

SOLIDARITY

official organ of the
**Black Consciousness
Movement of Azania**

No. 5 First Quarter 1981

- On Black Consciousness
- Anti-Rent Strikes in Soweto
- Open Letter to No Sizwe

PRICE 50p

SOLIDARITY

News, theoretical and discussion journal of
the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania

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An address delivered by Buti Tihagale in May 1978 gives an insight into the ideological direction of AZAPO. Shortly before that date, the emergence of AZAPO into the open was frustrated by bannings or detentions of its entire leadership. In September 1979, AZAPO re-surfaced determined to mobilise the black working class as the major agency for social change.
Buti Tihagale, himself very active in the emerging workers' movement, is a Catholic priest. On Sunday 22 February 1981, at a memorial service held at Regina Mundi Church in Soweto in honour of the ANC members murdered by the South African army during its raid of Maputo, his speech received the greatest ovation but, apart from the BBC World Service newsreel, was not mentioned at all in the media. AZAPO's role in the memorial services was not reported either.
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Based on material appearing in three left journals in the West, our article on the Polish summer brings to the attention of our cadres inside South Africa information and analyses of a working class struggle they have followed with the deepest interest.

Solidarity:

Published quarterly by the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania

Editorial Office:

42 Danbury Street, London N1 8JU

Distribution:

410 Central Park West, Apartment 12D New York, New York 10025,
United States of America.

Oppelner Strasse 41, 6990 Heidelberg, West Germany

Signed articles represent the views of the authors, which may not necessarily coincide with those of the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania

The Call for a National Convention

How do you concede power when you don't have nothing?

A call for a National Convention is in the air. Issuing from the liberal sector of the white establishment this call is already being trumpeted with much fanfare in their press. Doubtless more noises will be made about it in the period immediately ahead of us. And the danger exists that many well-meaning and good-intentioned people might be taken in by this ruse. They might be brought to believe that indeed some major dispensation, a kind of Magna Carta, is in the offing.

It should be noted at the start that this beckoning to calm, for that is really what it is, evolves against the background of enormous strife and resistance in the Black Front. The Blacks are being urged to suspend their fury against their oppressors and to settle in peace. But peace under what terms?

The year 1980 has been a year of total struggles for Blacks in our Country. It witnessed a school boycott campaign which even surpassed the memorable June 1976 school boycotts, in scope, intensity and durability. Bus boycotts, rent strikes, industrial action, resistance to mass removals, and a host of other resistance efforts mushroomed everywhere, marking the build up of the people's resistance to colossal proportions. Such an escalation in strife has few parallels even in a country where strife and resistance have never ceased since the establishment of white domination.

The call for a National Convention issues at the close of the year while these struggles are still rumbling in full rage and fury, without any sign of letting up. Right up to the time of this writing the resistance remains rampant.

We reject this call for a National Convention. We reject it not out of a thirst for blood, as the prize for freedom. On the contrary, we would like to obtain freedom without blood; and if there must be blood, with a minimum of it. We do not proceed from a fanciful doctrinaire position, the belief that the route to power is only through armed insurrection. Talks with those who are holding the power do have their part in the mechanics of power transfer. We shall talk to the ruling class, particularly those who exercise real power within that class; but only at a stage where that class concedes majority rule. Such was the position, for instance, when the Patriotic Front in Zimbabwe agreed to the Lancaster talks. The ruling class in South Africa concedes nothing yet.

The present call for a Convention does not come from those who are holding power in South Africa. The National Party has disassociated itself entirely from this call; and it insists that all its dealings with Blacks have to be channelled through its own agencies, such as the Presidential Council, Bantu Councils, and such like; in other words, through the very same instruments which maintain white dominance and which administer and foster tribal segmentation.

The prime movers for the so called

National Convention are a section of the liberal bourgeoisie — the Progressive Party, which is the official opposition in the all-white parliament. With them in the call are other white liberal organisations, such as the Black Sash, a white liberal women's movement, a few charitable institutions and associations of clerics, sections of the white intelligentsia of liberal persuasion. None of these elements wield the power, which remains firmly in the grasp of the National Party. They cannot concede power; because they don't have no power.

The reason why they seek to insert themselves in the contest between the Establishment and the Blacks is to blunt the thrust of the ongoing struggles, to deflect those struggles into a compromising position and to isolate the authentic leadership of the people and their struggles. They would like to see launched into the leadership of the Black resistance movement Blacks who front for whites — the type of Bishop Muzorewa in 'Zimbabwe — Rhodesia'.

They have already begun putting together such an assemblage. Sessions of "preparatory talks" are under way. The natural candidates are Gatscha Buthelezi and his Inkatha Yakwa-Zulu; the Labour Party, and the Reform Party. Rumour has it that they are also casting furtive and longing eyes at Dr Nthato Motlana and the Committee of Ten. We have reason to think that their hopes will be disappointed.

We do not know yet whether these emissaries of the peace will attempt to find a rendezvous with any of the South African political groupings in exile, especially those of them who share with the authors of this call the platform of multi-racialism. If we were to speculate we should have certain forebodings. After all, it is not a great distance between the platform of multi-racialism and the National Convention which is fathered by

the same liberal elements. All we can say at this moment is that a certain degree of watchfulness is in order.

Needless to say, the sponsors of the so-called National Convention have not addressed their solicitations to the Azanian People's Organisation and the Black Consciousness Stream. Seemingly they do realise that total rejection is inevitable from this quarter. Moreover, this is precisely the leadership which their entire exercise aims to outflank and isolate, in course of urging the Black Resistance Movement into a blind alley.

In sum this is our position. We reject the present call for a National Convention. We reject it because those who exercise real power in South Africa have no part in it; and they are not yet in the mood seriously to consider conceding power. Far from being disposed to concede power the National Party is actually moving rapidly in the other direction. No effort is spared to consolidate the power in their own hands and to mobilise to the maximum the white population behind this party of power. To this end they have called an early election — reportedly, April 29th, this year; and, significantly enough, they will put into issue at such elections their programme of "total strategy to counter the total onslaught". What a resonant disclaimer to the National Convention! It sounds like a war-cry.

The liberal authors of the call to Convention have no means to stem this tide towards total war; nor do they possess a real desire to do so. Their reaction has been mild protests against a "phony election" — an impotent protest in muted tones, which contrast starkly with their clamour for a National Convention. This is typical, too: they must show due obedience to those who hold power, just as they must display extreme boisterousness when addressing the discontented subjects of that same power.

It is not our business to seek to coax those who are holding the power to come and confer with us; nor do we stay, passively, waiting for them to bid us to talks. Our task is to continue to intensify the political and working class struggles which are now the order of the day, to ensure that out of these struggles there shall emerge a strong movement and an armed struggle rooted in the people.

Only under these conditions will those who are presently wielding power be forced to surrender or engage in meaningful talks toward the transfer of power.

Issued by
Interim Central Committee,
Black Consciousness Movement
of Azania.

Newsbriefs on AZAPO

AZAPO ON TRANSPORT (R.D.M. 5.1.80)

The Soweto branch of AZAPO, at its meeting at the Donaldson Orlando Community Centre to protest at a proposed increase in bus fares by the Public Utility Transport Corporation (PUTCO), decided that:

"We, in AZAPO, involved as workers and depending on PUTCO for transportation to and from places of slavery, and being underpaid, here resolve that: "PUTCO should not increase the fares. "If PUTCO is adamant in increasing the fares, we protest and call upon the blacks to boycott the buses and foot it to places of slavery and other destinations".

The president of AZAPO told the meeting that blacks did not choose where to live, and those responsible for siting the ghettos so far from places of work

must subsidise the fares.

The meeting also considered means of giving material support to the dismissed Ford workers in Port Elizabeth.

AZAPO ON SPORT (R.D.M. 11.1.80)

George Wauchope, AZAPO's National Publicity Secretary, said that sport in South Africa could not become non-racial before the oppressed people are liberated. "We maintain", he said, "that liberation of all those oppressed is the first priority. We can speak about normal sport when there is a free and open society which has been brought about by an unqualified franchise." He called upon blacks to boycott all overseas teams which came to play in South Africa.

AZAPO ON COLLABORATION (POST 4.2.80)

Speaking to a public meeting organised by the Seshego Village Committee, an

AZAPO representative said that those who suffer under oppression cannot collaborate with the system which causes their oppression. He condemned participation in government-created structures such as the Bantustans.

AZAPO ON APARTHEID (POST 28.8.80)

In a statement issued on the release from police detention of Mathata Letsabo, AZAPO stated that "apartheid was a fundamental cause of the recent explosion (schools boycott) in Mangaung". Further, "the unemployment crisis leads to crime, frustration and misery. All these problems combined with the apartheid system are responsible for the boycott of schools and buses". Letsabo is chairman of the Bloemfontein branch of AZAPO, and was detained for three months from 28 May during the schools boycott action in Mangaung, Bloemfontein. Also detained with him was Tebogo Sijanamani, a local school teacher. Letsabo was detained again during October.

AZAPO ON KOORNHOF IN MANGAUNG (STAR 8.9.80)

The AZAPO branch in Bloemfontein issued a statement condemning the apartheid Mangaung Community Council's decision to invite Dr Piet Koornhof to the township "without the consent and blessing of the black community". The statement went on:

"No Community Council can genuinely solve the ridiculous problems which have been created by the country's apartheid system. No visit by any Cabinet Minister can remove the genuine grievances which are rooted in our community. Only the people themselves can solve their problems and only through a united effort can

people gain redress for their problems. "We therefore call upon our black people to support our call for the establishment of a congress movement through which we can present a united effort against the authorities; a congress through which we can demand direct representation in the Bloemfontein City Council and forget about inviting Cabine Ministers to come and see the ridicule to which we are subjected".

DETENTIONS OF AZAPO LEADERS

The National Secretary of AZAPO, Sammy Tloubatla, and the Soweto branch Vice-Chairman, Manfred Yende, together with three other AZAPO officials were detained in Pietersburg during October after they had addressed a bus boycott meeting in Mahwereleng. The police alleged that they had visited a banned member of the banned Black People's Convention.

The detentions took place at the same time as many AZAPO leaders of the bus boycott in the Northern Transvaal were being arrested. In other parts of the country, AZAPO leaders were also taken into police custody. These included Duke More, branch chairman of AZAPO in Kwa Thema Springs; Mrs Nombulelo Melane, Acting President of AZAPO; Vuyo Pinyana, Cornic Mkesa, Ishmael Mkhabela and Miss Thoko Mphahane, all AZAPO branch officials in Cape Town.

AZAPO GIVES HERO'S FUNERAL TO "CASTRO" MAYATHULA

A more fitting tribute could not have been paid to Rev. Mashwabada "Castro" Mayathula, a founding father of black consciousness, when at his funeral on 22 September, 1980 over 2,000 mourners chanted freedom slogans, sang freedom

songs and held high freedom posters and the liberation colours of gold and black. The coffin left the Regina Mundi Church on the shoulders of the members of AZAPO who, together with hundreds of mourners, wore AZAPO T-shirts.

As one of the many speakers at the graveside said:

"Comrade Castro did not preach to the people about the furniture of heaven and the hot pots of hell, but preached to them about what affected them in their lifetime. He was a true leader of the people".

AZAPO ON THE SOWETO RENTS' ISSUE (POST 9.10.80)

The chairman of the AZAPO Soweto branch, Popo Molefe, accompanied his call for a public meeting on the rents issue with the following statement:

"In the light of the disclosure that the Administration Boards are funding the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs

(SABRA), an organisation propagating the policy of separate development, we as a branch stand convinced that the West Rand Administration Board (WRAB) and the Community Councils have no economic problems and that they can afford the subsidy of the rents.

It is against this background that we see the rent increases as naked exploitation and a deliberate intention to bleed white the already starving residents of Soweto".

ONE IRREPLACEABLE LIFE, BUT 100 REPLACEABLE JOBS

Placards bearing the above slogans were used by AZAPO and the Women's Federation of South Africa on 15 October at train stations and bus stops to persuade people not to go to work in protest against rent increases and the visit of Dr Piet Koornhof to Soweto. At least 5000 demonstrators, who the police failed to disperse, chanted freedom songs and "Amandla Ngawethu" outside the offices

of the Soweto Community Council where Koornhof was being received by the Sixpencers.

The Star (15.10.80) reported:

"The demonstrators organised by black consciousness groups was given impetus by an early morning bomb blast on the main Soweto rail line and by the approaching anniversary of the October 19 crackdown in 1977 on black consciousness organisations.

"Several prominent members of black consciousness organisations were highly satisfied with the large turnout at the demonstration, and also by the fact that people of all ages took part".

AZAPO ORGANISES OCTOBER 19 COMMEMORATIONS

The anniversary on October 19 of the banning of black consciousness organisations in 1977 was linked to two ongoing struggles inside the country. In the Northern Transvaal, mainly centred around Pietersburg and Potgietersrus, the anniversary was linked to the bus boycott and in Soweto, to the rent strikes. In both struggles AZAPO plays the leading role and it was AZAPO which in both these and many other areas in the country, called on people to observe October 19 as a day of remembrance.

The Lebowa Bantustan reacted to AZAPO's call by imposing an earlier ban on public meetings. The Seshego branch of AZAPO had called a meeting to discuss the detention of its leaders and the bus boycott in addition to commemorating the black consciousness organisations. The meeting and also a seminar on black consciousness, to be held near Turfloop, were banned, but the people walked one Km away from Seshego to cross the "Bantustan border" into so-called white South Africa to hold

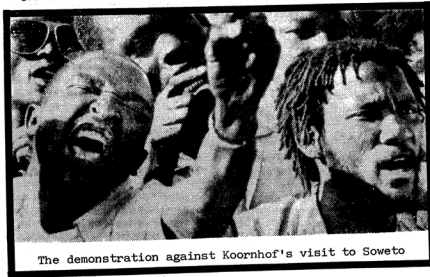
their meeting. They were baton charged by the police and several arrests were made. The chairman of the Northern Transvaal branch of the Media Workers' Association of South Africa (MWASA), Khangale Makhado, said that "no amount of bannings and intimidation will deter the people from the truthful course" (*Sunday Post* 19.10.80).

A member of the National Executive Committee of AZAPO, Dr Joe Variava, told a commemoration meeting in Lenasia: "Recent events in South Africa show an increasing political awareness of black people and a greater reliance by the Government on police methods to stem the wave of black nationalism. In fact the situation has become so tense that a period of relative calm is almost a newsworthy event. The aggression with which the Government pursues the maintenance of its neo-Nazi politics is now the norm of modern government in the country" (*Post* 20.10.80).

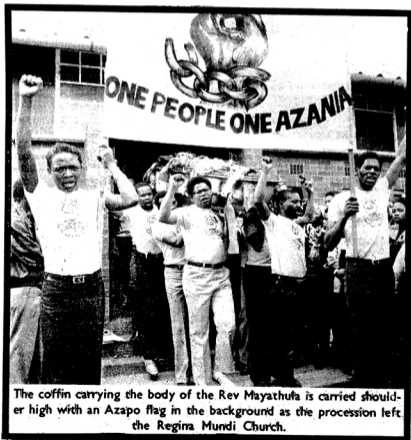
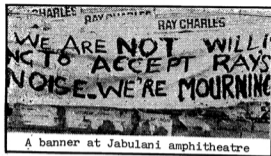
Phillip Dlamini, the General Secretary of the Black Municipality Workers' Union, addressing a meeting in Tembisa was reported to have said "The black struggle in South Africa will intensify until final victory for the black majority is achieved despite bannings and detentions by the Government. Blacks must go out and preach the gospel of liberation to all people" (*Post* 20.10.80)

AZAPO DECLARES WAR ON STARS FROM ABROAD

The commemoration of the banned black consciousness organisations was also used by AZAPO to further the cultural boycott of South Africa by stars from abroad. AZAPO members dressed in a movement's T-shirts and liberation colours of gold and black stood outside the gates of the Jabulani amphitheatre in Soweto to persuade people not to attend Ray Charles' concert. The show was cancelled



The demonstration against Koornhof's visit to Soweto



The coffin carrying the body of the Rev Mayathula is carried should-er high with an Azapo flag in the background as the procession left the Regina Mundi Church.

when it became clear that the people were heeding AZAPO's call to commemorate October 19 by attending political rallies and suspending events of a social nature.

People inside the country responded by cancelling sporting activities and other forms of social entertainment, and shops were closed for the day. Only Ray Charles refused to heed the call and, like an ostrich, sunk his head in the sand. Even repeated requests made by AZAPO and the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania for him to observe the cultural boycott before he left the USA for South Africa failed to elicit any response.

AZAPO'S National Publicity Secretary, Geoge Wauchope, said that AZAPO had objected to the visit when it was first announced. "We sent him two messages warning him that he may lose the respect

of his black fans. His presence in South Africa actually supports apartheid and all its oppressive economic system", Wauchope said.

Through the USA regional branch of BCMA, Ray Charles was contacted and the following cable from AZAPO conveyed to him:

"Much as you are regarded in great esteem in South Africa, your coming here to perform will be seen as nothing else but collaboration with the evil forces that exploit blacks in this country.

"You are therefore urged to stop coming for your performances otherwise blacks will turn against you. This becomes very serious in that the dates of your shows come during the week when blacks will be commemorating October 19".

Tribute to Rev. "Castro" Mayathula

The news of the death of Comrade Mashwabada "Castro" Mayathula on the 7th September 1980, shocked and saddened the entire community of the black oppressed. Over 2000 mourners turned out at his Soweto home where, under the leadership of the Azanian People's Organisation, he was deservedly given a hero's funeral.

Revolutionary songs were chanted and moving speeches made to pay the last respects to this gallant fighter and leader

of the oppressed. In a sense of loss and bereavement at his untimely death, the BCMA wishes once more to remember and salute Comrade Mashwabada.

His participation in the people's struggles began in the forties but only rising to a position of prominent leadership during the era of black consciousness. He involved himself as a member of the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) before it was banned together with other black consciousness organis-

ations in 1977. At the Maphumulo Theological Seminary in Zululand, he became one of the leading advocates of Black Theology, a theology of resistance which is one of the many ways the Black Consciousness Movement has reached all sectors of the oppressed. At the time of his death, he was President of the African Independent Church Association (AICA) which acts as the umbrella body for the grass-roots church movement.

One of the moving spirits behind the formation of the Black People's Convention (BPC) in 1971, he headed its Interim Executive Committee at a time when fear dominated everywhere in South Africa as a result of fascist repression of the National Liberation Movement during the sixties. He worked in the company of Mthuli Ka Shezi who was brutally murdered by the police in 1972 and former BPC Information Secretary, Saths Cooper now serving a six-year prison sentence on Robben Island.

After the banning of the black consciousness organisations in 1977 and after he had been detained by the police for almost a year, he again with tireless devotion threw himself into the re-organisation of the people's organisation.

He lent his hand and added his voice to the formation of the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO), the Soweto Civic Association (SCA) and the Azanian Students' Organisation (AZASO).

Always speaking and listening to the people, he was a source of inspiration to many a youth, parent-worker and intellectual.

To steer a revolutionary programme which answers to the aspirations of the black working class and other sectors of the oppressed, we need to learn from Comrade Mashwabada. An absolute faith in the power of the masses as a cardinal and decisive factor in the liberation struggle; an undaunted strife for a principled unity of all the patriotic forces — failure on our part to heed these important lessons would be tantamount to betrayal and surrender.

We salute you Comrade Mashwabada! Lala kahle! Our pledge is to uphold the high ideals for which you struggled the whole of your life.

Gerald Phokobje, on behalf of the
External Wing of the Black
Consciousness Movement of Azania.

Letter to the Editor

Your article on the South African schools boycott in *Solidarity* was one which we felt important to have the widest possible circulation. Thus we undertook to publish a few excerpts from it in our paper. Like you, we also feel that the relationship between race and class is crucial for

working out a pathway to revolutionary change both in South Africa and in the United States.

What has attracted us to the Black Consciousness Movement in particular has been the fact that it has attempted to make a unity between the activity of

fighting for freedom and the working out of a theory of human liberation. Indeed, so important did we feel were the ideas of Steve Biko that we both presented them within the pages of our paper and felt that his ideas were of great importance in our working out of our own most recent statement on the Black question — *Frantz Fanon, Soweto and American Black Thoughts*.

Our organisation is a Marxist-Humanist one which believes very strongly in the necessity to have theoretical or philosophical preparation for revolution to meet the tremendous spontaneous movement from revolutionary masses. There is no substitute for that movement from below which you documented very beautifully in your article. At the same time it puts a most crucial responsibility on serious Marxist revolutionaries. This responsibility is not to come forth with a "plan from above" by the "vanguard party", but instead, after seriously listening to the voices from below, to help work out a theory of revolution, indeed to recreate Marx's philosophy of revolution, for our day. This is the type

of labour we are trying to do, in our newspaper and pamphlets, which are written by combinations of workers and intellectuals, as we regard it an absolute necessity to break down the division between mental and manual labour, thinking and doing, that is the hallmark of capitalist society, and in the serious theoretical labour most comprehensively undertaken by the founder of Marxist-Humanism in the United States, Raya Dunayevskaya. Her major works are our statements of Marxism for our day, a Marxism based on Marxism as a humanism, and upon the new passions and forces seeking freedom in our day.

The power of the Black Consciousness Movement that arose and had its fullest expression in Soweto 1976, and continues today, seems to us to be in its attempts to be a new point of departure in theory as well as in action. It is that internationalism in ideas as well as in actions that we feel is so very needed by movements everywhere today.

Eugene Walker,
News and Letters Committee, USA.



A Further Determination of Black Consciousness

by FR. BUTI TLHAGALE

The relentless pursuit of the apartheid policy, the myth of racial interdependence and harmony within the South African capitalist system, the violence at once subtle and blatant meted out against any form of black resistance — all this, coupled with an ever-growing awareness and the demand for radical change, necessitates a further exploration of new dimensions in the black man's struggle for total liberation.

Any further determination or analysis of the black man's alienation from the socio-political structure of South Africa engendered by the present capitalist system takes its point of departure from values grasped, moulded and propounded by the black consciousness movement. It is well known by now how black consciousness unveiled the myth of the common good as promoted by the white people of this country. The iconoclastic enterprise of the philosophy of black consciousness blew up the myth that whites are the custodians of human progress and civilisation. It promoted the principle of self-determination and self-definition, adhered to the unquestionable conviction that the present surface areas of South Africa belong to the black people, heightened awareness with regard to the imperatives of freedom and relentlessly preached black solidarity as a potent weapon for attaining black liberation.

In the light of the above short account it is clear that any further probing shall be done within the broad framework of black consciousness. The major concern of the movement has been to draw all black people into the orbit of consciousness. It has been restricted to the empirical consciousness of alienation, grasped in terms of racial discrimination, exploitation and systematic land spoilation. But little has been done in terms of translating black aspirations into a praxis for the black masses. Little has been done to bridge the gap between empirical consciousness of alienation and radical action to uproot the causes of alienation. Any new dimension therefore must bring along with it a qualitative difference, a promotion from empirical consciousness of the enforced process of black alienation to a creative yet radical action.

Therefore, firstly, the industrial civilisation that now prevails in South Africa demands a reformulation of the black people's ideological stance. The survival economics of the peasant's civilisation has been transformed into the "survival economics" of the industrial civilisation.

The outstanding characteristic of this so-called transformation civilisation is the amassing of capital. Within the South African context, capital is made possible by the collective effort of the black workers. It is black cheap labour that keeps the capitalist monster alive.

Parliament has enacted labour laws aimed at retaining the status quo. Thus; under the present South African capitalist system, blacks have been inexorably pushed into a "survival economy". What therefore obtains is a ruthless dialectic of an absolute demand for cheap black labour to maintain the capitalist system on the one hand, and a passionate negation of black participation in the socio-economic structure of the country on the other hand. Both the economic exploitation and racial discrimination therefore posit themselves as radical forms of black alienation.

For any solution to be radical it must address itself to the above form of alienation. The philosophy of black consciousness has hitherto addressed itself principally to the question of black pride and black self-actuation without really spelling out how this self-actualisation could be translated into a reality. If therefore it is within the industrial civilisation that the ugliest form of human exploitation takes place then the seed of destruction is already contained within that civilisation. The role of the black workers therefore assumes a different significance. Insofar as the capitalist system thrives on their collective productive efforts, their organisational power can equally bring the capitalist system to an inevitable crash. In South Africa, where the question of ethnicity has been blown up beyond reasonable proportions, black solidarity spearheaded by black workers assumes new dimensions. It is the collective awakening of black workers to their historic role in the black liberation struggle that can herald a new epoch. The foundation of South African capitalism is black labour. The conversion of black labour into an instrument of liberation means that one strikes the capitalist system at its very foundation. It is in this light that one regards the mobilisation of black workers as a radical

solution, for it strikes at the very root of exploitation and alienation.

The role of black labour within the black struggle introduce a definite sense of orientation. Black consciousness ceases to be just a pervasive philosophy, an empirical consciousness of the evil of the apartheid system. Black consciousness ceases to be just an attitude of mind, it becomes an organisational power aimed at combating the violence of the state. With black labour as a revolutionary ferment at the heart of black consciousness, one already makes hints as to the nature of the future state. The patterns of exploitation that prevail today are characteristic of capitalist society. The role of black labour in the struggle will be to see to the allocation of the benefits of labour to the majority of the people. Thus when one makes an appeal to black workers, one addresses oneself to the powerful majority of the exploited people. One speaks, in the language of the people, of the shortage of bread and the ever-rising rent, the long hours of work and the meagre wages, overcrowded ghettos and the absence of title-deed. It is clear therefore that the ideological stance hitherto adhered to demands a qualitative change.

Taking black consciousness as point of departure, the present analysis is steered off the conceptual hazards of modern industrial society. The proletariat within the South African context specifically refers to black workers. White workers enjoy the protection of the laws of the country. Thus they could never be regarded as forming part of the exploited people.

The history of South Africa has shown beyond doubt the revolutionary role of student power. It has not just been an empirical consciousness of the black people. It has been an active struggle, demanding nothing less than a radical change. Recent history records occasions of bloody confrontations between students

and the custodians of the state. Besides, students have themselves to be astute analysts of the patterns of exploitation obtaining in South Africa. They have given rise to the philosophy of black consciousness and have transformed black existence into an existence of protest and resistance. Their organisational power has proved itself beyond doubt. They form a class of their own and therefore cannot be seen as part of the black proletariat as such. An alliance between the two has become imperative. A student-worker alliance will readily lend its organisational power to the entire black solidarity. It will not be a marriage of convenience, but communal sharing of common aspirations to bring about radical change. Thus the student-worker alliance becomes part of the total modus operandi in the black liberation struggle. In this case, the student ceases to be a casual participant but becomes an actively committed participant in partnership with the black worker.

The history of South Africa has been a history of the struggle between the white oppressors and the black oppressed masses. It has been a history of conflict and white domination. It has been a history of protection of white interests at the expense of the majority of the people. The government has been, and still is, a government characterised by violence. The fundamental rights of the black people have been violated by the numerous laws passed by parliament with regard to land, labour, and participation in the socio-political structures of the country. This is a civilisation where state violence is permitted. Both police and military presence posit themselves as a threat to those who deviate from the apartheid policy. The slogan "peaceful negotiations" has fallen into disuse.

Negotiation is only possible within what the government permits. In the light of the above there emerges a sense of urgency. Any meaningful struggle against white domination must be militantly uncom-

promising. Therefore, militancy ought to become a new dimension in the black man's struggle against the capitalist system that feeds on his cheap labour. Militancy must characterise, not committed groups of people, but the entire mood of the black nation. It must become a constituent element of black resistance. It is not bent on the destructive, but rather seeks to end alienation. It draws its inspiration not from the violence perpetrated by the state, but from the passionate love for justice and the equitable distribution of the benefits accruing from the collective effort of black workers. Liberatory campaigns must become militant if the exploitative capitalist machinery is to come to an end.

The notion militancy spells an end to the academic note of the struggle for total liberation from white domination. Action is a responsibility to be exercised by the black masses in order to bring an end to the egoism rooted in those who own the means of production. Militancy transcends mere empirical consciousness as it strives at converting black inauthentic existence into a life of genuine participation in the socio-political structures of the country.

Militancy within the ranks of black workers simply means that black workers will be deciding to exercise their right as workers to control the economic pattern that presently obtains in South Africa. Black workers are their own oppressors insofar as they allow their labour to be converted into a commodity without their determining the value of their labour. Organised withdrawal of black labour can only spell the inevitable downfall of the present political system. Thus it becomes imperative that labour be organised into militant unions that would aim at the root cause of alienation.

It is clear that there shall be no peaceful transference of political power from the white minority government to the majority of the black people on the terms put

forward by the blacks themselves. Therefore the bargaining power of the black workers is potentially a potent weapon that may bring political power into the hands of the black majority.

The above has been simply a deeper probing into some more radical perspective

with regard to black participation in the liberation struggle. The struggle cannot seriously continue unless these points are given proper consideration. Awareness is not enough. Radical action is imperative. And the black masses hold the key.

Azapo, Asinamali and Azikhwelwa

ROSEINNES PHAHLE

Part 1 Asinamali – Protests in Soweto

During the last week of March 1980, the Soweto Urban Bantu (now renamed Community) Council (UBC) announced that it would increase rents by more than 60%. David Thebehali, the so-called Mayor of Soweto, threatened to suspend any members of the Council who disassociated themselves from the proposed increments. The Meadowlands branch of the Soweto Civic Association (SCA) immediately called a meeting for 31 March. The meeting expressed opposition to rent increases and considered the possibility of a court action against the UBC to stop it from implementing the increases. (*Star* 31.3.80).

A more militant and larger meeting was called by Azanian Students' Organisation (AZASO) and the Congress of

South African Students (COSAS). The meeting was attended by over 2000 residents. Tom Nkoane, the president of AZASO, told the meeting that "it would be senseless for a black man to continue paying high rents as it he was paying for his slavery." All the speakers urged the residents not to pay a cent more on their rents. (*Post* 31.3.80).

The Urban Bantu Community Council has attempted several times since 1976 to raise rents. The prospect of mass resistance has led each time to the postponement of the increases. But later in 1980, the Council took advantage of the banings of public gatherings to announce a 75% increase to be introduced in the three stages between 1 August and 1 February 1981. The announcement was made during the June/July period when the government had banned meetings in order to frustrate the commemoration



of the Soweto Uprising on 16 June.

The Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) and the SCA, unable to hold public meetings because of the bannings, issued a joint statement on 22 July in which they called upon the residents not to pay the increases in rents but to continue to pay at the old rate. They stated further that "the economic plight of the black people is unchanged. The cost of living is soaring daily. Demands for wage increases have been ignored and/or responded to with repressive, reactionary and ruthless sacking of workers on strike. Black people should not be cowed by bannings of public meetings for massive rejection of the increase". (RDM 23.7.80)

On 7 August about 4000 pupils from schools in the Diepkloof area of Soweto marched through the streets in protest against the higher rents as well as Bantu Education. The pupils were marching to the local offices of the West Rand Administration Board, whose mouthpiece the Community Councils are, when they were intercepted by heavily armed police. Several arrests and "birdshots" forced the pupils to disperse. The pupils tried many times to regroup to continue their demonstration but were broken up each time by police action. With the police tied down by the large numbers of demonstrators in Diepkloof, pupils from schools in other parts of Soweto were able to march without much police disruption.

On 19 August, the Committee of Ten and the SCA petitioned the Supreme Court to stop the Soweto Community Council from increasing the rents. Two days later it became known that at the time he announced the increase, the so-called Mayor of Soweto was in rent arrears for up to three months. Ordinary residents were accustomed to being served with notices threatening eviction if they failed to pay a month's rent.

Yet no action was taken against the "Mayor". As one resident said "If it had been any other Soweto resident in arrears we would have read in the newspapers that he had been evicted and spent cold nights on the street with his family". (Post 21.8.80)

For such small mercies, Thebehal, like the repressive state whose interests he serves, must pretend that the people's protest is not genuine. According to him, resistance to the higher rents came mainly from non-rent payers, such as youth, who would make up the majority of the participants at the public meeting called for Sunday 24 August by the Committee of Ten (Post 21.8.80). The fact is that in the homes of many of the elderly parents and widows discarded without pensions by employers and state alike, it is the youth who earn the rent money.

Sunday's meeting was attended by about 3000 people. They re-affirmed their total opposition to the rent increases and expressed support for the legal action by the SCA and the Committee of Ten. The meeting also noted the people's readiness to boycott buses if the Public Utility Transport Corporation (PUTCO) effected fare increases announced the previous week.

THEBEHALI'S THREAT: "PAY UP OR HAVE YOUR HOUSE LOCKED".

It is difficult to gauge the number of people who responded to the call to support a rent strike. Paying rent is an individual act, much like the act of voting in a ballot box. Away from the collective arena of the factory shop floor or the community, the individual worker is much more easily made to behave in a manner conflicting with his own interests. Accordingly, many residents appear to have paid the increased rents when they first fell due at the beginning

tion, his chief Nico Malan, claiming that only "one per cent had not paid the August increases", said that "at this stage there is no question of evictions for arrears in rent payments" *Sunday Times* 26.10.80).

Most of those who participate as members of Community Councils have a small stake in the apartheid economy, often no more than a license to trade. The more articulate among them, that is the more able they are to sell apartheid, the more benevolence they receive from the government and industry both within the country and abroad. Their vociferous campaigns in support of apartheid institutions are rewarded not only by endless visits abroad as guests of Chambers or Institutes and Industry Commerce, but also by a flow to their pockets and shops of large "loans", either from government Bantu "Development" Corporations or from the private capitalist sector.

However small their stake in the economy

and powerless as the community councils are, these collaborators must act like the sergeant-majors of capitalism and speak as if they were members of the ruling class. They justify their role as collectors and raisers of rents by referring to the rises in the price of water and sewerage disposal. They say the people must pay increased rents to balance the books and maintain their services.

Whose books and whose services, the people ask? In opposition to all this tittle-tattle about services, the people's organisations are all saying that the onus is not upon us to pay for these services. They have urged the people not to pay the increases because, let alone the fact that the people cannot afford them, the creation and siting of the ghettos are the choice of the minority government. It is thus the responsibility of the government to maintain "services" within these areas (Harry Mashabela *R.D.M* 22.9.80).

RACE, CLASS AND CASTE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Open Letter to No Sizwe

Dear Comrade,

I read your book on the national question of South Africa — *One Azania, One Nation** — with great interest. But I have certain grave misgivings about your analysis of the elements in the theory of nation (chapter 6). Your discussion of

course centres around Azania, but the questions you raise are not unrelated to the problems of other Third World countries. And it is for that reason — and in a spirit of enquiry and friendly discourse — that I take issue with you.

The crux of the matter is your discussion of colour-caste — the implications of that analysis for revolutionary practice. But since you try to clear the ground of "terminological" and "conceptual" obstacles before processing to your central

thesis, it is to these issues I would first like to address myself.

1. You seem to be saying that to accept the concept of race — however used (anthropologically, biologically or sociologically) — is to accept a racial classification of people, giving each (race) a weightage or in the alternative, denying it weightage (and therefore a hierarchy of superiority) altogether. 'For just as the supposed inferiority or superiority of races necessarily assumes the existence of groups of human beings called "races", so does the assertion that "races" are equal in their potential for development and the acquisition of skill.' So that, for you, it is as meaningless to say that some races are superior to others as it is to say that all races are equal. Hence there is no such thing as race.

But you cannot do away with racism by rejecting the concept of race.

2. You deny the reality of race as a biological entity. Hence you deny the existence of racial groups. For the limited purposes of genetic science, however, you are prepared to describe such groups as "breeding populations" — since "such a description has no coherent political, economical or ideological significance". But however you describe them — and however 'inherently' neutral the description — some "breeding populations" do think of themselves as superior to other "breeding populations" and act out that belief to their own social, economic and political advantage. Changing the description does not change the practice — but the practice can taint the description till that ceases to be neutral (so that for racism we merely substitute 'breeding populationism').

In the final analysis, it is the practice that defines terminology, not terminology the practice. The meaning of a word is not 'the action it produces' — as you

seem to maintain with I.A. Richards. If so, to destroy the word would be to destroy the act — and that is metaphysics. On the contrary, it is action which gives meaning to a word — it is in the act that the word is made flesh. In the beginning was the act, not the word. Thus 'black', which the practice of racism defined as a pejorative term, ceases to be pejorative when that practice is challenged. Black is as black does.

You cannot do away with racism by using a different terminology.

3. Similarly, the use of the term ethnicity to differentiate between human groups that 'for some natural, social or cultural reason come to constitute a (temporary) breeding population' is equally irrelevant. In fact, it is, as you say, 'dangerously misleading'. For, in trying to remove the idea of group superiority while keeping the idea of group difference, ethnicity sidles into a culturalism which predicates separate but equal development, apartheid. It substitutes the vertical division of ethnicity for the horizontal division of class, political pluralism for class conflict, and freezes the class struggle.

4. The concept of national groups implies as you say, 'a fragmentation of the population into potentially or actually antagonistic groupings', and thereby facilitates 'the maintenance of hegemony by the ruling classes'. And the concept of national minorities, I agree, is essentially a European one and one that once again obscures the essential class nature of society.

5. But 'race' in its original sense of 'a group of persons or animals or plants connected by common descent or origin' (*Shorter Oxford Dictionary*) is no less neutral a term than "breeding populations". And that there are differences between such groups is an observable fact. What is

* No Sizwe, *One Azania, One Nation: the national question in South Africa* (London, Zed Press, 1979).

of August, only to complain afterwards that they had done so under harassment from WRAB officials. This should be seen in the context that no black workers — and very few workers anywhere in the world — pay rent by bank standing orders: in Soweto, workers call individually at WRAB offices to pay rents. Once a number had paid the higher rents under duress, the rest of the residents were subject to a confusion which the government could exploit to break the resistance.

That a considerable number of residents refused to pay the increases is clear from the threats that the Soweto Bantu Community Council issued at the end of August. The Council warned residents "to pay up or have your house locked". Some residents who were already in receipt of eviction notices, handed them in to the SCA and the Committee of Ten who urged the residents to ignore them. (Post 30.8.80)

At public meetings held in Jabavu and Chiawelo on 14 September, the Civic Associations told Soweto residents that the Bantu Community Council could issue many eviction notices, but could not evict all the Soweto residents nor the thousands who had continued to pay the old rents. (Post 15.9.80) They cited the example of Port Elizabeth where, in a similar protest, the people had not paid rents since the beginning of the year, and the Council had proved unable to evict all the protestors. Mr Leonard Mosala, a leading member of the Committee of Ten, told the Chiawelo meeting:

"Every struggle has people who sell themselves to the oppressor, sell their families and children. But these people have never been able to stop change from coming. By refusing to pay the increased rents, we are demonstrating that we need the little money we have

to educate our children. We have been excluded from economic activity and the quality of our education is intended to keep us in subservient positions" (Post 15.9.80)

WOMEN'S FEDERATION AND AZAPO ORGANISE MASS ANTI-RENT INCREASE PROTEST

On 5 October, the Soweto Bantu Community Council invited Koornhof to visit Soweto and awarded him the "freedom of the city". The Women's Federation of South Africa with the backing of Azapo used the occasion to demonstrate against Koornhof, the Council and the increased rents. The residents were called upon to stay away from work and to stage mass demonstrations. Hundreds of residents responded very early in the morning, organising pickets at bus stops and railway stations. Placards proclaimed: "One irreplaceable life, but 100 replaceable jobs". That same morning a part of the main rail line through Soweto was damaged, and the police reported finding African National Congress literature on the scene.

Afraid that the masses would direct their protest against them as well, PUTCO withdrew its bus services from operating inside Soweto and the banks remained closed for the day. Support for the mass demonstration came from local businessmen who closed their shops and the taxi-drivers who kept off the roads.

The planned motorcade through Soweto to "welcome" Koornhof was cancelled at the last minute. Instead, he arrived in a camouflaged helicopter, to be greeted by over 5000 demonstrators chanting freedom songs and the power slogan "Amandla Ngawethu". The police used dogs and teargas to disperse the demonstrators, but only succeeded in cordoning off the Council premises

in which the reception for Koornhof was held. A representative from the Women's Federation was allowed in to hand a memorandum to Koornhof. The women rejected the imposition of both Community Councils and Thebehali on the people, and told Koornhof in no uncertain terms: "Soweto cannot and will not pay the new rents".

In spite of intense police harassment — not even Koornhof escaped the tear gas — it was clear that the people were going to sustain the demonstration for the whole day. Those who gathered outside the Council's offices carried placards with messages such as Koornhof "return to your own country" and "Thebehali thrives on black poverty". Demonstrators injured by the police received treatment on the spot from Dr. Nthato Motlana, Chairman of the Committee of Ten. As soon as the crowds sighted him, he was carried shoulder high to oppose him, as the "god of the deprived in Soweto", to Thebehali and Koornhof, peering through a window of the Council's offices. An associate of Thebehali commented later, "I wanted to cry when I saw David Thebehali standing up there with his white advisors. I wanted to tell him: 'David, if you go down they will abuse you, but at least you will be with the people, not up here alone with your white advisors'". (Africa 24.10.80)

THE SIXPERCENTERS AND URBAN BANTU CIRCUSES

We have confined attention to Soweto only showing how the people, together with their organisations — the Civic Associations, the Women's Federation and AZAPO — responded to the rent increases there. However, rent increases were announced in many parts of the country, and in most places the issue was taken up by residents' organisations

specially formed for the purpose. Everywhere the confrontation was between the residents' organisations and the government-imposed Community Councils.

The Community Councils come from a long pedigree of dummy institutions — advisory boards, the Bunga, Native Representative Councils, and Native Representatives in Parliament. Opposition to these institutions was always premised upon the fact that they were creations of a Parliament in which the people had no voice; nor did they have any other powers whatsoever. Some organisations, notably the ANC and South African Communist Party, have participated in these institutions on the grounds that their platform could be used for propagandist purposes in the interests of the struggle for national liberation. But it is almost axiomatic, anywhere in the racially dominated societies of Southern Africa, that participation in government-created institutions leads to reformism and a policy of accommodation with the oppressors — "internal settlements", Turnhalle, Buthelezi, Thebehali and manifold variations upon the same theme.

In the State's pretence of conferring power on the latest version of urban dummy institutions, the Community Councils are able to collect rent and manage local services in the ghettos. Harry Mashabela correctly described these functions as "fronting for administration boards and so further alienating themselves from residents" (R.D.M. 80) For behind each Council and each "Mayor" (as is the case with the so-called Legislative Assemblies in the Bantustans) is a white political appointee to ensure that the puppets speak and act correctly. It is only when the puppets fail that the white chief steps forward into the open. Thus when Thebehali threatened rent strikers with vic-

material, however, is neither the term nor the group differences it implies, but the differential power exercised by some groups over others by virtue of, and on the basis of, these differences — which in turn engenders the belief that such differences are material. What gives race a bad name, in other words, is not the racial differences it implies or even the racial prejudice which springs from these differences, but the racist ideology that grades these differences in a hierarchy of power — in order to rationalise and justify exploitation. And in that sense it belongs to the period of capitalism.

C. Your 'central thesis', however, is that 'colour-caste' best describes 'the officially classified population registration groups in South Africa' — and that it is of 'pivotal political importance to characterise them as such'. About the importance of correct analysis for correct political action I have no disagreement. But, for that very reason, I find your characterisation of South Africa's racial groups as colour-castes not only wrong, but misleading.

Your argument for using the caste concept is made on the basis that South Africa's racial system (my phrase) has the same characteristics as the caste system in India.* These refer to such things as rituals, privileges, mode of life, and group cohesion ('an integrative as opposed to a separatist dynamic'). And whether or not 'the origin of the caste system in India is related to the question of colour', the crucial difference is that in India it is 'legitimised by cultural-religious criteria', whereas in South Africa it is 'legitimised by so-called "racial" criteria'. But in both, caste relations are 'social relations based on private property carried over in amen-

ded form from the pre-capitalist colonial situation to the present capitalist period'. To 'distinguish it in its historical specificity', however, you would characterise the caste system in South Africa as a colour-caste system — in which 'the castes articulate with the fundamental class structure of the social formations...'

But, in the first place, these are analogies at the level of the superstructure, with a passing consideration for the 'historical specificity' that distinguishes the two systems. They relate to ideological, cultural characteristics adjusted to take in considerations of class and social formations, but they do not spring from an analysis of the specific social formations themselves — they are not historically specific. That specificity has to be sought not in this or that set of religious or racial criteria, but in the social formation and therefore the historical epoch from which those criteria spring. The social formation in which the Indian caste system prevailed is qualitatively different to the social formation in South Africa, and indeed to that of India today. Secondly, it is not enough to say that caste relations are 'social relations in private property carried over in amended form' from a pre-capitalist era to a capitalist one, without specifying at the same time that private property in the earlier period referred mainly to land, whereas in capitalist society it refers also to machinery, factories, equipment. And that alters the nature of their respective social relations fundamentally. Thirdly, and most importantly, you make no reference to the *function* of caste. Caste relations in India grew organically out of caste functions of labour. They were relations of production predicated by the level of the productive forces but determined by Hindu ideology and polity. But as the productive forces rose and the relations of production changed accordingly, caste lost its original *function* — and, un-

needed by capital, it was outlawed by the state. But because India, unlike South Africa, is a society of a thousand modes, caste still performs some function in the interstices of its pre-capitalist formation and caste relations in its culture. South Africa, however, has caste relations without ever having had a caste function. Such relations have not grown out of a pre-capitalist mode; nor are they relations of production stemming from the capitalist mode. They are, instead, social relations enforced by the state to demarcate racial groups with a view to differential exploitation within a capitalist system.

To put it differently, caste as an instrument of exploitation belongs to an earlier social formation — what Samir Amin calls the tributary mode — where the religio-political factor and not the economic was dominant and hence determined social relations. The Hindu religion, like all pre-capitalist religions, encompassed all aspects of human life and Hindu ideology determined the social relations from which the class-state could extract the maximum surplus: the caste system. It is in that sense that India's great marxist scholar Kosambi defines caste as 'class at a lower level of the productive forces'.¹

In the capitalist system, however, it is the economic factor which is dominant; it is that which determines social relations and, in the final analysis, the political and ideological superstructures. And how these are shaped and modified depends on how the economic system is made to yield maximum surplus value with minimum social dislocation and political discontent. Exploitation, in other words, is mediated through the state which ostensibly represents the interests of all classes.

Since European capitalism emerged with the conquest of the non-white world, the exploitation of the peoples of these countries found justification in theories of white superiority. Such at-

titudes were already present in Catholicism, but, muted by the belief that the heathen could be saved, found no ideological justification in scripture. The forces that unleashed the bourgeois revolution, however, were also the forces that swept aside the religious inhibitions that stood in the way of the new class and installed instead a new set of beliefs that sought virtue in profit and profit in exploitation. 'Material success was at once the sign and reward of ethnical superiority' and riches were 'the portion of the Godly than of the wicked'² — and each man's station in life was fixed by heavenly design and unalterable. You were rich because you were good, you were good because you were rich — and poverty was what the poor had brought upon themselves. But to fulfil one's 'calling' was virtue enough.

In such a scheme of things, the bourgeoisie were the elect of God, the working class destined to labour and the children of Ham condemned to eternal servitude — 'a servant of servants... unto his brethren'. Each man was locked into his class and his race, with the whites on top and the blacks below. And between the two there could be no social mixing, for that would be to disrupt the race-class base on which exploitation was founded. To prevent such mixing, however, recourse was had to Old Testament notions of purity and pollution. Social or caste barriers, in other words, were not erected to preserve racial purity; rather, racial purity was 'erected' to preserve social, and therefore economic, barriers. The reasons for the racial divide, that is, were economic, but the form their expression took was social.

Thus, the racism of early capitalism was set in caste-like features — not ordained by religion, as in Hinduism, but inspired by it, not determining the extraction of surplus but responding to it. The Calvinist diaspora, 'the seed-bed of capita-

* I am not here concerned with Cox's or Bererman's position — let alone that of Van den Bergh.

listic economy³, would sow the seeds of racism, but how they took root and grew would depend on the ground on which they fell.

In general, however, as capitalism advanced and became more 'secular', racism began to lose its religious premise and, with it, its caste features and sought validity instead in 'scientific' thought and reason — reaching its nineteenth-century apogee in Eugenics and Social Darwinism. Not fortuitously, this was also the period of colonial-capitalist expansion. But at the same time, with every advance in the level of the productive forces and, therefore, in the capitalist mode — from mercantile to industrial to finance and monopoly capital — racist ideology was modified to accord with the economic imperative. Slavery is abolished when wage-labour (and slave rebellion) makes it uneconomical; racism in the colonies becomes outmoded with the advent of neo-colonialism and is consigned to the metropole with the importation of colonial labour. And within the metropolises themselves, the contours and content of racism are changed and modified to accommodate the economic demands (class) and political resistance (race) of black people. Racism may yet remain as a cultural artefact of an earlier epoch, but racism recedes in order that capital might survive.*

But not in South Africa. There, though the economy is based in the capitalist mode, the superstructure bears no organic relationship to it. It does not on the whole respond to the economic imperatives of the system. And that inflexibility in turn inhibits the base, holds it down, prevents it from pursuing its

own dynamic. Hence, there is a basic contradiction between the superstructure and the base.

Where that contradiction is located, however, is in that part of the superstructure which relates to the black working class — and black people generally. In effect, there are two superstructures (to the same economic base) — one for the whites and another for the blacks. The white superstructure, so to speak, accords with the economic imperatives — and is modified with changes in the level of the productive forces and of class struggle. It exhibits all the trappings of capitalist democracy (including a labour movement that represents the interests of the white working class) and of capitalist culture (except when it comes to mixing with the blacks). For the blacks, however, there is no franchise, no representation, no rights, no liberties, no economic or social mobility, no labour movement that cannot be put down with the awesome power of the state — no nothing. The 'black superstructure', in other words, is at odds with the capitalist economy, sets the economy at odds with itself, and inhibits its free development — so that only changes in that superstructure, in racism, can release the economy into its own dynamic. South Africa, therefore, is an exceptional capitalist social formation.

In the second place, South Africa's racist ideology, compared to that of other capitalist societies, has not changed over the years. Instead, it has gathered to itself the traits, features, beliefs, superstitions, habits and customs of both pre-capitalist and capitalist social formations. Its caste features bear an uncanny resemblance to the Hindu caste system of medieval India, though we know them to be inspired by Calvinism, the religion of capital. It combines, in Ken Jordaan's exact phrase, 'the Afrikaner' fundamentalist racism with the instrumentalist racism of British imperialism⁴. It finds authority in reli-

gion and in science both at once — in the doctrines of the Dutch Reformed Church and the teachings of Darwin. ('At the birth of the Union of South Africa', says Jordaan, 'Calvin and Darwin shook hands over the chained body of the black.') It is enforced by a capitalist state and receives its sanction from the church. And it is as open, obtrusive and unashamed as the racism that once justified the trade in human beings.

7. But what are the material conditions that made South Africa's racist ideology so intractable? What is the significance of the modifications that are currently being made in the racist structure?

These are not your questions and I am not competent to answer them, but you (and Johnstone⁵) go some way to answering the first in implying that South African capitalism was neither colonial nor industrial (in the strict sense), but extractive — derived from diamond and gold mining. Which meant that the labour process called for a mass of unskilled labour which was founded in the native black population — and a docile workforce which could be fashioned by racism. Hence, the nature of early South African capitalism reinforced and did not loosen up on racism as, for instance, in the USA.

Secondly, South Africa was a settler society which neither assimilated itself into the indigenous social structure (as Aryan India) nor was able to decimate the native population (as in the USA or the Caribbean). The settlers instead were (and are) a slender minority, distinguished by race and colour, faced with a massive black population. (The only parallel is Zimbabwe.) Hence, the only way they could preserve their economic privileges and their political power was to stand full-square against the encroachments of the black masses.

But — and here I am addressing my-

self to the second question — the demands in the economic imperative, both nationally and internationally, can no longer be ignored. Hence, Botha's attempts to 'modernise' racism — to accord with monopoly capital — by removing its caste features.

There are other changes, however, which have been in train for a longer time — and which are more dangerous. And these, as you rightly point out, are the creation of a black comprador class (comparatively negligible) and, more importantly, of black 'nations'.

In theoretical terms, what these strategies hope to resolve is the contradiction between superstructure and base, and so release the economic forces without incurring the loss of (white) political power. First, by removing the caste barriers and thereby providing social and economic mobility for the black working class within the central social formation. Secondly, by removing the superstructure for the blacks into a social formation of their own, a black state, in which they would appear to govern themselves while still being governed. The conflict, in other words, is extrapolated into a different (black) social formation — which is then subsumed to the needs of the central social formation, thereby maintaining, as you say, the hegemony of the ruling classes — to me, the white ruling class. For, surrounded as South Africa is by black African nations — given the lesson of Zimbabwe — there is no way it is going to cede an iota of white power of which racism is the guarantor. So that even if, at some far point in the future, racism dies for capital to survive, it will have to be resurrected — for capital to survive in white hands.

8. Which brings me to my final point. You say — and perhaps you are forced into saying it by virtue of your colour-caste interpretation (and on behalf of

* Racism refers to attitudes, behaviour, 'race relations'; racism is the systematisation of these into an explicit ideology of racial superiority and their institutionalisation in the state apparatus.

marxist orthodoxy) — that in the final analysis, the struggle in South Africa is a class struggle, to be waged by the working class as a whole, black and white alike.

But, as I hope I have shown, South Africa is the one capitalist country (Zimbabwe might have gone the same way but for black guerrilla struggle) where ideology and not production relations determines white working-class consciousness.* That is not to say that there are no class contradictions between white capital and the white working class, but to say that — vis a vis the black working class — the horizontal division of class assumes the vertical division of race: the horizontal is the vertical. Class is race, race class. In other words, so long as the blacks are forced to remain a race apart, the white working class can never become a class for itself. And as for the blacks, if the unending rebellion of the past few years and the birth of the Black Consciousness Movement are anything to go by, they are fast becoming both a race and a class for themselves — and that is a formidable warhead of liberation. In sum, the racist ideology of South Africa is an explicit, systematic, holistic ideology of racial superiority — so explicit that it makes clear that the white working class can only maintain its standard of living on the basis of a black under-class, so systematic as to guarantee that the white working class will continue to remain a race for itself,** so holistic as to ensure that the colour line is the power line is the poverty line.

To reiterate, in its ability to influence the economic structure — rather than be

influenced by it — South Africa's racist ideology belongs to a pre-capitalist social formation but, anachronistically, is present in a capitalist one — thereby distorting it. (It is not a pure capitalist social formation, in other words.) The emphasis on the ideological instance produces a characterisation of the population groups in South Africa as caste groups demarcated on colour lines (and 'articulating' with the class structure): an emphasis on the economic mode produces a straightforward (marxist) race-class concept and characterisation — thereby leading one to conclude that the economy in trying to burst its bonds would burst also the racist nexus. But if they are both comprehended equally and at once, holistically, South Africa shows up as an exceptional capitalist social formation in which race is class and class race — and the race struggle is the class struggle.

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Solidarity with Solidarnosc

The Polish Working Class Struggle for Independent, Self-Managed Unions

In the last 25 years the working class of Poland have repeatedly acted decisively in an attempt to resolve their socio-economic problems. There were the mass strike actions of 1956, 1970, 1976 and 1980. Three of these upheavals resulted in cosmetic changes in the government and leadership of the Polish United Workers' (Communist) Party.

The tradition of specifically proletarian struggle in Poland dates back to the 1905 revolution. That revolution, together with Czarist Russia's at the same time, signalled the historic fact that in the 20th Century, in semi and fully industrialised countries alike, the working class is to be a major actor in struggles for social change. Either the working class leads the revolution and recreates society in its own image, or surrenders the role of leadership to those doomed to play second fiddle to the interests of the dominant class.

Between the wars, the Polish working class engaged in intense and prolonged struggles in which they suffered many setbacks. Each time they were confronted by the armed force of the state. Two years before the outbreak of World War II, a peasant political strike took place — an event so rare as to be a phenomenon. The working class continued their struggles throughout the duration of the war against fascism and the Nazi army of occupation.

But why is it that in Poland, now a workers' state by reputation, the working class continues to struggle for "things to change"? Why is it that an increase in the price of meat can lead to so great an upheaval as we witnessed during the summer of 1980? Why is it that the increase in the price of meat, the initial spark to a long hot summer, could recede into the background, become a forgotten factor, and give way to political demands?

In spite of its high level of economic development, Poland contains many precapitalist features in varying degrees. Small private peasants continue to be dominant. As a result, 42% of the population is rural and 23% of the occupations are agricultural. A significant proportion of the rest of the working class is partially tied to agriculture. All this makes employment due to agriculture to be higher in Poland as compared to other countries which have attained the same level of economic development.

It is precisely the domination of agriculture by small private peasants which many observers on the left have employed to ground an explanation of the working class upheavals in Poland. On the surface this seems a plausible explanation, moroso in that the present strikes, as those of 1970 and 1976, were initiated by an attempt by the government to raise the price of agricultural products: meat and other food items.

As the explanation goes, the food

* This may be a heresy, but South Africa is a country that imites heretics.

** Note, for instance, how white workers have recently demonstrated their unrelenting opposition to blacks moving up into skilled jobs — thereby serving to entrench white racial superiority and engendering fascist attitudes, which the state could well exploit.

crisis is due to the absence of collectivisation of farms resulting in the continued dominance of small farms. But Włodzimierz Brus who in 1968 was dismissed from a professorial post at Warsaw University for supporting the students' revolt regards such an explanation to be an oversimplification. He notes that the resistance of the Polish peasants was (and is) probably the strongest in Eastern Europe: a social reality which successive Polish governments have taken into account and could not have done otherwise. Large scale collectivisation, in the face of such resistance, would have led to disastrous results as in the Soviet Union under Stalin. Thus in place of enforced collectivisation, the State in Poland opted for state farms alongside the many private farms. The food crisis, according to Brus, is due to the failure to modernise the dominant private sector in agriculture. The increase in the average consumption of the working class household could only exacerbate a food crisis determined by a lack of sufficient progress in the modernisation of agriculture.

The government's measure to resolve the crisis in agriculture by raising the price of meat was opposed by the working class and consequently rescinded each time it was tried in 1970, 1976, and 1980. Why these seemingly rational economic measures are each time rejected by the working class, Brus explains: "If you take the Hungarian population, they have in the last four years accepted very substantial increases in meat prices. These were accepted because the overall situation was different both economically and particularly politically. In Poland, however, there was a crisis of confidence — and you don't accept measures in such a situation which don't mean anything but an attempt to get out of a crisis at the expense of the population. No-

thing else was done — it was the only measure that was attempted".

Why has the Polish state failed to implement the modernisation of agriculture? Brus, granting that external economic factors have had an influence, explains that the root of the failure is political. Communication and contact with the people is, he says, "in the first place a political and not a technical problem. Without creating true conditions of freedom of speech and association the information channels get stuck — you only hear what you like to hear". Furthermore, the rebellion of workers when there are clear economic grounds for raising food prices "has meant that the relationships between the rulers and the ruled had not changed, that the workers did not regard themselves as co-owners of the means of production. . . the trade unions were as fictitiously representative".

Not a single attempt in the past having succeeded to raise the price of meat, the Polish government in 1980 thought it would act tactfully and introduce the higher prices by stealth. Special shops selling at what are called commercial prices enjoyed the monopoly in the choice cuts of meat. In these shops the prices rose by between 40 and 80%. Meat in the workers' factory canteens was also brought within the list of commercial prices. When, on 1st July, the government publicly announced the increase of meat prices, it made clear that the increases would only apply selectively and variations would occur from region to region. These were all tactics to blunt a confrontation with the workers on a national scale.

But the government enjoys no monopoly in learning from the mistakes of the past. As Daniel Singer has observed, its "clever tactics" would have worked if the Polish working class had not learnt

anything from their past experience. It was the clever tactics which drove the workers to strike.

The drawing of lessons from the past did not stop with the workers and the government. The intellectuals, including Marxists, left Catholics and nationalists, had come to recognise that their own special problems regarding the right to dissent could not be resolved in isolation from the workers' struggle. The seeds of unity between the workers and the intellectual were sown in 1976 when workers on strike were detained and given severe prison sentences. The intellectuals organised under KOR (later renamed the Committee for Self-Defence) gave help to the workers by carrying out tasks such as keeping an eye on acts of injustice and harassment by the State, and exposing these acts in the underground press. As a result, Brus notes that "all this helped slowly to develop an atmosphere of mutual trust between those dissidents and the most active workers in different parts of the country". And, when the strikes in 1980 started, it was KOR again who monitored them and brought them to the attention of the entire working class in circumstances where, because of State monopoly over the media, the government kept a news blackout on the events.

The confidence felt by the workers in KOR was displayed when the Gdansk Strike Committee called in the intellectuals as "experts" to help with negotiations over agreements with the government. The Strike Committee made the signing of the agreements conditional to the release of all detained KOR members as well as all other worker activists.

With more shipyards joining in the strikes and sit-ins, the government resorted to a policy of divide and rule. The bus drivers in Gdynia were offered a rise in their wages on condition that they made an immediate return to work.

The next day the workers in the Lenin yard were offered a rise on condition they ended the occupation immediately. But the economic demands had been transcended by political ones. The workers were no longer interested in compromises. Besides, the entire working class in Gdansk (before the strike spread to other parts of Poland) had to win their demands first. "We haven't the right to rat on the others: we must continue to strike, in solidarity, until everyone wins", said Lech Walesa.

Each plant in Gdansk elected a Strike Committee and all these were co-ordinated by a Central Strike Committee, the M.K.S. The workers refused to re-elect representatives to the State Unions. They formulated their demands: guarantee of the right to strike; freedom of opinion, expression and publication; application of the international conventions on trade union liberties ratified by Poland; representation of "all socio-political currents" in the elections; "LIQUIDATION" of the commercial shops and the privileges enjoyed by police and party apparatus; independence of the judiciary to be respected; free access to the media for the churches; a national debate on the means of getting out of the economic morass; family allowances to equal those paid to the army and the security police; fair allocation of housing; re-instatement of dismissed comrades; fair reporting of the conflict in the mass media; a monument to commemorate the victims of state repression in 1970; etc.

A very long list of political demands which the leaders of the strike realistically knew they could not hope to win all at once. But they put forward demands in large numbers in order to raise the consciousness of the people. They knew that the situation provided a unique opportunity to win their most important demand: workers' autonomous organisations. "We may be forced back to

a dishful of soup a day. But we want the right to make our own decisions concerning problems relating to where we work", Lech Walesa said. Another statement by him: "We may make concessions to the government which is in a parlous economic state. We may modify our claim to the 2000 zloty increase. But on the question of our own independent self-managed organisations, we'll make no compromises whatsoever. . .". Bernard Guetta, *Le Monde* correspondent put it thus: "For them the key thing is that the workers' autonomous organisations should survive after the strikes".

Demands which are clearly formulated act in a way which lends discipline to a mass movement in upheaval. Obviously when people know precisely what it is they are struggling for they are not likely to be detracted. That is why, for example, the bigger and stronger shipyards in the Gdansk region would not sign agreements and give up the struggle at the expense of weaker ones.

And need for discipline there certainly was to keep Soviet military intervention at bay. The government made veiled threats that if they could not solve the country's problems, others would do it for them. The top hierarchy of the Catholic Church intervened in a similar manner. Cardinal Wysznski, accorded the privilege of a television appearance, asked the workers to show a sense of responsibility. (Within this hierarchy, Singer says "there were obvious divisions as to how much should be done to help the Communist rulers").

Bogdan Borusewicz, the historian and leader of KOR in Gdansk, exemplified the restraint and discipline thus: "There must be no demands which either force the government to resort to violence or lead to its collapse. . . We must leave them some exits. We need more economic demands and negotiable political ones. For example, the liberation of pol-

itical prisoners, giving their names".

Inside the plants which they occupied the workers elected commissions to scrutinise every sort of problem. A team of workers to keep the factory premises clean, another to keep up the maintenance of the machines, and yet another to stand picket at the gates. Hospitals, public utilities and bakeries were allowed to function as normal. A ban on the consumption of alcohol. Street demonstrations forbidden. "The memory of December 1970 "Guetta reported, "is in everybody's mind: they don't want to smash anything, still less to be mown down by gunfire. They want to win".

After 18 days of the factory occupations, the Communist Party government of Poland conceded the workers' most important demands. In a protocol signed by representatives of the government and the interfactory strike committee, the M.K.S., agreement was reached on the following:

- 1) "Acceptance of free unions independent of the Party and of the employers on the basis of Convention 87 of the I.L.O. (International Labour Organisation) ratified by Poland, concerning trade union liberties".
- 2) "Guarantee of the right to strike and of the security of strikers and persons who help them".
- 3) "To respect the freedom of expression and publication guaranteed by the Constitution of People's Poland, and therefore not to proceed against independent publications, and to give access to the mass media to representatives of all regions".
- 4) "Re-establishment of the rights of those dismissed — after the strikes of 1970 and 1976, and of the students excluded from higher education for

their opinions. Liberation of all political prisoners (including Edmund Zadrozynski, Jan Kozlowski and Marek Kozlowski). Cessation of repression for holding opinions".

- 5) "To publicise, through the mass media, the formation of the NKS and to publish its demands".

The Gdansk Protocols obviously cannot resolve overnight the very serious economic problems facing Poland. But with the exemplary restraint and discipline shown by the workers throughout the strike, never once having lost sight of the goal of their struggle and now backed by independent self-managed trade unions, the atmosphere certainly exists in which the economic problems can be tackled.

For the many lessons which the Azanian struggle is drawing from the class struggles in Poland, the words of Daniel Singer are apposite:

"Western observers have been bewildered and bewitched by the glorious Polish Summer. I am not talking about the servants of the establishment who love strikes if they are staged on the other side of the Elbe. I mean the Western left, and I think there is some justification. What do you do with a movement which starts, as the Gdansk strike did to the tunes of both the *International* and the religious-patriotic hymn to God who has protected Poland over the centuries? Lenin, whose statue was unmolested but also ignored, would have been puzzled by the praying strikers, though with his proverbial realism he would have discerned the hard core of class struggle beneath the religious veneer. . . What do you do when the events and heroes of current history do not conform exactly to the desired or expected shape? Do you curse the ironies of history, sulk and withdraw to cultivate your own garden? Or do you attempt to understand the

reason why, and try to influence, however slightly, the course of events?"

R.P.

Acknowledgements; The material on the Polish strikes is based on:

- 1) Lessons of the Polish Summer — an interview with Włodzimierz Brus in *Marxism Today*, November 1980
- 2) Class Struggles in Poland by Daniel Singer in *Monthly Review*, November 1980
- 3) *Solidarity for Social Revolution* (Supplement), no.14, Oct/Nov 1980 in which is contained a translation of Bernard Guetta's report for *Le Monde* and the full details of the first five points of the Gdansk Protocols.





ONE PEOPLE
ONE AZANIA