ndebele people. In Mashonaland as well, attempts by the poor to better their lives have met with the wrath of the state. Strikes have been suppressed, trade unionists arrested, squatters forcibly removed from land, and so on.

In Zambia, economic crisis has forced the capitalists to attack the living standards and wages of the working people. This has provoked strikes from almost every section of the proletariat. The living conditions in the rural areas are horrible. There is an enormous shortage of food. Kaunda's reply has been to come up with a one-party dictatorship and the continued arrest of trade unionists.

In Botswana, the BDP government is incapable of solving the crisis in unemployment, housing, education etc. This has brought about anger and discontent among workers and youth. The BNF opposition is making gains, especially in the towns. The response of the BDP has been threats of declaring a one party state. The *anti-labour laws have been further tightened*. In addition the new National Security Act makes virtually any strike action a crime against the security of the state.

The governments of these countries have to rely on force to deal with their own workers. For this reason, they will never dare to give arms to the people for defence against SA, because in the end the masses would use these arms to further their interests and even overthrow these oppressors together with capitalism itself.

In future, when the labour movement in these countries begins to pose a threat to the existence of capitalism, these 'front-line' leaders will join the 'backline', and together with SA capitalism, try to crush the movement of the working class in the region.

## No illusions

To entertain any illusions in these leaders will be disastrous for the working people of Southern Africa. The working class can rely only on its own forces, its own power, and its own organisations. Under no circumstances should working people rely on the ruling class. Their defence should be carried out under the slogan: "For socialism! For the Southern African socialist revolution! For the world socialist revolution!"

The interests of South African, Botswanan, Zambian, and Zimbabwean workers are inextricably linked to one another. They live and work side by side. They have the same basic aspirations held by all workers—for *peace, security, democratic freedoms, and decent standards of living*. These common needs can provide the basis for coming together in common action.

The working class needs to base itself on its class interest in struggling against capitalists throughout

Southern Africa, and in the common interests of workers throughout the region and world-wide in fighting for socialism. These principles apply in times of war as well as peace.

## Right of self-determination

The working people of the black states are concerned to defend their right to independence and self-determination against SA oppression and aggression. But this does not mean that they can place any trust, for this purpose, in capitalist governments of their states. The task of defence can be carried out only through the workers and rural poor organising together. SA imperialism will be ended only by the victory of the working class in South Africa, which will defend the right of self-determination of the people of the surrounding countries.

The task, therefore, is to build class unity on the industrial and political plane in Southern Africa.

During the 1920's the Industrial and Commercial Worker's Union (ICU) was able to organise workers beyond the borders of SA. It had a branch in Zimbabwe, for example. The Francistown African Employees Union of Botswana was able to establish relations with workers in Ghana and Zambia in the 1950's. The conditions today are much more ripe for these traditions to be revived.

The SA working class has taken great strides forward in creating strong independent and democratic trade unions, and now, the mighty trade union federation, COSATU. Many workers from the black states of Southern Africa, who have played no lesser part in building the economy of SA, are active members of these unions. Their everyday struggles are against the same employers—De Beers, Anglo American, and other monopolies who are the enemies of the workers in the rest of Southern Africa. There is a clear need for unity in these *struggles*.

SA trade unions are searching for links with workers in Southern Africa. The SA NUM has helped in forming a federation of Southern African miners' unions. It should be the duty of every worker and revolutionary to take such initiatives for-

ward by ensuring that there is contact at the rank and file and shop-steward level among workers of Southern Africa.

The need for political unity will also pose itself. Day to day struggles teach workers that trade union struggles are inseparable from political struggles.

*Workers will struggle against all obstacles blocking their path towards creating and building their own political organisations. Marxists can arm workers with a programme and method for building such organisations—which can become linked together to unite and co-ordinate the political struggles in the sub-continent.*

## Clear socialist programme

With a political arm of their own and a clear socialist programme, the working class (and they alone), can break the stranglehold of SA capitalism throughout the region.

Armed force will be necessary to overthrow the SA regime. But the method of guerilla struggle put forward by the ANC leadership does not offer a means of overthrowing the racist state and capitalism in SA. Rural guerilla war has been possible in backward colonial counties because of the existence of a large peasantry in the rural areas. Also the victory of the guerillas was possible because of the weakness of the capitalist states that existed.

In SA there is no peasantry. What exists in the rural areas is a reserve army of labour which is part of the proletariat in the towns. It is the lack of a peasant base that has forced the ANC leadership to resort to urban guerilla attacks—of sending individuals or small groups to plant bombs in buildings etc. No regime can be overthrown on this basis.

The heroic struggles of the black masses inside SA have driven the lesson home that nothing short of an armed insurrection by the masses *themselves will be sufficient to defeat the state*.

The ANC leaders' policy of guerillaism is not only futile, but endangers the lives of the undefended masses in the surrounding areas.

Also, what is involved in promoting it creates a potential source of

243. *Inqaba* has explained thoroughly in other material (see, e.g., issue 18/19) how the mass base of Inkatha among Zulu workers, and especially in the impoverished rural areas of KwaZulu, has depended on the conviction of these people that the white state can never be overthrown. In their powerlessness, they try to make their peace with the authorities and can be turned, at times, against the revolutionary movement which they fear will only bring the wrath of the oppressor down on them without leading to victory.

Essentially the same point applies to those working-class strata providing support for—or, more widely, sympathising at certain times, especially times of setback—with the vigilantes in other areas.

244. As the crisis of the system deepens, however, and the cracks develop in the state along with the extension and strengthening of mass organisation and militancy among the black working class on a much greater scale, the eyes of these backward strata will be opened to the possibilities of liberation from white rule. This will especially be the case if more of the youth learn to approach them correctly, explain things patiently over and over again, and not write off the old people as hopeless.

Once they see the prospect of the working class taking power, millions of hitherto passive, even conservative, working-class black people of the older generations will move into the forefront of battle against the state and will amaze even the most courageous youth with their revolutionary feats.

245. These layers cannot provide any sustainable basis for reaction. Nor can the regime get very far by organising and arming thousands of extra black police, special 'kitskonstabels', council 'blackjacks' drawn mainly from rural areas, or anything similar.

They can be used, with some temporary effect, at this stage in the development of the revolution—but they cannot change the balance of forces in such a way as to drive the revolution back decisively. After a time, these forces will very likely become increasingly unreliable to the state, and the arms with which they have been equipped, as well as the benefit of their training, can be brought over to our side.

In recent days, municipal police in Katlehong, for instance, have 'rioted' over wages, mounting street barricades and facing armed white security forces sent in to crush them. This is an event of the most profound symptomatic importance for the future. It also proves what *Inqaba* has argued previously: that the only sustainable social basis for reaction in SA is white racist, and cannot be other than that.

246. However, such a reaction can clearly not penetrate and atomise the black proletariat.

In this we have a marvellous illustration of the way things turn into their opposite—and of the impossibility of cheating history.

The very socio-political system of white supremacy and segregation which has hitherto held down the blacks with a seemingly crushing weight of repression, turns into a fatal liability for capitalism once the black proletariat raises its strength beyond a certain point.

Three hundred years of perfecting a system without equal in the world for the enslavement of the proletariat have produced for capitalism ... an iron proletariat whose revolutionary will cannot now be broken by any force of reaction at the disposal of the ruling class. The mighty dialectic at work! What better confirmation of the hidden methodical process of world history towards the socialist revolution?

### Path to civil war

247. However, the insufficiency of the state and the social forces on which it rests to crush the black proletariat opens the way, not to any straightforward or swift victory for the revolution, but instead to a drawn-out, exceptionally violent and destructive struggle.

The relationship of class forces in South Africa is such that the state is both too weak to triumph conclusively, and too strong to be overthrown in one or a few revolutionary convulsions.

248. In the advanced capitalist countries where the social power of the proletariat is potentially overwhelming, and where the road for fascism is closed, the ruling class is obliged to depend for its survival on the collaboration of the labour and trade union leaders. Without this, as Lenin pointed out even in the conditions of sixty years ago in relation to Britain, capitalism couldn't last 'six weeks' once the system was gripped by a fundamental crisis.

These countries are now in the early stages of such a crisis which, for reasons explained in other documents of our tendency, will inevitably be very drawn-out and pass through many phases and swings from left to right and back again.

Through these successive phases, the active layer of the workers and youth will struggle again and again to solve the problem of leadership in the mass labour parties and trade unions, before the proletariat can take power and overthrow capitalism.

249. Once the old labour leadership begins to be pushed aside and becomes insufficient as a defence of capitalism, the ruling class will respond to the danger by preparing, over a whole period, measures of civil war against the proletariat. That is the direction in which developments in the advanced capitalist countries are tending.

This, however, will be an extremely risky and possibly fatal venture for the capitalists—the turn towards bonapartism and civil war in the face of so powerful a proletariat—but they will ultimately have no alternative.

The relationship of forces, at the same time, would permit a virtually peaceful transformation of society in these countries if the workers' organisations were transformed on revolutionary lines, with a fully conscious and uncompromising leadership, in time to avert civil war.

250. In South Africa, while fascism is similarly not an option for capitalism, there is no question of the ruling class being willing or able, even temporarily, to place its fate in the hands of the leadership of the



*Prime Minister Mugabe pays a state visit to President Masire in 1983. Supporting capitalism, these leaders cannot defend the masses against SA imperialism.*

division between these people and the SA working class.

To safeguard their acceptance and passage in these countries, the ANC leaders are forced to hold the leaders of these countries in high esteem. As a result, they have had to praise even the worst dictators in Africa. They supported Leabua, despite his vicious dictatorship, simply because he gave them refuge. They support Mugabe while he is murdering the innocent Ndebele masses. SA workers and workers internationally condemned Mugabe for arresting socialists in 1985, but the ANC leaders endorsed this move.

## Dictatorial regimes

Workers suffering under these dictatorial regimes will wonder if it is the same kind of rule that the ANC leaders want to create in SA! Many will gain the wholly false impression that this attitude of the ANC leaders reflects the attitudes of black workers and youth in SA—that they support

the oppression of fellow workers. This can lead to division and hostility.

The ANC leadership must correct their policy. Unity among the oppressed in Southern Africa will only come about when workers of each country are seen to be struggling and assisting each other against their common enemies in a spirit of revolutionary internationalism.

What the ANC leaders fail to realise is that their protection does not lie with the leaders. The lessons of their experiences in Mozambique, Lesotho and Swaziland must be absorbed. The only real defenders of the revolution are the masses in these countries. Educated on these problems together with their class brothers and sisters in SA, armed with socialist ideas and programme, they will constitute a force that can never be broken.

The working class, by taking power into its own hands, can ensure, for the first time, peace and stability in the whole region.

The overthrow of capitalism would mean the ownership of industries, commerce, finance and land by the

workers in all these countries. A Southern African Federation of socialist states could harness resources, technique, and manpower, in a plan of production. Whereas at present millions are wasted on arms, these enormous resources would be used for beneficial social and economic development.

## Mutual trust

Once the proletariat comes to power, mutual trust and confidence can be built gradually. Through common work and effort on the basis of a joint plan of production, discussed and decided upon by the mass of the population, it will be possible to remove the prejudices of the past.

A victorious socialist revolution in Southern Africa would spur workers in the rest of the continent and open the way to an African Federation of socialist states. Only on this basis can all the accumulated problems of Africa be overcome and the stains of past oppression and exploitation removed.

black masses.

Capitalism will survive or fall along with the established state. Thus to bolster the state against the revolutionary proletariat becomes the ruling class's first law.

251. What the South African state lacks in social underpinning, it already tries to make up for in firepower—in the accumulation and use of the most savage weapons of mass destruction against the blacks.

This is certain to become much more pronounced a feature of the SA revolution, with the use by the state of machine-guns, tanks, artillery, helicopter gun-ships (like the 'Airbok' already produced) and bombing once they find themselves unable to contain the movement by the present means.

252. At the same time, the inadequacy of the white population to cope with the black upsurge already forces the regime towards the increased recruitment of blacks into the police. There is also talk of conscripting coloured and Indian youth into the army.

At present there are only 1,7 police per thousand of population, a considerably lower ratio than in Europe, for instance. With its present conscript reserves fully mobilised, South Africa has just one soldier for every 2½ square km., or one for every 50 of the black population. This will prove hopelessly inadequate in the longer term, as the regime understands.

But to 'overcome' the deficiency by recruiting and arming blacks is to build dynamite into the brickwork of the state. At a certain point that will change from a factor of stabilisation to a factor of collapse.

253. Along with this we will see the disintegration of the capitalist class itself as the revolution develops. Trotsky excellently summed up the process that occurs—with results that are qualitatively different from the simple divisions between 'left' and 'right', 'verligte' and 'verkrampte', that have characterised bourgeois politics hitherto:

"The ruling classes, as a result of their practically manifested incapacity to get the country out of its blind alley, lose faith in themselves; the old parties fall to pieces; a bitter struggle of groups and cliques prevails; hopes are placed in miracles or miracle workers."

254. In such conditions the military would be certain to move to the political centre-stage.

To hold together a divided white population as the mainstay of the state, the generals will have to press the whole white population increasingly into uniform, step by step militarising civilian life and ultimately production also, to hold the country on a footing for civil war.

A development of events more or less along these general lines seems inevitable. But that will not dispel, but on the contrary will only intensify the contradictions, compressing them explosively within the armed forces and the state as a whole.

255. Marx, in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, described how the French bourgeoisie had been unable to contain the revolution of 1848 within

a parliamentary framework, and, in December 1851, had been obliged to concede power to a bonapartist dictatorship for the sake of its own survival.

The revolution, wrote Marx, "goes about its business methodically.... First of all it perfected the parliamentary power, in order to be able to overthrow it. Now, having attained this, it is perfecting the executive power, reducing it to its purest expression, isolating it, and pitting itself against it as the sole object of attack, in order to concentrate all its forces of destruction against it."

256. In South Africa, the revolutionary period ahead will be characterised by an ever more monstrous 'perfection' of the state power. Although with zig-zags and contradictory interludes, there will inevitably be the resort to detention, brutality, torture and massacre on a scale far greater than anything we have yet seen.

Raised above society in an ever more revolting way, the racist state will at the same time reveal more and more plainly its role as the defender of rotting capitalism. All this will not strengthen the state, but on the contrary the more surely prepare its downfall.

Splits and disintegration of white society—along class lines fundamentally, but within the classes too—will also find expression within the state. The more extreme the methods of the state hierarchy to enforce control, the more the conflicting forces will tend to burst beyond control.

257. But least of all in South Africa can there be an automatic, or essentially spontaneous triumph of the revolution as a result.

Especially once the incapacity of the state dictatorship to suppress the blacks becomes more starkly revealed, the reaction among the whites will have the potential to take on much more ferocious forms. So far events have only shown a glimpse of what can occur.

'Armies' of white civilians organising to engage in armed clashes with blacks could well become a feature of the situation. Horrific reigns of terror and paroxysms of racial barbarism could follow. The country would face the prospect of sliding into a bloodbath of racial civil war possibly more terrible than any civil war in history.

258. But this appalling course is not by any means inevitable.

By the analysis we have made, it is clear that the generalised prosperity and security enjoyed by white working people for more than a generation is irrevocably doomed in the period now opening up. Clinging to the present regime and state, or to the opposition on the ultra-right, they will face an endless nightmare.

The changes in the objective situation, the sharp shocks and turns they will experience, will lay the basis for sharp changes also in consciousness—provided the explanation of an alternative way out is provided, and backed by adequate force.

Out of the chaos and disintegration that will ensue in the camp of our class enemy, it is our task to clear a bridge for white working people to cross over to a common democratic and socialist future in South

# THE BOTSWANA — TRANSKEI LINK

There was anger and outrage among workers and youth in Botswana recently at the collaboration between the Botswana security police and their Transkeian counterparts.

Four South Africans, three men and a woman, were arrested for illegal possession of arms. They were tried and sentenced to seven years imprisonment.

During the trial it was revealed that three Transkeian security police (though the Botswana government denies they were security police) were given permission to come and interrogate the four in Botswana. Two of the four refused to be questioned, while the others were interrogated for up to four hours.

The Botswana government has claimed that it supports the struggle against apartheid and for democracy in SA. Yet, behind the scenes, it joins hands with the very enemies of democracy, the SA racists and their Bantustan puppets. It is absolutely scandalous.

Not so long ago, there were big demonstrations and protests all over the world against the raids by SA into neighbouring countries, including Botswana. The youth in SA themselves organised protest meetings, where many were sjambokked and bitten by police dogs.

Now the Botswana government is expressing its appreciation for this solidarity by clandestinely working with one of the worst police forces in the world against the young fighters of SA.

## Achievement

Many activists see the achievement of national liberation in SA as a way of freeing the people of Botswana also from the economic and political grip of SA imperialism. They will be disappointed by Botswana's immoral dealings with the Transkeian police.

Secret dealings with a Bantustan on political matters is the height of

hypocrisy, when Botswana claims not to be recognising the Bantustans. The Transkeian police and puppet government work hand-in-hand with the SA regime. As in SA, the Transkeian jails are full of young people whose only crime is fighting for liberation in SA. Many have been tortured and killed. Living conditions of the masses are abhorrent.

All the Bantustan governments are rotten. Not long ago, Mangope massacred young and old people in Winterveld. Throughout SA, there are growing struggles against these Bantustans and their governments. Recently a remarkable victory was scored by the workers and youth of KwaNdebele, who forced the stooge government to retreat from asking SA for "independence".

This collaboration by the Botswana government is an indication of where it really stands.

In a shameless attempt at covering up this scandal, the Botswana police argued that this was "a non-political police-to-police matter". What a lie! It was clear from the beginning that the four were linked to the ANC and fighting for liberation.

## Mistaken

*Inqaba* has explained why the ANC's tactics of guerilla attacks are mistaken and even damaging to the development of the revolutionary mass movement in SA. However, we unhesitatingly defend the guerillas against the state, whether in SA or Botswana, and would fully support efforts to transport arms into SA for purposes of preparing mass armed self-defence.

The Botswana government recently introduced the National Security Act. It claims that raids into Botswana by SA forces are made possible by spies operating in the country and that the law is meant for such people.

This event makes a joke of this argument. Here were these Transkeian police, spying for the SA

regime. But, rather than arresting these police and putting them on trial, the Botswana government permits them to enter with false number plates, and to interrogate ANC members.

This law is not meant for SA and spies, but is necessitated by the political problems in Botswana. The government realises that it is losing support because of its failure to solve a single one of the problems facing the masses. It realises that the working class will be provoked into action to defend living conditions. This law is part of the preparation by the ruling class to deal with the workers of this country.

## Opposition

The leadership of the opposition Botswana National Front has done nothing to explain the meaning of this law to workers. No active opposition has been rallied. They do not understand that they will be among the victims of this law.

Nor have the BNF leaders said anything on the question of the Transkeian police.

It is the task of workers and youth in the BNF to raise these questions for discussion, to educate the members.

Also, ways must be found of meeting and discussing with SA youth and organised workers, to overcome any mistrust, and build unity in struggle.

Let this collaboration by the Botswana government be a warning that, as the revolutionary movement of workers and youth develops in South Africa, the Botswana government will join hands with the SA ruling class against it. What is needed is to build political unity among the struggling masses of the whole region, to fight for the overthrow of the apartheid regime and its allies and the establishment of a Southern African federation of socialist states.

Africa. That can only be based on absolutely resolutely showing the way in action to **democratic working-class rule**.

260. It does not need a genius to realise that the policies hitherto pursued by the Congress and SACP leadership—of seeking a negotiated settlement through a so-called 'democratic' alliance with the liberal big capitalists, the class enemies of the white workers—can only guarantee that they and the lower middle class whites remain in the grip of racist reaction.

This will come eventually to constitute the single most formidable barrier to the liberation of the black people.

To overcome it, an armed mass movement will be

necessary. But physical arms will not be enough. Our movement must be armed with the necessary understanding, policy, strategy and tactics as well.

261. Building a mass ANC on a socialist program, transforming the whole Congress movement in this way under working-class leadership, will offer not only the best means of building the forces of the revolution. It will also provide the indispensable means of breaking the white reaction decisively and so clearing the way to power.

The path to achieving this—and the political struggle which is needed against the various false ideas and trends within the movement which presently obstruct this task—will be discussed further in **Part 2**.

---

# Botswana railway workers: A fighting way forward

By Mpho Moremi

**The government's 1986 wage increases are the latest in a long line of attacks on the pay and living standards of railway workers. The increases have not given back what has been taken away from our union's members in previous years.**

In 1985, for example, the government imposed a low increase of 6,6%. This was followed by increases in water and electricity tariffs. Rent went up by 20% and cooking gas by 13%. According to the government's conservative figures, inflation stood at 10% by June and was above 12% by the end of the year. In effect our living standards went down.

Undoubtedly 1986 is worse. We had been promised increases of between 15% and 20%. When we received our pay packets at the end of April, rises ranged from 20% to as low as 5%. Above all, men in the same grade and on the same scale were awarded different increases. This is clearly an attempt at dividing railwaymen and weakening them.

For most workers, this has meant a further cut in real wages. The price rises of the past twelve months are not compensated for. The next wage increase is due in April 1987. By how much will prices rise between now and then? Already water and electricity tariffs have been raised from April 1. Now the price of milk has gone up by 10% from May 1.

This is just another part of the general attack launched by the government and the employers against the working masses. Our trade union rights have been subjected to severe attacks through the different labour laws. Now even civil rights are being attacked through the National Security Act. Workers are not safe under Domkrag (the ruling Botswana Democratic Party) and the capitalist system.

Just 'negotiations' with government by our leaders, without mobilising the members for struggle, will not solve the problem. Any sign of weakness on the part of the leaders will invite even more aggression from the government and employers.

Our union leaders have shown no capability or intention of challenging any of these attacks. This includes the Botswana Federation of Trade Unions as well. There was overwhelming opposition to the government's offer throughout the country. If the leadership nationally had lifted even its little finger to mobilise workers and prepare for action—they would have enjoyed enormous support from the rank and file. The government and employers would have been forced to improve their offer.

## National action!

Lessons need to be learned from past experiences. All members who are determined to defend and improve living standards need to examine the reasons for these set-backs and ask how matters can be improved for the future.

**In reality the only way that decent wages and conditions can be won is national action by all our members. For this to succeed, thorough preparation and explanation is necessary!**

Meetings at all stations up and down the country must be organised to gain support for a determined fight. In these meetings the rank and



*Increased misery for workers in Botswana—destitute residents of Old Naledi reach expectantly for free bread.*

file should be armed with facts and figures on employer's profits, on the cost of living etc. On this basis it would be possible to determine a living wage. A wage demand decided upon by all members would then be put forward to the employers. This should culminate in a special Pay Conference, with all branches represented, where questions of strategy and tactics would also be discussed.

Our leadership is opposed to a closer working together of railway branches. It is up to the activists in the branches to continue working for closer links, and explaining the reasons for the disastrous wage increases of 1986. The leadership at branch level needs to be developed and strengthened.

We can only rely on our own strength and organisation to defend our living standards. With confidence, hard work, and correct leadership our aims can be secured.

Never before has the task of building the Railway Workers' Union been so urgent. The government is taking over the railways from Zimbabwean administration at the beginning of 1987. What is the position with our gratuity?

## Gratuity

We are to... there are two options. One is for us to keep our gratuity with the government after NRZ has paid them. In this event we will not have to apply for employment as new employees. But no explanation has been given as to the interest accruing on these funds! Is it for us or for the government? What happens when one of us is fired? Presently, if we are dismissed we lose the gratuity as well. How many of us are going to be fired even for the smallest mistake?

Worst of all, if our money remains with the government we will be chaining ourselves. Conditions at work can deteriorate. Workers will be more reluctant to stand up and fight, fearing not only to lose the job, but the gratuity as well.

The other option is for workers to take their gratuity. In this event they will have to apply for re-employment—as new employees under the government. Here workers run the risk of losing their jobs. But

are our jobs guaranteed in any case? Long service means nothing at the railways. Some of us have worked for over 15 years but are still doing the same work we started with. The wages are still low.

## Stand together

The general attitude among railway workers at the moment is for taking our money. But this must not mean losing our jobs. The only solution is for all of us to stand together and make the same demand at the same time. "Gratuity for all! Jobs for all!" should be our slogan. This should be combined with the need for the immediate introduction of a pension scheme for all workers.

As with the Pay Campaign, meetings throughout our branches should be organised to discuss this question. Members should express their opinion. This campaign should lead to a conference where a plan of action would be drawn up in the event of our demands not being met.

But it is becoming clearer and clearer to more and more activists and members that our demands cannot be secured on a lasting basis by the trade union alone. What a trade union can win can be taken away on the political plane. The BDP government—a capitalist government—is forced to make workers pay for the crisis of the capitalist system.

Railway workers, along with workers generally, urgently need political change if our jobs, living standards, conditions and trade union rights are to be protected.

## BNF

Workers are now looking towards the BNF (Botswana National Front) to bring these improvements. Support for the BNF has increased massively, especially in the towns. There is a strong possibility that the BNF could win the next election.

But what we see is that, the more that support for the BNF increases, the more that its leaders move to the right. They are discarding the radical

demands in their programme of the past. They are talking about a coalition with the pro-capitalist BDP. They have even talked about signing an open Nkomati-type 'security agreement' with the SA apartheid government.

Our problem is that the workers in Botswana have no party of our own. The BNF is a middle-class party, supported by the workers because they have no other alternative to the BDP.

If the BNF is elected to government, its leaders will be faced by enormous pressures from the capitalists, from SA, and from the imperialist powers overseas. A military coup, backed by SA, could well be threatened. If, as is likely, the BNF leaders were to bend under the pressure, they would not even be able to carry through major reforms. Our problems would continue, and be worsened by the worsening crisis of capitalism in SA and world-wide.

What we need to do, within the BNF, is to bring together active workers to struggle for a bold socialist programme for full employment, decent housing and living standards, and measures to solve the problems of the rural poor.

## SA workers

We must explain that the struggle to solve our problems in Botswana cannot be separated from the struggle of the revolutionary SA workers against the SA apartheid regime and the capitalist monopolies it defends, who also hold us in their grip.

This will begin to lay the basis for the mobilisation of the workers and rural poor as a mass force that can overcome successfully the many deep problems facing the working people of this country.

---

**\* For an immediate campaign on pay and gratuity!**

**\* Gratuity to all and jobs to all!**

**\* For a living wage!**

---

# ZIMBABWE—workers need a socialist way forward.



*Secondary school students in Harare.*

**KUDA MALINDI and PETER CHIRIMUTA, two Zimbabwean youth supporters of *Inqaba*, explain the present problems faced by workers, peasants and youth in Zimbabwe and the need for the working class to lead a struggle for a socialist ZANU to complete the revolution.**

"Increasingly the workers and youth of Zimbabwe are questioning the commitment to genuine revolutionary transformation on the part of Mugabe and the leadership of Zanu(PF).

The reserve of support that existed for the leadership of the party of independence is being eaten away as workers experience continued poverty on their part, but the open collaboration with capitalism and rapid accumulation of personal wealth on the part of the leadership.

Recently workers have questioned the great expense involved in the government hosting the summit of Non-Aligned Nations in Harare. At the same time as workers are demanded to show restraint in their

demands for better pay and living conditions, the government spends massive amounts in preparing for the summit.

A worker from Central Mechanical Development reported that 90 Mercedes Benz (each costing Z\$90 000), 130 Lancias, and 400 motorbikes have been purchased by government for the summit.

## Cover-up

In 'preparation' for it the government has also tried desperately to cover up the reality of life for the mass of people in the country. Prostitutes and beggars forced onto the streets by poverty have been ruthlessly removed by the regime in its attempt to 'clean-up' the city.

Our experience in Zimbabwe has shown the impossible contradictions that exist between production for profit, and production for need.

Even though there was a 30% increase in production in the tobacco industry in 1980-1982, workers still suffered cuts in income and the loss of jobs.

Promises made by Mugabe at the time of independence have since been retracted under pressure from the bosses. The question of a minimum wage is only one example.

In 1985 agricultural workers were promised a Z\$143.75 minimum wage. The refusal of the bosses to implement this led to the regime's backing down and a new 'minimum wage' of Z\$85 being 'agreed'. Since then workers have shown their anger in widespread strikes and protests.

## Peasants

It seems as if the government has forgotten the peasants, who are as vulnerable as ever to exploitation by private farmers. For example there have been many cases where the General Marketing Board(GMB) has refused to buy grain from the peasants supposedly because of its high moisture content. The peasants are then forced to sell it to private business for lower prices. But the private farmers then take it to the GMB who will give them a high price for it.

Municipal regulations implemented by the government, which state that maize planted within 20 metres of a river bank must be cut down to prevent soil erosion, have also created great hardship for peasant families. Their crops have been destroyed on government orders and they have received no compensation. Also they have discovered that it applies not only to river-banks, but to anywhere where the government decides maize or vegetables can't grow.

The compromise on land at the Lancaster House agreement—making its redistribution only possible on a 'willing buyer-willing seller' basis, is also beginning to reveal its true meaning.

Only 12 000 peasant families per year have been resettled, and this has often taken place without proper consultation between the peasant families and the authorities. Yet about one million families need land.

The government's failure to

redistribute land is also angering the ex-combatants. Many are still unemployed. Their feelings are 'we fought for Zimbabwe, and were promised land, food and jobs, but now we are sitting doing nothing.' A reporter was recently told by ex-combatants that "the government must do something before we take action—we fought for Zimbabwe but now find that we are in as bad a position as we were under Smith."

## Severe difficulty

Many people continue to live under severe difficulty, like wild dogs. In the remoter areas there are still few or no facilities. There is a high birth rate and many diseases due to lack of health facilities. Many children have to walk eight kilometres to school, and the bad condition of the roads, lack of bridges etc, means that in the rainy season children may miss school for several months.

A high level of unemployment allows white farmers to continue to exploit the peasants for cheap labour.

In the cities and towns the youth face a future with little real hope. There is now a 25% unemployment rate among school leavers, and up to 80 000 school leavers join the hunt for an income every year. Many children lack education because their parents can't afford it, and they are sent to the rural areas instead to work.

The youth are angry that the government is not doing anything for them. Also, their parents are worried because young people who have nothing to do but walk the streets often end up becoming thieves or thugs.

At the time of independence the youth were among the most enthusiastic supporters of the regime. Initially there was a high attendance of youth at ZANU(PF) meetings, but this has since collapsed. Now workers are being forced to attend meetings, and many have found that it is not possible to get a job unless you have a letter of recommendation from the branch chairman—thereby forcing attendance.

Youth who do attend these meetings are given positions without the necessary education and explanation. The youth are used to carry messages, to call meetings, and as an

army to force people to attend. This has discouraged the youth so that most of those who attend are now elders.

The youth see the problems that still confront the workers in the factories, and the problems of the unemployed, and are increasingly angry with the regime. In many places working conditions have not improved, and wages have not satisfied the needs of the workers. Many factories have been closed, and industry remains in the hands of foreign multinationals.

Increasingly, party leaders are finding jobs as the exploiters and oppressors of the workers. At Lytton Tobacco Company the personnel manager is on the ZANU(PF) district committee, and has used his position to suggest that the party is against wage increases, and to get jobs in the company for his friends! The workers and youth want the nationalization of these industries and the establishment of workers control.

When workers go on strike, the government protects the management and not the workers. The Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) is still used by the government to intimidate striking and demonstrating workers. Many workers know we are being exploited, but dare not organise or discuss this with fellow-workers for fear of being arrested.

The leadership of the trade unions has angered many workers because, instead of leading the workers, they are leading the management to exploit the workers. Union leaders continue to be corrupt, often embezzling union funds for their own private use.

## Trade unions

Prevented from democratic participation in their unions, many workers feel that the trade unions have nothing to offer. For example workers in the textile industry say: 'The trade unions just take our money, and should be banned'. That is how strongly they feel.

This need not be the case. We have campaigned to explain how trade unions should fight for the rights of workers against the bosses. We have called for the removal of the corrupt leadership, and for a new elected

leadership that is accountable to the members. Our campaign has been greeted with enthusiasm by the workers, who begin to see how the government is defending capitalism in Zimbabwe.

The corrupt trade union leadership has not been challenged by government—in fact it has been protected. Many workers had hoped that the rotten engineering union leadership could be thrown out. They were surprised last year when the government detained workers' committee leaders and protected the pro-capitalist secretary.

The working class is unconsciously heading for a new revolution to overthrow capitalism, but there is a need for a genuine socialist tendency in ZANU to assist the workers' committees transform the trade unions, and give a political direction to the youth and workers, both Shona and Ndebele.

## Same bosses

The ZANU leadership does not explain that the workers in Zimbabwe and South Africa are oppressed by the same bosses, and that therefore our struggle should be linked. On 'Africa Day' the government held rallies and demonstrations on SA. Similarly on 'Soweto Day' the government encouraged the participation of the Youth Brigades, but only as puppets to carry placards and slogans. It did not explain that the struggle in South Africa is against capitalism as well as apartheid. If the government is serious about applying sanctions on SA it must take over the SA companies which own so much of the wealth of the country.

At these rallies, leaders from Stalinist states applaud 'socialism' in Zimbabwe, but do not explain that socialism means power for the working class.

While the factories, mines, banks and big farms remain in the hands of the bosses, the government will not be able to satisfy workers' needs. There is a need for a socialist way forward, to unite the working class and poor peasants, and to prepare the way for genuine socialism nationally and internationally."

# NIGERIA —

## "The workers are now angry, and searching for new ideas and ways with which to combat the bosses"

Comrade FEMI ABORISADE was formerly Education Officer of the Nigeria Labour Congress. Last March he was sacked by them, with no reasons given, and without receiving a hearing. The real reasons were his active struggle for the democratic involvement of workers in the unions, and for devoting his educational work to developing the class understanding of the union membership.

The comrade spoke to an *Inqaba* correspondent about the situation facing Nigerian workers.

"Workers in Nigeria were inspired by the formation of COSATU, and have been spurred on in their own struggles.

The working-class in Nigeria have suffered greatly as a consequence of the crisis of world capitalism. 95% of Nigeria's revenue has come from oil, and is now severely hit by the crash in world oil prices.

Exports have fallen from \$26bn in 1980 to \$12bn in 1985. Manufacturing output dropped by 23% between 1982 and 1984, with a further fall of 4,8% in 1985. Industry is only working at 20-30% of capacity—and yet there is no shortage of want in Nigeria.

### Concessions withdrawn

The concessions won by the workers during the oil boom of the 1970s have gradually been withdrawn by the ruling military government. Spending on education, health and housing has been cut. Key public corporations are being threatened with privatisation.

Prices have risen by 500% since 1984, and this has been accompanied by retrenchments, and growing social problems. In recent years the youth

have been particularly hard hit: youth unemployment has reached 35%. The youth realise that there is no hope for them under the present system, and are increasingly angry.

Between 1982 and 1985 the private sector has laid off 30% of its workforce. The bosses face no restrictions on retrenchments and the workers have no rights to challenge the bosses in court.

### 'IMF package'

The 1986 budget has become known as the 'IMF package'. It provides a good example of how it is the workers who must pay for the crisis of the bosses.

In return for new loans the IMF

demanded three things from the Nigerian government: trade liberalisation, the devaluation of the Naira (Nigerian currency) by up to 200%, and the end of petrol subsidies. The result will be massive inflation and further cuts in living standards.

When the government imposed an additional duty of 30% on imports, it meant that prices in the shops rose, and the living standards of the workers fell even further. Similarly the withdrawal of the petrol subsidy translates for us into an increase in the price of public transport.

All this has resulted in an increase in militancy of the Nigerian working class. Unfortunately though, it is necessary to distinguish between the response of the labour bureaucracy and that of the rank and file workers.

Trotsky said that "the crisis of the working class is essentially a crisis of leadership" and this is especially true in Nigeria.

Here most trade union leaders live like lords at the expense of the workers. They believe that we must have a 'developed capitalist society' in Nigeria (which is impossible) before any socialist revolution.

This is also the position of the so-called "left" in the trade union leadership, who look to the Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia and accept the "two-stage" theory of the latter. They see their role as helping to "consolidate the national



*Nigerian students demonstrating against the previous military government, in 1978.*

bourgeoisie"—and so turn themselves into agents of a bankrupt capitalist system against the workers of Nigeria.

They won't tolerate any opposition, are not accountable to the workers, and are more concerned with 'protecting' the workers from Marxist ideas than they are with fighting the bosses.

A good example of this was conference of the Organisation of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU), held recently in Lagos. When the leaders arrived at the airport most refused to go to the hotels in ordinary cars, but wanted only Mercedes or BMWs! This from the people who were in Lagos to discuss the terrible problems of famine, homelessness, and poverty within the African working class!

The chairman of the 'Launching Committee' was a multi-millionaire! Finally the meeting collapsed due to charges of corruption. This was the example set for the workers and youth of Africa!

In spite of this though, as long as the problems remain, the workers will be forced to struggle. The workers are now angry, and are searching for new ideas and ways with which to combat the bosses. Recently there have been many new struggles, and the workers have been trying to link up their struggles with each other.

There have been strikes amongst bank-workers. Market women have protested against the bulldozing by the government of their shacks.

## High profits

In December 1985 the workers at Volkswagen called for a 100% Christmas bonus, due to the high profits made by the company that year. The management refused, and when the workers went on strike, collaborated with the labour leadership, who agreed that the police be sent in. This resulted in 90 workers being charged at court, and over 300 workers retrenched.

As a result of the recent 'IMF budget' the government demanded wage-cuts across the public sector. The workers were effectively being asked to choose between retrenchments and working for nothing.

Due to pressure from the workers the trade union leaders were forced

to give the government a '21 day ultimatum' to withdraw the proposed wage cuts. Predictably they withdrew the challenge three days before the ultimatum expired, giving the government a victory and the confidence to extend the wage-cuts into the private sector.

## Demonstration

When the dock-workers went on strike the leadership were forced to organize a demonstration which attracted 10 000 workers. The government took fright and withdrew their plans to privatise cargo handling. This was just one example of the unbeatable strength of the workers if they are given support from the leadership.

As a result of the role of the labour leaders, the workers now see them as the political police between them and freedom. During the wage-cut crisis the Marxists issued a leaflet calling for united working class action against the attacks of the bosses. This leaflet was snapped up by the workers, who saw immediately in the idea of Marxism a fighting alternative to the class collaboration, reformism and corruption of the union bosses.

All the tensions in Nigerian society were demonstrated by the recent student struggles.

On 23 May a student demonstration was organised at Ahmadu Bello University in Northern Nigeria in memory of five students killed during student struggles in 1978. The Nigerian police reacted even more savagely, killing up to 25 students.

These brutal killings triggered off nationwide solidarity action as students broke loose from the junta's "law and order".

For about ten days the students were virtually in control of the streets. Police stations were burnt down, prisons attacked and in one incident 216 prisoners were set free.

But the students by themselves do not have the power to challenge the regime. Their struggle needed the support and leadership of the working class in order to advance.

That is why it was an event of great significance when the NLC bureaucracy called a solidarity march in support of the students for 4 June. So widespread had been the student action that union leaders could not

avoid being drawn into the social whirlpool that had been created.

The workers on 4 June were not only going to protest against the killing of the students, but link it with the cuts in living standards. The demonstration could have marked the beginning of a revolutionary, class-based movement against the regime.

This prospect frightened the junta, and it threatened to stop the march "with all the force at its disposal". Chiroma and other NLC leaders were briefly detained.

But even more frightened were the labour bureaucrats of the rank-and-file mood. They therefore hid behind the junta's threat, and called off the demonstration.

The class collaboration between the junta and the NLC bureaucracy was reflected by Chiroma's words after his release from detention: "I have no grudges against the government".

This prompted a Dunlop worker in Lagos to comment: "Ali Chiroma has not been to detention; he has been wining and dining with the Ministers!"

## New hardship

The military coup of December 31, 1983 was at first greeted with hope by the workers. But it has only meant new terror and hardship.

Now the military government, afraid of its unpopularity, is already making promises to hand over to the civilian politicians—by 1990!

The bourgeois parties, riddled with corruption, regionalism and tribalism, offer no way forward for the Nigerian masses, who have lost confidence in both military and civilian regimes.

Without a revolutionary struggle for the socialist transformation of society, the future would be bleak for workers and youth in Nigeria. The task is to campaign for the formation of a Labour Party, based on the workers' strength in the trade unions, and adopting a program to mobilise a united struggle of workers and poor peasants for the removal of capitalism.

Our aim must be the victory of the proletariat and the institution of workers' democracy and socialism on a world scale!"

# BELGIAN WORKERS DEMAND ALL-OUT ACTION

By Steve Morgan  
Reprinted from *Militant*,  
18/7/86

The last period has seen big strike movements in Western Europe, and also in the US, as workers have moved into action to fight against the attempts of the capitalists and their governments to load the burden of economic crisis on the backs of working people.

While some of these strikes have been publicised (such as the British miners' strike of 1984-5), others—such as the near-general strike in Denmark in March 1985—have gone virtually unreported in the capitalist press.

Another such movement was that in Belgium this May.

A conspiracy of silence by the media has surrounded the recent struggles of the Belgian working class. The announcement of 199 billion Belgian francs worth of cuts by the Catholic-Liberal government provoked a huge movement.

On a scale never witnessed before, Catholic and Socialist trade unionists, French and Flemish speaking workers, public and private sector workers joined in united struggle.

The movement has subsided as a result of the spineless inaction of the union leaders. However, the government has been unable to inflict a defeat on the workers. With the programme of cuts remaining to be implemented, it seems likely that the

struggles will flare up anew later this year.

The economy, according to the Belgian Kredietbank, "has reached a new limit". With the highest public-sector deficit in Europe, the Belgian ruling class is determined to make the working class pay with cuts threatening over 60 000 jobs in the next two years.

Even before the cuts were announced, the very rumour of the attack brought workers and youth out onto the streets.

In March, 25 000 school students under Marxist leadership struck against government policies. In April the miners took action.

Under mounting pressure, the trade union leaders called a one-day public sector strike. The strike was absolutely solid. Pressure was building up for an all-out battle with the right-wing government. The union leaders responded by calling another 24-hour strike ten days later.

But the Charleroi railway workers moved into action four days in advance of the planned strike and drew out the rest of the railways with them. The railway workers remained on strike, in opposition to the leaders' instructions, until 31 May.

## Rail workers

Following the lead of the railworkers, many other sections who joined the 16 May general strike also remained out for another two to three weeks.

On 23-24 May another general strike was called, for 48 hours this time, which again was highly successful.

At each stage, the union leaders tried to restrict the movement to the traditional religious and national barriers.

The leaders of the Catholic union, the CSC, failed to give a clear strike call to their members, and continually tried to negotiate with the government.

However, more and more Catholic workers linked up in action with workers in the Socialist union federation, the FGTB.

The Catholic party, and consequently the whole government, has been riven with splits as a result. In one incident 100 party members burned their party cards outside the

party head office in protest at government policies.

The workers' movement terrified the ruling class and the union leaders—not only the CSC but the FGTB leaders also.

From 6 May the movement gathered momentum. Even sections of the police, organised in the FGTB, took action and participated in demonstrations.

## Defend picket line

On a demo in Antwerp, for example, police were told by their HQ that the paramilitary National Guard were being sent to attack a nearby picket line. The police immediately formed into lines and led the demo at the double to defend the picket line!

In the Walloon area, workers overpowered the sentries and occupied National Guard barracks in opposition to any attempt to break the movement by military force.

Clearly the movement was going beyond the limits of industrial protest action, and was beginning to raise questions of state power.

On 31 May the FGTB called a demo in Brussels. 250 000 workers marched through the city. 100 000 red flags streamed past the bourgeois centres to the music of the *Internationale*. The workers were masters of the streets for that day.

There is no question that, if a clear call had come from the workers' leaders, an all-out general strike would quickly have materialised. Not only would the Martens government have fallen within hours, but the opportunity of socialist transformation would have been posed before the workers.

Already, many groups of workers have drawn revolutionary or semi-revolutionary conclusions. Among activists the main call is for "A general strike to the finish".

The main factor holding the workers back has been their own leaders. In this battle the FGTB leaders have exposed themselves as never before.

But the workers have been far more critical than in the 1983 strike movement, and furious at their leaders' inaction. A movement has built up against the union bureaucracy. Intersectoral Committees have been formed, bringing

together the best militants in the public sector, which have tried to link up with similar committees in other cities and with private sector workers.

At the inaugural meeting of one such body in Brussels, attended by 320 shop stewards and activists, an older tram worker summed up the general mood:

"I have been on the trams for over forty years. I participated in the strike of 1948, in the general strike of '60-'61, and in 1983. I have never witnessed a demonstration like that of 31 May. But I have also never witnessed such open and scandalous betrayal as I have seen today by our trade union leaders.

"They have tried to divide the working class into small sectors. Before 1979 we had one united Socialist Party, now that is divided. Now they want to do the same with

the unions and with Belgium.

"I recognise no barriers. We have to change things for the rank and file."

Many militants have eagerly taken up demands for greater democracy and accountability in the unions. As one worker put it: "If we are tigers led by mules, then it's time we ate the mules"!

### Next government

The Socialist parties in Wallonia and Flanders have given no lead to the workers. If the present government falls, the Socialist leaders might be taken into the next government to carry out the cuts.

But the workers' opposition now developing in the unions will also find

its reflection in the Socialist parties.

The teachers have now called for strike action in the autumn. The prospect could open up of a new upsurge in the coming months, deepening into a fundamental crisis for the capitalist system in Belgium.

Even the British *Financial Times* has been forced to conclude: "With the working population two thirds unionised, the trade union chiefs could theoretically put the government out by overturning the parliamentary majority on the streets".

The union leaders must not be allowed to dissipate the energies of the working class in a new series of limited actions to let off steam. What is clear above all is the need for Marxist leadership to galvanise and direct the enormous power and combativity of the Belgian working class.

## NOW AVAILABLE!

**Labor Militant**  
Marxist paper for labour  
and youth in the USA

**Towards the political  
revolution**

—perspectives for Poland of the Trotskyist  
workers' tendency of Solidarnosc.



A first step to re-arming the biggest working class in the capitalist world to fight back against Reagan's disastrous policies at home and abroad, and form a Labour Party armed with a programme to end capitalism in the US.

Also available: *Perspectives for the USA*  
(A Labor Militant Publication)



In 1980 Solidarnosc in Poland mushroomed to 10 million members, struggling to end the stranglehold of the Stalinist bureaucracy and establish workers' democracy. But its leadership was inadequate for the task. This historic document reaffirms in Eastern Europe genuine Marxist ideas as a contribution to arming the workers for the political revolution.

Write for a full list of publications.

AVAILABLE FROM: World Socialist Books, 3-13 Hepscott Road, London, E9 5HB.

# 1986—YEAR OF ANNIVERSARIES

1986 is a year of anniversaries for the workers' movement internationally. The tenth anniversary of the Soweto uprising is also the anniversary of the 1926 General Strike in Britain, the infamous 1936 'Moscow Trials', the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, and the 1956 Hungarian revolution.

The purpose of recalling anniversaries in our movement is not that of the bourgeoisie, who use them to repeat their distortions and lies about history. For us they are an opportunity to reflect upon and assimilate the lessons of history in order to strengthen the struggles of the future. At the same time we pay tribute to working-class fighters who made enormous sacrifices in the struggle for socialism.

In Britain after the First World War many workers returned from the trenches with hopes of an end to poverty and exploitation. Instead the bosses repaid them with growing unemployment and a series of vicious attacks, as they attempted to maintain their profits.

The 1926 GENERAL STRIKE was the response of the working class. On May 1st 1926, under extreme provocation from the bosses, the TUC voted with a majority of over three million for a general strike. This was the go-ahead for workers throughout the country, who quickly began their own independent initiatives to make the strike a success.

Up to three and a half million workers were involved at the height of the struggle and throughout the country embryonic soviets sprang up.

Baldwin, the Tory Prime Minister, understood the real meaning of the general strike: "The government found itself challenged with an alternative government; the General Strike was threatening the basis of ordered government and going nearer to proclaiming civil war than we have been for centuries past."

The general strike was a direct challenge to the capitalist system in Britain: it posed before the workers the question of state power.

However, whilst the bosses used all their resources and energy to defeat the workers, the reformist leaders of the TUC had made neither political nor organisational preparations.

---

**By Sean Kelly**

---

The TUC leaders were more terrified of the movement they had been forced to unleash than they were of defeat by the government.

Secret negotiations took place between the labour leaders and the bosses to try and reach a compromise behind the backs of the workers—handing the initiative back to the ruling class.

## Nine days

Nine days after the strike had begun, without consulting the workers, the trade union leadership called off the strike unconditionally. The suddenness shocked even the bosses. In some areas strike committees thought that the TUC telegrams calling off the strike were faked by the government.

On the day after the strike was called off, 100 000 more workers were on strike than before. But, without leadership, the workers had to abandon the struggle. The miners remained on strike until November, when they were forced back to work by hunger.

The bosses took their revenge in anti-strike legislation, and further

massive attacks on living standards.

British workers today, hit by mass unemployment and cuts in living standards, are faced again with the need to transform the leadership of the labour movement, to carry to victory the struggle to end capitalism.

The Russian Revolution of 1917, when the working class took power for the first time, was the greatest event in human history. Less than twenty years later, the 1936 'MOSCOW TRIALS' were a sign of the degeneration of the revolution, and of the bloody consolidation of power of a privileged bureaucracy.

The revolution had become isolated in a backward country with a shattered economy. The small but heroic proletariat of 1917 was exhausted after years of war, revolution and civil war. This provided the material basis on which a privileged bureaucratic caste took power out of the hands of the working class and established its rule over the planned and nationalised economy.

The head of this bureaucracy was Stalin, who became an absolute dictator. The workers' democracy of 1917-23 was utterly destroyed.

To consolidate its rule it was necessary for the bureaucracy to root out in the ranks of the working class those activists who preserved the traditions and aims of October 1917.



Workers in Britain march in support of the general strike in 1926.



*Troops of the Spanish Republic fighting Franco's forces in 1937.*

The pretext for the trials was the murder in 1934 of S.M. Kirov, the first secretary of the Leningrad party—a murder carried out on Stalin's orders. The main accused were all former leaders of the Russian revolution, including Zinoviev, Kamenev and Trotsky. (Trotsky had been forced into exile in 1929, and was tried in his absence).

These revolutionaries, Lenin's closest comrades, were found 'guilty' of a variety of trumped up charges, including treason and collaboration with the Nazis!

From exile Trotsky conducted a defiant campaign to try and expose the Stalinist school of falsification—and was assassinated by an agent of Stalin's in 1940.

At the end of the Second World War, Trotsky's remaining followers called upon the Soviet bureaucracy or the Allied powers to produce evidence from the German archives to support the charge of Trotsky's collaboration with the Nazis. This, of course, they were utterly unable to do.

Hundreds of thousands of Russian workers were murdered in Stalin's purges, drawing a river of blood between the rule of the new bureaucracy and the 1917 revolution.

Disastrously, the crushing of workers' democracy was covered up by the 'Communist' Parties and their fellow-travellers around the world. These applauded the Moscow Trials,

and have never since openly admitted their error.

Though Stalin succeeded in physically eliminating the opposition in the Soviet Union, he could not crush the ideas of Bolshevism. The writings of Trotsky in the last years of his life kept that tradition alive, as a treasure-house for workers' today struggling to defeat capitalism and Stalinism.

The obstacle represented by Stalinism for the working class internationally was tragically revealed in the **SPANISH REVOLUTION OF 1931-7.**

Workers and peasants in Spain had suffered centuries of harsh oppression and exploitation. In 1931, the monarchy fell, a republic was established, and the masses drove forward in a heroic struggle for democracy and socialism. Ten times they could have conquered power, but were held back by the policies of their leaders.

In 1936 a radical bourgeois government, supported by the workers' parties—Socialist and Communist—was elected. In key areas of the country, workers responded by occupying the factories and peasants seized the land. But the workers'

leaders said that "conditions were not ripe for socialism", and propped up the tottering capitalist state.

Seeing their weakness, General Franco mobilised the armed forces for counter-revolution. In response, workers stormed the barracks in key cities, and set up workers' militias. The Spanish Civil War had begun.

Despite the magnificent determination of the masses, despite the support of the whole capitalist class for Franco's Fascist reaction, the Socialist and Communist leaders continued to insist that this was merely "a struggle for democracy" and not against capitalism. They offered no programme to split away Franco's peasant support, or win his troops to the side of the revolution.

In fact, with the assistance of Stalin's secret police, the CP leaders waged a campaign behind their own lines to root out and murder revolutionary leaders calling for the socialist transformation of society.

On this basis, division and demoralisation in the ranks of the working class was inevitable. Despite enormous sacrifices by the camp of the revolution, Franco triumphed, and his dictatorship was installed in Spain for nearly 40 years.

The defeat of the Spanish revolution is a tragic testimony to the bankruptcy of Stalinist "Popular Front" and "stages" policies, which fail to link the struggle for democracy to a struggle to end capitalism and

establish workers' rule. It demonstrates the need for the working class to be re-armed with the ideas of Bolshevism, which brought victory for the working class in Russia in 1917.

**The 1956 HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION** was an attempt by the workers to remove the burden of the Stalinist bureaucracy from the back of the planned economy. **It was a struggle for workers' democracy, not (as the bureaucracy claimed) for the revival of capitalism.**

It struck at the heart of Stalinism, threatening to resurrect the traditions and aims of Lenin and Trotsky.

Though the revolution began on October 23 1956 as a mass demonstration of students, the workers quickly took command. One of their first actions was to pull down a 36 foot bronze statue of Stalin in the centre of Budapest!

Within days, workers' councils had been set up throughout the country and had taken state power from the hands of the bureaucracy. They began to set about reorganising society under workers' control and management.

On the second day of the revolution Russian troops were brought in to crush the revolt. However a class appeal from Hungarian workers swayed them to the side of political revolution.

The Russian bureaucracy could finally defeat the workers only with backward troops from Siberia, who were told that they were "fighting the fascists in Berlin". Nonetheless it took 200 000 troops, equipped with 6 000 tanks, ten days to crush the revolution—resulting in the murder of up to 20 000 people.

The revolt of 1956 was an attempt by the Hungarian workers to carry through the political revolution and build genuine socialism on the basis of workers' democracy. Success would have spelt the beginning of the end for the Russian bureaucracy, and hastened the socialist revolution throughout the world. The Hungarian revolution has been echoed by movements of opposition to bureaucratic rule in Czechoslovakia and Poland—particularly the rise of Solidarity in 1980-81.

Today, with the bureaucracy revealing itself an absolute fetter on the economic development of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union itself, the need for carrying through the political revolution is more pressing than before. The coming years will see its victory.

"Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it." By discussing the lessons of these struggles we can arm ourselves to explain the real dangers that reformism and Stalinism continue to pose to the workers' movement internationally—and the need to rearm the movement with the genuine ideas of Marxism.



**Further reading:**

Leon Trotsky, Ted Grant, and Peter Taaffe, *The General Strike*, (Militant pamphlet);

Alan Woods, *Fiftieth Anniversary of the Moscow Trials*, *Militant* Nos. 813-814;

Ted Grant, *The Spanish Revolution, 1931-7*, *Inqaba*, No. 6, Supplement;

Leon Trotsky, *Lessons of Spain*, (Militant pamphlet);

(For the Hungarian Revolution), "The Crisis of the Stalinist States", Chapter Four, *South Africa's Impending Socialist Revolution, Perspective of the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the African National Congress*.



(Left) Russian tanks in Budapest in 1956: used to crush the revolution.

(Right) Armed workers defend the short-lived gains of the 1956 revolution.

# THE ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT

## — a warning to Labour

Written in February 1986, this article analyses the basis of the national question in Ireland: the partition of the country by British imperialism, and the oppression of the Catholic minority in the North.

It shows why the agreement signed between the British and Southern Irish governments last November cannot solve these problems, but will merely inflame sectarian conflict in the North, and could lead to civil war.

Subsequent events have confirmed this perspective in stark terms (see Editor's note, p. 66)

Marxists in Ireland have stood alone in providing a clear class explanation of the national question, making no concessions to reformist or nationalist ideas.

*Inqaba* salutes the courage of these Irish comrades in standing firm against all the pressures the conditions impose, and pays particular tribute to Irish *Militant* supporter Colm McCallan, murdered by Protestant sectarian thugs on July 14 this year.

**The Anglo-Irish Agreement is a bosses' accord. It has been designed by the Westminster and Dublin governments to serve the interests of big business in Ireland. For the working class, Catholic and Protestant, it offers nothing.**

It will not alleviate the poverty which is now endemic, north and south. It will not reduce, let alone end, unemployment, now over 20 per cent in the north and 17 per cent in the south.

Hardly was the ink dry on this agreement when the Thatcher government showed the true face of Toryism and announced a drastic cut in housing expenditure coupled with further cuts in the Health Service in Northern Ireland. The real solution of the Tories to the problems of Catholic and Protestant workers is to make them worse!

---

**By Peter Hadden**  
**Editorial Board Member**  
***Militant Irish Monthly***

---

This agreement will, however, have one effect. It will produce instability, upheaval and violence. Because it will have solved nothing its final net effect will be, at best, to increase sectarianism. At worst, if the Tories try to hold this unworkable agreement together and greet Protestant resistance with bayonets, they could precipitate a full-scale sectarian bloodbath.

Clearly this is a very dangerous moment in the history of the Irish labour movement, and the labour movement in Britain also. Open sectarian conflict in Ireland would threaten the very existence of the trade unions, north and south. It would be a setback of a quite serious character for the working class of Britain also.

If ever there was a time when the entire labour movement of Ireland and Britain should be moving into action to avert potential disaster that time is now. Yet the leadership of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions have maintained a deafening silence on the whole issue. In Britain and in the South the respective Labour Party leaderships have acted as the shadows of Thatcher and Fitzgerald on the question.

From none of these has there been so much as a hint of an independent class position. If the labour movement emerges intact from the present crisis it will not be as a result of the actions of Neil Kinnock, Dick Spring or the ICTU leaders, or at least their actions to date. It will be despite the damaging and dangerous policies of bipartisanship and silence.

### Illusion

The standpoint of these leaders is based on an illusion—that, on the basis of capitalism, there can be a solution to the national conflict in Ireland.

One of the greatest accomplishments of capitalism in the past was the creation of nation states through the breaking down of feudal barriers and the assimilation or part-assimilation of peoples and cultures.

This was possible in the period of capitalist expansion when the system still played a hugely progressive role in developing the productive forces.

Now we live in the epoch of the death agony of capitalism. The productive forces strain at the limitations of private property and the nation-state. The system can no longer satisfy the appetites of the gigantic monopolies and consortiums for expansion. Far from developing production, existing productive potential can no longer be used. Now, even in periods of boom, only 80% of the productive capacity of Europe and America is used. In the underdeveloped world capacity use of 50% and even 30% is the norm.

### Destruction

Modern-day representatives of capitalism look to the destruction of the existing productive forces, the closure of factories, mines and steel plants, and not to the creation of new wealth. This is the rationality behind the madhouse economics of monetarism as practised by Thatcher, by the 'Chicago boys' in Chile and, albeit in a peculiar manner, by Reagan also.

One of the distinguishing features of this period is the tendency for national conflicts and antagonisms to emerge and re-emerge with ever more ferocity. Already in the colonial and ex-colonial worlds, where the states which exist are, at best, caricatures of the nation-states of the West, wars, national, tribal and religious conflicts are on the order of the day. Capitalism, in these areas, means ultimate Lebanonisation and barbaric disintegration. Only the working class, fighting for a socialist solution, can draw behind itself and unite all sections of the oppressed.

Also, in the advanced capitalist states national differences, even some which were apparently resolved, have now the capacity to appear or reappear. In the long-run, failure by the working class to overthrow capitalism in Italy, France, Belgium, Britain, etc could be punished by the breakup of these states, a development which would be entirely retrogressive and reactionary.

Where a national problem exists it cannot be resolved on the basis of capitalism, or of Stalinism for that matter. So the

conflict between India and Pakistan, or the conflicts within India and within Pakistan, are permanent features of capitalism in this area. As the world crisis of capitalism deepens so these antagonisms will sharpen unless and until the working class shows a way out. Only a socialist federation of the sub-continent can provide an answer. So also in Sri Lanka, in Zimbabwe, in the Middle East, in Cyprus, Spain and in deformed workers' states such as Yugoslavia, where the issue is already acute.

## Impediments

Capitalism, and now Stalinism, are reactionary impediments to economic development. Their contribution on the national question is also negative and reactionary. This general conclusion holds true for the national problem in Ireland and will be reconfirmed by the failure of the latest attempt at a capitalist solution—the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The roots of the national problem in Ireland lie in the partition of the country. Partition created an artificial statelet in the North with a Protestant majority, but with a large Catholic minority which cannot be permanently reconciled to the state's existence. On the other side the one million Protestants are totally opposed to any link-up with the state they see in the South. So long as the alternatives appear as either a poverty-stricken capitalist North, or the merging of the two poverty-ridden states, north and south, into a capitalist united Ireland, so long will there be an irreconcilable gulf between the Catholic and Protestant working class. In a nutshell capitalism means conflict in Ireland.

Most ironical about the present situation is the fact the British ruling class would now prefer a united Ireland. When this same class imposed partition in 1920 their prime purpose was to avert the danger of revolution in Ireland by splitting the working class along religious lines. It was a classic example of the age-old tactic of divide and rule. There were other factors, the retention of control over Irish ports for military purposes, the fact that they could still directly control the northern industrial region of Ireland, but first and foremost it was to derail the movement of the working class.

Thanks to the failures of the leaders of the Irish trade unions and the Labour Party this tactic was successful at the time. But the dialectic of history has turned the tables on the ruling class.

By the 1950s and '60s partition was an anachronism from the point of view of British capitalism. Socialist revolution, in Europe at least, seemed off the agenda. Advances in military technique, and the



*UK Prime Minister Thatcher and Irish Prime Minister Fitzgerald sign the Anglo-Irish agreement in 1985.*

long-term decline of Britain as a military power, rendered the matter of bases in Ireland unimportant. Economically the southern part of Ireland was developing into an important market. By 1968 it was the fifth largest importer of British goods. Two-thirds of British companies had subsidiaries there.

Under such conditions the border was of no purpose to imperialism. Just the reverse. The northern statelet had become a permanent drain on the British exchequer while the division of the island had created a source of permanent instability. The problem for imperialism is that capitalist reunification is completely impossible. Standing in the way are the million Protestants who were given a state in 1920 and for whom a capitalist united Ireland can never be attractive or acceptable. Despite its partial development over the past two decades, the South remains a relatively backward economy, especially in terms of infrastructure and social services. It is in deep economic crisis with a national debt equal to 130% of GNP. Its working class are probably the most highly taxed in Europe—yet the total tax intake in 1985 will be less than the interest on the debt.

## Sickly

The crisis of world capitalism, and of sickly Irish capitalism, plus the austerity measures of the present right wing Fine Gael dominated coalition government, have led to a 20% fall in the living standards of the working class in recent years. 17% of the workforce are unemployed and 35% of the population depend on state benefits for all or part of their income.

On top of all this Protestants see a state dominated by the Catholic church, with restrictions on divorce and contraception. They fear that in a debt-ridden, poverty-stricken capitalist united Ireland, they would be made the scapegoats and end up as a discriminated-against minority.

*Militant* has consistently explained that an attempt to coerce the million Protestants into a capitalist united Ireland would be resisted by force. At times this idea has been derided by individuals like John Hume, by some republicans and by sections of the left of the British Labour Party among others. "It is all a bluff" they would say. Given the reaction of the Protestants to even the smell of a united Ireland which they detect in the Anglo-Irish Agreement there can be no more argument on the question.

## Civil war

A serious step to capitalist reunification would provoke civil war. The Protestants, because of their strength of arms, with 20 000 in the UDR and RUC, with the legally held firearms in the Territorial Army, with the para-militaries, with their access to aircraft, munitions and even missiles through defence industries like Shorts, and because they would be fighting with their backs to the sea, would emerge as victors. There would be wholesale slaughter, a massive movement of populations leading to the repartition of Ireland and the retrenchment of the sectarian division.

As an aside, this is the crushing answer to the strategy and tactics of the Provisionals. Their methods of individual terrorism can never succeed in defeating the British army. All that 15 years of these

methods have achieved is increased repression plus greater sectarian division. By dividing and disorientating the working class they serve only to reinforce the hold of imperialism in Ireland.

The ultimate logic of the Provos' strategy is military confrontation with the Protestants. There are those within their ranks who see salvation as lying on the other side of a sectarian holocaust. They believe that civil war would force the South to intervene and seize the North.

All advocates of such sectarian lunacy deserve only the contempt of the working class in these islands and internationally. James Connolly predicted that partition would bring a 'carnival of reaction'. The same can be said of civil war and repartition—except a hundred times more so.

British imperialism, while its hands are tied, would still prefer reunification. Not so the weak and effete southern bourgeoisie. This class has completely abandoned its original mission: to capture the national territory of Ireland and develop a unified nation-state. For its political representatives in both Fianna Fail and Fine Gael the removal of the border is a vote-getting slogan with absolutely no content.

## Document

The very document adopted by these parties at the end of the New Ireland Forum discussions, supposedly a justification for reunification, is in reality a convincing argument against. It points out that the British subvention to the north is now a staggering 27% of the province's GNP. It projects that a United Ireland which had to pay out such a sum would end up with 32% unemployment by the 1990's. This is hardly a prospect to fire the imagination of northern Catholics let alone Protestants. And then there is the cost of security, now £400 million a year, which the Forum report assumes would become completely unnecessary!

The Southern ruling class and the capitalist parties all accept partition. They do not seek the inheritance of the economic desert of the north with its half a million disaffected Catholics, let alone its million embittered Protestants.

But just as a capitalist united Ireland is impossible, so any solution based on the existing statelet is likewise unworkable. The 1970s saw the ending of Stormont and brought direct rule. Then came the power-sharing executive and the Sunningdale Agreement. These were shattered by Protestant resistance in the form of the 1974 Ulster Workers Council stoppage. Within two years the next initiative, the Constitutional Convention, had come and gone. One year after that new con-

stitutional talks were set up and ran into the sand. In 1980 the Constitutional Conference of Humphrey Atkins was put on ice. The following year saw the launching of a new set of proposals which ultimately led to the formation of the Northern Ireland Assembly, now on the verge of collapse.

## Litany of failures

This litany of failures is not accidental. There can never be a lasting solution within the north. To the Catholics this state has meant 50 years of Unionist discrimination followed by 15 years of British military repression. Alongside the discrimination goes the poverty. Male unemployment among Catholics is now estimated at 38-40%. The British ruling class now largely accept that they have 'lost' the completely disaffected Catholic working class. Their initiatives, including this latest agreement, are designed mainly to win hearts and minds in the 'leafy Catholic suburbs'. Because such deals can do no more than paper over the fundamental divisions within society they are bound, sooner or later, to fall to pieces. The ultimate fact is that the Catholic minority cannot be reconciled with the existence of the present impoverished state. The aspiration for a united Ireland, which to the Catholic working class means taking control of their own destiny and changing things north and south, will not be relinquished.

So the latest deal, like its predecessors, reflects, not the strength and foresight but the impasse of the British ruling class in Ireland. Despite the furore of the Protestants, the new agreement has nothing to do with reunification. It is a cosmetic exercise designed to bolster the SDLP by giving a few paltry concessions to the Catholics. At the same time it aims at greater north-south co-ordination of repression. Thatcher's hope was that this pact would woo the SDLP, deal a blow to Sinn Fein, split the Unionists and thereby lay the basis for devolved government and some form of internal settlement. On all accounts she has been sadly mistaken. The entire episode is fated to prove a gross miscalculation on the part of two governments, a miscalculation with potentially disastrous consequences.

The agreement cannot succeed. Its most fundamental proposal, the establishment of an inter-governmental conference through which the Dublin Government is to be granted a consultative role in the running of the north, is unworkable from start to finish. Those 'concessions' to the minority which might emerge from this new body, for example the repeal of the Flags and Emblems Act, RUC men patrolling along with the UDR, would make no real difference to Catholics. To

remove the Flags and Emblems Act would simply make it legal for Catholics to do what they do anyway, fly the Tricolour and have street names in Irish. And one Catholic youth in Derry aptly summed up the cynicism with which Catholics would greet the appearance of the RUC alongside the UDR: "All it means is that when the UDR beat you up at a checkpoint you'll be charged with disorderly behaviour for your troubles". (*Fortnight*, 2/12/85)

Yet even these mealy-mouthed changes would inflame the Protestants. Paisley's response would be predictable—"They tell us that our sovereignty is unchanged. Why then do we now have two national flags?" etc.

On the other hand, if Thatcher were to try to make the deal palatable to Protestants by presenting it as a recipe for increased security and nothing more, she would soon run into Catholic opposition. Eventually even the SDLP would be forced to withdraw their support or lose credibility. In truth the agreement is an unsustainable attempt to face in all directions at the same time. Most likely by offering only worthless sops to the Catholics mixed with larger measures of repression, with the Protestants seeing only the sops and the Catholics feeling only the repression, the end result would be to alienate both Catholics and Protestants. The ruling classes will discover that the circle of Northern Ireland politics cannot be so neatly squared.

Were it simply a matter of another initiative which must eventually run into the sand the question would not be so serious for the labour movement. But, because this agreement attempts to go further—in the sense of the showpiece involvement of the Dublin government—its consequences will be all the more serious. The danger is that it may not so much fall apart as be blown to bits in the furious sectarian backlash it will provoke.

## Miscalculation

Thatcher's most serious miscalculation has been to underestimate the extent of Protestant reaction. The scale of Protestant opposition was brought home in two events almost as soon as the deal was signed.

First there was the demonstration in Belfast called one week later. This was not so much organised as announced. No special posters or leaflets were issued. It was simply called for by the Unionist leaders using the organisation of the Orange Order in particular. In the event the turnout was larger than that achieved by Carson during the mass resistance to Home Rule in 1912. Estimates vary from 100 000 to 200 000, or between 10-20% of the Protestant population.



*Mass Unionist rally in Belfast on November 23, 1985, protesting against the Anglo-Irish agreement.*

Second was the strike and demonstration of Protestant workers on 11 December, the day of the first meeting of the inter-governmental conference. Significantly not only did the shipyard and Shorts workers come out, so too did workers at the key Ballylumford power station. When Paisley tried to organise a stoppage in May 1977 the refusal of the Ballylumford workers to give their support was a decisive factor in ensuring his defeat.

This anger is because of the open-ended nature of the agreement, which to Protestants seems to accord the Dublin government a say in virtually every aspect of life in the north. While the agreement stresses that this is only a consultative role, the Protestants see it as joint sovereignty. It is regarded as a foot in the door, the first opening to a united Ireland.

## Suspicious

Also both the manner in which the agreement was reached, and its present implementation, could not have been better designed to make Protestants suspicious and arouse their anger. All negotiations were held in secret. The inter-governmental conference will discuss in secret. It all appears to have been done above the heads and behind the backs of the Unionists.

From a socialist point of view the whole thing is entirely undemocratic. The right-wing Tories in both Fine Gael and Fianna Fail are no guardians of the rights of either Catholic or Protestant workers. They are elected by no-one and accountable to no-one in the north.

Playing on the anti-democratic character of the deal, Paisley and co have struck a deep chord among the Protestant working class. On the part of these leaders the howls of protest about consultation and democracy are sickening hypocrisy and nothing more. These latter-day converts to democratic principles and their forebears, are the same politicians and parties who for 50 years withheld democratic rights from the Catholic minority and who in 1968-9 took to the streets to physically counter the mass campaign for civil rights!

The tragedy of the present situation is that these people have been given an enormous boost. Far from splitting the Unionists and isolating the Democratic Unionist Party Thatcher has provided Paisley with a pedestal around which to draw mass Protestant support. It is those who dare dissent, and they are few, who are isolated. In the coming weeks and months, provided the agreement remains, this Protestant opposition seems certain to intensify. Protestant opposition will harden not relent. The stage has been set for a massive increase in sectarianism.

The January by-elections were one of the most sectarian elections for decades. Now back in Parliament the Unionists

threaten to present a motion opposing the agreement. If this is lost they have stated that they will withdraw from Westminster and from all institutions of local government in the North. Pressure will now come onto the MPs to abide by their commitment to resign.

## Next move

Paisley is coy as to what would be the next move. But strong hints have been given of a rent and rate strike, of advice to UDR and RUC members to resign. Although not yet widely talked about, a repeat of the 1974 Loyalist stoppage might be attempted at a certain stage. If things were to go this far events could then begin to have a logic of their own.

Paisley may be guarded in his comments as to where all this might lead. Not so some of his lieutenants in the DUP. Their words are a warning to the labour movement which it will choose to ignore at its peril. So Gregory Campbell, DUP Assemblyman for Derry, states: "We must form ourselves into a provisional government, that provisional government must have a defence; and that defence must be armed. The Protestant people must be armed". (*Magill*, 14/11/85)

DUP Chief Whip Jim Allister described his own role if the agreement is not re-

voked: "I would act in concert with hundreds of thousands of other Loyalists in arming ourselves. No self respecting individual is going to anything but resist. In those circumstances there are no lengths to which Ulstermen would not be prepared to go to stop it. None." (*Magill* 14/11/85)

## Violence

In the same article Sammy Wilson, DUP Assemblyman for East Belfast openly threatens violence in the South. *But the final word must go to the Rev Iuan Foster of Fermanagh DUP:* "I wouldn't be joining the army of Ulster as a chaplain. I would be joining as Joe Bloggs, an ordinary footsoldier... I know how to use a gun. There's no use carrying a gun if you don't know how to use it. There's no use carrying a gun if you don't intend to use it. And if I am ambushed I have one prayer, 'Lord let him miss the first time'."

Inherent in these statements is the final option of UDI. Among the mass of Protestants there is little or no support for this at present. But if it appeared that the choice was independence or rule from Dublin the Protestants *en masse* would feel no choice but to support the former. There is a certain logic in the Unionist's campaign of resistance which, at the very least, points them in this direction.

To advocate UDI is merely a more polite way of advocating civil war. The development of armed Protestant reaction seeking control of the state would prompt a corresponding move in the Catholic areas to defence. Just as the Protestants will never accept capitalist reunification, so the Catholics would fight before they would place themselves under the iron heel of a Protestant state. An attempt to engineer a UDI would inevitably spark a civil war and end up with repartition. It would be a disaster for all workers, Protestants included.

Even if things do not go so far the situation which will open up if the Unionist MPs withdraw from Parliament will be fraught with dangers. Standing in the wings are the para-militaries. Both the Ulster Defence Association and the Ulster Volunteer Force have been reduced to a semi-activity in recent years. This agreement has given them the opportunity to begin to reorganise, using the recently formed 'Ulster Loyalist Front' as a cover. Within a few days of the massive Belfast demonstration UDA posters started to appear in some towns. UVF leaflets and posters have been openly circulated in key factories such as Shorts and the shipyards. While the mass of Protestant workers will not turn again to these vicious murder machines they can recruit

among the lumpen strata and are capable of acts of extreme sectarian provocation designed to inflame the situation. So too are the Irish National Liberation Army and the Provos, or sections of the Provos. Likewise sections of the RUC and UDR are capable of carrying out atrocities to shipwreck the agreement.

In such an atmosphere one incident could conceivably overflow into fullscale bloodletting—spiralling towards a Lebanon 1975. Rather than bring about stability and reconciliation this capitalist 'solution' will most likely lead to a situation in which a civil war will become a possibility. The longer the British government attempt to enforce the pact, the greater will be the possibility of such a horrendous result.

*The British ruling class do not want civil war. It would mean upheaval in Britain. Far from sorting things out in Ireland it would bring about Middle East-style instability with Catholic refugees driven into the south, with a perpetual guerrilla offensive against the new northern state, with attacks on British property and with international repercussions such as possible action against British goods in America. It is therefore most likely that Thatcher will be forced to back down at a certain stage.*

## 'Ulsterisation'

For years the military strategy of the British bourgeois has been the 'Ulsterisation' of the security forces. This has been in part accomplished, not in the sense that British control on security has been lessened, but through the greater reliance

upon locally recruited footsoldiers to implement the will of the British Chiefs of Staff.

In 1973 there were 16 000 British soldiers out of a total security force of 30 000. Now out of a total of 28 000, only 9 000 are from Britain. There are almost 20 000 UDR and RUC, both full- and part-time.

## Alarm bells

If these forces were to begin to crumble in the hands of the British generals, *alarm bells would start to ring which would be heard all the way to Downing Street and Westminster. This, and/or the possibility of massive sectarian violence, even civil war, would leave the government no alternative but to extricate themselves from the mess by one way or another scrapping the agreement.*

For the present there are no obvious signs of a shift on the part of the government. Thatcher is busy comforting herself with a massive 426 Parliamentary majority. For the most part the capitalist press are still proclaiming the myth of Thatcher's invincibility. After all, she defeated Galtieri, the hunger strikers and the miners! Why not the Protestants also! *The Times*, now descended to the level of the yellow press, in an editorial (2/12/85) accepts, "That a year from now the Cabinet may still be facing widespread disobedience from many of Northern Ireland's one million Protestants. The government therefore needs to prepare psychologically, as well as physically, for a seige".



*Workers demonstration in Northern Ireland: Protestant and Catholic workers can unite in building a fighting Labour Party.*

Despite such defiant noises it is most likely that reality will strike home among the ruling class in Britain and even in the dense skulls of Thatcher's cabinet at a certain stage. The government are in a no-win situation. There seems no prospect that they can gain the acceptance of any substantial section of Protestants for this agreement. Nor will it satisfy the Catholics and lead to an ending of the IRA campaign. Alienating both communities and creating disaffection in the RUC and UDR, they would need to commit 50 000 troops just to hold the situation and then with no guarantee that events would not at any moment spin out of their control. So, trapped in a blind alley of her own construction, there seems little doubt but that the 'Iron Lady' will have to beat a hasty retreat.

## Labour leaders

The response of the trade union and labour leaderships can only be measured against this background of a very real danger of sectarian reaction. In Britain the right wing Labour leaders have given unqualified support to the Agreement. By doing so they have squandered a marvellous opportunity to open up class divisions among the Protestant population in the north.

Protestant workers often comment that they support Labour on social questions: but the Tories on the constitution. Now it is the Tories who they see as selling them out on the national question. Class opposition from Labour would have struck a chord among working-class Protestants. But Kinnock's support for Thatcher only serves to bolster Paisley and like bigots and, in the end, could be the factor which will save Thatcher's bacon when the agreement crumbles. Similarly, Labour's role in coalition in the South of Ireland has reduced them to a faint echo of Fine Gael. This subservience to right-wing nationalism also helps cement the all-class alliance of Unionism. It confirms the fears of many Protestant workers that the working-class movement in a united Ireland would be overwhelmed by the church and by a green Tory state.

Worst of all has been the position of the trade union leadership in Ireland. The sum total of their response has been a statement of a few lines declaring that, as this is a 'constitutional question', they can make no comment. This is the old and worthless tactic of reacting to danger by 'rolling over and playing dead'. Better, say the ICTU leaders, to lower our heads and keep quiet than to expose ourselves to sectarian attack. There is not a shred of justification for this argument.

Silence by the leaders will not protect the movement from attack. It will be seen

by its enemies for what it is—a profession of weakness and irresolution—and will be a signal to these people to move onto the offensive. Nor will silence at the top stop the Anglo-Irish Agreement being discussed within the unions. It will merely assure that it is the bigots who have the first opportunity to raise the issue and that the discussion takes a sectarian form.

The situation is too serious by far to allow this cowardly response by the leadership to go unchallenged. On the worst scenario the very existence of trade unions would be at stake. Civil war would result most likely in military-police dictatorships coming to power in both states following repartition. In the north, Protestant military reaction would be of a particularly vicious character.

A new northern statelet would be an economic catastrophe. 75% of Northern Ireland's imports come from Britain. For exports the figure is 85% to Britain. Of the rest of its trade 45% of imports and 57% of exports are with the South. This would all be disrupted. The huge British subvention would be gone. 75% of the workforce are in the public sector, mainly in services. These would be devastated. The survival of the state would mean the pauperisation of the mass of the population. Such a regime would be compelled to use fascist methods to achieve this smashing down the living standards of the working class. In a general sense civil war would create a Middle East situation. For the working class of the north, in particular, it would be more like a Chile solution.

This is not the most likely outcome, but even in events short of civil war there are dangers. Far from being excluded, it is now likely that some loyalist bigots will at some stage raise the question of an Ulster TUC, as was last seriously put forward after the 1974 Stoppage. Campaigning against the involvement of Dublin politicians and civil servants in the north, it is a short step to also campaign against the presence of Dublin-based trade unions.

## Division

Things must be called by their right names. An Ulster TUC would mean a Protestant TUC. It would mean sectarian division in the trade unions. And if it were to take flesh it would not stop there. Accompanying its establishment would be a campaign to drive Catholics, and with them socialists and genuine trade unionists, from the workplaces. Northern Ireland's history gives ample precedent for this.

This would not be the first attempt by bigots, north, south, orange and green, to split the trade unions. To date all have

failed. Even partition did not break the all-Ireland unity of the then Irish Trade Union Congress. There can be no greater tribute to the resistivity of the working class and particularly the class consciousness and courage of its advanced layer of trade union activists than this. Every sectarian offensive to date has been beaten off. Catholics and Protestants still organise together and fight together through their class organisations.

However, if the situation does seriously deteriorate, the silence of the trade union leaders will, at the very least, put this unity in jeopardy. Within the North the Labour and Trade Union Group and supporters of the Irish *Militant* have mounted an offensive within the trade unions to challenge the position of the leadership. They have demanded that the Northern Ireland Committee of ICTU produce a socialist response to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, that this be circulated in the working class movement and that a special rank-and-file delegate conference be called to discuss this and also to consider how the movement can defend itself and its membership from the dangers of sectarian attack, both political and physical.

## Socialist solution

What is the basis of a socialist solution to the national problem and a socialist reply to this agreement? First, it is the understanding that only the working class, by overthrowing capitalism in Ireland, can resolve the national problem. Capitalist solutions are various roads to disaster. The national question and the class questions are inseparably linked. Socialism in Ireland not only would mean the removal of the border, it is the only way the border will ever be removed. Socialism in Ireland and in Britain would allow the present bond of imperialist exploitation to be replaced by the voluntary federation of equals. A socialist reply to the agreement must therefore centre on the slogan, 'a socialist united Ireland and a socialist federation of Britain and Ireland'.

Only by putting forward, carefully explaining and then campaigning on this slogan can the labour movements of these islands satisfy the aspirations and allay the fears of all workers, Irish and British, Catholic and Protestant.

Given a bold leadership the potential for the emergence of a mighty class movement is enormous. A greater percentage of workers in Northern Ireland are organised in the unions than in Britain.

Strikes are solid and have never, in recent decades, been cut across by sectarianism. By putting forward socialist solutions to the class problems and to the national problem, by taking action to

protect workers against sectarianism, by opposing all forms of repression and by building a mass Labour Party, the trade unions could become the decisive force in the north.

## Lessons

That this prospect has suffered a setback and that sectarian reaction is now capable of developing is the responsibility of the trade union leaders who have failed to take advantage of past opportunities to overcome it. During the past 15 years there have been ample opportunities for the labour movement to establish itself as the authoritative voice of all sections of the working class. Fighting trade unions and a fighting socialist Labour Party could have done to the bigots in Ireland what the labour movement in Liverpool has done to their co-thinkers there.

In 1968/9 the revolt of the Catholic working class and the sympathy which at first existed among Protestant workers, provided one such opportunity. Anyone who doubts what then was possible has only to listen to what the same DUP leader, Gregory Campbell, who now advocates a Protestant provisional government, has to say about those times: "I saw nationalists were campaigning for better living conditions, jobs, voting rights, and yet everything they were campaigning for, I hadn't got either. I hadn't got hot running water. I had to go outside to the toilet.... Maybe in the early

days there was a socialist ideology in the Civil Rights movement, but it was always couched in terms of republicanism which obviously distanced me and people like me from it". (*Magill* 14/11/85)

Instead of seizing the opportunity the trade union leaders, as now, made the mistake of burying their heads in the sand. The working class paid the price in the form of half a decade of sectarian reaction. Again in 1975-76 at the time of the 'Better Life for All Campaign' and the Peace Movement the mass of the working class could have been mobilised to deal a crushing blow to the bigots. And again in 1977 when the demise of the Ulster Unionist Action Council stoppage created such an opening. Or in 1982 when the massive campaign around the healthworkers' strike would have been a sufficient springboard for the building of a Labour Party in the North. Even in recent months there has been a quite significant movement of workers with strikes by health workers, barmen, meat workers, teachers, civil servants among others.

## Setback

If the movement emerges unscathed from the present difficult situation the lessons must be learnt. There have been and will again be opportunities to defeat sectarianism. But these are not unlimited. Ultimately the movement must either adopt a class position on the national question, or it will be engulfed by it.

---

*Editor's note:* Since this article was written, its sober warning has been confirmed by a dramatic increase of sectarianism in Northern Ireland.

The demagoguery of Protestant leaders like Paisley and Peter Robinson—unchallenged by the labour leaders—has even sparked divisions on the factory floor. In Short's aircraft plant in Belfast, employing 7 000, Protestant workers provocatively hung Union Jacks around the shopfloor, and extreme elements were calling for the dismissal of Catholic workers.

Loyalist and Republican paramilitary groups have stepped up their activities, terrorising families from their homes, and engaging in a series of tit-for-tat killings.

Unless the Anglo-Irish agreement

is withdrawn, this can only escalate. There is the danger that Protestant leaders will call a week-long sectarian strike in November on the first anniversary of the agreement. Paisley recently threatened that "we are on the verge of civil war."

The fightback against sectarianism has been left to the rank and file. Workers at Lurgan Health and Social Security office recently set a brilliant example by striking after one of their members received a sectarian death threat.

The labour leaders need to mobilise a united struggle against sectarianism, linked with a campaign to form a Labour Party committed to end poverty and unemployment, and fight for socialism.

The sectarian polarisation since the Hillsborough accord already represents a setback for the working class. Further setbacks are likely unless this agreement is very speedily done away with. In such a volatile climate it is not possible to foresee the scale of the setback which will have been suffered. Most likely it will be of a partial character, a blow from which the movement will recover.

## Turned into opposite

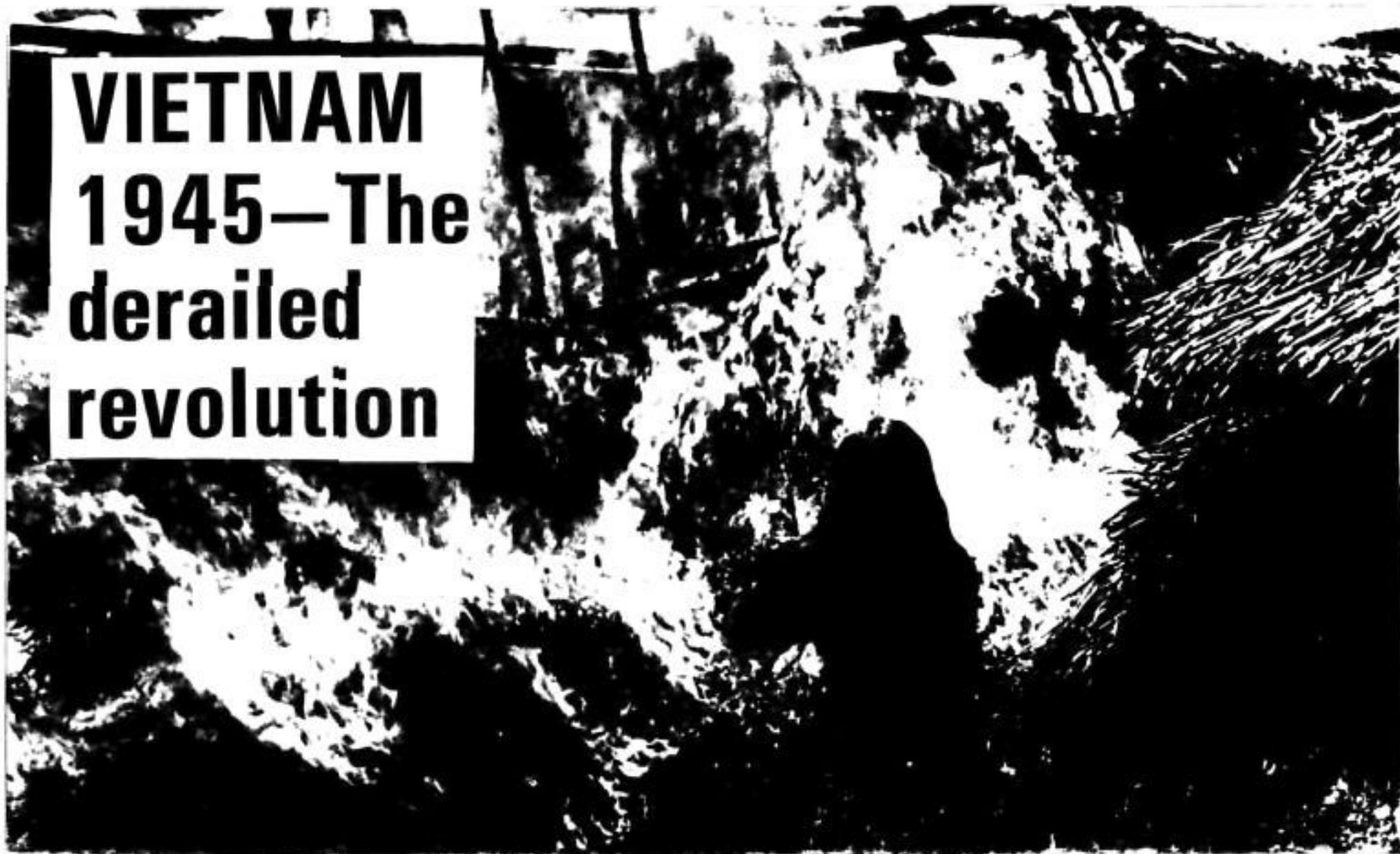
1912-14 was also a dangerous period for the younger and weaker Irish labour movement, faced with armed Unionist reaction, and armed nationalist movement and possible civil war. Yet four years later, due to the international factors of war and revolution, the experience of the mass slaughter of 1914-18 and the inspiration of the Russian Revolution, this was turned into its opposite. 1918-20 were years of revolution in Ireland. Had there existed a revolutionary leadership the working class could have taken power.

One feature of the present period of world economic crisis is a tendency for the aggravation of national antagonisms. But it is not the only or the most fundamental feature. The primary characteristic of the epoch is the movement of the working class to struggle. In the colonial countries we have movements to revolution, as with the revolution of a continental character developing in Latin America. In the Stalinist states we have and will have movements such as that in Poland. In the advanced countries the beginnings of the process of revolution are particularly to be seen in the countries of Southern Europe.

Those in Northern Ireland who lack an international perspective will be unable to keep their heads. It is these great events which shape and will shape the character of the period. Against this background, a partial setback in Ireland will quickly give rise to new opportunities. But the fundamental precondition of success, in Ireland and in all these countries, is a leadership which understands the lessons of history, which will not abandon its independent class position and which will fight unflinchingly for a socialist solution to the economic crisis and to the national problem.

In the class struggle no experience, of victory or defeat, of even the most bitter defeat, is wasted—provided that its lessons are assimilated by the working-class. If the advanced workers learn from this setback and act upon their conclusions, in other words if a Marxist leadership is built within the workers organisations in Ireland, the way for victory will be prepared.

# VIETNAM 1945—The derailed revolution



In 1975 the Vietnamese people gained a historic victory, driving out the US armed forces and liberating the South. After 28 years of war—costing two million Vietnamese lives, the defoliation of 10% of the total land area, and the destruction of much of industry and transport—the country was reunited and capitalism and landlordism abolished throughout.

With these heroic sacrifices, the Vietnamese workers and peasants paid the price for the defeat of the revolution of 1945, when they had power in their grasp.

Why was this opportunity lost in 1945? What are the lessons of this defeat for the workers' struggle today?

Vietnam was a French colony from the mid 19th century, exploited for its raw materials and cheap labour by the French monopolies. Under French rule, illiteracy rose by 80 per cent. While 6 000-7 000 local landlords and colonialists owned vast holdings of the best land, half the peasant majority were landless, and the rest owned tiny plots.

Companies such as Michelin operated rubber plantations using mainly forced labour. Workers became known as 'fertiliser for the

---

**By Jim Hensman**  
(Coventry SE Labour Party)

---

rubber trees' because the bodies of those who died toiling in inhuman conditions were buried on the plantations.

Industrial development was retarded by colonial rule. But a small working class developed in industry, the mines, and transport.

Despite severe repression, workers and peasants began to engage in struggle against the harsh conditions forced upon them—and for national liberation. It was from within this movement that the Indochinese Communist Party was formed in 1930 under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh.

Although this Party had strong local roots and considerable mass support, it was critically influenced by developments in the Soviet Union where many of its leaders had been trained, and to which it looked for guidance and support.

The Communist International, to which the Vietnamese CP belonged, was born after the Russian revolution as an instrument to further the strug-

gle of workers world-wide for democracy and socialism.

However in the 1920s a privileged bureaucracy usurped political power from the working class in Russia. While this bureaucracy rested on—and developed—the nationalised and planned economy of the Soviet Union, its privilege depended on the total suppression of workers' democracy.

## Instrument

Increasingly, it transformed the Communist International into an instrument of its own interests. By the 1930's the CI was a consciously counter-revolutionary force, with the Stalinist bureaucracy terrified of the effect the establishment of a democratic worker's state anywhere in the world would have on workers within the Soviet Union.

The Russian revolution had been living proof of the fact that, even in an economically backward country like Tsarist Russia, the liberation of the peasantry from landlordism, and the achievement of democracy, depended on the working class coming to power. This was the understand-

ding around which Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolshevik party led the working class in the October Revolution of 1917.

As Trotsky had explained, the capitalist class in the underdeveloped countries was too weak to play any progressive role. Against the masses, they were tied up with the forces of imperialism and landlordism. Faced with a mass movement of workers and peasants, they would inevitably support the side of reaction for fear of losing their privileges.

Reflecting the interests of the bureaucracy, however, the Communist International under Stalin argued that, in the underdeveloped countries, a 'two-stage revolution' was necessary. First there was supposed to be an alliance with the 'progressive capitalists' to achieve national independence and democratic rights on a capitalist basis. Only 'later' would the struggle for workers' power and socialism be placed on the agenda.

## "Two stage" theory

This was the same false position which had been put forward by the Mensheviks before the Russian revolution. When the workers overthrew the Tsar in February 1917, and held power in their hands their Menshevik leaders entered and propped up a capitalist "provisional government" which was neither "progressive" nor democratic. Lenin and Trotsky denounced this policy, and convinced the majority of the working class of the need to take power. Had they not done so it was almost inevitable that the "provisional government" would have been replaced by a bloody military dictatorship.

In China in the 1920s, in the name of a 'two-stage' theory, the Chinese CP dissolved itself into the bourgeois Koumintang led by Chiang Kai Shek. A huge movement of workers and peasants drove towards power, but, deprived of leadership, was turned upon and defeated by the "progressive bourgeois" Chiang Kai Shek.

The idea of a 'progressive' capitalist class was equally inappropriate in Vietnam. Discriminatory restrictions imposed by the French administration had effectively debar-

red the Vietnamese from entering industry, finance and commerce. 'National' capitalist development was restricted to money-lending and the landlord class. This class tended to take out French citizenship and send their children to French schools. They were loyal supporters of colonial rule.

## Communist Party

The policies of the Communist International received their first serious test in Vietnam with the coming to power of a 'Popular Front' government in France in 1936. This was a government of class-compromise in which the Socialist and Communist Parties joined, or supported, a coalition with so-called 'progressive bourgeois forces' against the menace of Fascism.

The CP was following in fact Stalin's foreign policy which, from the mid-1930s, sought alliances with anti-German capitalist powers, in particular French imperialism.

The accession in France of a government including the CP encouraged the masses in Vietnam. There was an upsurge in the struggle and organisation of the working class. But the class-collaborationist 'Popular Front' had no intention of liberating the colonies, or indeed of major colonial reform. Trade unions continued to be banned, and workers' leaders jailed—including the Communist Nguyen Van Tao. The French Colonial minister, a member of the reformist Socialist Party, telegraphed to Vietnam that "French order must reign in Indo-china as elsewhere".

What was the response of the Communist Party leadership in Vietnam? The slogans 'Down with Imperialism' and 'Confiscate the land of the big landowners' were 'temporarily withdrawn'. The 'two-stage' theory was based on the false idea that the 'national' bourgeoisie would struggle for independence against imperialism. But policies of class compromise, once begun, know no stages. **In slavish obedience to Stalinist policies of class-compromise in Europe, the Vietnamese CP was now compromising with...the imperialist bourgeois and the feudal landlords!**

The CP Councillors on the Saigon

city municipal council eventually voted in favour of taxes for 'national defence'—taxes for colonial suppression. After all hadn't Stalin told the French Prime Minister Pierre Laval in 1935 that he "understood and approved completely the policy of national defence of France".

In opposition to Stalinism and the two-stage theory, political groups developed in Vietnam in the 1930s supporting Trotsky's ideas, and increasingly these gained dominance in the growing trade union movement. They also won control from the Communists in a political grouping organised around the newspaper *La Lutte* (The Struggle).

In 1939 elections took place for the Cochinchinese (South Vietnamese) Colonial Council. This was a relatively powerless body, based on a restricted franchise disqualifying many workers. Nevertheless the Trotskyist candidates Ta Thu Thau, Tran Van Thach and Pan Van Hum were elected with 80% of the vote, defeating the Communist and bourgeois party candidates.

Membership of the Trotskyist parties grew to around 5 000, and the CP split with a considerable part of its working-class membership joining the Trotskyists. The historian J. Buttinger commented of this period: "...the Communist party for several years was overshadowed by a Trotskyist movement so strong as to make it for a short time the leading group in the entire communist and nationalist camp".

But with the outbreak of World War II in September 1939 all the worker's parties were made illegal and severe repression launched. Ta Thu Thau and Tran Van Thach were imprisoned along with many others on the infamous island concentration camp of Poulo Condor, where prisoners were kept like animals in tiny underground cages.

## Japanese occupation

In 1940 the armies of Japanese imperialism occupied Vietnam. France had fallen to the Nazis—and for most of the war the Japanese allowed the collaborationist Vichy regime to govern Vietnam. As the war drew to a close, however, they decided the French administration could not be

relied on, and replaced it with a puppet government headed by the former Vietnamese Emperor Bao Dai.

In May 1941 the Vietminh (League for the Independence of Vietnam) was formed on the initiative of the Communist Party, and launched a guerilla war against the Japanese from bases near the Chinese border in the rural north.

By 1945 conditions had become desperate for the mass of people. Famine ravaged the north of the country, killing an estimated 2 million people—while the Japanese exported rice to feed their troops.

When Japan surrendered to the Allied powers in August 1945 the stage was set for a massive social explosion.

Throughout the south, but particularly in Saigon, People's Committees equivalent to Soviets sprang up and began to take over. Peasants seized land from the landlords, and workers took control of factories. The prospects for the formation of a democratic socialist state could not have been better. For this to have been established it was necessary for the existing state machine to be smashed, and the "people's committees" to become linked together into a new democratic state power, based on the working class.

But the leadership of the CP was imbued with the spirit of class-collaboration implicit in the 'two-stage' theory.

This was reflected in the class composition of the party. An internal party report was later to disclose that only one in thirteen of its members in key positions were workers, and less than 20% were peasants. The vast majority were intellectuals and members of the urban middle class.

## Independence

Above all the party leadership feared the independent movement of the masses, particularly the working class influenced by Trotskyist ideas.

In the rural north the CP-dominated Vietminh declared independence on September 2nd in Hanoi but, in line with the "two-stage theory", on the basis of a firmly bourgeois constitution modelled on the American Declaration of Independence. The government included members of the right-wing nationalist party Quoc Dan Dang. Indeed, Ho Chi Minh even obtained the Imperial gold seal of office and ruby-encrusted sword from the discredited puppet leader Bo Dai, and appointed him "Supreme Political Adviser"!

In the south, on August 21, after mass demonstrations by workers in Saigon, a provisional Central Committee for the People's Committees was established. Most of the political parties came together to form a

'United National Front'. A situation of dual power, as had existed after the February revolution in Russia, was arising.

The CP was relatively weak in the more economically developed south with its more militant working class. Desperate to control the situation, it allied itself with the right wing of the UNF.

On August 23 at 5 am, in a conscious attempt to bypass the People's Committees, the CP seized power by means of a coup. It used the prestige of the Vietminh to give itself mass credibility, and pressurised various bourgeois nationalist leaders to enter a coalition government called the "Committee of the South".

This CP-led government immediately set out to crush the mass movement. CP leader Nguyen Van Tao declared: "Those who incite the peasants to take over the estates will be severely and mercilessly punished.... Our government, I repeat, is a democratic and middle-class government, even though the Communists are now in power".

## Workers' militias

The working class had created a number of workers' militias to defend the revolution. In Saigon these came together to form a Workers' Guard under Trotskyist leadership.

This was viewed with horror by the CP leaders. "Those who incite the people to take up arms will be considered as saboteurs and provocateurs, enemies of national independence" they screamed.

Instead, they declared, "Our democratic liberties will be guaranteed by our democratic allies". Who were these "democratic allies"?

In pursuit of their own imperialist interests, the 'Allied' powers had fought against Nazi Germany—on the same side as Russia. But this did not mean that the imperialists had turned into guarantors of democracy—as the Russian bureaucracy maintained. Yet this was the position uncritically accepted by the leadership of the Vietnamese CP.

At the Yalta and Potsdam conferences in 1945, Stalin had reached agreement with Roosevelt and Churchill on the post-war division of the world into 'spheres of influence'.



Stalin with US President Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Churchill at the Yalta conference in 1945.

Stalin had little interest in the struggle in South-East Asia and concurred in an agreement which split Vietnam in two at the 16th Parallel. To supervise the Japanese surrender, the north was 'assigned' to reactionary Chinese warlords who were principally interested in what they could loot; the south to the British army.

It was these imperialist powers that the Stalinist bureaucracy labelled "democratic allies"—and whose occupation of Vietnam the Vietnamese CP leadership slavishly supported.

Thus, instead of carrying forward the struggle for a new workers' state, the CP leadership collaborated in propping up the colonial state machine—resting now on 'Allied' armies, rather than the Japanese.

From September 12, British troops, mostly Indian Gurkhas, commanded by General Gracey started to arrive. They were greeted with demonstrations organised by the Vietminh with the slogan (in English) "Welcome to the Allies" The Vietminh even turned over their own head-quarters to the British forces.

The Peoples' Committees denounced the Vietminh collaboration with the British forces. As a result, on September 14th the Vietminh police chief and Communist Party stalwart Duong Bach Mai, sent an armed detachment to where the Peoples' Committees were meeting in assembly. They broke it up, tearing down the red flags that bedecked its assembly rooms, destroying its records, and arresting and imprisoning its leaders.

## Saigon

But, despite CP assistance in crushing a popular movement, General Gracey did not share their illusions in class-compromises. As he later remarked: "I was welcomed on arrival by the Vietminh. I promptly kicked them out."

He closed down the press, banned demonstrations, and declared martial law. On September 22 British troops were sent to take over the Saigon jail. They disarmed the Vietnamese guards, released the French troops imprisoned there, and rearmed them. Together the British and French took over the key installations in the city, ousted the Vietnamese government



*Ho Chi Minh and General Giap, leaders during the post-1945 guerilla war.*

from the Saigon town hall and arrested its leaders.

Thus did Vietnam's four-week old independence come to an end.

By dawn of September 23rd the coup was complete. The French troops engaged in an orgy of violence against any Vietnamese they could find. There were, as a British reporter, Tom Driberg (later a Labour MP) described it: "disgraceful scenes of vengeance".

The masses responded magnificently to the attempt to reimpose colonial rule. An insurrection followed and most of Saigon was taken over by the workers. Mass demonstrations rocked the city, the market was burned down and barricades erected. Power plants and the radio station were attacked and a general offensive launched against the imperialist forces.

Faced with revolution, General Gracey then rearmed...the Japanese troops! Indeed in the battles that followed the Japanese sustained more casualties than the Allied forces combined.

With a leadership determined to establish a workers' democracy the Vietnamese workers and peasants could have issued a fraternal class appeal to the ranks of the troops fighting against them—and split and paralysed the enemy forces.

The collapse of fascism at the end of the war had an enormous

radicalising effect on workers the world over, and this mood infected the war-weary troops of all nations. Moreover General Gracey's troops were Indian Gurkhas who could not fail to have been affected by the struggle for independence in India which was then approaching victory.

They were particularly incensed by the re-arming of the Japanese troops: military documents record that this policy was carried out "outrageous as it seemed to all the ranks at the time". A clear class appeal to these troops would undoubtedly have had a tremendous impact.

## Potential

An indication of the potential that existed for such a class-based appeal was offered by the example of the Japanese forces, who at the end of the war began to disintegrate on class lines. This process was described by the historian Vu Ngu Chien: "Some Japanese leaned towards the Vietminh, releasing Communist prisoners, providing weapons to the Vietminh front, and even offering their services to the local Vietminh forces. Others, including the military commanders, wanted to use their forces to support Kim's government (the Vietnamese puppet government)

and to crush the Etsumei (Vietminh)".

Instead the Vietminh leadership, still trying to hold back the mass struggle, negotiated a ceasefire in early October. This merely allowed the French to bring in more troops. When the ceasefire broke down the imperialist forces launched an offensive with unqualified savagery, attacking combatants and civilians alike—a harsh precursor of American strategy 20 years later.

The British command issued the following directive: "We may find it difficult to distinguish friend from foe. Always use the maximum force available to ensure wiping out any hostiles we may meet. If one uses too much no harm is done".

The Vietnamese workers fought heroically with the meagre resources at their disposal, attacking the docks, airport, and Allied bases, using spears and poisoned arrows in some cases—impressing even the experienced Allied troops with their courage and daring. They were met with mortars and field-guns in an indiscriminate slaughter. Officially 2 700 Vietnamese were killed, though the real figure was many times higher.

While the workers were battling desperately to defend the revolution, the main concern of the CP leadership was to eliminate all opposition to themselves. Foremost among their targets were the Trotskyists who had consistently opposed their incorrect policies.

Even during the World War the CP, branding the Trotskyists in the words of Ho Chi Minh as "stooges of the fascists", had shown no qualms in collaborating with the French against the Trotskyist movement. In 1941 it had betrayed 15 activists to the authorities—leading to their arrest.

## Murdered

Now the CP leaders set up 'honourable squads' with the 'honourable' task of exterminating anyone who opposed them. The leadership of the *Struggle* group, meeting to co-ordinate military action against the French, were surrounded by one of these groups, arrested, and then shot. Among the murdered was

Tran Van Thach, released only a few weeks earlier from Poulo Condor.

Ta Thu Thau, the other leading Trotskyist, had gone to the north of the country to help organise famine relief. Ellen Hammer, an American writer, described what happened on his return. "On orders from Hanoi he was arrested on the way. He was tried three times by local Peoples' Committees and acquitted each time. But (CP leader—*Editor*) Tran Van Giau, ruthless in the pursuit of power, reportedly felt that his position in the South was being threatened by Ta Thu Thau's popularity. He seems to have served a sort of ultimatum on the Vietminh Central Committee in Hanoi—either himself or Thau—and Hanoi gave way. Ta Thu Thau was killed in Quang Ngai, Annam, on the orders of Tran Van Giau".

## Appeasement

Thau had been a leader of workers in China in the abortive uprising of the Canton Commune of 1927 in China, and had survived its defeat by counter-revolutionary troops. He spent years in prison including six years in Poulo Condor, where torture had left him partially paralysed. He had been elected to the Saigon Municipal Council and the Cochin China Colonial Council on several occasions.

While on the one hand murdering this workers' leader, the CP leaders were on the other hand desperately trying to appease the imperialist powers.

A few months later Ho Chi Minh commented on the death of Thau "He was a great patriot and we mourn him...All those who do not follow the line which I have laid down will be broken". What was this 'line'?

**In November 1945 the CP voluntarily disbanded itself!** The declaration it issued took the "two-stage" theory to its logical conclusion. "In order to complete the Party's tasks in this immense movement of the Vietnamese people's emancipation a national union conceived without distinction of class or parties is an indispensable factor".

It further emphasised that it was "...always disposed to put the in-

terests of the country above that of the classes..." But even the defence of national independence was impossible—once this struggle was consciously divorced from the struggles of the working class and poor peasantry. This was soon to be shown, disastrously, in practice.

## Colonial rule restored

At this time the French had no troops in the north, and the French commander Leclerc was quite candid about his weakness. "We never intended to launch an armed conquest of North Indochina...To do that we would need forces much stronger than those we now have".

But Leclerc played on the weakness shown by the class-compromising CP leadership. He proposed an agreement to the Vietminh, which they signed in March 1946, whereby Vietnamese "independence in the French Union" was recognized—in return for allowing French troops to occupy the North!

When the agreement was announced, the Vietnamese people were stunned. Ho Chi Minh, speaking to a mass meeting in Hanoi, was forced to plead with his audience, "I swear to you I have not sold you out".

"Independence in the French Union" meant nothing less than continued colonial rule. The 'agreement' simply allowed the French time to reinforce their forces, and reimpose colonial rule north and south effectively.

The March agreement was repeatedly violated by the French, and broke down completely in November when the French bombarded the port of Haiphong, killing 6 000 people according to 'official' estimates—though the real figure was nearer 20 000.

The French began a general rout of the Vietminh, who—whilst Ho Chi Minh pathetically petitioned the Allied powers, the Pope, and others—were forced to retreat underground and into the countryside to start what was to be a **30-year guerilla war for the recovery of national independence.**

Although the main responsibility for the defeat of the 1945 Vietnamese revolution rested with the Vietnamese

CP leaders, the leaders of the working class in Britain and France also played a shameful role.

In Britain there was a Labour government headed by Clement Attlee. Before the war Attlee had written that "the Labour Party is of course opposed to imperialism, whether in its old or new form." Yet the 1945 Labour government agreed to the British occupation of South Vietnam, confining itself to ordering General Gracey: "Sole mission: disarm the Japanese. Do not get involved in keeping order".

However it was typical reformist blindness to expect public-school and Sandhurst-trained officers to betray their loyalty to their class and imperialism. Gracey went ahead to "keep order", i.e. crush the revolution—and was unhindered by the Labour government.

## Reactionary

Attlee was reduced to reassuring Labour critics that "you may be certain that the government is carrying out the principles for which it has always stood". Right-wing Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin made no secret as to where he stood. He commended "...the close and friendly cooperation between British and French commanders" and spoke on behalf of the "liberal attitude on the

part of the French government".

If the Labour Party leadership in Britain tacitly supported imperialism, the role of the French Communist Party leadership was even more reactionary.

## Sphere

The post-war agreements between Stalin and the Western powers had put France into the Western sphere of influence. Despite the fact that the Communist Party in France could have taken power after the war and carried through socialist revolution its policy, following Stalin's line, was not to challenge capitalism. It became part of a coalition similar to the 'Popular Front' of 1936—and with a similar role.

Without criticism from the CP, this class-collaborationist government effectively supported the re-colonisation of Vietnam!

A report prepared for the Vietnamese Communists by the French CP advised them to be sure that their struggle "meets the requirements of Soviet policy". It warned that any "premature adventures" in Vietnamese independence "might not be in line with Soviet perspectives", and urged a policy of "patience".

This was two days after the British-engineered coup deposed the Vietminh government, and launched the savage reprisals by the French forces

that followed!

Later the French CP leader Maurice Thorez, a vice-premier in the government, remarked to a Vietnamese delegation that "the Communist party under no circumstances wished to be considered the eventual liquidator of the French position in Indo-China and that he ardently wished to see the French flag fly over all corners of the French Union".

Unbelievably in 1945 and 1946 the Communist Party MPs in France repeatedly voted for the military budget which included funds especially earmarked for French troops in Vietnam; opposed Socialist party attempts to reduce the budget; and supported sending congratulations to the French Expeditionary corps in December 1946 after it had bombarded Haiphong!

## The long war

Eight years of war followed before the French were defeated in 1954. Then after the Vietminh granted disastrous concessions in the subsequent settlement—which perpetuated the partitioning of the country—another 20 years of war followed against US imperialism and its puppets in the south before capitalism and landlordism were overthrown throughout Vietnam.

These struggles will always be an inspiration to socialists everywhere. Yet even today, despite the substantial social gains of land reform and nationalization of industry, the Vietnamese people have had to pay for the defeat of a workers' revolution in 1945 in the rule of a privileged Stalinist bureaucracy, implacably hostile to workers' democracy, and fighting wars against similar bureaucracies in China and Kampuchea in pursuit of their national self-interest.

The record of the CP leadership in the defeated 1945 revolution will fill every socialist fighter with resolve that the disastrous Stalinist policies of "two-stageism" and Popular Frontism must be rooted out of the workers' movement internationally, in order to prepare for the victory of workers' democracy and socialism in the new and greater battles that lie ahead.



*US bombers rain devastation on Vietnam in the ultimately futile attempt to crush the guerilla war.*

# REVOLUTION IN THE PHILLIPINES



*Life in the Philippines: for rich and for poor*

**The world situation in the last part of the twentieth century is characterised by an enormous crisis of capitalism on a world scale.**

**For the first time in history the struggle of the proletariat has become genuinely international, affecting every part of the world.**

This is because, much more than ever before in history, the world economy has become one single interdependent whole, a greater part under the economic, if not military, domination of the EEC powers, Japan and the United States.

This neo-colonial domination is characterised also by a crisis within the developed capitalist world with its enormous scale of unemployment and the crisis of production. This marks a definitive crisis of the entire capitalist system on a world scale.

Even in the periods of "boom" in the metropolitan countries only 80 per cent of productive capacity can be used. In periods of slump 70 per cent or less in many industries can be used.

Capitalism has now become an absolute fetter on the development of the forces of production. Its crisis is revealed also by the fact that the neo-colonial domination of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America is ab-

---

**By Ted Grant, Political Editor,  
Militant, Marxist paper in the  
British Labour Party**

This article was first published in three parts, on 2-16 May, three months after the events which brought the Aquino government to power in the Philippines. In the subsequent months, the analysis made in the article has been borne out in the failure of the new government to carry out its promised reforms, the crisis within it, and the further advance of the guerilla war.

---

olutely vital for the continuation of capitalism in the developed capitalist countries.

One of the factors in the present "boom" in the West is that during the course of the last 18 months, a 'present' of \$79 000 million from the

colonial peoples has been given to the Western industrialised powers, due to changes in the terms of trade. Food and raw material prices have been falling (tin, copper, other raw materials and foodstuffs and now even oil) while the prices of industrial goods (ie engineering products and capital goods especially) are rising. This difference in the terms of trade constitutes the main method of the super-exploitation of the colonial peoples.

The West's shaky boom might continue to next year, or possibly the year after, but will be succeeded by an even greater crisis than the previous slumps of the 70's and 80's. Now, for the first time, the serious strategists of capital are speaking about the possibility of a new '1929'—a gigantic depression.

Even on the basis of the present 'boom' however, explosions and revolutions, in response to the intolerable conditions imposed on the masses, are already beginning to take place in Asia, Africa and Latin America. During the course of 1986, there have been revolutionary disturbances in South Africa, Sudan and Egypt, riots in Panama, South Korea and Chile, revolution in Haiti and now also the collapse of the Marcos regime in the Philippines.

The removal of Ferdinand Marcos marks the opening phase of the revolution in the Philippines, which will have profound consequences in the Pacific region as well as in Africa and in Latin America.

Marcos, like Duvalier in Haiti, was an agent and puppet of American imperialism, propped up by them for 20 years. On generous terms, he gave them the Clark and Subic Bay military bases.

After the experience of the revolution in Haiti and revolutionary disturbances in other countries, the main preoccupation of the US imperialists was how to get rid of Marcos without provoking a revolution of the Filipino masses. Yet even after the glaringly obvious rigging of the elections in favour of Marcos and his stooges in the Philippines Congress, Reagan tried to justify this by saying that the opposition had also rigged the votes.

## US imperialism

With the enormous movement of the masses which began to affect the army however, there was no alternative for US imperialism but to find the speediest and least painful way to get rid of Marcos. It was obvious that if they continued to prop him up, they would be involved in the inevitable collapse of the regime through an uprising of the masses in Manila and other cities.

Necessity knows no laws and there is no gratitude in politics. With a tear and sigh, Reagan indicated to Marcos that his time had come, that he should resign and the US would supply the airforce planes to take him to safe and comfortable exile. They had to behave in this way, in spite of the effect it might have on their other dictatorial puppets in South Korea, Indonesia and in other areas, because a revolutionary overthrow of Marcos would have an even more disastrous effect. In addition the CIA had presented a report to the US government arguing that unless reforms were carried out, the guerillas of the New People's Army (NPA) would be in power within three years.

The Filipino people have traditions of guerilla wars against the Spanish imperialists, who dominated the Philippines for 300 years and later

against the US imperialists, who were compelled to give nominal independence when they saw the throwing out of the imperialist powers from India, Vietnam, Indonesia and other countries.

US investment in the Philippines constitutes 50 per cent of its economy. Other foreign investments make up a further 30 per cent. But even more than this, it is the Philippines strategic position which worries the US. It would cost billions of dollars to move the bases to other areas of the Pacific and they would not be as convenient as the Philippines for the domination of the whole of the Pacific.

It is significant that after the painful lessons of Vietnam, the US imperialists have not even considered the question of direct military intervention against a nation of 55 million people. They realise it would cost them as much as Vietnam and *with a like result*.

**Marcos has been one of the vilest of the puppet rulers of US imperialism. He has used the state as his private milch-cow. He has looted the treasury and economy of the Philippines and illegally exported \$10 billion to various parts of the world. This must make him one of the richest, if not the richest, man in the world.**

This looting was from one of the poorest Third World countries where the economy is in great difficulty and where the debts to the metropolitan bankers amount to \$27 billion. More than a third of the debt could be redeemed were it not for the money stolen by Marcos.

## Bribe

Reagan and his predecessor were quite prepared to be accomplices in the plunder of the resources of the Filipino people. A bribe of \$45 million was given by Marcos to the election funds of Reagan and Bush and further millions went to Carter's.

Marcos had his fingers in every pie. The telephone, telex, telegraph and satellite communications and the three biggest private television networks were controlled by him and his family.

The state was a looter and parasite on the economy and the people, a regime like those of the fascist

gangsters in Italy, Germany and Spain in the 1930's, but without the *mass support*.

Marcos and his clique lived a life of profligate luxury which can only be compared to the feudal regimes of Louis XIV of France and the Tzar of Russia. After the fall, in the palace which was her home, it was found that Imelda Marcos had a thousand pairs of shoes. In their yacht there were enough clothes for a department store, and Imelda Marcos' bath was plated with 24 carat gold. They were absolutely remote from the lives of poverty, want and semi-starvation of the mass of the population.

Probably even the majority of the Philippine capitalists were in opposition. They were terrified of the guerilla war being waged by the NPA and the mass discontent.

They, and most of the landowners, were envious and horrified at the looting of the state by the gangsters *in control*. They wanted their share of the profits. All the most lucrative industries were not owned by foreign capital, were owned and dominated by Marcos and his cronies. As the opposition put it, it was 'crony capitalism'.

## Split

Thus there was a split in the ruling class. The capitalist opposition parties headed the movement against Marcos. In the villages where the NPA were not dominant, sections of the landowners and planters who were not in favour with the Marcos regime, were also in opposition, though the majority of landowners probably supported Marcos.

As always a split in the ruling class opened the way to the beginning of the revolution.

Many times in the history of the Philippines, one capitalist regime has replaced another, only to play, very rapidly, the same role as the old. Marcos himself came to power as a reformer with a programme of land reform.

The new Aquino government and the new regime of capitalists and landowners would like an agreement with US imperialism. It wishes to carry on as if nothing had happened except for the removal of the Marcos oligarchy. But as the *Financial Times*

ominously remarked: "Mrs Aquino may find that 'People's Power' once unleashed is not easy to channel".

As the Haitian regime is finding out, it is not sufficient merely to drop Duvalier and leave his faithful lieutenants with key positions in the government. In face of massive demonstrations against them, they have had to drop the generals who were associated with Duvalier.

Now in the Philippines, Juan Ponce Enrile, Marcos' Minister of Defence and General Fidel Ramos, Chief of Staff, have dominant positions in the government. Seeing the writing on the wall they switched sides at the twelfth hour. They have continued in power and, together with their colleagues, still constitute one of the most reactionary governments on the Asian continent.

It is a government in the mould of Thatcher and of Reagan themselves. The Finance Minister Ongpin, gave an interview to the *Wall Street Journal* in which he said: "I think governments should get out of business completely. Privatise everything. There is to be a minimum of government interference." He speaks of "liberal reform". He has a significant influence on Mrs Aquino and wrote her first major economic speech. Her other economic advisers are two bankers.

In other words, the revolution has brought to power the old orthodox and 'respectable' establishment. In the Cabinet, the *Financial Times* remarks, "every one of the 41

members shares much of Mr Ongpin's free market philosophy." Of the entire cabinet only one is 'a statist'.

## Economy

The new government in the Philippines is one of the most ignorant in the colonial or the entire capitalist world. It has not learned the lesson of the disaster in Chile, where the 'Chicago Boys', Pinochet's economic advisors, lowered tariffs, resulting in the destruction of the great part of Chilean industry. New Finance Minister, Mr Ongpin wants to repeat the same experience in the Philippines: "I don't believe in protection", he says, despite the fact that 40 per cent of the frail and weak industries of the colonial economy could suffer if it were scrapped.

50 per cent of exports go to pay interest on debts. Production fell by 10 per cent during the course of the last two years. Now there is a possibility of inflation as a result of Marcos spending \$500 million more than the IMF authorised—to pay for bribes in his election campaign.

"A new period of austerity will be required to mop up all that inflationary credit", remarked Ongpin. He has even insisted in retaining Marcos' central bank governor, Jose Fernandez.

On the enormous sums which have been smuggled to other countries, principally the US, legally and illegally, Ongpin's priority is "to convince Filipinos to invest in their own country". "We are confident", he said, "that if we achieve that the foreign investors will follow". In other words he wants a continuation of the Philippines as a neo-colonial field of investment and exploitation by the multinationals.

Yet, faced with a guerilla movement, Ongpin remarked: "We must dismantle the foreign monopolies", and called for 'land reform' based on the Malaysian model, not confiscatory but one which would give full (in reality excessive) compensation to those whose land would be taken away.

This is living in a dream world, because the money does not exist. The annual budget is \$6 billion. Marcos in his last years removed \$3 billion a year. It would be impossible to compensate the landlords without a disaster for the economy.

With a programme of this sort, the Philippines will rapidly move to the next stage of the revolution. New demands will be put by the masses. Ongpin and his ministers will not last for very long.

The landlords are medieval bosses who were established in every province as satraps of Marcos and his party, the KBL, who run their areas as fiefs like medieval warlords with armed retainers. They are not prepared to give this up without a struggle. A great part of the parliamentary deputies that these warlords have will go over to the Aquino government. But that means it will not be possible to carry through even a caricatured land reform on the lines sketched by Ongpin.

The Gross Domestic Product of the Philippines is \$35 billion. In the last few years *per capita* income fell by 15 per cent and industry, even with the tariffs mentioned above, is still only working at 60 per cent capacity. 40 per cent of the land is not being cultivated.

In 1985 there was a *per capita* income of \$600 per year, no higher than in 1927. Half of the 21 million workers in agriculture and industry are unemployed, or employed for only part of the year.

Living standards have fallen by one-sixth in four years and the economy is so weak that even under the best circumstances of 'boom' it



Defence Minister Enrile and General Ramos: at the top under Marcos, and still there under Aquino.



Cory Aquino, popular figurehead...and rich landowner.

would require five years to even reach the income level of 1981.

The standard of living of the working class is so low in the cities and in the agricultural areas that an explosion has been threatened for the last decade or two.

A *Guardian* reporter interviewed some of the agricultural workers on the 'sugar' island of Negros. Although the minimum wage is £1 a day the agricultural workers get 50p a day. Only 25 per cent of the native planters even pay the minimum of £1 a day which is not sufficient for the labourers to feed their families.

The reporter asked some of the women whom he interviewed: "What do you want?". They replied: "Cheaper rice". When he asked the men they said: "An acre or two of the land to support my family".

The population, which has produced fabulous wealth for the planters, live in rudimentary bamboo houses built in silt. There is no electricity and no sewerage. The medieval method of share-cropping still exists for many of the labourers who are paid in kind for work on the crops.

## Malnutrition

At least 60 per cent of the children in the Philippines suffer from malnutrition, in one of the most fertile and richest areas of the globe. Half the children die before the age of seven because of malnutrition.

They are susceptible to various diseases that exist in the tropics, apart from conditions of dirt and disease under which they have to live in the slums.

The land stands idle, the workers are idle and many of the sugar barons are bankrupt. The Bishop of Negros, Antonio Fortich, said that the island and the whole of the Philippines was a 'social volcano'. The sugar workers' union is militant, with connections with the guerillas.

The liberation priests and planters in the area agreed that the whole of the area was charged with the possibility of a social explosion. Even the official police agreed on the possibility of outbreaks of mass violence.

There is enormous hatred of the Americans and their bases. 20,000 prostitutes work in the surrounding

areas. The collapse of Marcos has meant bitter strikes by the workers employed in the bases themselves demanding an increase in wages.

The Kauslang Mayo Uno Bayan (KMU) is a federation of trade unions. Like those in Greece they are based on individual factories.

## Workers' struggles

There has been a rash of strikes in Manila and other cities. In many cases in the towns workers also get less than the minimum wage. The struggle against the employers takes a very bitter form. Pickets are compelled to sleep outside the factories in makeshift shelters, because the employers, like the landlords, have their own armed retainers which they use to fire on the workers.

**Low wages, poor conditions, low job security—those are the underlying conditions which prepare the way for revolution in the Philippines. No amount of sugary promises will make any difference to the grim attitude of the starving or semi-starving mass of the population, not only in the cities, but in the rural areas.**

The situation is explosive, as in Spain in the sunny days of 1931. The difference is that even now, certainly in the countryside, there are not the same illusions as existed in Spain in 1931. Speaking to a young worker without any political connections who he asked about the support for the new regime, a *Guardian* reporter heard this sober reply: "If Mrs Aquino is prevented from doing what is needed by her class interests, in two or three years time there will be another revolution....Next time the armed struggle will take precedence."

This is an epoch of storm and stress, especially in the colonial world—of revolution and counter-revolution and local wars.

All the conditions are there for a classical development of the revolution on the lines of the Russian revolution as outlined in Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution.

The Philippines demonstrates graphically the Marxist law of combined development. Manila is a modern city with skyscrapers and a population of at least four million. Surrounding it are the usual shantytowns of the Third World—slums

and poverty for the overwhelming majority of the masses, glittering riches for the ruling class.

The revolution, like that of Spain in the 1930s, has begun relatively peacefully. But the example of Spain is not encouraging to those who imagine that it will be possible to settle the process in the Philippines in a peaceful way.

The agrarian question is the dominant problem. It cannot be solved by the regime that is now in power, which more and more will become, like that of Marcos, a regime of landlords and capitalists under the domination of the multi-national monopolies that control the economy.

The revolution began as a capitalist revolution. In Russia and other countries the capitalists opposed the beginning of the revolution. In the Philippines because of the bonapartist character of the Marcos regime, based on the looting of the state, the opposition capitalists actually supported change from the Marcos regime to Aquino. They could do so because there is no fundamental change in the system, just the removal of the monster who was running the country as his own private property.

It is this that gives some the illusion that it will be possible to go forward on the basis of an agreement between the fundamental classes of the nation.

## Permanent revolution

Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution explained that, because the capitalists were linked to the banks, landowners, monopolies and foreign capital, the capitalist class was incapable of carrying out the tasks of its own democratic revolution. This has been demonstrated over and over again in the history of the Philippines, not only under Marcos but previously, and now again with the Aquino cabinet of bankers and Marcos generals.

Even the removal of the Marcosites from the government will not make any fundamental difference to the process. Even in Britain and France in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the big capitalists did not support the democratic revolution. It

had to be carried out against their opposition.

But the capitalist class in backward countries like the Philippines could not begin to play the role of the capitalists of the West over the last two or three centuries. They have come too late on the scene.

Trotsky's explained that because of the incapacity of the capitalist class to carry out the tasks of the revolution, the working class could lead the nation and carry out the tasks of the democratic revolution—the expulsion of imperialism, giving the land to the peasants. The working class having come to power would then go on to carry out the tasks of the socialist revolution.

But society is international. The failure of the 1917 revolution in Russia to spread, the coming to power of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and the degeneration of the Communist Parties internationally, brought enormous confusion to the working class and the forces for social change throughout the world. This development still has an impact in countries like the Philippines today.

## Beginning

The revolution is just beginning. It will probably extend over a number of years—three possibly, more likely five to seven, as in the case of Spain in the 1930s.

But the whole history of the past 70 years has shown that what Marxists call 'the subjective factor' is decisive. That is the question of leadership, of a party which understands the basic ideas of Marxism and can orientate itself to the problems that face the masses. The Communist Party, which could have played this role had it stood on the ideas of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, is not capable. The Moscow-line Stalinists were actually legalised by Marcos and are now in ruins.

It was not an accident that the only government in the world to congratulate Marcos on his 'victory' in the elections was that of the Soviet Union!

The only thing the Kremlin could see in the revolutionary situation in the Philippines was the possibility of taking advantage of the friction between Washington and Marcos. They



*Imelda Marcos is greeted in Moscow by Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, only months before the overthrow of the hated Marcos dictatorship.*

had no desire for the collapse of the Marcos autocracy and the development of a revolution in the Philippines because of the problems that this would bring them in their relations with Washington, and the elaborate attempts at some sort of a compromise between the super-powers which Gorbachev is undertaking at the present time.

Now, with the collapse of the Marcos autocracy, this programme is in ruins. The revolution in the Philippines will be just one of the first revolutions in Asia, Africa and in Latin America.

If there existed in the Philippines a genuine Marxist tendency of even a few hundred, then revolution in the Philippines would be possible, and even inevitable, on the lines of the classical development of the revolution in Russia of 1917. If such a tendency were to be created, the possibility would still exist of a revolution in which the working class plays the decisive role in the life of the country.

The working class in the towns, supported by the working class in the countryside, who are not strictly peasants, but largely agricultural labourers, could lay the basis for the socialist revolution to take place on classical lines, bringing a democratic workers' state into being.

The possibility of such a tendency being created during the course of the next few years is implicit in the

situation. Without it the revolution will take the form of a caricature of the permanent revolution.

The pro-Moscow wing of the CP adopted a reformist programme and even came to an agreement with Marcos, who legalised them. These traitors have eliminated themselves from the development of the revolution. In fact they were trying to do the dirty work for Marcos by splitting the NPA guerillas, by splitting off the nuns and priests who were supporting them.

In this they had enthusiastic support from Moscow and the hard-line Communists around the *Morning Star* in Britain, who published an article only a year ago advocating this split, without any comment, and supporting the ideas that were put forward by the pro-Moscow CP.

## New Peoples' Army

The other wing of the Philippines CP, the NPA, and its legal front in the cities, based themselves on the development of the revolution which has taken place in China and other backward countries since the Second World War. It has a contradictory program. On the one hand it stands for what would amount to Popular Frontism—the idea of defending 'na-

tional' capitalism, and of revolution by stages. At the same time it demands wholesale land reform, the expulsion of the multinationals and nationalisation of their property, removal of elements of the Marcos dictatorship still in place, and the removal of the Marcos generals who are still in control of the army and the police.

The carrying out of such a programme would mean the nationalisation of 80 per cent of the economy and the expropriation of the landlord class. If the guerillas are compelled to wade through blood in the implacable struggle against the regime, which will quicken in the coming years, it is clear that despite their confused programme they would not be prepared to support the continued control of 20 per cent of the economy by the native capitalists in the Philippines.

## Guerilla war

Twenty years ago, when the guerilla war began, the CP of the Philippines were supporters of the ideas and the methods of Mao Tse Tung. With the conservative development of the Maoist bureaucracy in China they have broken away and now pursue an independent policy. But their

whole attitude and tactics are dictated by the same considerations which developed during the course of the Chinese revolution.

They now have an army of 20 000 guerillas. Before the collapse of the Marcos regime, they were active in 80 per cent of the 73 provinces of the Philippines. Now they are active in them all! According to official admissions, at least 20 per cent of villages are "Communist-influenced".

As could be expected, they have refused to call off the guerilla war unless Aquino is prepared to carry out their programme, which of course would be impossible for a capitalist government to do. Therefore the guerilla war will go on.

Victory for the NPA and ex-Maoists is possible over the course of the struggle over a number of years. They are waging a war on the classical guerilla model. Their army is composed of ex-agricultural workers, ex-peasants, lumpen proletarians and even criminals, together with ex-students and workers who have fled the towns. Their programme has immense appeal, not only to the semi-starved peasants and workers in the ruined Philippines economy, but also to the workers in the towns, for lack of an alternative.

They stand for the 'two stages' programme—the development first of capitalism and then over a number of years, even decades, the development of the socialist revolution. That

also was the programme of Castro in Cuba and Mao in China—"a hundred years of capitalism" and then to move towards what they called 'socialism'. In reality, in China, having taken the power, they could not hand it back and proceeded to expropriate the capitalist class and establish a regime in the image of Moscow—not the workers' democracy of Lenin and Trotsky but the Stalinist totalitarian dictatorship established by Stalin and continued by his successors.

## Pragmatism

If the NPA come to power it is inevitable that they will carry out the same programme as Mao carried out in China after the collapse of the Chiang Kai Chek oligarchy, which was strikingly similar to the regime of Marcos in the Philippines. They would expropriate the capitalists and prepare for the establishment of the same system that exists in the other Stalinist states. Their programme will be determined by pragmatism and not theory. Having come to power they would not be prepared to hand over to the capitalists, but would inevitably come into conflict with them.

Without an international perspective, without an international programme, inevitably they would move onto the lines of a national Stalinist economy and very rapidly degenerate into the same totalitarian system as exists in other Stalinist states.

Nevertheless, the collapse of capitalism and of landlordism in the Philippines, even in this eventuality, would mark an enormous step forward. The productive forces would be liberated and there would be an enormous development of the economy. That is the acid test which Marxists apply to all regimes, whether they are capable of developing the forces of production.

In the end, as in the Soviet bloc now, the regime would become a fetter and impediment on the productive forces. This would prepare the way also for a political revolution and the establishment of a workers' democracy on classical Marxist lines. But that in its turn would depend on the international developments on a global scale, especially in the advanc-



*Young guerillas in the rural areas of the Philippines...now a force in every province.*

'coloured and Indian houses', as over group areas and aspects of security legislation in the recent months. But this irritation is a price which the government has to pay to maintain the fiction of a genuine 'parliament' and of 'power sharing'. It would not be enough to result in their instant abolition, and immediate outright rule by decree.

235. Thirdly, without a parliament for the whites in some form, there would be no 'safe' means of letting off steam on the far right. The extra-parliamentary ultra-right would be likely to become even more of a wild card than it is now, and a factor of greatly increased conflict in the whole society.

At the same time, removed from the constraints of even a semi-parliamentary system, the dictatorship would have a substantially increased relative autonomy from the direct influences and pressures of the big capitalists themselves, which the latter would want to avoid as long as possible.

236. Furthermore, the complete political expropriation of the whites—the complete elimination or nullification of the parliamentary franchise—and the concession of power to an unfettered bonapartist dictatorship, would tend also to accelerate the split among the whites and the going over of increasing numbers of the white youth to the side of revolution.

Among Afrikaners, the myth of 'democratic government' and 'constitutional legality' has been assiduously cultivated by the Nationalists. Openly abandoning this would deepen the crisis of Afrikanerdom and advance its disintegration in incalculable ways. Thus it would be resorted to by the Afrikaner bourgeois only *in extremis*.

237. For all these reasons the present semi-parliamentary variant of bonapartism is likely to be maintained for some considerable time yet, even as the contradictions and chaos associated with that accumulate.

But, at a certain point, quantity will change into quality—the suspension or abolition of parliament will probably become unavoidable to capitalism, and a dictatorship acting as a complete law unto itself will assume power. That would in all probability be a more or less direct military-police regime.

### Inadequacy of a military-police regime

238. However, as Trotsky wrote: "All history shows that it is impossible to keep the proletariat enchained with the aid merely of the police apparatus"—i.e. to hold down the proletariat in an industrialised country merely by means of a military-police regime. (See *Bonapartism and Fascism*, 1934.)

And again: "In the epoch of imperialist decline a pure Bonapartist Bonapartism is completely inadequate"—i.e. a regime simply of bonapartist balancing and manoeuvring, resting on the military-police apparatus of the state.

This general observation holds true despite the exceptional strength of the SA state, based on the privileged whites.

239. Trotsky added that imperialism "finds it indispensable to mobilise the petty bourgeoisie and to crush the proletariat under its weight. Imperialism is capable of fulfilling this task only in case the proletariat itself reveals its inability to conquer power, while the social crisis drives the petty bourgeoisie into a condition of paroxysm." This was the basis on which the bourgeoisie turned to fascism in the 1920s and 1930s. (See *Bonapartism, Fascism, and War*, 1940.)

240. But, today, for reasons already explained, imperialism and capitalism cannot resort to fascism as it did then. Even in South Africa, the development of fascism on the basis of the whites has limits which will prevent the crushing of the black proletariat by these means, and which make it too dangerous for the bourgeoisie to sponsor it in that attempt.

This situation forces them to seek and use potential forces of reaction among the blacks.

241. It is true that the black vigilante reaction, incited and organised by the regime and its stooges in response to the onset of revolution, has wreaked a terrible havoc against our movement.

The 'Witdoeke' in Crossroads; Inkatha impis in Natal; the 'Mbhokhoto' in KwaNdebele; the 'A-Team' in Tumahole; the 'Pakathis' in Thabong; the 'Greenflies' in Aliwal North—virtually every area and township has been the subject of vigilante savagery, directed especially against the militant black youth.

Horrific atrocities: sjambokking to death, ritual mutilation, burial of victims alive reported from some rural localities—these have been among the methods used.

The need to take the vigilante reaction very seriously, counter it with organisation and propaganda, and above all extend the preparation of systematic armed self-defence against them to every area, does not, however, detract from the fact that the basis of this reaction is fundamentally weak.

242. In each case, the hard core is gangsters linked to the police, usually involving community councillors and well-known figures of the black business mafia in the area concerned. They are organised and provided with finance, arms and state protection, and are able to employ lumpenised elements of township youth.

To give themselves strength, they rouse to action the most ignorant and demoralised working-class people, mostly of the older generation, who have been bewildered by the endless chaos and turmoil which seemingly leads nowhere, and are incensed by the arrogance and excesses which, to some extent, inevitably accompany the revolutionary mobilisation of the youth. (Inevitably, that is, in the absence of a mass revolutionary party capable of guiding the tactics of the youth and channeling their fighting energies in the best way).

What a feeble basis for reaction in the longer term! The fact that the state has to resort to relying on this stratum of the **oppressed black working class**—along with the incitement of tribalism which is a mainstay of the regime—merely shows the parlous position in which it finds itself.

ed capitalist countries and in the Stalinist bloc in Russia and Eastern Europe.

Thus Marxists would give material support to such a regime and enthusiastically greet its progressive manifestations in the elimination of landlordism and of capitalism which now is an enormous fetter on the development of society in the Philippines.

At the same time Marxists would make no concessions to the 'socialist' pretensions of such a regime, would point out its inevitable bureaucratic and totalitarian features, and would implacably uphold the need for workers' democracy as the necessary basis for the transformation of society in the direction of socialism.

A third possibility in the Philippines would be the development of chaos. The incapacity of the Aquino regime to solve any of the problems means that they will have to merge with the Marcosites, which is partially taking place already, and end up with a short-lived attempt at a new dictatorship, which in its turn would lead to absolute chaos and the collapse of civilisation.

## Vomited out

Marcosism without Marcos is no longer possible. The masses of the population in the city and the countryside have vomited out the Marcos regime and there is no way, even with the support of US imperialism, that it will be possible to thrust it down their throats once again. The consequence would be the possibility, as in pre-war China, of a virtual break-up of the Philippines into various fiefdoms. But this seems a remote possibility.

If a new military dictatorship were established on a capitalist or landlord basis it would make Marcos look like a humanitarian moderniser in the light of the monstrous crimes that it would commit. It would be on the Indonesian model, in which the failure of the Communist party to carry through the democratic revolution resulted in the slaughter of at least a million communists and ended, up not in a capitalist democracy, but a military-police state. In reality there is no social or economic basis for stable capitalist democracy anywhere

in the colonial world.

The present Aquino government will not last long. There can be no turning back.

## Psychology

It is true that the counter-revolution still has a formidable base, in the gangsters and retainers controlled by the Marcos satellites in the provinces, amongst the landlords and plantation owners. But it would not be possible to use the army as it was used in the past. The effect of the collapse of the Marcos regime had enormous consequences in the psychology and attitudes of the rank and file of the army who in the main come from the agricultural labourers and the peasantry.

Far more likely under present circumstances would be a victory for the NPA with all the consequences that would flow from it. This would be the first of a whole series of revolutions in the third world. It would have profound consequences in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

If, on the other hand, the Philippine revolution were victorious on the classical model of the permanent revolution advocated by Lenin and Trotsky, then it would lead to the development of the socialist revolution led by the working class all over Asia, Africa and Latin America.

In the last few years the working class has become the decisive factor in most of these countries, as evidenced by the movement of the workers in South Africa, Chile, Pakistan, and in other countries. If the Philippine revolution took a classical form, it would have an enormous effect in stimulating the working class as the main force in the revolution everywhere.

However it seems most likely, because of the weakness of Marxism in the Philippines, that the revolution will develop as in China and Cuba, with a movement in the countryside leading to the collapse of the army and, in the last stages, a march on Manila, with a general strike of the workers supplementing the army of the peasants and semi-agricultural labourers. It would mean that the working class would not be the leading force in the revolution but act as a subordinate and auxiliary.

Where the tasks of the socialist revolution are carried out by other class forces, that in itself has profound social consequences in such a country. It would mean the development of bureaucracy on the same lines as in Russia and in China. It would be enormously progressive in the elimination of landlordism and capitalism but reactionary in the sense that there would be no real workers' democracy. Power would be taken into the hands of the officials and of the bureaucracy itself.

If the revolution takes this distorted form, it might throw back the movement elsewhere. But the victory of the workers of such countries as Chile, Brazil or Argentina and the establishment of a healthy workers' state based on real workers' democracy in any important country would in its turn react on the Philippines.

On the other hand, if there were no development of the revolution on those lines in either the countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe or in the Stalinist bloc, this victory of ex-Maoist guerillas would inevitably strengthen illusions in the ideas of guerillaism, in the same way as Maoism and Castroism had enormous attractive power, unfortunately, for the students who abandoned the towns and organised rural guerilla movements in Latin America, leading in many cases to disaster.

## Marxism

However, in this epoch of upheavals and of revolution many events will take place which will shake the destiny of all countries including the Philippines. The main task of Marxists is to keep the ideas of Marxism alive. It is only by understanding the processes in other countries that we can understand also the developments in our own country and our own labour movement.

What is decisive in all countries is the creation of Marxist cadres who are rooted in the history of the movement, understand the modern developments of the movement and can prepare the way for the victory of the workers and the overthrow of world capitalism.

## CONTENTS

Soweto rent-strike	page 2
Kinross	page 4
State of Emergency campaign	page 6
Freedom Charter	page 10
UDF 'national unity' call	page 12
'Democratic' big bosses?	page 14
Trotsky on a socialist programme	page 27
CAYCO activist speaks	page 32
1976 Soweto uprising	page 34
COSATU—the way forward	page 41
Marx on trade unions	page 42
Southern Africa—fighting SA aggression	page 43
Botswana-Transkei link	page 48
Botswana railworkers	page 49
Zimbabwe youth speak	page 51
Nigerian worker interviewed	page 53
Belgian public sector strike	page 55
1986—Year of anniversaries	page 57
Anglo-Irish agreement	page 60
Vietnam 1945—derailed revolution	page 67
Revolution in the Philippines	page 73

---

For security reasons, fictitious names have been used by writers of articles in this issue of *Inqaba ya Basebenzi*. In every case, however, care has been taken not to give a misleading impression of the background and experience of the comrade concerned. Details about writers are provided only when security considerations make this possible.

---

*Inqaba ya Basebenzi*, BM Box 1719, London WC1N 3XX, Britain