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Cartoon by Mogorosi Motshumi

**South Africa:  
The Struggle for  
Revolution Continues!**

**WORKERS AND OPPRESSED UNITE!**

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# Revolutionary Communism

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# South Africa: Forward to the Building of a Mass Workers' Party Based on a Revolutionary Program!

*Statement of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 5.2.2014*

1. South Africa's largest single trade union, the metal worker's NUMSA, has broken its long-standing ties with the bourgeois ANC and the Stalinist SACP. NUMSA has also raised – albeit in algebraic terms – the possibility of forming a mass workers' party. In addition, COSATU – the country's largest federation – is deeply divided and could split in the next few months because of the loyal support for the ANC government by the dominant faction in COSATU's leadership. The recently founded *Workers and Socialist Party* (WASP) as well as the *Economic Freedom Fighters* (EFF), led by the former ANC youth leader Julius Malema, reflect the desire of the most advanced sectors of the workers and poor to build a new party alternative to the bourgeois ANC. This creates the historic opportunity to form an independent mass workers' party for the first time in South Africa, a party which could lead the working class and the poor towards socialism. However, this exciting opportunity is in danger since, at the top of NUMSA, EFF, and WASP, are leaderships which have proven during their history that they are incapable of fighting for the historic interests of the working class. To build a mass workers' party which is really independent of the bourgeoisie, socialists in South Africa must organize on the basis of a revolutionary program in order to fight against these existing petty-bourgeois leaderships.

## **NUMSA's Break with the ANC: a Historic Step**

2. It is certainly no exaggeration to call the results of NUMSA's Special National Congress in December 2013 "historic." There, NUMSA denounced the so-called Triple Alliance (ANC, SACP, and COSATU) as "*been captured by rightwing forces*" and "*calls on COSATU to break from the Alliance*". In addition, NUMSA resolved to "*[withhold] our subscriptions to COSATU as an ultimatum for the convening of the Special National Congress of COSATU.*" In line with this decision, in late January 2014 nine unions issued an ultimatum to the leadership of COSATU regarding the calling of a Special Congress before the end of March, and demanding the immediate reinstatement of Zwelinzima Vavi as General Secretary. (The latter was recently sacked by the pro-ANC faction in the COSATU trade union bureaucracy.) The NUMSA congress also resolved to "*lead in the establishment of a new United Front that will coordinate struggles in the workplace and in communities, in a way similar to the UDF of the 1980s.*" In addition, it resolved that "*Numsa will explore the establishment of a Movement for Socialism as the working class needs a political organisation committed in its policies and actions to the establishment of a socialist South Africa.*"

3. These decisions are historic. They put on the agenda the possibility of breaking up the reactionary popular front which – with the help of the Stalinist-reformist SACP – tied the workers' movement to the ANC for many decades. The ANC was initially a petty-bourgeois-nationalist movement which was transformed into a bourgeois, pro-imperialist party in the early 1990s. In 1994, the ANC – with

the full support of the SACP and the COSATU leadership – concluded a reactionary deal with the white monopoly capitalists in South Africa. This rotten deal formally ended Apartheid and was cheered by the reformists and most centrists (including the DSM/CWI) as "national liberation." In fact it was a democratic counterrevolution – as were the sell-outs and de-mobilizations of the heroic liberation struggles of the workers and youth that occurred in many other countries in the 1970s and 1980s. In fact, the white monopoly capitalists were allowed to continue their rule in exchange for accepting the ANC as the new executive of the ruling class, and by incorporating a small layer of black politicians and capitalists.

## **South Africa's Post-Apartheid Capitalism: Continuation of Super-Exploitation and Poverty for the Black Working Class and Oppressed**

4. Since 1994, the ANC has ruled the country in the service of the bourgeoisie. While formal political Apartheid has been abolished, social Apartheid continues. Capitalist South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world. According to official statistics, more than a quarter of the population is unemployed. Related to this is the dramatic increase of diseases and violence. It is estimated that a total of at least 2.6 million people have died of AIDS (mainly young adults and children), and as a result, the median age of death has fallen from 52 in 1997 to 43 in 2007. Another expression of the society's decline is the extremely high level of murder, rape, and violence against women (the homicide rate for women was 25 per 100,000 in the early 2000s, six times the global average!)

5. While a small black middle class and an even smaller black bourgeoisie have been created after 1994, the huge majority of the black population remains super-exploited and poor. Official unemployment among black people is five times higher than among whites. Only 2% of white households earned less than Rand 20,000 (\$ 2,500) a year, compared with 49% of black and 23% of colored households. At the same time, the rich capitalist and land-owning classes remain nearly completely white. While the white population constitutes only 9.2% of the population, over 95% of the Johannesburg Securities Exchange is still controlled by white capitalists. The white minority nets 45% of total household income, about eight times that of black households. Similarly, the land expropriation of the black population continues to exist: A small elite of 60,000 white farmers own almost 87% of the land.

6. In addition, an increasing number of migrants now live in South Africa – the majority of these are about 3 million documented and undocumented migrants from Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Mozambique, and Swaziland. As migrants, they are even more super-exploited by South Africa's capitalists than the native black workers.

7. This development is a glaring confirmation of the Marxist thesis that neither poverty nor national and racial oppression can be abolished as long as capitalism



continues to exist. Equality for all can *only* be achieved if the working class overthrows the capitalists by means of a socialist revolution and builds a workers' republic. In other words, as Trotsky explained, Marxists have to combine the democratic tasks with the socialist tasks in the strategy of permanent revolution.

8. It is hardly surprising that the workers and poor have become increasingly disenchanted with the ANC after two decades of its rule. In the last two elections, only 56% of the registered voters went to the polls. However in 2012, anger turned into mass resistance culminating in the heroic miners' strike in Marikana in August 2012. The brutal repression by the police was an important lesson for millions of workers. It demonstrated that the ANC government is an executive of the bosses, that the SACP bureaucracy, which has two ministers in the government, is equally a class enemy, and that the COSATU bureaucracy was either also supporting the repression of the miners or remained passive and failed to mobilize support for the miners. Marikana convinced the workers' vanguard that it needs unions which are liberated from the treacherous bureaucracy, as well as and a new party which serves the working class and not the capitalists' interests.

9. It has been this massive shift in the consciousness of the workers and youth that led 100,000 miners to leave NUM/COSATU and join AMCU and propelled the foundation of the Malema's EFF as well as the WASP. Similarly, it was this massive pressure from the rank and file workers which forced the leadership of NUMSA to end its support for the ANC and call for a new United Front as well as a "*Movement for Socialism*." These developments reflect that South Africa has entered a pre-revolutionary phase.

### The Challenge of a New Mass Workers' Party

10. These developments are of major importance for all socialists in South Africa and around the world. Without doubt, in terms of the class struggle and working class consciousness, South Africa is today one of the most advanced countries world-wide. The South African workers' vanguard now has the historic opportunity to form for the first time an independent mass workers' party in South Africa, a party which could lead the working class and the poor towards socialism. However, the pre-requisites for achieving this are a realistic assessment of the existing leaderships, the elaboration of a revolutionary action program, and the unification of the South African revolutionaries in a Bolshevik organization.

11. Socialists should strongly welcome the decisions of the NUMSA congress and join the thousands of activists in moving forward with a policy of class struggle. However, at the same time, they must differentiate between the enthusiasm of the rank and file activists and the reformist political calculations of the union leaders. Socialists judge the NUMSA leadership not by its words in congress resolutions, but by its deeds. What has been the record of the union bureaucracy in the past two decades? It politically and financially supported the capitalist government ANC party. What was the record of the union bureaucracy during the Marikana strike? It failed to mobilize its support for the miners and call for the expulsion of the police union from COSATU and the banishment of the strike-breaking

NUM leadership. Of course, socialists must not draw any sectarian conclusions from this. If, rather, NUMSA now mobilizes for mass actions against the government, this must receive the full support of socialists. Similarly, socialists should call on NUMSA to launch a mass workers' party and initiate or participate in every possible activity towards this goal. But at the same time, socialists must warn against any illusion regarding the NUMSA bureaucracy.

### Obstacles to the Founding of a New Workers' Party

12. Not only has the NUMSA leadership failed in the past, the dangers of future betrayals are already lurking in the resolutions of their recent congress. These fail to give a clear commitment to the building of a mass workers' party and to challenge the ANC in the upcoming elections this year. They also praise the old ANC program – the "*Freedom Charter*" – and commit themselves to fight for it. But the "*Freedom Charter*" was a petty-bourgeois democratic, not a working class socialist program. The historic ANC leader Nelson Mandela explained this unambiguously as early as 1956: "*Whilst the Charter proclaims democratic changes of a far-reaching nature, it is by no means a blueprint for a socialist state but a programme of the unification of various classes and groupings amongst the people on a democratic basis. Under socialism the workers hold state power. They and the peasants own the means of production, the land, the factories and the mills. All production is for use and not for profit. The Charter does not contemplate such profound economic and political changes. Its declaration 'The People Shall Govern!' visualises the transfer of power not to any single social class but to all the people of this country, be they workers, peasants, professional men, or petty-bourgeoisie.*" (Nelson Mandela: Freedom in our Lifetime, 30 June 1956). Thus, the "*Freedom Charter*" already contained the future capitulation to the monopoly capitalists in the early 1990s. A new independent workers' party must be built on a socialist and not a petty-bourgeois program! In addition, the NUMSA resolution calls for a united front "*similar to the UDF of the 1980s.*" But the UDF was a popular front, i.e., an alliance with petty-bourgeois forces that sought to win over sectors of the white bourgeoisie. It was a chief instrument in advancing the sell-out in 1994!

13. The NUMSA leadership is a trade union bureaucracy which is currently moving to the left because it is being forced to do so by pressure from the workers' vanguard. This leadership remains stuck in reformist policies and an orientation towards a popular front. Given the nature of the NUMSA bureaucracy, like that of all trade union bureaucracies, i.e., a privileged layer integrated via numerous strings into the capitalists' system, this cannot be otherwise. In order to transform the unions into organs of the revolutionary class struggle, it is necessary to liberate them from their bureaucracies and win them over to a socialist program. In order to facilitate the process of building unity with NUMSA workers, socialists should apply the united front tactic as developed by the Bolsheviks: They must call on the union leaders to organize militant actions, while at the same time warning the rank and file workers about the dangers of betrayals by the union leadership. They have to focus on closing ranks with the workers and winning them over for a socialist program,

instead of focusing on deals with the bureaucrats. Socialists should work *inside* NUMSA – as well as inside other unions – and organize a revolutionary opposition. They should build a rank and file movement, and win it over for a socialist program, thereby transforming the union into an authentic instrument of class struggle.

14. Julius Malema's *Economic Freedom Fighters* (EFF) have attracted many militant youth as well as sectors of the workers. This is hardly surprising, given the militant rhetoric of the EFF and its support for the Marikana strikers. However, Malema must be judged by his deeds, not his words. Malema, too, has for many years supported the ANC government. Today, he is reaching out to Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the arch-reactionary leader of the *Inkatha Freedom Party*, who collaborated with the white Apartheid regime in the 1980s against the liberation struggle. The EFF is not a workers' party, but rather a petty-bourgeois left-populist force. However, socialists would be dead-wrong to ignore the fact that the EFF today rallies tens of thousands of workers and youth behind it. In addition, in practical terms, Malema's EFF has, in various recent class struggle events, stood to the left of the COSATU bureaucracy and the Stalinist SACP. The task is to work side-by-side with the EFF supporters and implement the united front policy towards the EFF, in order to break the workers and youth away from the Malema leadership.

15. The formation of WASP has been an important step forward since this reflects the political radicalization of vanguard sectors of the militant miners and other workers. Since promoting the formation of a mass workers' party is a chief task in South Africa, socialists should have a positive attitude towards WASP and should work together closely with its militants (including, perhaps, even joining its ranks). However the major defect of WASP is the fact that its leadership is dominated by the right-centrist DSM, the South African section of the CWI. In the 1980s the predecessor of the DSM was part of the ANC and refused to fight for an independent workers' party. In 1994, it supported the ANC in the general elections and was complicit in camouflaging the democratic counter-revolution as "national liberation." Unsurprisingly, the DSM leaders don't say a single word critical of NUMSA's praise for the "Freedom Charter" and the UDF of the 1980s. (See WASP: After Numsa's congress – seize a historical opportunity in the 2014 elections, 30.1.2014.) In addition, the CWI absurdly believes that socialism can be achieved peacefully and via parliamentary elections. It also refuses to defend semi-colonial countries and peoples against imperialist aggressors (e.g., Gaza, Afghanistan, and Iraq). To ensure that WASP becomes an important instrument for the revolutionary class struggle, a strong revolutionary opposition has to be built to win over the entire party – including many of the honest DSM rank and file members – for an authentic socialist program.

#### **What Should be the Program of a new Mass Workers Party?**

16. As we have said earlier, present developments offer excellent opportunities to advance the organization of the workers' vanguard independent of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces and to win them over to a revolutionary program. Socialists must enthusiastically participate

in activities and discussions of NUMSA, EFF, WASP, and other organizations in order to advance a revolutionary program and a class struggle perspective. NUMSA speaks about the need for a united front. This is absolutely correct, and should be welcomed by all socialists. Revolutionaries should propose a *program of struggle* for such a united front. Such a program should include important immediate and transitional demands like: a massive raise of the minimum wage in all sectors; equal wages for women and migrants, a public employment and infrastructure program to abolish unemployment and to improve living and health conditions; the nationalization of the major industry and banking corporations under workers control; the expropriation of the white farmers; etc. The task should be to prepare for a *nation-wide general strike* which unites public sector workers with precarious workers and the unemployed, youth, and the poor. Such a perspective has to go hand in hand with a call to form *factory committees and action councils* in the townships, schools, etc., thereby organizing the broad masses. Furthermore, the formation of *self-defense units* must be promoted to repel the forces of repression which – as we saw at Marikana – are prepared to kill workers in the interest of the bosses. All organizations claiming to defend the interests of the workers and the oppressed should be called to join such a campaign.

17. At the same time, socialists should support all efforts to build a mass workers' party independent of all factions of the bourgeoisie. It would be sectarian to make the adoption of a socialist program a precondition for participating in the formation of a new workers' party. However, from the start socialists should argue for the necessity of an Action Program which outlines the transition from the present situation to the socialist revolution. Such a program should include the *expropriation of the super-rich* – native and foreign, white and black – and the *nationalization of industry and the banks under workers' control*. It should also call for a comprehensive *public reconstruction plan* – elaborated in detail and under the control of the workers and the poor – to build the necessary infrastructure (housing, electricity, transport, health sector, etc.) to eradicate the extreme inequality in living conditions between the rich and poor, and the white and black populations. Another important task would be to rally the (mostly black) rural poor for the *expropriation of the white landowners and the nationalization of the land*. While socialists advocate, in principle, the formation of larger agricultural units to increase productivity, it is up to the rural poor to decide whether they wish to go along with such a policy of cooperatives, or if they prefer to distribute the land among them for individual farming. Finally the workers' party should fight for the overthrow of the capitalist ruling class and the formation of a *government of the workers and poor, based on councils and popular militias of armed masses*.

18. The most urgent task now is to unite all authentic revolutionaries in a Bolshevik organization which will fight for such a program and actively participate in the present process of building a new workers' party. It should also combine such a campaign with the fighting for a new workers' International which, in our opinion, will be the Fifth Workers' International. The RCIT looks forward to discussing these matters and collaborating with revolutionaries, in order to advance the formation of such a revolutionary organization. ■

## Permanent Revolution and South Africa (1986)

*Theses of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International (Predecessor organization of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency, RCIT), originally published in: Permanent Revolution No. 3, 1986*

### Apartheid & South African Imperialism

1. South Africa began the 20th century as a colony of British imperialism. To-day it exists as a minor imperialist power in its own right. Not only was British imperialism forced to concede to this development due to its own weakness after two world wars, but it co-operated in the transference of capital ownership and the provision of investment to allow this development to take place. In return, South Africa promotes the regional interests of Anglo-American imperialism as well as extending its own interests.

The position of South Africa as the producer of major strategically important mineral wealth and the retention of huge investments, means that British and American imperialisms are determined to retain South Africa as a junior partner in an imperialist alliance dominating Southern Africa.

2. The Apartheid State combines imperialist democracy for the immensely privileged white minority with a brutal dictatorship over the black majority. Systematic racism was the only 'justification' possible for keeping the black masses as 'colonial slaves' of the whites. Military and police repression are the only means of maintaining it. The Apartheid system grew naturally out of the conditions of a racist settler state seeking to deny self-determination, independence or indeed even the most basic political and civil rights to the blacks. That racist state owed its historic development to the need of British imperialist mining capital for the supply and maximum exploitation of black labour. As a result, the blacks were denied any ownership of land and cattle. In order to develop the process of proletarianisation, black farmers were deprived of their traditional forms of proprietorship and forced to work as wage slaves.

While we recognise that the black masses suffer political oppression akin to that of colonial domination, we reject the 'internal colonialisation' theses as argued by African nationalists and the South African Communist Party. We do so in particular for two reasons:

(a) it contains the false argument that South Africa consists of 'separate nations' (i.e. a 'black' and a 'white' nation). This concedes to the Afrikaner and English-speaking whites the idea that separate nationhood (i.e. partition of the South African state) could be advanced as a political solution to the present crisis.

(b) it falsely ties the ending of the blacks' colonial status to a separate, democratic stage in the revolutionary process.

3. The nature of the Apartheid State, as a qualitative development of the racist colonial state can only be understood as the outcome of a reactionary alliance between the Afrikaner working class, petty bourgeois and farmers to: (a) restructure the relationship between South African capitalism and British imperialism in a way which both extended the economic and political power of the Afrikaner and preserved the reduced interests of foreign imperialism; (b) guarantee the existence and extension

of labour aristocratic privileges (wages, conditions of employment, job reservation) of the small Afrikaner working class which felt itself threatened by the mass of unskilled African labour below and the skilled white immigrant labour from above; (c) restrict the freedom of movement and urbanisation of black labour to provide cheap abundant agricultural labour; (d) encourage the emergence of an independent Afrikaner bourgeoisie.

The success of that alliance resulted in the consolidation of the apartheid state after the Second World War which further systematised racial discrimination, job segregation and land division, entrenching the alliance between South African capital and the white working class.

4. South African monopoly capitalism finally attained the status of an independent imperialist power in the 1960s. Today, the economy is highly monopolised; Anglo-American, a predominantly South African owned multinational, towers above all else. The ownership of capital is overwhelmingly in the hands of English and Afrikaner South Africans.

From the beginning of its imperialist development, South Africa has been an exporter of capital. However, because the greatest source of super-profits was to be found INTERNALLY, within the mines and industry of South Africa, this remained relatively undeveloped even though it was still responsible for opening up Namibia to imperialist exploitation. Only in the late 1970s, with the evident stagnation of monopoly capitalism in South Africa, did the rate of increase in the export of capital accelerate.

5. Historically, South Africa has been a major source of strategically important raw materials and a prime source of super-profits. Peak profitability has occurred after World War 2, in the 1960s and 1970s, and this period witnessed the gradual eclipse of British imperialism's role as chief foreign investor by American imperialism. Britain, however, retains a greater political leverage due to its historical and current political ties inside South Africa. Coincidental with the late 1970s and 1980s crisis of South African monopoly capitalism, the rate of increases of new British and US investment in South Africa has declined, due to falling profitability.

Britain and the US fear above all the destruction of Apartheid from below by a revolution of the black masses which would threaten their investments. They do, however, seek to pressure the Afrikaner alliance to reform Apartheid so as to co-opt into the South African ruling class a black component, i.e. to do a deal with the black nationalists, giving them a subordinate share in political power, the better to head off and, where necessary, repress, the struggles of the black workers and the urban poor. The problem for them is how to pressure the South African state to grant 'concessions' in such a way as not to break up its repressive apparatus.

6. Apartheid made possible the most ruthless exploitation of the black working class. The crisis of South African monopoly capitalism in the 1970s and growing black



militancy forced the monopolists to reconsider the labour aristocratic privileges of the white Afrikaner working class.

The restructuring of Apartheid in the 1970s (removal of certain features of 'petty Apartheid', erosion of the job bar, reforms of residential rights) was an attempt to deal with the crisis of South African capitalism by lowering costs and raising labour productivity.

Government inquiries, such as the Wiehahn Report, aimed to address the cramping effects of Apartheid policies on capitalist accumulation insofar as they restricted the movement of black labour to urban industry, prevented a necessary minimal level of black literacy and technical education and created artificial shortages of skilled labour. Whilst there was an unevenness in the response of different sections of South African capitalists, some restructuring was in their general interest.

7. The restructuring of Apartheid presupposed above all its continuation in the decisive sphere of political rights. The Constitutional initiatives of the early 1980s have re-affirmed the opposition of Afrikaner nationalism to political power for the African masses. Instead, through the 1983 Constitution, they have endeavoured, unsuccessfully, to:

- (a) divide the Asian and Coloured communities from the African masses;
- (b) strengthen the executive and military powers of the President to equip the state with the repressive power necessary to crush black resistance;
- (c) indicate to the class collaborationist black petty bourgeoisie and tribal leaders that power sharing may come in time.

### Counter-Revolution

8. Because of the class alliance on which it rests, the white supremacist Afrikaner bourgeoisie cannot reform Apartheid out of existence 'from above'. The white labour aristocracy and petty bourgeoisie who constitute the state bureaucracy and armed forces will not voluntarily surrender their privileges. Apartheid will only be destroyed by a mighty revolutionary movement of the black masses and first and foremost the black proletariat. Can capitalism survive the death of Apartheid? This cannot be excluded but the price of its survival would be a bourgeois-democratic counter-revolution which robbed the rural and urban workers of their victory.

The agency for this abortion of the South African revolution is the nascent black bourgeoisie and the aspirant petty bourgeoisie who will seek to strike a deal with defeated South African and multi-national big capital. Any programme which outlines a self-contained bourgeois-democratic stage opens the door to a capitalist South Africa. Any coalition of class forces built on such a perspective stands to be betrayed at any and every critical juncture by the treacherous bourgeoisie and the vacillating petty bourgeois forces. Only working class leadership and the goal of the proletarian dictatorship can assure victory for the South African revolution against racist, imperialist capital.

9. The South African revolution must be made permanent or it will not successfully solve the burning social problems of the South African masses; unemployment, poverty, exploitation. The only class that can carry through this

permanent revolution is the black proletariat, primarily the black African working class together with the much smaller Asian and 'Coloured' working class, and its allies in the impoverished sections of the black petty bourgeoisie.

If the black proletariat forms the vanguard class in the South African revolution then, within this proletariat, the vanguard is to be found in different sectors. First, the trade unions whose social power and degree of urbanisation places them in the front ranks. Alongside them stand the youth and the women of the townships who bear the brunt of the struggle at the moment. No one political ideology unites these vanguard elements. They look variously to the ANC, Black Consciousness, or even to no party at all. But a revolutionary nucleus must direct its activity and propaganda first and foremost to these struggling sections without discriminating on the basis of the professed political ideology of these sections.

The white working class forms a reactionary roadblock. It is not simply a white segment of the South African proletariat but a massively privileged and pampered labour aristocracy, large sections of which are employed in the repressive Apartheid state apparatus or in the role of overseers and task masters of the black proletariat. Winning the white workers over cannot be a condition of the South African revolution. Under the pressure of mass upheaval, through the imminent prospect of the loss of all their privileges, individuals, or even sections of skilled workers, may come over to the black proletariat. They should be encouraged to do so. But there can be no special privileges or reserved place for the white working class in the workers' united front, that is, in the common struggle of the working class to smash apartheid.

10. The only consistently revolutionary class in South Africa is the black proletariat. Apartheid seeks to retard its homogeneity and prevent its urbanisation. However, by the mid 1980s this class, through its position in mining, manufacturing and agriculture, possessed all the social power necessary to deal a decisive blow to the Apartheid state together with its capitalist roots.

The black proletariat has a rich history of struggle and organisation, but never have the black workers been more organised than today, with 10% in trade unions. The unions embrace one part of the vanguard of the black working class. Since 1973, a series of successful struggles by black workers has boosted confidence and legal organisation. Substantial increases in wages have been won and with it legal recognition of black trade unionism.

While class collaboration is the natural political outlook of reformist trade unionism, no established caste of trade union bureaucrats exists AS YET in the black trade unions. Consequently, a tradition of rank and file democracy pervades the new unions. This rank and file democracy will have to be vigorously and consciously defended within the new federation COSATU. The officialdom of this federation will immediately come under the pressure of the state and the multinationals. Its growth will provide a basis for bureaucratic privilege. Lack of an alternative revolutionary communist leadership will tend to allow the leaders to use the unions as a brake on the mass struggles, as a de-politicising agency rather than a school for socialism and an instrument of the class struggle.

11. The emergence of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) out of a merger of FOSATU,

the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and other, smaller, unions represents an important landmark in the history of black trade unionism. It is crucial that the new federation affirm the traditional rank and file democracy and accountability that it inscribed in the origins of the new unions. The rank and file need to be alert to the pressure of the conservative trade union bureaucracies of the international trade union movement who, with their advice and money, aim to crystallise out of the new federation a caste of trade union officials increasingly remote from their members.

Unity in action in a common struggle is a thousand times more important than mere organisational fusion. This is especially true given the existence of large numbers of Black Consciousness inspired union members who remain outside COSATU, and of black members in the Trade Union Congress of South Africa (TUCSA).

The new federation must use the enthusiasm and momentum now established to recruit the bulk of non-union black labour to its ranks and build its unions along industrial lines. While advocating 'non-racialism' within the working class organisations, COSATU should, nevertheless, welcome the black-only unions to its ranks without demanding that they change their own constitutions.

#### The ANC and the UDF

12. More decisive, however, for the future of the South African revolution is how the unions will answer the question: What political role shall we play? Two answers hold the stage today. In the first place, Popular Frontism. Some unions (CUSA, MGWU, FACTU) have endorsed the politics of the United Democratic Front (and hence the ANC). Along this road lies the betrayal of the proletariat's independent class interests in the name of the 'national revolution' against Apartheid.

Other unions, such as those previously in FOSATU, have rejected this road, but only, to date, negatively. They have embraced Economism. While these unions proclaim the 'independence' of the unions from popular front parties they do so in a manner which confines the unions to economic issues, leaving the field clear for the UDF/ANC to dominate the POLITICAL struggle. Economism cannot be a barrier to class collaboration politics since it itself hands over politics to the forces of the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie. The trade unions cannot in real life avoid political struggle.

The alternative that faces the organised working class is not 'politics or no politics' but whether the working class shall lead the political struggle or, be led. Whether it will fight for its own class political objectives or see its strength used in the interests of other classes, its present and future exploiters.

The grip of Popular Frontism is tightening over the black unions. The growing mass support for the ANC/UDF among unorganised black workers and in the townships has intensified the pressure upon the 'economists' to recognise the leading role of the ANC in the political struggle. It is therefore vital that, when the black unions enter the struggle against Botha around political slogans, the scope and duration of this action should not be controlled by the popular front. Only if the workers'

economic organisations take up the task of forming a political leadership, a party with a programme for working class power, will the dangers of economism and popular frontism be overcome.

In the short term, the ANC is likely to increase its influence in COSATU. However, the likelihood of attacks on COSATU by the Apartheid state and the subsequent deepening of the class struggle, opens a real opportunity for revolutionaries within COSATU to expose the ANC's conciliatory popular frontism.

13. The need for an independent working class party with a programme for working class power becomes daily more urgent. The immediate danger facing the black proletariat is that the heroic resistance of the youth, unemployed and women in the townships, seeking to defend themselves from police and army harassment, will exhaust itself before the black trade unions enter the fray around political slogans and for political revolutionary goals. Rather than leaving the political leadership in the hands of the UDF/ANC, the trade unions must be called upon to build an independent class party of the proletariat. In this work it is clear that revolutionaries will have to fight alongside workers and leaders who as yet do not see that such a party must become a revolutionary communist combat party. The decision on the party's programme and final structure must be the outcome of democratic internal debate and the free competition of tendencies.

Doubtless, forces will arise which will seek to direct the workers' party onto the road of a reformist labour party. If the unions actually take up its formation, Stalinism, despite its opposition to any mass independent workers' party, will certainly intervene to direct it into a class collaborationist popular front strategy. Against these tendencies, revolutionaries must fight to define the party, in struggle, on the basis of an action programme which starts from the immediate revolutionary-democratic task of smashing Apartheid and shows how this must be continued into the seizure of political power by the working class. In the process, revolutionaries would have to fight for the structures and organisations of a mass Leninist combat party, drawing in all the militants of the unions, the youth, the women and the rural workers. Only such an organisation could survive the brutal repression and illegality that is ever present in South Africa.

14. There are many political forces in South Africa who are enemies of the independent struggle of the working class and relentless opponents of a revolutionary party which would fight to lead this struggle with the programme of permanent revolution. Chief among them is the African National Congress. This is a petty bourgeois Nationalist formation dominated politically by the Stalinist South African Communist Party (SACP). Through its 'legal' front, the UDF, and through control of the students' organisation COSA, the ANC exercises considerable influence.

Its programme, since the 1960s, has been furnished by the SACP and is thoroughly Stalinist. It defines the impending revolution against apartheid as a bourgeois-democratic one. From the 1920s through the Freedom Charter until today, the ANC's programme subordinates the workers' movement to a "people's front" of petty bourgeois and bourgeois nationalists and abandons the 'historic goal' of socialism to a distant future in favour of an idealised



version of bourgeois democracy.

This strategy is reactionary and utopian. It is reactionary since it hands leadership of the revolution to the petty bourgeoisie, a class which, at the critical moment, and because of its many ties with the bourgeoisie, will abandon the proletariat and rural poor to satisfy its own demands. It is utopian, because the ANC's 'democracy' is not attainable or sustainable on the basis of a crisis-racked capitalism in the last quarter of the 20th century. Bonapartism presiding over weak capitalism and dominating the workers and poor peasants (as in Zimbabwe) or a revolutionary workers' government expropriating capitalist property are the choices that confront South Africa's impending proletarian revolution.

15. The strategy and tactics of the ANC have oscillated between a civil rights protest movement and guerrillaism, or a combination of both. The civil rights protest dissipated the potential of mass struggles to overthrow the Apartheid state; guerrillaism arose on the basis of the defeat and subsiding of the mass struggle and served to deepen and confirm that ebb in mass resistance. Combined with a fetishism of illegality, and a scornful, sectarian attitude to the emergence of the new trade unions, the ANC and SACP have conducted the armed struggle on the margins of the mass movement. Indeed, it has been the spontaneous struggles of the townships, not the armed actions of the ANC, which have shaken the regime.

Whilst, of course, it is the duty of all revolutionaries to defend the ANC's freedom fighters against the racist state, guerrilla actions and sabotage, EVEN AT a period of mass upheaval like the present, should play at the most an auxiliary role since the task of a revolutionary vanguard is to start the process of training and arming the masses.

For revolutionary communists, the tactics of the armed struggle must relate to the actions of the masses at every stage. The best way for this to occur in the first instance is to organise the DEFENCE of protests, strikes, boycotts, the need to prevent evictions, the organisation of land seizures. Through these tasks, a workers' militia can be formed which, tied to the growth and development of the mass proletarian struggle (strikes, General Strike), can move forward from defensive actions through the seizure of the factories, to the organisation of the insurrection itself.

16. The black masses of South Africa must be alerted to the dangers of the ANC/UDF. The reaction of the ANC to the toothless measures of the Commonwealth Conference, the Zambian discussions with the leading figures of South African capitalism, all indicate that in the desperate search for a 'community of interest' between black workers and progressive sections of domestic capital, the ANC may well boycott its own democratic programme and settle for an agreement short of one person - one vote; or concede 'constitutional guarantees', i.e. economic and political power, to the white minority.

17. Through the UDF, the Church exercises considerable political influence over the black masses. Where political and cultural life has been brutally restricted for decades, where poverty and oppression triumphs, there the church reaps the benefit, becomes a focus for opposition and resistance. But Tutu and Boesak preach peace and non-violence in the face of state murder; they court the liberal and democratic sympathies of European and

US imperialism (Boesak organised Kennedy's tour) and therefore distance themselves from appeals to the international labour movement. With due sensitivity to the deeply held religious convictions of the masses, revolutionaries must, through their slogans and demands, seek to drive a wedge between the workers and youth who overflow the churches and the Tutus and Boesaks whose shallow demagoguery flows uninterrupted from the pulpits.

### **Black Consciousness, AZAPO & the NFC**

18. An alternative leadership to the Stalinists and the ANC seems to be provided by the National Forum Committee and its most important constituent organisation, the Azanian Peoples Organisation (AZAPO). The NFC/AZAPO forces make very wide-ranging criticisms of the UDF. The NFC's "Manifesto of the Azanian People" claims to put the struggle for national liberation in South Africa on a socialist course.

They denounce the UDF as a Popular Front. A component of the NFC, the Cape Action League (CAL), rejects alliances with the bourgeoisie. The apparent rejection of both the popular front strategy of the Stalinists and the stageist 'Freedom Charter' represents both the continued influence of 'Trotskyism', albeit of a centrist liquidationist current, and the pressure towards class independence emanating from the growth of the black proletariat and its independent trade unions.

19. The other, indeed the major, political influence in the NFC/AZAPO is the Black Consciousness movement. Whilst this was born in the community and school student struggles of the early and mid-seventies, it took much from earlier 'Africanist' traditions as well as the US Black Power current. While rejecting the SACP/ANC tradition, they also rejected class analysis altogether. Steve Biko argued for black banks and black businesses. The movement centred on community welfare and educational projects. It undoubtedly aided a new generation of young blacks, overcoming the divisions into which the Apartheid state sought and seeks to split the oppressed masses.

20. Whilst the NFC/AZAPO have moved sharply to the left they have not been able to stem the growth of the ANC's influence. Their programme is not a coherent alternative to that of the ANC. They talk about a 'maximum programme of socialist transformation', but between this and a series of 'rights' to work, to free education, decent housing, health, legal and community services, there is no bridge of transitional demands. They have no clear conception of democratic demands and how the fight for them should play a central role in the overthrow of the Apartheid state. On the national question, in rejecting the regime's attempt to split the oppressed, in rejecting the SACP/ANC's 'multiracialism', insisting on 'One Azania, One Nation', they reject the democratic right of self-determination for the oppressed peoples. To do this can strengthen separatism and fears of oppression in a future South Africa/Azania amongst minority peoples within the struggle against apartheid.

The left wing of the NFC, the Cape Action League, despite its apparent rejection of the Popular Front, in fact opens the road to it by advocating strategic alliances with petty bourgeois nationalism, even to the extent of a common

party.

21. Also, the Black Consciousness tradition does not produce a correct orientation vis a vis the trade unions. Supporters of this tendency organise the AZACTU and are influential in the CUSA federations. They fight against being drawn into the UDF popular front behind slogans of non-political trade unionism. This is a doubly false policy when the unions are faced with the task of leading the mass resistance to Botha's crackdown. All fighting unions should be within COSATU, seeking to direct the half-million strong black unions towards a general strike and towards forming a workers' party.

Of course, revolutionary communists should direct much of their propaganda towards and, wherever necessary, work within, the left and Black Consciousness organisations in order to show that opposition to the popular front, and espousal of working class independence, requires working class political leadership, through a Leninist combat party, in the struggle to make the South African revolution permanent.

### Permanent Revolution in South Africa

22. In the developing revolutionary situation in South Africa, the proletariat alone can lead all of the oppressed masses to victory against the racist state and against capitalism and imperialism. While the revolution has begun as a democratic one, it must not be confined to a democratic stage. Permanent revolution can, alone, guarantee the completion of democratic tasks by fusing the struggle for democracy inextricably with the struggle for socialist revolution. To take this road, the proletariat must solve, in struggle, its crisis of leadership.

A revolutionary leadership must be forged in the present struggle. The hallmark of a revolutionary party is its programme. In South Africa, a revolutionary action programme must link the struggle for immediate and democratic demands with the struggle for proletarian power. It must be a transitional programme.

23. The struggles around rents, education, against forced removals and for the consumer boycotts have been centred on the townships. They have shown both the determination and ability of the youth and women to lead mass mobilisations against the Apartheid state. These actions must be defended and supported by the organised working class through building joint action councils and militias. The townships on their own cannot defeat either the Apartheid state or its particular laws and state forces. They can be isolated, surrounded and smashed. They cannot paralyse the regime.

In the struggle against the regime, an advance from localised battles must be made. The trade unions must take the lead in launching a general strike. Only the political General Strike can mobilise the entire oppressed, led by the working class, for a direct confrontation with the regime. It can pave the way for the question of power to be posed point blank. It can, if it develops into an insurrection, answer that question in a revolutionary fashion. It can draw into it the youth of the townships and colleges, the unemployed, the women and the unorganised, fusing all of the local and partial struggles.

24. Democratic slogans are of central importance in the revolutionary programme for South Africa. The masses

are crying out for political rights. In every sphere of struggle; the workplace, the townships, the homelands, education, the masses come daily face to face with the absence of elementary democratic rights. Their illusions in democratic rights alone as the solution to their exploitation and oppression, and their illusions in leaders who would compromise in the struggle for political democracy, make it all the more vital that revolutionaries take up and fight to lead the struggle for the full realisation of the democratic aspirations of the masses. These cannot be achieved by any form of compromise with, or concessions from, the Apartheid state. That regime is incompatible with political democracy for the black masses.

In place of negotiated concessions, the proletariat and oppressed must fight for:

*\* The destruction of the Apartheid state and ALL its discriminatory laws and regulations denying permanent residency rights, equal status etc, to the black masses.*

*\* Universal, equal suffrage for all people over the age of 16.*

*\* The break up of the standing army and police and their replacement with a people's militia.*

*\* Down with the Balkanisation of South Africa. For a united republic, but with the provision of the right to self-determination, up to and including separation, of any people excluding the white oppressor community.*

*\* For an end to imperialist secret diplomacy. Renounce all treaties made by imperialism. Support the struggles of the African masses against imperialism and its agents.*

*\* Abolition of the barbarous separation of the family that is imposed by Apartheid. For complete freedom in the relations between men, women and children.*

*\* For a sovereign Constituent Assembly to be convened immediately, open to all parties, excluding the counter-revolutionary ones who seek to maintain or re-impose the Apartheid order.*

25. The engine of the South African revolution will be the urban black proletariat, but it must also seek allies amongst the millions of rural blacks, most immediately with the 1.4 million rural proletarians working on white-owned farms, the natural agents of democratic collectivisation.

But this is not enough. Though South Africa lacks a large peasantry in the classic sense, and the establishment of millions of atomised small holdings is not in the proletariat's interest, millions are condemned to poverty and starvation in the 'homelands' and other rural areas. There are, in addition, many "squatters" and illegal occupiers of abandoned white-owned land. These layers cannot be mobilised for the revolution without the leadership of the concentrated urban workers, who must encourage and support the establishment of rural soviets to develop and express the needs and aspirations of the rural masses, soviets whose programme would include:

*\* Assistance in the development of a plan that can ensure the land is utilised to the maximum benefit of the Azanian people.*

*\* Seizure of the large "white" farms and wherever possible, collectivise them within a system of land nationalisation.*

*\* Legitimisation of all illegal 'squatters' and occupiers of 'black spots' and abandoned "white" land.*

*\* Discourage the breaking up of large holdings by the land hungry, while remaining willing to support the revolutionary seizure and break-up of large estates where this happens.*

*\* Reach out to the families of migrant workers in the rest of southern Africa, helping to spread the revolution throughout*

*the sub-continent.*

26. The mass of black women must be mobilised against their own specific oppression, in an independent democratically organised movement, under revolutionary working class leadership, as a vital component of the permanent revolution.

Denied all rights as blacks, the women are further oppressed (i) as servant labour for the privileged whites; (ii) as extra-cheap labour in industry and services; (iii) as domestic slaves in their own families. Particularly harsh is the lot of women in the 'homelands' and other rural areas who bear children and are left to raise them in squalid housing conditions, often without their male partners for the long periods of their migration, and subsisting on tiny plots of soil with unreliable small remittances from their absent partners.

The absence of social and health services is a burden more crushing on black women than for any other section of the blacks. The Bantu and Church schools deny women the education that is vital to their own sexual self-determination, in particular for the control of their own fertility.

In order to mobilise the mass of oppressed women to their fullest potential and for their most important needs, the following must be fought for:

\* Full unionisation of women workers, with the right of caucus, in industrial unions; equal pay and a minimum wage; equal opportunity in training and hiring; free workplace creches and paid maternity leave.

\* Comprehensive sex education; free, safe contraception, sterilisation and abortion available on demand.

\* Free comprehensive nationalised health services under working class control. A programme of public works under working class control to make adequate housing available.

\* Free legal divorce at the request of one partner and adequate state maintenance for the dependents.

\* A comprehensive social welfare system.

\* Free community creches and nursery schools, subsidised community canteens as steps towards the socialisation of housework.

\* Education and action in the mass organisations to combat all forms of sexual harassment and male chauvinism.

27. The task of winning democracy is in itself a revolutionary task in South Africa. The working class must not eschew politics. It must take its place at the forefront of the struggle. It must build factory and workplace councils to organise strikes, link up with township committees in the struggle. It must organise a militia based on these action councils. Such councils and such a militia can stop a Constituent Assembly being the plaything of those who wish to negotiate with imperialism and those who wish to construct a democratic obstacle to working class power. Such councils must become town-wide organisations, struggling against Apartheid AND providing a real alternative state power - SOVIET (Action Council) POWER.

To succeed in this struggle, the South African proletariat must take the lead in organising and leading a mass insurrection. In breaking up the armed forces of Apartheid the opportunity exists to win the black rank and file from their white officers, to create black soldiers' councils, to elect officers and to mete out punishment to the racists.

28. The working class must never for one minute forget or

subordinate its own class demands in the present struggle. Better wages, an end to all discrimination in the workplace, shorter hours and better conditions, full union rights etc. must ALL be fought for. At the same time, the working class must link these immediate demands to the political struggle for power. It must fight for:

\* Workers' control of production, hiring and firing, speed and intensity of work, of safety and of the length of the working day.

\* For workers' control over the length of the working week so that available work may be shared and the unemployed, including women, given jobs.

\* For the protection of wages against inflation by a sliding scale of increases linked to price increases. For committees of the workers' and women's organisations to decide on the workers' cost of living index and the wage increases needed, and on equal pay for women workers.

\* For mass workplace based democracy - via the mass meeting, protected from the bosses and their thugs by WORKERS' DEFENCE SQUADS - to take all decisions requiring action and impose workers' control.

\* Open the books of the capitalist enterprises to the inspection of the workers. The workers have had to pay in blood for the profit margins to be found in the ledgers of Anglo-American and the other corporations. They demand to see the extent of their exploitation, the better to end it.

\* Nationalise without compensation and put under workers' control, the giant factories and industries owned by the white capitalists, and foreign capitalists.

29. To defend each and every one of its gains and to press home each and every one of its demands, the working class needs to take state power. Only such power can improve the lot of all of South Africa's oppressed masses. The workers' councils must not allow democracy in the shape of a Constituent Assembly to hinder them in the struggle for power. They must press on, relentlessly, to assert their own power under the slogan:

FOR A WORKERS' REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA/  
AZANIA

30. The struggle of the South African masses against the Apartheid state and for proletarian revolution will have an enormous impact on the states in Southern Africa dominated by South African imperialism. It will progressively throw into crisis the regimes which have compromised and collaborated with the Apartheid state. In the struggle for workers' power, the South African masses must stand at the forefront of aiding and solidarising with the struggles which develop against the South African imperialists and their agents. A victorious proletarian revolution in South Africa would immediately take steps to spread the revolution beyond its borders, starting with the surrounding states previously dominated by South African imperialism. Only such a perspective "for a federation of Workers States of Southern Africa" would buttress the workers' republic of South Africa against the inevitable attack by imperialism and open the prospect of overcoming the economic and social distortions resulting from South African imperialism's domination of the surrounding states.

FOR A FEDERATION OF WORKERS' STATES OF  
SOUTHERN AFRICA ■



## The Apartheid State (1986)

By Keith H, Published by Workers Power (Britain) and the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International  
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The uneven and combined development of world capitalism is nowhere more starkly expressed than in the vast continent of Africa. The belt of Sub-Saharan countries, crushed by imperialist exploitation, contains the most impoverished peoples on earth. Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta) has the smallest per capita income in the world.

Yet at the southern tip of the continent the South African racist state power presides over a highly developed and monopolised capitalist economy. South Africa produces nearly one quarter of the continent's GOP, accounts for some 40% of its manufacturing output and consumes over 50% of the whole continent's energy.

Alone among the continent's forty-five independent states South Africa has escaped imperialist economic enslavement to become an imperialist power in its own right. Its capital dominates the economies of the surrounding states - even those that emerged out of a powerful anti-colonial liberation struggle like Angola and Mozambique. All of the front-line states are heavily dependent on the economy of the apartheid state. In addition it keeps Namibia in colonial servitude and Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland are semi-colonies whose formal independence is little more than a charade.

South Africa today has taken its place within the modern imperialist world order. An imperialist power in its own right, but one tied to two of the largest powers - USA and Britain. It receives their constant aid and protection and in return performs a vital service for them.

The colonial empires of the European imperialists were replaced after the Second World War by a system of semi-colonies; that is, formally independent states where the local military hierarchy, the state bureaucracy and the black bourgeoisies won or were entrusted with, political power but where imperialist exploitation went on virtually unchecked.

South Africa - and for a short period Rhodesia were exceptions. The South African state acts as a wedge, driven into the post-colonial states, promoting internal rivalries and division, aiding the Balkanisation of Africa.

The South African armed forces intervene to weaken or crush liberation movements in the adjacent states.

Within South Africa no normal national development could take place. Racism became the basis of the state in a way unsurpassed outside of Nazi Germany. However, it aimed not at the genocide of a minority but at the perpetual enslavement of a vast majority of the people of South Africa. Twenty three million blacks are deprived of all political rights. Political power and social wealth is concentrated in the hands of some 4.5 million whites; 60% of who are Afrikaners (descendants of Dutch settlers) and the rest

of English extraction. The 'Coloured' (9%) and 'Asian' (3%) population form intermediate oppressed social strata.

The black African population, although they form the overwhelming majority of the proletarian wealth producers and 72% of the SA population, receive only 29% of total personal income. Some 60% flows into the bank accounts of the whites, whether in employment, housing or social and public life, the systematic segregation and discrimination against blacks condemns millions to super exploitation, repression, and poverty. Yet this very system has produced a massive explosive charge of rage that threatens to blow apart not only this brutal racist regime but also monopoly capitalism itself.

### From Settler State to Imperialist Power

How has it been possible for a country, which at the beginning of this century was a colony of British Imperialism - in origin a settler state - to be transformed into an imperialist power in the second half of the twentieth century?

The Dutch, a mercantile capitalist power, occupied the Cape to guard the route to their colonies in the East Indies. The excellent agricultural land drew in settlers. When in the last half of the Seventeenth century Britain fought and eventually subordinated the Dutch she began to exert a powerful influence in the region.

By the Nineteenth century commerce was radiating outwards from Cape Town. This commerce and the economic liberalism accompanying modern capitalism began to undermine the traditional master/slave relations of the Boers. This the Boers tolerated as long as they could benefit from this growing commerce, in particular by becoming cash farmers catering for the Cape Town market. Those further inland who could not, saw in urbanisation only a threat to their way of life. Many of these Boers decided to trek into the interior. Once there, having dispossessed local tribes, they founded the two Boer republics.

At first Britain ignored these republics, content to control the vital seaboard. All this changed with the discovery of diamonds, and later gold, in the interior. Their allure proved irresistible, particularly when the Boer' republic of the Transvaal began to move closer to Britain's archrival - Germany. In the Anglo-Boer war that followed (1899-1902) Britain defeated the goers.

The colonisation of the Boer republics accelerated the penetration of British capital into the region and crippled the economic aspirations of the nascent Afrikaner bourgeoisie. However, despite defeating the Boers in a bitter war, Britain did not treat the Boers as a conquered enemy but rather as potential allies; allies it needed to help maintain the continued oppression of the native African popula-

tion.

The essence of this alliance was a pact between British mining capital and the large Afrikaner landlords. Afrikaner landlordism acted as a junior partner, providing agricultural produce for the mines and mining-towns. It flourished on the basis of cheap, coerced black labour and state subsidies from taxed mine income. In 1910 manufacturing contributed less than 5% to the economy. Up to the Second World War, mining and agriculture regularly accounted for half of GDP and over half of export earnings.

The modern apartheid system was born during the period 1916-1924 as the result of the development of an indigenous South African capitalism. In this period a cross-class alliance was forged. It was born in a period of unrest for both black and white workers. The post-First World War period saw severe clashes between the mine owners and the white miners. Caught between the competition of the growing black proletariat and the capitalists, the white workers faced mine owners determined to drive down their wages and progressively replace them with cheaper black labour. The white miners' militancy focussed on the defence of their privileges against the black workers. White working class militancy reached its high point in 1922 with the Rand revolt, which led to the defeat of the white mine workers.

The capitalists were therefore faced with an increasingly militant working class, both black and white after the First World War. The militancy of the black workers was progressive, in pursuit of better conditions; that of the white workers became increasingly reactionary, a defence of racial privileges. It was out of this split in the working class that the modern South African state emerged - the apartheid state.

The other major component of the alliance was the Afrikaner petit-bourgeoisie. Despite their military defeat at the turn of the century they had never given up hope of regaining dominance within the South African state. This they badly needed in order to sponsor the growth of fledgling Afrikaner capital and to secure advance in the English dominated state bureaucracy.

Gradually, this alliance was to attract support from the larger farmers. With the growth of urban industry these farmers were more and more interested in imposing greater restrictions on the movement of black labour to halt the drift from the land to the towns. The decimation of the small farmers by the inexorable growth of large-scale farming had created a growing mass of Afrikaner unskilled labour squeezed between the vast reserves of cheap unskilled black labour and skilled white English immigrants.

The conflict between the mine-owners and white labour together with the growing pressure of black labour, presented the Afrikaner nationalists with the opportunity of winning white labour to their side. In 1924 the Labour Party, supported mainly by English-speaking white workers and the Nationalist Party formed an alliance and won the elections. In return for its support, the privileges of white workers were enshrined in law. These included the Miners & Works Act of 1926 barring Africans from skilled mining jobs, the Immorality Act (1927) and the Urban Areas Act, both of which enforced social segregation. As a result of this reactionary alliance, the white workers lost all semblance of class independence; the Labour Party duly

withered as the nationalist and liberal bourgeois parties gained at its expense.

The recession in the 1930s rent the alliances that made up the Nationalist Party, allowing the old pro-English United Party back into power. Its return however was to be short lived, for in 1946 there occurred one of the greatest events in the annals of black South African labour history - the 1946 miners' strike. This strike together with rising black working class militancy through out the economy petrified the whites. The war had seen a rapid growth of industry and consequently a rapid growth in the urban black working class. The spectre of black workers using their class strength to shake the racist state and capitalist economy drove the whites into the arms of the re forged Nationalist Party. Most whites saw the Nationalists as the only party capable of suppressing the black working class. The result was the landslide victory of the Nationalist party in 1948 and its subsequent extension and consolidation of the apartheid state.

The role of the apartheid capitalist state was to act as mid-wife for the birth and development of a national Afrikaner economy. The first move to broader national economic development began with the formation of the South African Iron and Steel Corporation (OSCOR) under Herzog's nationalist government in the late 1920s. This was legislated for in the teeth of opposition from Britain, who saw in South Africa an important market for its own depressed steel industries.

The secret of South Africa's independent economic development, in a world dominated by imperialism, was gold. It was the product of black labour turned golden, thousands of feet underground. To these millions of labourers, working in hellish conditions, whose sweat built South Africa, the mine dumps stand today like pyramids: mute testimony to their efforts as well as to the rapacious drive of capitalism.

The gold mines became the axis around which the national economy developed. In their shadow grew the towns. To service the mines an infrastructural web arose; ports, roads, railway lines, power stations. In addition the mines constituted a huge market for agricultural and Industrial products. Finally, by channelling all gold sales through its hands, and through taxation, the state diverted an increasing share of the profits from gold into national economic development.

Because of the super-profits derived from gold mining, the apartheid state was able to reconcile the antagonism between the emergent national bourgeoisie and the imperialist bourgeoisie of the UK and the USA. This was due to the high rates of exploitation. The powerful apartheid state was able to force the black working class to produce enough profits to attract foreign capital as well as providing for local accumulation. On top of this there were sufficient super-profits to pay for the extensive privileges of the white working class.

The Second World War proved a watershed in the economic development of Afrikaner capitalism. The desperate needs of British imperialism drew South Africa into the war effort. As a result the war saw the rapid expansion of local production. Indeed, many of the large companies in South Africa, such as Premier Milling, date back to this time. By the end of the war industrial employment exceeded mining employment for the first time.

Moreover, British imperialism emerged from the Second World War severely weakened in relation to U.S. imperialism. Its inability to retain its existing domination over the South African economy led it to seek a jointly beneficial accommodation with the newly developing native capitalism; one which safeguarded its position within South Africa and ensured that the apartheid state would take over policing the interests of both British and U.S. Imperialism in the southern part of the continent.

Britain's decline was reflected in South Africa by the erosion of British control over the mining industry during the war. By 1945 only 47% of dividends were transferred abroad, compared to 85% in 1910. The Anglo-American Corporation spearheaded the growth of South African owned mining companies. However, English-speaking South African capitalists still predominated, Afrikaners only owning 1 % of mining shares in 1945.

It was clear that in a world capitalist economy already dominated by giant monopolies, the development of native South African monopolies would have to occur at a rapid pace, and so it was to be. If industrialisation proper began in the Second World War, then within twenty-five years South Africa had become a highly monopolistic economy. The victory of the Nationalists in 1948 accelerated the pace of industrialisation. Import controls and quotas were introduced to protect and extend local industry. The state set up financial institutions such as the National Development Corporation to provide cheap loans to aspiring capitalists.

One of the first tasks of the incoming Nationalist Party government was to centralise credit. In 1949 it set up the National Finance Corporation. In the early 1950s it set up the Discount House and Acceptance bank. Hence by the mid-1950s a money market had come into being in Johannesburg, which, together with the banks and Stock Exchange was able to mop up all the available funds and channel them for investment.

This development reflected the growth of indigenous finance capital in the South African economy. Between 1945 and 1960 internal financing grew from 31 % of total investment to 43%. In the mid-1950s, Anglo-American the largest mining conglomerate- moved into banking. Union Acceptances Ltd is now the largest merchant bank In South Africa.

This process was mirrored within the Afrikaner community itself. The Afrikaner bourgeoisie still constituted the weaker section of the ruling class. They were heavily reliant on state support and their ideological domination, through nationalism, of the white Afrikaner workers, civil servants and small farmers. These were encouraged to deposit their savings in two large Afrikaner financial institutions - Volkskas and Sanlam. In this way Afrikaner credit and investable funds were centralised so as to compete with 'English' capital.

Without the centralisation and development of credit, South African economic development would have been considerably slowed down and the bourgeoisie would have had great difficulty financing new factories. This centralisation, in the context of a small economy, meant that from an early stage each industry was composed of a small number of companies.

The unprecedented world 'long-boom' from the late 1940s to the late 1960s allowed South Africa to grow into the

space vacated by a declining British imperialism.

The Second World War was the decisive turning point in this 're-division' of the world. Moreover, the expansion of the world economy in the 1950s and 1960s ensured that there was only marginal friction between South Africa and Britain. In addition, the long boom created a stable, long term demand, both for gold (\$35 per oz) and South Africa's mineral wealth, which provided the resources for industrialisation. Finally, the booming world market provided a ready outlet for South Africa's agricultural exports and its growing mineral exports.

The high rates of profit to be earned in these post-war years meant South Africa became a magnet for foreign investment. As a result the 1960s witnessed a boom exceeded in scope only by Japan. The economy grew by 76% in this decade. The black working class meanwhile enjoyed none of this. While white workers wages increased by 40%, black workers enjoyed no increases. As a result white mine workers wages grew from seventeen to twenty-one times the level of black workers' wages.

This decade was also a time of increased transference of the ownership of capital from foreign into South African hands. By the late 1960s the mines were predominantly South African owned. Today, only 24% of mining shares (30% of gold mining) are foreign held and this sector has the highest concentration of foreign capital.

In the same time span the South African economy lessened its dependence on mining and agriculture as the big mining monopolies diversified into other areas. Manufacturing grew rapidly - by over 8% per year in the 1960s. In 1950 agriculture contributed 18% of GDP, mining 13% and manufacturing 18%. By 1970 agriculture represented 9% of GDP, mining 10% and manufacturing over 23%.

Anglo-Armenian demonstrates most forcefully the growing monopolisation of the South African economy. It has 831 South African subsidiaries, 186 non-South African subsidiaries and major investments in 506 other foreign companies. One example of what Lenin described as a very important feature of capitalism in its highest stage of development, namely, "the grouping in a single enterprise of different branches of Industry" can be seen in Anglo's move into the related area of metal production.

In the early 1960s it formed the Highveld and Vanadium Corporation to exploit South African vanadium deposits. From there it took over Scaw Metals, a user of specialised steels, which became one of South Africa's leading exporters of manufactured goods.

At the heart of South African monopoly capitalism lay a contradiction. Without apartheid the emergence of a distinct South African imperialism would have been impossible. The super-exploitation of the black masses was a precondition of the relatively non-antagonistic development of an independent capitalism in South Africa.

Likewise the stagnation and further development of this capitalism in the 1970's was a combination of the general contradictions that beset all capitalist powers at this stage of development (declining profitability, productivity and investment) and the specific cramping effect that apartheid had on the continued expansion of production.

In particular, apartheid operated to accelerate the inherent tendency towards declining productivity. The specific toll that apartheid policies levied on productivity and profitability performance is difficult to assess. Nevertheless, by



the early 1970's it was clear that there was deepening stagnation in the South African economy.

By 1969 GDP growth was down to 2.9% per annum. Under the impact of the 1974-78 recession (the worst in South Africa since the 1930s) growth was negative in 1977. The declining profitability that lay behind this slowdown was clearly evident also, as the following table indicates:

#### 5 year average - rate of return.

1960-64 16.9%

1965-69 15.1%

1970-74 11.8%

1975-79 9.7%

1980-84 8.7%

(Source: South African Reserve Bank Quarterly Reviews.)

In other words between the early 1960s and the early 1980s the rate of return halved. The fall in the rate of profit led to a fall in investment. In the first half of the 1960's investment grew at a rate of 20% per annum. This was one of the highest rates in the world and it helped to explain South Africa's rapid growth. During the 1970's the growth rate of investment halved to around 10%. With the recession in the mid-seventies investment actually fell in the second half of the decade. Although this fall was interrupted in 1980/81 due to a dramatic increase in gold prices, since 1982 investment levels have continued to fall. In the three and a half years to 1985 real gross domestic investment had fallen by 18%.

Contributing to this cycle of falling profitability and investment were profound structural changes within South African monopoly capitalism. By the end of the 1960s manufacturing had become the biggest sector in commodity production (27% of GDP). Manufacture relied increasingly upon skilled or semi-skilled labour as mechanisation proceeded. Between 1946-1970 the capital-labour ratio doubled as fixed capital stock more than quadrupled. This technological change created an even further intense shortage of white labour and sharply highlighted the economic costs to the employer of the job bar on blacks.

Although apartheid provided capitalism with cheap unskilled labour, it also deprived it of the productive, semi-skilled labour that export-oriented manufacturing industry needed. While apartheid did not cause the stagnation of monopoly capitalism certain of its features hindered the employers from overcoming it. The job bar above all contributed to the low productivity of labour in industry as it gave the white labour aristocracy no incentive to work harder and it retarded the process of mechanisation because of the shortage of skilled labour.

By the 1970s, with the imperative need for capital to find expanded markets outside South Africa, many bosses realised they would never be competitive in the international markets until they raised productivity.

Yet because of the cross-class alliance that existed at the heart of apartheid capitalism a direct onslaught on the privileges of white workers to improve productivity was out of the question. Consequently, stagnation continued and competition between the monopolies deepened. In the 1970's companies and banks were hard pressed to find new investment opportunities in industry. Hemmed in by exchange controls, confronted by rising competition, companies began to buy up other companies. A wave of merg-

ers in the 1970s swept through the economy. Each industry came to be dominated by a handful of monopolies. By the mid seventies, 5% of manufacturing companies accounted for 63% of turnover, while in distribution 5% of companies controlled 70% of turnover.

In turn these monopolies were themselves gobbled up by eight financial corporations and banks – Anglo American, Barlow Rand, South African Breweries, Rembrandt, Sanlam, South African Mutual, Volkskas and Anglo-Vaal. Since then merger mania has continued apace, and the economy is beginning to be dominated by only five finance-capital conglomerates. Of these, the giant of giants- Anglo-American -controls 56% of shares on the stock exchange.

In fact, South Africa is, next to Japan, the most highly monopolistic country in the world. Increasing stagnation internally also led to an acceleration of the export of capital. Of course, this tendency was not a novel feature of the 1970's. Namibia, in particular, was exploited as a direct colony by South Africa in the decades after the Second World War.

In the 1950's and 1960's a massive export of capital from South Africa and western-based multinationals led Namibia's GDP to grow by 573% between 1946 and 1962 and a further 320% over the next decade. Anglo's subsidiaries, such as the Standard Bank of Angola, Merchant Bank (Zambia) Ltd, Standard Bank of Mozambique and many industrial subsidiaries, spread throughout southern Africa.

Increasingly, South Africa began to dominate the whole region. Today South Africa exports over R2 billion worth of goods to the region. South Africa supplies Botswana with 88% of its imports, Malawi with 36%, Zimbabwe with 22%, Zambia with 16% and even Angola with 13%.

Not only does South Africa provide a large proportion of these countries' imports, but much of the rest passes through South African ports. 70% of Zambia's imports pass through South Africa, 60% of Malawi's, 57% of Zaire's and 50% of Zimbabwe's.

Neither were South African capital exports limited to Africa. MINORCO, another subsidiary of Anglo, invests heavily in the USA, Canada and Latin America. Indeed, in the early 1980's MINORCO was the single biggest Investor in the USA, ahead of such giants as Royal Shell, BP and ICI. In response to this pressure to export ever more capital, exchange controls were relaxed in the early 1980's. Indeed, in the ten years up to 1984 South Africa's private external assets grew by over 731% compared to a growth in foreign capital inflows of only 449%. Nevertheless, foreign investments in South Africa are still two to three times larger than South African Investments abroad.

This growing economic domination translated itself into an imperialistic foreign policy. In the early 1970's, South Africa attempted to set up a Southern African Constellation of States. When this attempt at detente failed, mainly due to the anti imperialist struggles in the then Rhodesia, Angola and Mozambique, South Africa adopted a more interventionist policy. South African foreign policy aims at stifling the economic growth of the region thereby increasing its economic subservience on South Africa, and turning it into a market for South African investments and goods: In this way South African capitalism is attempting to resolve its economic crisis at the expense of the peoples

of the whole region.

The major imperialist powers need South Africa and must at all costs prevent the fall of the apartheid state as a result of a revolutionary upsurge of the black masses. Historically, South Africa has provided imperialism with three things.

First it is a source of key minerals for their industries, particularly the metal and defence industries. The US gets 54% of its antimony, 82% of its chrome, 99% of its manganese and 91% of its platinum from South Africa. These sources must be protected.

Secondly, South Africa has been a profitable area for investment. Although US interests there are relatively small (\$14 billion in 1982) compared to investment in the rest of the world, they have been extremely lucrative. Rates of return of US manufacturing companies in South Africa in 1967 were 12.6% as compared to the European investments' return of 8.6%. The rate of return on US mining interests were even higher (e.g. 43.3%, 1963-67 as compared to 19.9% in Latin America). British imperialism with £11 billion has been eclipsed by the US during the 1970s as the biggest single investor in South Africa, but Europe as a whole is far more important than the USA.

The EEC accounts for over half of all foreign investment in South Africa. Until 1977 the UK was still South Africa's main trading partner but it now ranks fourth. Nevertheless, due to the historical and political ties and the role of British financial interests in South Africa, British imperialism still exerts enormous influence on the regime. This is the reason why Thatcher refuses to harm South African trade links.

However it has to be remembered that the renewed crisis of the 1980s has drastically reduced the profitability of South Africa for overseas investors. In 1983 the average rate of return to US companies investments slumped to 7% (compared to 31% in 1980 due to the high gold price). This is only likely to accelerate the trend, which has seen a net outflow of over £11 bn of long-term foreign fixed investment in the private sector in the last eight years.

This increased tendency to export capital and decreased tendency to import capital has reduced the foreign stake in the South African economy. From 1965-75 foreign capital accounted for 10.4% (average per annum) of Gross Domestic Fixed Investment. This has fallen in the last ten years to an annual average of less than 1%.

Thirdly, South Africa has acted as the representative of all the imperialist powers against the nationalist movements in the region, attempting to bring them to heel both by direct military attack, by backing reactionary movements (UNITA) and by exerting its economic stranglehold. By these means it has forced humiliating deals on bourgeois-nationalist regimes (Nkomati Accords or the previous Vorster-Kaunda 'detente'). Only with French imperialism do South Africa's interests occasionally threaten to collide in a region where it is often a keen competitor in the same markets. Hence, Mitterrand's recent espousal of the need for sanctions. However, imperialist commitment to the apartheid system is far from total. They do not want endemic instability in South Africa. They want South Africa to incorporate representatives of the black masses and that means ones with real nationalist credentials not just puppets like the local councillors or stooges like Buthelezi.

In the last analysis they will do anything to preserve impe-

rialism's interests including even a South African equivalent to the 'Lancaster House' type settlement getting black nationalists to take direct political responsibility for defending these interests.

### Capitalism and Apartheid

Monopoly capitalism was born out of apartheid. Apartheid made possible the most ruthless exploitation of the black working class and earned the monopolies gigantic profits that were the envy of capitalists the world over.

Underpinning the ability of the South African capitalists to take advantage of these factors lay the apartheid system itself, which ensured the masses lived in conditions worse than those of colonial servitude. Denied political rights, the right to organise and turned into a massive reserve army of labour through the residence laws, the South African ruling class was able to deny the black proletariat any share in the growing wealth of the country. Wages remained pitifully low, while migrant labour was used on a massive scale within the mines. In this way a level of 'super-profits' was maintained which would have been impossible outside the system of apartheid capitalism. But to preserve these profits, the monopolies were forced to modify apartheid, beginning in the 1970s. Under pressure of the world capitalist recession and growing black militancy they were forced to begin undermining the privileges of what was the most labour aristocratic section of workers the world has ever seen- the white working class. The modifications all had one purpose; to, again reduce average labour costs. The monopolies could no longer afford all the privileges of the white labour aristocracy. Thus, the reforms did not flow from the softened hearts of the capitalist class; rather, they flowed from the needs of their pockets. Restructuring apartheid, not getting rid of it was their object.

British imperialism in the late Nineteenth century systematically racially oppressed the black workers of the gold mines. This was a common condition of all 'coloured' peoples enslaved by imperialism - deprived of all their rights or possessing merely a mockery of them.

But the absence of political rights for the black majority was only one part of this system of racial oppression. It was used to enforce systematic job discrimination and residential segregation. While in part inherited from the colonial period, apartheid was systematically extended and deepened after the formation of the Union (1910) and developed into a total system by the Nationalist Party governments in the period 1948-70. Apartheid in this post-war form lay at the heart of South Africa's successful growth. Yet through the creation of a modern capitalism and a black working class, it helped to undermine its further continuation.

Apartheid is a system of discrimination designed to benefit the various sections of big capital, the 'new middle class' of the state bureaucracy and the white workers. Consequently, these 'allies' often fall out about which aspects of apartheid need to be defended and which modified or relaxed in order to create conditions favourable to their continued prosperity. But they are all united in denying to the blacks the destruction or dismantling of the system as a whole. The history of apartheid's development was determined by the conflicting and changing interests of the various elements of the racist alliance.

In the late nineteenth century and up to the Second World War agricultural capital did not insist upon a job bar to blacks nor did white workers seek one as the latter drifted from the land to seek skilled jobs in the towns and mines. Mine owners actually opposed the job bar on blacks since they needed a mass of unskilled, cheap black labour. They fiercely resisted the statutory imposition of the job bar and constantly wrestled with the white unions over the legal ratio of white to black labour.

Nevertheless, mine owners insisted upon severe restrictions on black labour mobility and benefited from the Pass Laws, which prevented black migration to the towns. Both sectors of capital gained directly from the land Acts of the early 1920s, which deprived blacks of the possibility of sufficient land for independent production and so created a mass supply of black labour.

In every area of life after 1948 these measures were extended in order to atomise the growing black proletariat. The Bantu or homeland policies of 'separate development' in the 1950s and 1960s were aimed at this. The Bantustans are the keystone of Grand Apartheid, ensuring the existence of a pool of cheap and insecure black labour, and acting as a dumping ground for the economically inactive. The African reserves, making up 13.7% of the total land area, were given legal sanction in the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936. In post-war apartheid, successive Nationalist governments attempted to construct a myth of 'separate development' and 'self-government'.

By 1970, Vorster had abandoned the idea that the reserves were economically viable. Population density, which is 13.7 per hectare in South Africa as a whole, reaches 89 per hectare in 'independent' Ciskei. By the early 1970's, an estimated 70% of the land in the 'homelands' was unsuitable for cultivation. But forced removals to the 'homelands' continued.

The consequence of these policies on the black masses by the late 1960s was terrible. In manufacturing and construction the wage differential between whites and blacks was 6:1 by 1970. In the gold mines it was 21:1.

An average wage for Africans was R208 per year while for whites it was R4,329. In housing, education and cultural amenities these grotesque disproportionalities were repeated. The 'homelands' policy has resulted in the virtual elimination of the South African peasantry. Instead, it has helped to create a large semi-proletariat. This class is mainly dependent on waged work in industry and partially reliant on what living could be scratched in the 'homelands'. Further, the intensification of the policy has led to a situation where two-thirds of the black population in the Bantustans is landless.

Apartheid threw a massive burden onto the backs of black women. Virtually no element is included in wages for workers families, that is, for the reproduction of the next generation. Procuring subsistence has been left largely to the women. Over 5 million women are expected to survive on tiny plots of land in these areas where they live without their husbands, denied any kind of family support. Some receive tiny remittances from their working husbands, although only 23% of African women are married.

Women suffer also by a complete denial of political and legal rights. Women are almost all considered 'minors' with no rights to hold land, even though in reality they are 70% of the heads of households. Many women seek employ-

ment as casual agricultural labourers on white farms, or apply to gain a pass to work in urban areas.

Permission for such a move is required from both the local rural labour bureau and their guardian - husband or father. Any lucky enough to get a job may find that they lose their rights to their plot of land.

The 1970's were a decade of significant changes within the apartheid system. By the end of the decade many bourgeois commentators had hailed the Vorster regime's reforms (1970-78) and those of his successor P.W. Botha, as heralding a gradual but unstoppable process of the withering away of the apartheid state; as signifying the possibility of a humane liberal capitalism - free from the degrading and stultifying effects of apartheid.

Indeed, those ten years did see a drastic erosion in white economic and social privileges in a number of areas.

For example, although the job bar barely shifted in the gold mines during the period 1971-82 the white/black wage ratio fell from, 21:1 to 5.5:1 as a result of real wages for blacks rising by 400% compared to 3% for whites.

In manufacturing and construction the respective figures were from 6:1 to 4.4:1.

Many elements of 'petty apartheid' were eroded at this time (e.g. sport, social mixing) as well as the legal removal of the jobs bar in 1973. An attempt was also made to create small businesses and a concomitant black middle class that could be used at a later stage to incorporate the black masses into the system. Finally, there were changes in residency rights for about 2.5 million blacks (Section 10ers and 'commuters').

Some apologists for apartheid have attempted to explain the raising of the living standards of the black proletariat in the 1970s as a recognition by employers that capitalism could only continue to flourish in South Africa by massively raising effective demand in the internal market. This they could only do by raising the purchasing power of the black population. However, this was not the impulse for the change.

Boosting the general level of wages of the black proletariat without improving productivity would have depressed profitability and competitiveness further. The real aim of removing the job bar, of improving training and education of the black masses was to reduce overall labour costs. Only training blacks to do white skilled jobs at lower rates of pay could do this. The relatively large increases in the wages of black workers in the gold mines are explained by three facts.

Firstly, after the end of the fixed gold price in 1971, the price of gold soared, from \$35 per ounce in 1971 to \$800 in 1980. Hence, real wages improved but so did profits at an even faster rate. Secondly, black workers militancy increased in the 1970s. The 1973 Durban strike frightened the mine owners. Thirdly, after 1974/76 the overwhelming dependence of the mine owners on non-South African black labour changed as several black countries imposed limits on the numbers allowed into South Africa. In order to attract unskilled and skilled labour to the mines -given the attraction of jobs in industry- wages had to rise.

Manufacturers, mine owners and farmers all reacted differently to different aspects of apartheid's labour policies. From the 1960s increased farm mechanisation heightened the farmers need for skilled labour too. As with the mine owners they fiercely opposed changes in labour mobility,



that is, the ability of black workers to move freely around the country in search of work.

The most resistance to change came from the huge state bureaucracy itself. This was for two reasons. First, large numbers of Afrikaner workers doing relatively low skilled jobs were threatened by any relaxation in the job bar. Secondly, a vast amount of the bureaucracy existed precisely in order to administer the rules of apartheid.

There were strict limits to the process of 'reforming' (in reality the re-structuring) of apartheid. Although by 1978 most jobs were legally open to blacks, employer discrimination was still the norm. Those blacks who were upgraded found that their white counterparts were 'reclassified' to allow them to retain their wage differentials.

Moreover, the 'separate development' policy of the 1970s and 1980s deepened apartheid. Fearful of the growing tendency of urbanisation among the black proletariat Vorster and Botha extended the homelands system, eventually depriving millions of South African citizenship in an attempt to atomise the growing black working class.

In similar vein the state introduced the 'decentralisation' policy, which aimed to relocate industries near border areas. Intimately connected to this was the continued resistance to 'stabilisation'; that is, the ability of black workers to have their families with them.

It should also be remembered that the 1970s witnessed an intensification of the policy of forced removals of black workers and the permanently unemployed who were illegally settled in the cities and towns. Needless to say, the Pass Laws remained in force.

The massive growth in the security apparatus in the 1970's paralleled the extension of repressive legislation which was used against black activists. Deaths in detention increased, including that of Steve Biko in 1976.

All of these policies had the same central aim; to atomise the growing black proletariat - itself a product of the development of industry - and prevent the development of a collective class experience. This involved enforcing the separation between community struggles in the townships and 'homelands' on the one hand and the struggle of workers in the factory and mines on the other. Towering above all other considerations, however, has been opposition to ending political apartheid. Fierce restrictions on the black trade unions' political activity are one element, but absolute opposition to black political rights remained within Afrikaner nationalism throughout the 1970s.

An attempt (overwhelmingly unsuccessful) was made to incorporate the 'Coloured' and Asian minorities in an attempt to divide the black population. Further proposals to extend some political rights to black Africans since 1983 have met with fierce resistance from most Afrikaners.

The original weakness of Afrikaner capital had forced it to rely heavily on white workers, civil servants and small farmers. By the early 1970s Afrikaner capital had matured into monopoly capital. Volkskas, Trust Rank, Rembrandt, Sanlam, Generale Mynbou, and Federale Mynbou began to stand on their own two feet. The monopolists, regardless of whether they were 'English' or Afrikaner Anglo-American or Generale Mynbou- now shared a unity of interest. This much became clear with the forced departure of Vorster in the mid-1970s. By then, the stagnating economy had reduced the number of investment opportunities. The monopolists eyed the juicy and profitable companies in

the state sector with relish. They demanded privatisation but were opposed by Vorster and his cabinet.

This conflict was brought to a head by the dispute over who should own the new giant SASOL plants. Finding a convenient scandal, the monopolists unceremoniously bundled Vorster out of office and SASOL, together with other state assets, passed into the hands of the private sector. P.W. Botha replaced Vorster. The fact that he was only the second Prime Minister to come from the Cape was not without significance. The Cape had always represented the seat of the most developed Afrikaner capital (SANLAM). P.W. Botha, in fact, was the personification of Afrikaner monopoly capitalism.

P.W. Botha's ascendancy has been accompanied by renewed crises and recession. Offloading this onto the backs of the black workers has meant necessary changes in the South African state. This state combines the features of a brutal police-military dictatorship to the black population with the characteristics of an 'imperialist democracy' for the whites. The crisis has driven the ruling Afrikaner bourgeoisie to increase the powers of the executive and the military, that is, to move in a bonapartist direction. The 1977 Constitution extended the exclusion of 'English' South Africans from political power. P.W. Botha - Minister of Defence since 1968 and head of the military faction within the ruling National Party is a suitable figurehead for these tendencies. In the 1970s alone the armed forces doubled, to stand at 82,000. The state Security Council has become more important than the Cabinet.

The 1983 Constitution deepened this trend, strengthening Presidential powers and removing debate on key policies from Parliament into a Committee of Ministers.

The creation of a pseudo-parliament for 'coloureds' further devalues the white parliament and increases the arbitrating role of the President, who can present himself as above sectional interests of the parliaments.

The underlying economic rationale for these changes has been an attempt to reduce the claims and pressure of the white working class upon the monopoly capitalists.

The latter desperately needed to relax job reservation in industry to boost profitability. Yet there are extreme limitations to the bonapartist tendencies of Botha's executive in its attempts to resist the claims of the white workers, farmers and petty bourgeoisie. The state, forces consist of precisely these classes in uniform and would never willingly dismantle their own bloated privileges. Whenever he has been faced by a 'white backlash' Botha has hastily retreated turning his repression on the black labour movement despite the disappointment this has caused in Washington and London just as it did in 1916 and 1946, the militancy of the black working class has strengthened the alliance between capital and the white working class. Botha recognises his dependency on the white workers. He fears their backlash. He faces increasing pressure from within the hard line (verkrampte) faction in the Nationalist Party. In particular the Conservative Party (a 1982 split from the Nationalist Party) and the neo-fascist HNP and NCP threaten to increase their support among the Afrikaners at the expense of the Nationalist Party. The latter two parties achieved 17% of the votes in the 1981 elections, and in by-elections in late 1985 showed signs of spectacular gains as the challenge of the black workers mounts.

Alienating white workers invites a coup from the right,



a move which will undoubtedly strengthen the hand of white workers. On the other hand, granting meaningful power sharing to the black population does not guarantee that the black masses would stop their revolution half-way.

Botha is therefore drawn back into the traditional alliance between capital and white labour. Increasingly Botha turns his guns against the courageously militant black communities. Piet, 'the great reformer', turned out to be 'Piet the skiet' (the shoot). The thousands of deaths since the early 1980s spells out in blood that the apartheid state cannot be reformed away.

Of course, there are those sectors (foreign imperialism,

Anglo-American, PFP) who wish that enough concessions could be made to entice black representatives into a set-up that will preserve their investments and profits.

The reactionary mass base of the whites almost wholly, precludes a 'reform from above' perspective - dear as this is to bourgeois liberals within South Africa. Apartheid must and can only be destroyed from the bottom up: it is a task for the millions of black workers.

Of course, this does not mean that given a huge and successful upheaval that 'reform from above' may not be offered as the only way of swindling the black masses out of the full fruits of their own sacrifices and in order to preserve capitalism. ■





## The South African Working Class (1986)

By Sue Thomas, Published by Workers Power (Britain) and the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International  
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**W**hat role can the South African working class play in the fight against the Apartheid state? By Sue Thomas

The South African revolution will be successful because the black African proletariat decisively enters the struggle for democracy, or it will not be successful at all. In that fight the six million strong black and one million 'coloured' and Asian workers will find themselves pitted against the overwhelming bulk of the one and a half million white workers. Why?

At the turn of the century most white workers were English immigrants jealously guarding their wages and conditions in craft unions. Gradually, the destruction of the class of small Afrikaner farmers resulted in a growing class of unskilled Afrikaner workers.

Their reactionary stamp was given early on. On the one hand they allowed themselves to be used as scabs to break the strikes of the English immigrants, as in the 1907 miners' strike, which ended with them establishing a toe hold in the industry. On the other, between 1893-1926, the Afrikaner unions fought to establish (and eventually enforce in law) restrictive controls over the mass of unskilled black labour so as to create a pool of scarce skilled Afrikaner labour and hence secure domination over the black working class.

In 1922 white mineworkers struck in defence of the colour bar. Subsequently in 1929 a system of national collective bargaining was established the Industrial Conciliation Act which excluded African workers. The penetration of Afrikaner nationalism into the white working class and trade unions in the 1930's and 1940's, through the Broederbond, brought semi-skilled workers into an alliance with Afrikaner capital to extend job reservation and protect white privilege. Today, the white trade unionists organised in the Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA) and the South African Confederation of Labour (SOCAL) remain wedded to the protection of privilege and of apartheid, although the latter is more openly reactionary.

While the overwhelming majority of the white workers have always formed a labour aristocracy over the black workers, the intensive and extensive growth of its privileges occurred precisely in South Africa's imperialist growth phase - the 1960's. Between 1948 and 1970, real wages for whites doubled. In addition, the racial profile of the occupational structure illustrates the fact that whites, by and large, perform a managerial/supervisory role over black workers in production, or inhabit the state bureaucracy, which is largely geared to the enforcement of apartheid. For example, only 16% of manual production workers today are white. Less than 5% are categorised as unskilled. Nearly 70% of white collar workers are white, while 91% of the managerial/administrative grade are white, compared with 4% of black workers.

The white working class, however, is not homogeneous. Historically, the English speakers dominated white-collar occupations while Afrikaners generally occupied lower blue collar grades. The years after the Second World War, under the perpetual rule of the Afrikaner nationalists, redressed that balance.

The biggest change in the conditions of the white proletariat relative to the black has been since the start of the 1970's. The end of the legal job bar in many areas has gradually resulted in about 250,000 whites (17% of those in work) being overtaken in the job hierarchy by a small rising stratum of black, white-collar workers.

This partial erosion of the labour aristocratic homogeneity of white workers has, deepened, and will continue to deepen, the reactionary political outlook of many Afrikaners. In the depths of the 1977-78 recession, railway workers threatened a go-slow over the pace of black workers' advance. In addition, the Diamond Cutters Union went on an eleven week strike against black advancement.

This tendency had deepened in the late 1970's and 1980's. In a 1979 by-election in a working class Afrikaner constituency, some 40% voted for the neo-fascist HNP candidate which had only polled 3.2% nationally in the previous General Election. By the 1981 Election, the HNP increased its poll to 200,000 votes (14.1%). In a spring 1985 by-election there was a 22% swing to the Conservative Party. A series of elections in late October 1985 indicated that the Nationalist Party may have finally lost the allegiance of a majority of Afrikaners as the voters moved right.

The post-1976 (Soweto) threat of the black working class, has split the Afrikaner nationalist alliance. The developing crisis in South Africa will undoubtedly open fissures within the white working class. Unemployment and pressure on wages will increase. It is possible that, under the impact and leadership of black workers, some white workers may be won over to opposition to apartheid (already, the 59,000 strong, mixed-race Boilermakers' Union has led a move out of TUCSA, taking its white workers with it). It is even possible that sections of the white working class will be won to a revolutionary party.

But this is by no means a necessary or inevitable development. The likely reaction of the white working class will be to further protect its privileges and maintain its alliance with the ruling class. The bulwark of the reactionary Afrikaner working class, the 26% working in the state sector, will probably desert to fascist parties rather than concede decisive reforms. Many of them are in low grade jobs, many of them owe their jobs to the continuation of the job bar.

Above all, many of their jobs are directly concerned with policing apartheid and would disappear with apartheid. The South African revolution cannot wait for white workers to come over to its side, it must confront them with a



sharp choice: "Go under defending your exploiter or join with us in building a society which puts an end to both oppression and exploitation".

### The Black Working Class

The gravedigger of South African capitalism, the black proletariat, has risen to its full height only in the last thirty years, with the growth of manufacturing industry and construction. It is this which has, despite apartheid, contributed to the growing urbanisation and proletarianisation of African workers.

Some 1.2 million African and half a million 'coloureds' and Asians work in industry or the building trade. About 750,000 thousand work in the mines, nearly half a million of these in the gold mines. Until 1974, about 80% of those were foreign migrant workers. Today, about 58% are 'internal' South African black migrants from the 'homelands'. There are also about one and a half million black agricultural workers. The black peasantry has been virtually eliminated by a series of forcible land seizures by whites.

This then is where the social power of the African working class resides. It is also a concentrated class. 70% of GDP is produced in the eight metropolitan areas, but 40% is produced in the 'PWV triangle' around Johannesburg, Pretoria and Vereeniging. The 'homelands' account for a mere 3% of social wealth.

Large and concentrated, this is the core of the black proletariat which must be mobilised against the apartheid state if it is to be shattered and destroyed. There are still some 2.5 million service sector workers (700,000 domestic servants included). In addition, there are as many as 1 million unemployed or semi employed who are part of the black working class, lacking leverage on production but whose oppression makes them intransigent foes of apartheid and whose weight must be thrown onto the scales to bring down the racist regime.

However, the apartheid state has done its best to prevent the growing homogeneity of the black proletariat, to prevent it from progressing from a 'class-in-itself' to a 'class-for-itself'. The battery of repressive laws (on residence, job influx) has prevented the black workers from establishing concentrated working class communities. Rather, apartheid has created three types of workers. First, there are some 1.6 million migrant workers (25% women) who are kept on short-term contracts and are often moved from one job to another over the years. In between, they are allowed short return visits to the 'homelands'. This is the lot of most mineworkers and many factory workers.

Secondly, there are about 700,000 black 'commuter' workers who travel daily from a homeland area to work in a nearby white urban area. Life for these workers often means a 2am start with a four hour journey to work. A long day's work is followed by a similar return journey, getting home at 8 30pm. Thirdly, there are over three million permanent resident workers who live in black townships outside the 'homelands' and on the edge of white urban areas. These are the biggest anomaly within, and greatest threat to, the apartheid system of 'separate development'. But they have become an indispensable stable element in the factory labour force. Finally, to these we must add the million black people who live illegally in shanty towns/

squatter settlements on the edge of cities (eg Crossroads settlement, east of Cape Town).

Since 1964 when a total ban was placed on women entering urban areas other than with work passes, many women and their families have come to these settlements both to be with their partners and to seek work. Largely women and youth, constantly harassed, they form a large reservoir of semi-employed and unemployed.

Black women now make up a significant section of the working class. They are 33% of the workforce, a substantial leap from 23% in 1960. African women workers are concentrated in agriculture (19%) and the service sector (50%). Yet they are increasingly entering industry. This is because they are cheaper to employ, the wage-gap still being in the order of 20% between men and women.

One quarter of all black women workers are domestics. Wages are low and conditions are appalling. They are forced to live in separate accommodation, denied all employment protection, expected to work all hours and robbed of the right to their own family life. While they create a comfortable life for their employers and particularly their children, they are not allowed to have their own husbands or children with them.

The erosion of the job bar and of wage differentials has created a more diversified black working class spread across a wider range of occupations. In the years 1960-1980, the number of blue-collar black workers slightly less than doubled, while the number of agricultural workers remained relatively stable. But the number of black workers who moved into professional grades increased by more than 400%, and into lower level white-collar grades by over 1000%. It is from among the former layer, black 'labour aristocrats' and petit bourgeois, that the candidates for conciliation with the whites are drawn.

Meanwhile, at the bottom, the number of unemployed grows relentlessly. Their numbers increased by 400% in the twenty years to 1980. Since then, the unemployment rate has accelerated, and it will do so again as South Africa fails to achieve the 3.5% of GDP growth each year which it needs just to absorb the new additions to the labour force. It is the unemployed in the townships, together with the school students, who are the backbone of the rebellion on the streets. They are overwhelmingly young. Some 54% of black Africans are under 19, and two-thirds are under 25. It is this post-Soweto generation of politically aware and confident youth which must be organised and allied to the growing trade union movement to forge a truly unstoppable force.

The first trade union of black workers in South Africa was founded in an auspicious year - 1917. The influence of revolutionary syndicalism in the USA is shown in its title The 'Industrial Workers of Africa' (adapted from the IWW, the Wobblies). It exerted strong pressure on the South African Native National Congress (SANNC later to be renamed the ANC) to take up workers' grievances.

The IWA and the SANNC attempted to call a general strike for a minimum rise of one shilling a day for all black miners. It organised a black miners' strike in July 1918 and participated in the anti-pass campaign of 1919. In 1919, a strike of black mine workers directly challenged the colour bar. All these struggles were brutally smashed by military and police repression but a glorious tradition had been launched.

This tradition was taken up by the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) which was founded in 1919 amongst black and coloured Cape Town dockworkers. Its principal leader was Clements Kadalie. The ICU faced not only the state but also the most disgusting racist scabbing by the white workers' unions. This was the case even though the ICU had supported the white workers when they struck.

The ICU however rapidly became a huge mass movement, helped by the conservatism of the ANC, which turned more and more to petitioning and protest by respectable blacks. By 1926, it had a membership of over 100,000. But its great weakness lay in its inability to penetrate the compound system and organise the black miners. Its main strength lay amongst the rural and urban workers. During the Rand Rebellion of 1922, the white miners adopted a reactionary demand for the defence of the status quo agreement that kept a ratio of black to white miners in force. Attacks took place on black workers and the ICU found itself supporting the Smuts' government's repression of the white miners.

The lack of a firmly anti-racist communist movement amongst the black and white miners was bitterly felt. The 1924 coalition government, that brought the Nationalists into power and initiated a systematic drive to impose what became apartheid, put the ICU to the test. It was a test that Kadalie and the majority of its leadership failed. Communists were expelled from the union for advocating direct action, strikes, pass-burning, tax boycotts etc. The right, around Kadalie, wanted to 'go carefully'. At first, the union continued to grow. In 1928 it had perhaps a quarter of a million members. But its crash and disintegration was as rapid as its rise.

Communists and expelled communists, Trotskyists and other socialists all played an important role in building black unions in the 1930s. A notable example is Max Cordon, a Trotskyist who built unions in the laundry, baking and printing industries and in shops and warehouses. Various loose co-ordinating bodies attempted to unite these unions but had no lasting success.

During the war, the influence of the Communist Party grew substantially. In 1942, the Council for Non-European Trade Unions (CNETU) was founded and by 1945 had 119 affiliated unions with 158,000 members. The mid-forties saw the zenith of these black unions' strength. Their historic weakness remained their inability to penetrate the brutal compound system and organise the most decisive sector of the black proletariat - the miners. Also, under the leadership of the CP, the unions collaborated in the war effort.

How they were to be repaid was to be seen after 1948. In 1946, the CNETU affiliate, the African Mine Workers' Union demanded a minimum wage of ten shillings a day. In August, the mines on the Witwatersrand were brought to a standstill by the largest miners' strike in South African history with some 73,000 miners out on strike. However, the full weight of repression was unleashed against the miners, resulting in twelve dead and 1,200 wounded. The union leaders were arrested and the union smashed. This served a heavy blow to the CNETU. Unemployment and the advent of the Nationalist Government were to finish it off.

When it assumed power in 1948, the Nationalist Party set

up a commission - the Botha commission - which drafted proposals on the black workers' unions by 1951. It obliged these unions to register with the state and subjected them to a series of harsh conditions. They were to have no right to participate in an industrial council, the framework for collective bargaining. They were only to negotiate with the employer via a government appointed 'Native Trade Union officer'. Direct negotiations were possible only on condition that the white workers in the industry or firm did not object and the employer agreed to it. Political activity was strictly prohibited and any federation of the black unions explicitly banned. The right to strike was prohibited and compulsory arbitration enforced. Sympathetic strikes were outlawed and unionisation banned in three critical areas: the mines, on the land and amongst government employees.

Even before these draconian recommendations could be enforced, the unions suffered a series of terrible blows. In 1951, the right-wing white unions decamped from the South African Trades and Labour Council (SATLC) a multi-racial federation, and formed their own all-white South African Federation of Trade Unions. Mixed unions were split or destroyed. Another phase of union organisation and struggle had ended in defeat and repression.

The rump of the old SATLC formed the Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA). In response to the vicious anti-black union laws, they organised parallel unions under the tutelage of the white unions. In March 1955, the unions opposed to this 'polite racism' united with the remains of the CNETU to form the South African Congress of Trades Unions (SACTU).

From the beginning, SACTU was openly political. Its politics were those of the ANC and especially of the new militant leadership of this body. It joined the Congress Alliance, signed the Freedom Charter and participated in all its campaigns of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Unlike previous federations, it was highly centralised. At a local, factory or mine level it was weak. Consequently, it abandoned the industrial union perspective and opted for building general unions, rallying workers from small and isolated workplaces. The idea was to divide them into industrial unions at a later stage.

In fact, SACTU was able to organise few strikes or industrial disputes and those it did were brutally repressed. Its main activity was in the ANC led campaigns such as the bus boycott of 1957 and the £1 a day campaign for a minimum wage from 1957 to 1963. According to Don Neube the minimum wage campaign was:

"not based on a specific action programme in order to filter and be translated into tangible action on the shop floor. There was no organisational machinery to implement and to monitor the practical aspects of the campaign. Instead it was hoped that the campaign would gather momentum like a messianic movement" (Black Trade Unions. Johannesburg 1985)

A 'stay-at-home' stoppage was attempted in 1958 but it failed to become a general strike.

In fact the failure of the ANC and the South African CP leadership to put trade union organisation and workers' direct action at the centre of their strategy meant that SACTU failed to become a mass organisation of the black proletariat. It was not SACTU's commitment to politics in general, or to the liberation struggle, that was to blame

for this. Rather, it was a direct consequence of the popular front, 'peaceful protest' politics of the ANC.

SACTU was also drawn into the split within the ranks of black nationalism. In 1959, the AFL/CIO (and therefore CIA) dominated International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) organised, via TUCSA, the founding of the Federation of Free African Trade Unions of South Africa (FOFATUSA). FOFATUSA was heavily influenced by the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), formed to fight 'communist influence' and related to the new bourgeois African states that were replacing colonialism throughout the rest of the continent.

Though it was anti communist, the PAC, partly in order to outmanoeuvre the ANC, launched a powerful disobedience campaign aimed at the pass system. PAC leader Robert Sobukwe led this campaign. The police reply was the Sharpeville Massacre in March 1960. A wave of strikes and rioting led to the government's State of Emergency, the passage of the Unlawful Organisations Act and the banning of both the ANC and the PAC on April 8th 1960. SACTU itself was not banned. It continued to participate in the protests and struggles of the next three years, suffering severe repression until it collapsed in 1963.

The collapse of SACTU effectively left TUCSA's parallel black unions as the only option for black workers. Yet the collapse of effective black unionism encouraged the temporarily triumphant apartheid regime to put pressure on TUCSA which, in 1969, declared African unions to be ineligible for membership.

In 1970, the officialdom of the defunct African Affairs section of TUCSA founded the Urban Training Project (UTP). This was to be an important germ of the new black unions of the mid-1970s to 1980s period. It was largely an educational and trade union cadre training body. Strikes and union struggles in the late 1960s and early 1970s were rare events. Allied to it was a co-ordinating body formed in 1973 - the Black Consultative Committee. They helped form a whole series of new unions in 1973 4.

The decisive change in the black unions' circumstances was to come with the great strike wave of 1973 in the Durban/Pinetown area. This led to the creation of the Metal and Allied Workers' Union and the National Union of Textile Workers in 1973 and the Chemical Workers' Industrial Union and the Transport and General Workers' Union in 1974. The Black Consciousness Movement of those years led to the formation of a general community-based union, the Black Allied Workers' Union. It made a principle of 'black leadership' whereas in the other unions white organisers initially played a very significant role.

The significant growth of this new movement of unionised workers faced the racist regime with a dilemma. It was already under pressure from the major employers to relax certain measures of the apartheid labour code. The scarcity of white skilled manpower meant opening certain fields to trained black workers. Employers wanted to regulate relations with them, i.e. to engage in collective bargaining with bureaucratised and incorporated trade unions. They wished to bring an end to the 'chaotic' strikes of the early and mid-1970s. Under this pressure, the regime established a Commission of Inquiry into Labour Legislation chaired by N.E. Wiehahn.

The Wiehahn Commission recommended that the basic rights of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) be

applied to the new unions. This meant freedom of association, the abolition of statutory job reservation, the registration of unions and their participation in statutory machinery for collective bargaining. Registration was clearly aimed at restricting the freedom of manoeuvre of the new unions although, in South African terms, it meant an extension of legality for the new unions.

As a result, the 'new' or 'independent' unions combined into two major federations: the Federation of South African Trades Unions (FOSATU) established in 1979, and the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA). A number of unions remained unaffiliated. FOSATU was pledged to the principle of non-racialism. Its membership and its leadership were open to whites. It was committed to industrial unionism and its powerful shop-floor orientation encouraged the creation of networks of shop-stewards. It promoted plant-level, rather than national or industrial, negotiation, establishing itself in the workplace first, before approaching management for recognition.

FOSATU was initially opposed to registration and to participation in the 'industrial councils' of Wiehahn. Eventually, however, it compromised and allowed unions to seek both, providing this did not mean accepting racial limitation or undue restrictions. Politically FOSATU was very guardedly 'independent', refusing to join the UDF or subordinate itself to the ANC's leadership.

CUSA, established in 1980, was much more influenced by the Black Consciousness Movement. It made a principle of black leadership and was, and is, much more community orientated. It was more uninhibited about registration under the Wiehahn legislation. Politically, CUSA showed its neutrality by joining both the UDF and the National Forum Committee in 1983. Internationally, it is linked to the ICTFU which regards it, rightly or wrongly, as something of a bulwark against communism.

CUSA's most successful affiliate was to be the National Union of Mineworkers - founded in 1982 and recognised by the Chamber of Mines in the following year. The NUM's creation and dramatic growth represents a historic advance for the South African proletariat. With its growth, and with the recognition and wages struggles of the next years, the ground was laid for the formation of a new federation of non-racial trade unions.

Today, about 880,000 black workers are organised in unions compared to 40,000 in 1973. The NUM has 150,000 alone. This still represents less than 10% of black workers, although many non-members look to and follow the lead of the union activists who form the vanguard of the black working class.

The successes born of struggle and the concessions wrung from employer and state alike have contributed to both a greater stratification within the black proletariat and to a





greater sense of confidence and combativity. Since these successes have almost always been on the wages front, they have also helped to foster a certain 'economism' amongst their leaders, that is, a neglect or postponing of 'political questions'. This has slowed down the development of the political consciousness of the mass of union members.

Two urgent tasks confront the black trade union movement today. The first is the need to complete the building of trade union unity.

The formation of the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) on December 2nd 1985 marked a great step forward for the black proletariat. The 871 delegates, representing 450,250 paid up members in 34 trade unions, decided to create a federation based on industrial unions. They also seek to organise rural workers, domestic servants, transport workers, and the unemployed – all, as yet, largely unorganised. In addition, COSATU has pledged itself to fight discrimination affecting women, to fight for equal pay for equal work, maternity rights and for a campaign against sexual harassment.

The new federation has also pledged itself to continue the FOSATU/NUM practice of rank and file democracy. Before the fusion, 23 COSATU unions had 12,462 shop stewards representing 363,000 workers (an average of one steward to 29 workers). These unions in addition had 306 paid officials. The NUM, perhaps the most powerful and strategically placed of the unions, has over 150,000 paid up members and a shaft-steward system. This democratic tradition needs to be maintained and extended to the newly organised workers to ensure that the unions' growth and their recognition by the state and the employers does not lead to the development of a caste of privileged bureaucrats. At the moment, there is no substantial material base to sustain a union bureaucracy, given the low level of wages and subscriptions of the union members. A bureaucracy also needs the support of the bosses to sustain itself and this it most certainly has not yet got.

To rely on anti-bureaucratic organisational measures alone would be to nurture dangerous syndicalist illusions. The only real barrier to bureaucratisation is to build a revolutionary communist leadership in the unions; that is, to turn them to support a strategy for the seizure of power by the working class. The struggle to prevent bureaucracy and resist class collaboration in the new unions points directly to the task of building a revolutionary party of the black working class vanguard.

CUSA and the Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions (AZACTU) remain outside the super-federation. CUSA is an affiliate of the International Congress of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and claims to be 'black oriented and controlled'. It criticises the 'non-racial' positions of the other unions. It is open about seeking good relations with the employers. AZACTU, the smallest of the federations, is closely tied to AZAPO. It was AZAPO's Labour Secretary, Rev. Joe Seoka, who condemned the two day stay-away of November 1984.

Whilst AZACTU is affiliated to the National Forum and opposes the UDF, it should not stand aside from involvement in COSATU. If it really wishes to combat popular frontism, together with the influence of the UDF and the ANC, then it must do so within the mass trade union federation or perish as a serious trade union. The goal of an all-black leadership is wrong. A minority of whites, such

as Neil Agett, have given their lives to the struggle to build the unions. It is one thing to seek to ensure that the union leadership fully reflects the numerical strength of the black proletariat but quite another to be 'black exclusivist' either with regard to union membership or leadership.

Also the clinging to community-based unions, as against the project of industrial unions, is to turn ones back on the most effective means of organising the black workers into a force capable of ensuring the common downfall of apartheid and capitalism. General unions can indeed be important for organising un-unionised industries but they should give way to industrial unions as soon as possible.

### Politics & the Trade Unions

The second urgent task is to resolve the current debate within and between the various black independent unions over what political role the unions should play in South Africa. The terrible repressive conditions that overhang even today's legal unions, which make 'normal' trade union activity impossible, force all unions to confront this problem.

Since 1979 and 1980, with the emergence of FOSATU and CUSA respectively, these unions have been forced to respond politically to the deteriorating political situation.

When, in 1984, Botha introduced the new Constitution, creating fake parliaments for 'Coloured' and Indian representatives with no enfranchisement for the black African majority, the trade unions joined in the successful boycott campaign.

The most significant political action called by the unions before the formation of COSATU was the two day stay-away (protest strike) in the Transvaal in November 1984. An estimated 800,000 workers took part. The strike was called on the combined issues of educational reform, including the end of sexual harassment in schools, the withdrawal of security forces from the townships, the release of detainees and no increases in rents or fares.

These actions, and their varied success, have served to pose ever more sharply the question of what political organisation of the working class will best unite the disparate struggles. The response to date has been varied. CUSA has taken the attitude of working with both the UDF and the National Forum (black consciousness grouping). The MGWU affiliated to the UDF alone. FOSATU, FCWU and the GWU kept their distance from these nationalist organisations. They objected to subordinating the workers to other classes within the 'multi-class' framework of the UDF or NF.

FOSATU's attitude was motivated by both positive and negative arguments. Broadly, its leaders' expressed desire for class independence and hostility to subordinating workers' interests to 'broad alliances' was correct. But there is also an accompanying economism which tends to limit the unions to struggles over wages and conditions.

The working class and its economic organisations, the trade unions, cannot 'keep out of politics'. Their choice is simply whether they will tail other class forces politically or whether they will support an independent working class political party. Some union leaders such as the secretary of the Metal and Allied Workers' Union in the Transvaal, Moses Mayekiso have in the past called for 'a workers' freedom charter' and for the unions to form a

“workers’ party”.

The very size and strength of the new federation will draw it into politics. Indeed, the leaders have been much more outspoken since its formation. Elijah Barayi, President of COSATU has called for nationalisation of the mines and major industries and commented: “Ultimately there will be a socialist state in South Africa.” In other interviews however he has said that he: “regarded himself as a moderate, had no particular communistic leanings but was committed to attaining one man one vote in a unitary South Africa.” Politically this position is identical to that of the ANC/UDF.

Other leaders of COSATU, including Jay Naidoo, the General Secretary, and Sydney Mafumadi (Assistant General Secretary) are active supporters of the UDF. The warm welcome that the ANC has given to the new federation contrasts sharply with its attitude in the 1970’s when it regarded the ‘independent unions’ as collaborationist and counterposed to them the largely defunct SACTU.

This change indicates that the ANC senses the growing hold of its ‘policy of alliances’ and the declining strength of what it calls ‘economism’ and ‘sectarianism’.

Elijah Barayi has promised a campaign of pass-burning (starting in June 1986) unless Botha scraps the Pass Laws. This is in line with the auxiliary role the ANC sees for the unions. Direct class struggle by the unions is subordinated to civil disobedience tactics, mass rallies, appeals to foreign governments to apply boycotts and disinvestment policies, plus guerrilla attacks on military personnel and economic targets. None of these tactics, singly or all together, can smash the apartheid state. But they are not meant to. They are aimed at forcing the government to the negotiating table.

Yet there is not the slightest guarantee that they will do that. Revolutionary crises do not last for ever. The present economic crisis of the regime is not eternal but is related to the cyclical crisis of the world economy. The masses’ revolutionary energy is not inexhaustible. Enthusiasm can wane if the struggle does not move towards a decisive confrontation with the dictatorship. Demoralisation and demobilisation can set in. The resistance of the unarmed townships to brutal repression and repeated massacres is

not limitless. The terrain, as well as the economic and social conditions in South Africa, make sustained guerrilla warfare difficult, if not impossible.

Nor can the trade unions be expected to continue their growth free from repression. Any substantial improvement in the government’s situation will presage new attacks. The unions need to perfect their organisation and take up immediate class interests and democratic struggles. Yet it must always be within the context of preparing decisive action against any government attack. These preparations must centralise the mass uprising of the people into a General Strike. Political subordination of the unions to the UDF/ANC will derail the chances of this strategy succeeding.

### A Workers’ Party

Trade unions are not adequate to carrying out political tasks. Since the trade unions are the only mass workers’ organisations, the revolutionary vanguard should call on them to play a key role in building an independent class party of the proletariat.

In this work it is clear that revolutionaries will have to fight alongside workers and union leaders who, as yet, do not see that such a party must become a revolutionary communist combat party. In this sense, the call for a workers’ party is an algebraic slogan. It is one that starts from the agreed need for a separate and independent party but which assigns the decision on its programme and final structure to the result of democratic internal debate and the free competition of tendencies.

Doubtless a tendency will arise which will seek to direct the workers’ party onto the road of a reformist Labour Party. Stalinism, despite its opposition to a mass independent workers’ party, would, if the unions actually took up its formation, certainly intervene to direct it towards a class collaborationist, popular front strategy.

Therefore, it is not inevitable that a broad, trade union-based and programmatically ‘open’ workers’ party would come into existence or last for a prolonged period. But it is equally certain that no propaganda circle can grow by ones and twos into a party large enough to lead the overthrow

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of apartheid in the current crisis. In the present period, the slogan of the workers' party enables the fight for a revolutionary programme to be carried out alongside the most politically conscious members of the unionised working class; that is, with its spontaneous vanguard. This way, the formation of a conscious Trotskyist vanguard party can be dramatically forwarded.

In the contest with Stalinists and social-democrats, inside such a workers' party, revolutionaries would have to fight for the structure and organisation of a Leninist combat party. It is essential that it become a professional organisation, combining legal and illegal methods, for only such an organisation could survive the brutal repression that is ever present in South Africa.

Above all, revolutionaries would have to fight for an action programme which started from the immediate political tasks of the proletariat, smashing apartheid, and show how this must culminate in the seizure of political power by the working class.

### A Revolutionary Action Programme

A revolutionary situation is developing in South Africa. Its economic and social pre-requisites, the crisis of the economy and the reduced situation of South African capitalism, have delivered a tremendous shock to all classes and strata of society.

Lenin's classic objective conditions which make up a revolutionary situation are all to be observed. It is indeed "impossible for the ruling class to maintain their rule without any change". There is a profound "crisis in the policy of the ruling class" which has led "to a fissure through which the discontent and indignation of the oppressed classes bursts forth". As we have seen, this situation exactly describes the crisis within the South African bourgeoisie today.

From this point, one passes from the objective to the subjective conditions for a revolutionary situation. The ruling class is unable and the working class unwilling to carry on in the old way. Trotsky noted that "a revolutionary situation develops out of the reciprocal action of objective and subjective factors". The most important of the latter is that of the proletariat which "begins to search for a way out not on the basis of the old society, but along the path of a revolutionary insurrection against the existing order".

The massive struggles of 1985, the strikes of the mineworkers, the successful stay-away of May Day 1986, the revolt of the townships and the huge demonstrations which meet with the most bloody repression, all indicate the depth and seriousness of South Africa's revolutionary crisis. Section after section of workers, layer after layer of the population, 'coloureds', Asians, the various religious communities, including the Muslims, have all been drawn into what is already a truly great people's movement. The vanguard role of youth is particularly noticeable. Their courage is without equal. They are breaking from every vestige of enslavement and submission and they are leading their elders to make this break themselves.

Yet, again as Lenin observed, not every revolutionary situation turns into a revolution. For this the spontaneous mass revolutionary consciousness needs to find a directing centre and a clear, coherent strategy for victory. It needs to find a revolutionary party.

As the working class is the only revolutionary class that

can consistently fight South African capitalism and its apartheid system to its end, so only a revolutionary communist party with a programme for workers' power can be adequate to leading the black, 'coloured' and Asian masses to victory. The only scientific basis for a programme in the imperialist epoch in a country where the masses are suffering a colonial-style dictatorship lies in the theory of permanent revolution.

### Immediate Demands

The South African masses lack the most basic democratic rights which have long been in the possession of workers in the 'advanced' imperialist countries. They need the most basic human and civil rights: the right to reside where they wish in their own country, citizenship, freedom from arbitrary arrest and deportation, the right to vote in municipal, regional and national elections, the right to marry and live with whom they choose.

In addition, they suffer exclusion from the land of their forebears, massive super-exploitation at work, terrible restrictions on their trade union rights, non-existent social services and woefully inadequate educational provision.

Thus, the struggles of today all start from democratic and immediate demands - but it would be false to draw from this the conclusion that a "bourgeois democratic" revolution awaits South Africa. As we have seen, South Africa is as economically developed as any country which has broken from colonial dependence to become an imperialist power during this century. In the present, and for the foreseeable future, the world capitalist system is wracked with crisis. No prolonged period of capitalist development will improve the conditions of the masses merely if apartheid were abolished. Capitalism must perish with apartheid.

The programme of permanent revolution alone can fuse the struggle against apartheid with a battle to destroy capitalism and create a workers' state. Fighting for the programme of permanent revolution in South Africa does not, however, mean that Trotskyists counterpose the slogans of proletarian revolution to the democratic demands now being raised by the masses. On the contrary, the programme of permanent revolution is, in Trotsky's words, "...a combined programme, reflecting the contradictory construction of historic society...". What we reject is the notion that the solution of the democratic tasks necessarily pre-dates the fight for socialist revolution and that only democratic slogans can be advanced in the present stage. We must fight to give the democratic struggle a proletarian direction and content.

The highest points of the struggle to date have been the stay-aways and school boycotts, the boycotts of white businesses, the strikes of the mineworkers and the street fighting with Botha's armed forces. The imposition of the state of emergency and the subsequent wave of brutal repression posed the need for a higher and more general form of struggle. The formal end to the state of emergency has changed little. If anything the repression has intensified.

### Democratic Demands

The revolution unquestionably starts as a democratic one. The existence of the white dictatorship, denying the most elementary of democratic rights (universal suffrage; one



person, one vote) ensures this. Therefore, revolutionary communists must put the demands of democracy in the forefront of their programme. They must demand, alongside the broadest masses, universal, equal and secret suffrage for all men and women above the age of sixteen years. They must demand the total abolition of all discriminatory laws and regulations of apartheid, the smashing of its racist police force, its army, judicial system and state bureaucracy.

The standing army must be replaced by an armed militia of the whole people and in particular of the urban and rural workers. The armed people is the only secure basis for democracy and national independence. But, in advancing this, the toilers will pose another question to themselves - which class shall rule in South Africa? We deny absolutely that the fact that democratic slogans are now in the foreground means that the working class must allow the black bourgeoisie or petit-bourgeoisie to come to power because the revolution is a 'democratic' one or is in its 'democratic stage'. Nor is sharing power with this class an option, for it inevitably means the subordination of the workers to their exploiters and the preservation of their system of exploitation.

### The Agrarian Question

The working class of the townships and the mining areas must form an alliance with the workers in the countryside. They must extend a hand to help them organise a powerful trade union based on an elected delegate committee on each large farm. The reactionary laws impeding the organisation of rural workers must be broken.

A central democratic demand must be the nationalisation of all the large and medium sized farms monopolised by the whites, with no compensation to these land thieves. This demand in itself is not incompatible with the survival of capitalism, meaning only that land ownership should be vested in the state.

Beyond this lie the vital questions; who shall use the lands; how shall agricultural production be organised; who will benefit from it? The proletarian answer is that those who work the large-scale farms should manage them as part of an economic plan in the interests of the masses. This is impossible except as a result of the victory of the working class and the expropriation of the whole exploiting class and the creation of a planned economy. To achieve this goal, the rural workers must fight now for workers' control over the farms.

The agrarian revolution must of necessity involve the small farmers of the Bantustans, the squatters, the occupiers of 'blackspots'. The working class must fight side by side with them for the seizure of enough good quality land to assure decent living conditions.

The working class' programme does not involve a general parcelisation of the large farms into tiny peasant holdings or a 'return to the land' of the urban population. This would be a retrograde step economically for the masses. Only large-scale, scientific, mechanised farming, once it is directed to the welfare of the masses, can meet the demands of a modern developed society. Politically, it would be a retrograde step too, to return millions of city and township dwellers to rural fragmentation and isolation. Private ownership would also, in the situation of in-

termixed language groups, lead to disputes between them about land ownership.

However, revolutionary socialists cannot be doctrinaire abstainers from living struggles. If the oppressed rural workers and displaced cultivators within the homelands take up the struggle to seize and divide the large farms of the white landowners, it is our duty to lend the maximum support and indeed offer leadership in the onslaught on apartheid. For, once the racist regime was smashed and the urban workers and rural toilers have established their own state power, a process of creating democratic co-operatives, of state organised mechanisation schemes and scientific farming could overcome the dangers of fragmentation and subsistence farming.

### The National Question

The apartheid regime has repeatedly attempted to fragment and divide the majority of black South Africans to hide their minority monopolisation of economic and political power within a constellation of fake 'independent states' and Bantustans. The South African/Azanian revolution must sweep away these minute puppet states. These cover only 13% of the Republic's territory yet claim as citizens 55% of the country's black population. The firmest unity between all the oppressed linguistic groups and communities is vital to overthrow the apartheid state.

The working class is the class objectively most able to achieve this unity. The conditions arising from its position in production and the struggles that arise there dictate the closest unity across linguistic, 'racial' and national divisions. The proletariat should even welcome into its ranks all white workers who forsake the defence of the racist state and their privileges and are prepared to solidarise unconditionally with their black fellow workers.

An integral part of the proletariat's democratic demands must be the recognition of the right of self-determination, up to and including separation, for all South African oppressed peoples. The working class should defend this right - but certainly not advocate separation - in order the better to bond all the communities together. In this way, internecine conflict can be minimised or avoided. It is in the interests of the working class to form the largest and strongest state in southern Africa that it can. It can do this only by helping the workers and peasants of Namibia and the surrounding states to, cast off the shackles of imperialism. To this end it should fight for a United Socialist States of Southern Africa.

### Women's Liberation

Any great peoples' revolution must take up the demands of all the oppressed if it is to triumph. Women have suffered extremes of hardship under apartheid. The right to a united family home, to live where you choose, are basic rights denied to the masses of South Africa. Women were the most courageous opponents in the campaign against the Pass Laws in the 1950s and 1960s. It took eleven years from 1952 to impose them on women.

Women must also fight for the right to work, an end to the farce that says they can survive on subsistence plots of inadequate land. Equal pay, and maternity rights are also immediate demands for women.

Women in the workforce must be drawn into the trade unions to fight alongside the men. In the post-war years, women were especially important in building up the trade unions. Some 10% of the unions in 1983 had women General Secretaries. Women must continue to be organised and to lead the unions. The women's organisations in townships have been decisive in organising the boycott campaigns. These groups, together with those in the 'squatter' areas, need to be linked to the unions in a militant unity that can challenge apartheid. Their heroism in the townships must find a place in these most powerful organisations of the class. Women in the Bantustans must also be organised and, through rural councils of action, be linked to agricultural unions.

Women have demonstrated their ability to resist apartheid. This must be fused with the general working class struggle by a mass working class women's movement which can take the struggle forward to challenge not only apartheid but their own fundamental oppression, rooted deep within the soil of class society.

### Constituent Assembly

The victorious revolution in South Africa must denounce all the secret treaties and military agreements with other imperialist powers, publishing the evidence of the plots against the freedom and integrity of the other states of Africa.

It should aid the completion of the liberation struggles of the neighbouring states where imperialist puppets have long oppressed their peoples (eg. IJNITA in Angola or Hastings Banda in Malawi). It would call for a Federation of South African states to fight imperialism and prevent the encirclement and disruption of the revolution by counter-revolutionary forces.

The question arises who, or what body, can fulfil these democratic demands? In our view the dictatorship of the proletariat alone can fulfil and defend the democratic demands. However, repetition of this truth in a situation where the masses have enormous illusions in 'democracy', that is, bourgeois democracy, is insufficient as a guide to revolutionary action. Our task is to combat their illusions and at the same time "utilise whatever is progressive about these illusions". (Trotsky)

In the present situation, this means we raise to the fore the call for a sovereign Constituent Assembly. From Zimbabwe to Nicaragua, we have seen petit-bourgeois nationalists, Stalinists and social democrats thwart the democratic aspirations of the anti-imperialist masses. Councils of state, bonapartist 'guardians of the revolution' and other such things have been the instruments for halting anti-imperialist revolutions.

While the masses are not yet organised for, and in their great majority not yet prepared to accept, soviet power, we communists will fight for the consistently democratic slogan of the Constituent Assembly. Within it the programmes of the contending parties can be openly viewed by the masses.

In this way the proletarian vanguard and the revolutionary communist party can, as Marx said, "win the battle for democracy"; for democracy is not a resolution or abolition of class conflict, but an arena in which it can take place. The working class has its own democracy, that of the

workers' councils, which is superior to all forms of bourgeois democracy because it combines the direct election by the toiling masses of their representatives. These are at all times answerable to assemblies of their constituents and recallable and replaceable by them. This is a democracy far superior to that of the freest bourgeois parliament.

Moreover, not only can the workers councils deliberate and legislate, they can execute their own decisions, cutting away the necessity of a huge unelected and unanswerable bureaucracy that thwarts the will of the people and serves the interests of a minority of exploiters.

Yet, as long as the majority of the masses have illusions in a parliamentary assembly, we must go along with such a demand, trying to protect the masses against the deceptions and tricks which accompany all bourgeois democracy. Thus, the product of the revolutionary overthrow of the apartheid state must not be a 'national convention'. This would only bargain with the imperialists and South African racists, or the ex-stooges of apartheid in the homelands. Still less can there be an agreement to allow whites a veto, or concede them a federal republic. A sovereign, revolutionary Constituent Assembly elected by universal suffrage alone is acceptable.

The organisations of the workers and the communities should see to it that its election is fully democratic as to equal electoral districts, distribution of election propaganda, unrestricted campaigning, and the democratic registration of candidates (excluding racists and collaborators). Above all, the election and convocation of the Constituent Assembly should be done under the protection of the armed people and its militia. No prior agreements or limitations on the competence of the Constituent Assembly must be tolerated.

Is there any guarantee that such an assembly will come into existence? No, because the exploiters (black as well as white) will do everything they can to avoid having the people as a whole exert their will in the matter of the nature of the republic and the government that will emerge in South Africa. This fact poses, in its starkest form, the necessity of working class leadership in the South African revolution.

### General Strike

It is now obvious that the winning of democracy alone, in racist South Africa, is a revolutionary task, that is, one of smashing the racists' state. Negotiations, compromises and national conventions cannot lead to the abolition of apartheid so long as the rifles, the tanks, and the aircraft are in the hands of the white racists. The repeated onslaught of the state forces poses to the organised proletariat the need to throw its weight into the struggle. The South African bourgeoisie, and its British and US backers, are terrified that the tap of exploitation and super-profits will be turned off by the black proletariat. This can only be done by political mass strikes aiming at a republic-wide general strike. Indeed, unless such a strike occurs, then sooner or later the Botha regime will re establish order on the basis of the exhaustion of the struggle in the townships.

The general strike can mobilise the entire working class. Its momentum can and will draw the many workers not yet unionised, the youth and unemployed in the townships, the students and black petit-bourgeoisie into a di-

rect confrontation with the state power of apartheid. All the variety of forms of struggle now being waged by the oppressed in South Africa can be strengthened, co-ordinated and given a revolutionary direction by means of the general strike.

In the course of a general strike, the masses must develop their self-organisation. The stay-away and boycott committees in the townships have drawn in delegates from all sectors of the masses. Strike and factory committees too, must be built and must fuse with the township and countryside based committees so that the strike can be organised and prosecuted by action councils representing all the workers and oppressed.

Such councils cannot and should not be restricted to the workplaces. They must be built in the townships and communities to replace the government stooge councils. They must draw in the key existing organisations of school students and the unemployed. In the countryside, they must also become organs of the agrarian revolution against the white landowners.

Last, but not least, in the process of breaking up the armed forces of apartheid, the opportunity exists to win the black rank and file from their white officers, to create black soldiers' councils, to elect officers and to mete out punishment to the racists. Factory, mines, township, rural workers' and soldiers' councils; these are the necessary organs of struggle and insurrection on the road to democracy.

The general strike cannot allow itself to be crushed by Botha's police and army. Workers' mass pickets will have to link up with student and unemployed youth to create a militia - a militia that can offer real defence and resistance and which must set out on the difficult task of arming itself and winning over Botha's black police and troops.

Appeals should be made to the black 'nationalist' states, to the guerrilla forces, to the 'workers' states' and to the western labour movements for immediate unconditional aid and the fullest supportive action.

The demands around which a general strike may be launched would be immediate and concrete, for example, a particularly brutal massacre, the declaration of a state of emergency, the arrest of prominent nationalist or workers' leaders. It must be some issue which by its importance electrifies the masses.

The initial immediate and partial demands must strike at the central weapon or attack of the government. Then, as the struggle develops, broader and more strategic goals will come to the fore. It would be schematic and abstract to guess as to whether one or several general strikes will suffice to break and divide the ruling class, to mobilise and arm the masses, to put on the order of the day an insurrectionary struggle, setting as its immediate aim the smashing of the state forces. Yet this is the direction the struggle must take if apartheid and all racial oppression is to be destroyed without trace.

Once having paid in blood for the downfall of the apartheid state, should, indeed can, the working class content itself with a democratic republic in which a black capitalist class replaces the white racists as exploiters? It must not unless it wishes to sacrifice 90% of the real social content of the revolution for the exploited and oppressed people: decent housing, food, education, welfare, all these are possible only on the basis of a commonly owned and democratically planned economy. Therefore, the democratic

revolution, the fight for majority rule and the overthrow of the whole apartheid state, poses at every stage the question of working class power.

### Transitional Demands

The task facing revolutionary communists is to start from the position of total solidarity with the masses in struggle, to advance consistent revolutionary democratic slogans, linking them to the class demands of the proletariat.

These must include immediate and partial slogans, both political and economic

*\* For fundamental improvements in pay and working conditions;*

*\* For an end to wage and job inequality between white and black workers;*

*\* For full trade union rights and recognition; maintain the total independence of the unions from the state;*

*\* For full residence and citizenship rights for workers and their families;*

*\* For decent housing for all workers.*

In addition, the working class must take up the cause of the unemployed, of the school students and of women, thus preventing the bosses and the state from being able to mobilise those without a job against the organised proletariat.

Yet such immediate demands are insufficient either to meet the needs of the working class or to point the road to working class power. Transitional demands must be fought for which centre on challenging the bosses' despotism in the workplace and the economy and the state's despotism in society.

In the workplace, we must fight for workers' control of production, of hiring and firing, of the speed and intensity of work, of safety, of the length of the working day.

A reduction in the working week with no loss of pay must be fought for so that the unemployed can be taken on in the factories and mines. Likewise, wage demands need to be formulated with the backing of committees of women and need to include a sliding-scale of wages to protect working class living standards against inflation.

Committees of delegates in each workplace, elected at mass meetings free of management spying and intimidation, can lead these struggles and establish workers' control. The business secrets of the South African and international monopolists need to be opened up to workers' inspection. Never will such astronomical exploitation and plunder of the workers have been revealed. This needs to be exposed to the proletariat of the whole world. It will greatly help in winning their aid and assistance for the revolution. In turn, it will aid their own struggle against these companies in semi-colonial and imperialist heartland alike.

### Nationalisation

The nationalisation of individual enterprises or whole industries is posed to workers in their day to day trade union struggle. Companies and industries that reject the workers' vital demands for radical improvements in wages, health and safety conditions, housing and so forth, pleading 'inability to afford it', must be met with the demand to nationalise their company/industry and to open all their records to workers' inspection. The occupation of



factories by workers must be used to enforce this demand. But, least of all in South Africa, is mere state ownership the answer.

State ownership means simply that the capitalist class as a whole owns and takes responsibility for operating production. In South Africa, this state is not only capitalist but also an oppressor, racist state. The reformist notion of state ownership as being equal to democratic or popular ownership has not even a semblance of truth.

To the demand for nationalisation, therefore, workers must add the demand "No Compensation! Not a cent/penny for the racist super-exploiters!" They must not rely on the actions of the state but on their own organised power to install workers' control in the enterprise and the industry. They must above all realise that only the expropriation of the whole class of big capitalists and the seizure of state power by the working class can preserve and make permanent the workers' gains.

The call for expropriation arises not only from the immediate struggles of the working class but also from the democratic aspirations of the masses. A fully democratic republic, where the votes of the black majority were decisive, would be a mockery if the factories, the mines, the banks and the land remained in the hands of a tiny white minority.

The masses should demand the nationalisation of the wealth of South Africa. It is impossible to do this and to indemnify the South African and foreign imperialists. On the contrary, the complete expropriation of these parasites opens the road to a socialised and planned economy.

There is no gradual or peaceful road for the South African masses to really control their own country and their own destiny. Any bourgeois or petty bourgeois nationalist government that attempted to take the road of gradual nationalisation with compensation, or even partial expropriations, would be undermined by economic sabotage of all kinds.

The enemies of the revolution would use all the tricks of political destabilisation such as have been used against Angola and Mozambique by the South African racists and by the US imperialists against Nicaragua. Only the working class, by expropriating the imperialists, can put the immense natural and productive wealth of South Africa at the service of her people and of the oppressed and exploited of the whole continent.

### A Workers' State

The advance of these demands is a measure, an acid test, of the real achievements of the working class. Without the achievement of these demands, any state, any republic, whoever stood at its head and whatever political liberties it conceded, would still be a bourgeois state, a capitalist dictatorship at every level. All talk by nationalist leaders of 'socialism' would be a deception.

Even when the working class has established its own power in the factories and is able to guard it in the streets with their own militia, the task still remains to seize the state power for the working class. The workers must resolve the dual power situation by destroying for ever the capitalists' power.

Without doing this the workers' gains, however extensive, will be temporary. The possibility of counter-revo-

lution will hang suspended over the heads of the working masses. This will be equally true whether the bourgeoisie entrusts its defence to Botha, to Buthelezi, or even if it is forced to hand power to Mandela. The working class must establish its own dictatorship if it is not to see all its gains eroded or destroyed.

To this end, the working class vanguard must fight for its class goals and those of all the oppressed masses. They must stress that to achieve in full measure their objectives the republic must be an urban and rural workers' republic. That means the elimination of all large scale private property in the means of production, transportation, commerce and the media, and its replacement by a democratically planned economy.

To achieve this, the working class must concentrate full power in the hands of its own organisations, workers' councils, and must create a workers' government answerable to a congress of them. This programme must be fought for in the mass organisations first and foremost but the party of the proletarian vanguard must likewise press its cause on the Constituent Assembly.

Whether the Constituent Assembly will come into existence independently of the deceit and trickery of the exploiters and whether it will meet the wishes of the majority of the people cannot be spelled out in advance of the struggle. What is certain is that if it obstructs the worker and peasant masses trying to press beyond the wishes of 'their' representatives, either because the masses have become more radical or because the legislators have become more conservative or reactionary, then it will have to be swept aside. The working class must allow no democratic demand to become a noose to strangle the revolution whose safety is the supreme law.

What will a workers' republic mean in South Africa? It will be the first giant step toward the liberation of the whole of Africa from imperialist servitude in which it suffers starvation and untold miseries despite the formal independence of its states. A workers' Azania/South Africa will press forward two interlinked struggles; against imperialism and against the puppets, the pseudo radical demagogues and military dictators who infest the continent.

It will aid the workers and peasants to throw off their tormentors and apply their skills and training to Africa's enormous natural wealth. This wealth can then be used in the interests of the people and not of the European and North American exploiters. In carrying forward this fight it will inscribe on its banner:

**FOR A WORKERS' REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA/  
AZANIA!**

**FOR A FEDERATION OF WORKERS' STATES OF  
SOUTHERN AFRICA! ■**



## The Crisis of Leadership (1986)

By Stuart King, originally published in: *Permanent Revolution No. 4*, 1986

Writing nearly fifty years ago, Leon Trotsky, chief figure within the Military Revolutionary Committee that planned and directed the October insurrection, the founder of the Red Army and the “organiser of victory” in the civil war wrote, *“Political leadership in the crucial moments of historical turns can become just as decisive a factor as is the policy of the chief command during the critical moments of war. History is not an automatic process. Otherwise why leaders? Why parties? Why programmes? Why theoretical struggles?”*

(Trotsky: “The Party, the Class and the Leadership”)

The South African proletariat has demonstrated incredible revolutionary strength, tenacity and intelligence in the struggle of the past three years. It would be folly to draw from this the stale and complacent recipes of spontaneism. The leadership of the South African masses lies largely in the hands of the ANC, whose chief inspirer is the South African Communist Party. The leadership of the unions is more varied but certainly COSATU does not represent an alternative political leadership to the ANC. The leaders of the ANC, Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo in prison and exile and Winnie Mandela have enormous prestige amongst the masses. While their courage and sacrifice have earned them this, their political strategy is nevertheless a disastrous one for the black proletariat. There is in the South African revolution a crisis of leadership, one that will become all the more obvious in the months ahead.

In the revolutionary situation in South Africa, the question of leadership, of strategy and tactics, of programme and party, take on a burning urgency. It is vitally necessary for revolutionary communists to voice clearly and openly their criticisms of the leaderships in the South African/Azanian struggle because their policies will make the vital difference between victory and defeat.

This article deals with the history and current strategy of the ANC and SACP as well as the UDF. Our criticisms of these currents are placed firmly within the context of giving them unconditional support in their struggle against the South African ruling class and its imperialist backers. We recognise that, in imperialist Britain, it is our first duty to expose the lies and hypocrisy of Botha’s ally, Thatcher, and to help organise workers’ action to aid those in struggle in South Africa.

Unfortunately, not only is the South African movement dominated by a powerful Stalinist current. It also contains a number of organisations which bear all the hallmarks of degenerate, centrist “Trotskyism”; the Unity and the New Unity Movements, the Cape Action League and, through the influence of the CAL, to some extent AZAPO itself. This article, therefore, also deals with the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USEC), one section of which has already politically gone over to Stalinism, the SWP(US). Meanwhile, the other wing, supporting Ernest Mandel, has abandoned all semblance of Trotskyism and waits on the “objective process” of the revolution to carry the struggle to victory.

If this were not enough, two of the largest centrist organisations in Britain, the Militant Tendency and the Socialist

Workers Party, one of which has supporters in South Africa (the Militant-linked Marxist Workers Tendency of the ANC), have put forward a caricature of Trotskyism. Both are united in their sect like passivity in the face of a revolutionary crisis of enormous proportions. Alex Callinicos, a leading member of the SWP, has recently claimed that the MWT, “has produced some of the best recent analysis of the struggle in South Africa. Its basic analysis is very similar to that of this journal . . .” (International Socialism 2:31)

Indeed it is. While the USEC lauds the “revolutionary process”, Militant/SWP deny its very existence. The revolutionary crisis is “years in the future”. This has to be the case for these centrists because they have no operative programme and tactics for the complex revolutionary situation which stares them in the face. This leads both of them to attack the ANC/SACP from the right on the question of tempo and the immediate tasks in South Africa.

Trotsky summed up the role of such would-be leaders in the French situation of 1935,

“At the present time, all that the pious mouthings of the phrase ‘non revolutionary situation’ can do is crush the minds of the workers, paralyze their will, and hand them over to the class enemy. Under the cover of such phrases, conservatism, indolence, stupidity, and cowardice take possession of the leadership of the proletariat, and the ground is laid, as it was in Germany, for catastrophe.” (Once Again, Whither France)

Had these groups any mass influence in South Africa this is precisely the role that their degenerate “Trotskyism” would play.

### The ANC

The African National Congress (ANC) claims to represent the whole people of South Africa in their struggle against apartheid. It is a petit-bourgeois nationalist formation dominated politically by the Stalinist South African Communist Party (SACP). Through the United Democratic Front (UDF the ‘legal’ anti-apartheid organisation in South Africa, and through control of the now illegal students’ organisation, COSA, the ANC exercises considerable influence in the present struggle against the racist state.

The ANC was formed in 1912 as the South African Native National Congress. It was the black African organisation formed alongside similar types of Congress in South Africa for ‘Indians’ and ‘Coloureds’ with the objective of pressuring white liberals (especially the English) to grant limited reforms, such as the right of blacks to vote for blacks, subject to a property qualification, a right that existed in Cape Colony. It was dominated by chiefs, known as the ‘princes of African blood’, who formed an upper house in the Congress.

The campaigns launched by the ANC included petitions and passive resistance on the model of Ghandi’s National Indian Congress. After 1925, the African Congress took its present name, ANC, but still eschewed any tactics that went beyond its method of ‘peaceful persuasion’ to bring

about reform. It survived and grew in the 1930's through its liaison with the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA). By this time, the CP was a thoroughly Stalinist organisation. In the context of South Africa, this meant that its perspective restricted the revolution that would destroy white supremacy within a bourgeois democratic framework. This was spelt out by the CPSA theoretician of the time, A.T. Nzula:

"The basic content of the first stage of the revolution in Black Africa is the struggle for land and a war of national liberation. In this case, therefore, the revolution will, in its initial stage, be a bourgeois democratic revolution."

This perspective of the democratic stage of the revolution has remained part of Stalinism's programme since 1928. The strategy has taken various political forms from passive resistance to armed struggle, but the bourgeois-democratic objective has always remained. The revolution is limited in scope to suit the petit-bourgeois nationalists with whom the Stalinists bloc and who are seen as the leading force in this stage of the struggle.

The Stalinists thus subordinate the workers' movement politically to a 'peoples front' of petit-bourgeois and even bourgeois nationalists and 'put off' (in fact abandon) its historical goal and tasks to a distant future in favour of an idealised (bourgeois) democracy. This strategy is reactionary and utopian. It is reactionary because it hands over the leadership of the national, anti-racist revolution to the petit-bourgeoisie, a class not fitted to lead this revolution to success.

The petit-bourgeoisie, whenever it is not firmly led by the working class, because of its thousandfold ties with private property in the means of production, has a historic tendency to submit to the domination of the bourgeoisie at the critical moment. The petit-bourgeoisie will compromise with the big (imperialist) bourgeoisie, first assuring its own rights and privileges and then deserting the proletariat and the rural and urban poor.

The Stalinist strategy is utopian because even bourgeois democracy with its historically progressive features is neither achievable nor maintainable on the basis of the crisis racked capitalism of the last quarter of the Twentieth century. The history of the 'democratic revolutions' of the Twentieth century, from Mexico and China (1910 and 1927) to Iran and Zimbabwe shows that the possibilities of capitalist democracy emerging are slim indeed. The choice is between a weak capitalism with a bonapartist dictatorship, a bloody disaster for the workers and poor peasants, or a workers' government and the overthrow of capitalism.

The Stalinist stagist strategy enabled the CPSA to win friends in the ANC and influence its policies. However, the miserable failure of its popular frontist strategy was cruelly exposed by the election of the Nationalist Party Government in 1948. The government carried out the full scale imposition of apartheid and illegalised the CPSA in 1950 under the Suppression of Communism Act. So tied was the CP to the popular frontist perspective (which had taken them so far as to defend racist South Africa and its white bourgeoisie in the Second World War) that it voted to dissolve itself in the face of this Act. Only in 1953 did it re-emerge as the South African Communist Party (SACP). The ANC's brand of petit-bourgeois nationalism took root amongst the black masses in the 1950's. The development

of a total segregationist policy under Herzog in the 1930's, the triumph of the Nationalist Party in 1948 and the beginning of Grand Apartheid ended the influence of the older generation of would-be collaborators in the ANC. A radical leadership, including Nelson Mandela, emerged through the Congress Youth League and took the ANC into a period of mass protest with the Defiance Campaign of the 1950's. Whilst even they did not move beyond Ghandian methods, they did turn the ANC into a mass nationalist movement.

The failure of the Defiance Campaign sent the ANC once more looking for white 'progressive' support. It is why it is only in this period that the influence of the SACP on the ANC has been decisive.

In 1955, the ANC formed the Congress Alliance with the white Congress of Democrats (communists and liberals) and the 'Indian' and 'Coloured' Congresses. The ANC, with SACP backing, even invited the bourgeois United Party to attend this 'Congress of the People'.

The Congress Alliance adopted the Freedom Charter. The year after it was adopted, Nelson Mandela made clear that the programme was a democratic, not a socialist, one.

"Whilst the Charter proclaims democratic changes of a far-reaching nature it is by no means a blueprint for a socialist state but a programme for the unification of various classes and groupings amongst the people on a democratic basis. Under socialism the workers hold state power. They and the peasants own the means of production, the land, the factories and the mills. All production is for use and not for profit. The Charter does not contemplate such profound economic and political changes. Its declaration 'The People Shall Govern' visualises the transfer of power not to any single social class but to all the people of this country be they workers, peasants, professional men or petty bourgeoisie." ('In Our Lifetime', June 1956)

The SACP and the Marxist Workers Tendency of the ANC (Inqaba), like to emphasise the 'socialist aspects' of the Freedom Charter. It states for instance that "The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole". While all other industry shall be 'controlled' to assist the well being of the people.

Clearly this commitment is vague enough to be interpreted in many ways by various groupings in South African society, and it is intended to be. How many monopolies will actually be nationalised has been carefully left open. Oliver Tambo, after his recent discussions with the monopoly capitalists of Anglo-American, talked of nationalising 'some industries' and establishing a 'mixed economy'. Of course, the Charter says nothing about expropriating these industries from the capitalists who have already been paid a thousand fold in profits extracted from the super-exploited black labour force. Nor is there any intention of establishing workers' control over them.

Such nationalisations, however large, would leave the power of the monopolies over South Africa untouched. Anglo-American would be quite willing to live with this kind of nationalisation. It would be a repeat performance of the nationalisation carried out by the Zambian government in relation to Anglo-American's copper mines, which did nothing to weaken Anglo's hold on this vital sector of Zambia's economy.

As Mandela explains, the demands of the Charter do not



aim to break the power of the capitalists and establish a socialist state in South Africa, rather their purpose is to establish a black capitalist class alongside the white capitalists:

“The breaking up and democratisation of these monopolies will open up fresh fields for the development of a prosperous non-European bourgeois class. For the first time in the history of this country the non-European bourgeoisie will have the opportunity to own in their own name and right, mines and factories; trade and private enterprise will boom and flourish as never before.” (Ibid)

Thus the Freedom Charter is the programme for the popular front which aims to mobilise all classes, including the nascent black bourgeoisie, around a programme to establish a more ‘democratic capitalism’. For all their talk about ‘uninterrupted’ revolution, this is the programme the SACP endorses and fights for.

The South African CP seeks to divert all democratic struggles into a self-contained ‘democratic stage’, a distinct bourgeois revolution. This means doing violence to the manifold objective connections between all democratic issues and the overthrow of capitalism in South Africa. It means intervention to put a brake on and interrupt the dynamic of the struggle against Apartheid.

However, a democratic programme like the Freedom Charter fought for by the peaceful Defiance Campaigns, was enough to evoke a vicious wave of repression by the Apartheid regime. The treason trials of the late 1950s were a prelude to the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 and the subsequent banning of the ANC. The ANC had done nothing to prepare the masses for this repression. They had deluded the masses with hopes of reforms. The masses paid for it with their lives.

Following Sharpeville, it was no longer possible for the ANC to retain its hold over the masses by a strategy of peaceful protest. It turned to armed action against the Apartheid state. Much of the ANC’s credibility, particularly with the black youth, is due to its long, armed campaign against the racist regime.

Neither the ANC nor the SACP advocated a turn to armed struggle until 1961. The justification for this, given by the ANC in the 1969 Morogoro Conference document Strategy and Tactics of the South African Revolution, and by Joe Slovo in *No Middle Road* (1976), is that, until that date, the necessary factors were missing. These were and are that the masses have found for themselves that peaceful processes could not bring change and are ready to make the necessary sacrifices, that there is a tried and tested political leadership, and that other objective conditions are right:

“The act of revolutionary leadership consists in providing leadership to the masses and not just to its most advanced elements, it consists of setting a pace which accords with objective conditions and the real possibilities at hand.” (Strategy and Tactics)

This avoids the question of why neither the SACP nor the ANC propagandised earlier for the necessity of armed struggle or for the organised defence of protest action. ‘Setting a pace’ in effect means opportunist adaptation or alternatively, it is a cover for the fact that neither the SACP or ANC, prior to 1960, considered that violence would be necessary.

The strategy adopted by the ANC/SACP was of “a long term, multi-staged campaign of disciplined violence”

starting with sabotage, to be followed by a campaign of primarily guerrilla warfare. It is striking that this did not relate to the existing, although admittedly retreating, mass movement. For instance, the failure of the protest stay-aways led the ANC to write them off rather than consider how to plan for their defence, for rebuilding in the workplace, for overcoming the dissipating effect of one and two day strikes etc. The armed struggle was to be separated from the masses. It is significant that the rural guerrilla campaign was not rooted in, in fact was launched two years after, the major land war on the reserves, the Pondoland revolt of 1959/60.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s campaign, the black working class was relegated to the background by the SACP. It demonstrated a highly sectarian attitude to the emerging trade union movement in the 1970s, pronouncing that as the Apartheid state was fascist, the independent trade unions could not grow. Herein lies the key weaknesses of guerrilla warfare as a strategy. It is far removed from the struggles of the key revolutionary class, the working class. The ANC gets millions in aid to fund its armed wing, Umkhonto We Sizwe (Spear of the Nation). Despite this, it has been the largely spontaneous township revolts, not the ANC’s armed actions, that have shaken the regime. The revolts have an immediate effect on the class relations in South Africa. The guerrilla actions, by and large, have not had this effect. Yet, as Trotsky explained with regard to China, it is precisely the relationship of class forces that is decisive in struggle:

“What is involved here is not whether or not we are sympathetic toward the military movement that has begun, and not even of organisation and material aid to it. There is no need at all to waste words on that score . . . Every bit of aid that comes from the sidelines is necessary, but it is not decisive. The relations among the Communist Party, the revolutionary troops, the workers, and the poor peasants is what is decisive. But these relations are determined to a good extent by politics as a system of slogans and actions. You can give any kind of material aid you want to a rebelling army, but if the question of power is not posed point blank, if the slogan of soviets is not raised, and if a complete programme of economic measures linked to the establishment of soviet power is not put forward, then outside material aid to the armies will not produce the desired results”.

In the 1960s and 1970s the ANC substituted the armed struggle for a fight to win the masses to act against Apartheid. Their strategy failed. After the sabotage campaign, guerrilla warfare, “in our case the only form in which the armed struggle can be launched”. (Strategy and Tactics), was to be launched in Operation Mayibuye. The capture of the ANC and MK High Command at Rivonia in 1963 effectively ended this. Training was renewed but many cadres were lost alongside ZAPU in the late 1960s. The ANC/SACP’s self criticism of the period concentrates on the lack of proper political preparation for illegal work and so forth, but does not question the strategy. The 1969 Morogoro Conference confirmed the strategy of guerrilla warfare, and stressed the subordination of the military to the political, in 1970, the SACP’s Augmented meeting of the Central Committee also endorsed the guerrilla struggle but referred to armed action in the towns as an “indispensable corollary front”.

The ANC's strategy for armed struggle has thus been historically characterised by a separation of armed actions from mass struggle. But, if "war is a continuation of politics by other means", then for working class politics, for the advance of the revolutionary programme of the working class, the tactics of the armed struggle must relate to the actions of the masses (which is not the same as being tied to them). Their object must be to aid the working class to seize power, not to enable a petit-bourgeois leadership to negotiate the fate of the nation over the heads of the masses. Such opportunities occur with the need to defend protests, strikes, boycotts and so forth, with the need to prevent forced evictions, land seizures. This is the context of the call for a workers' militia which remains essential even if in practice repression, illegality etc. force all kinds of constraints, limit the number of cadre who can be trained and so forth. With the building of such a militia, the working class can go forward to take the offensive with factory seizures, undermining the police force (a large part of which is black), sustaining a general strike. Sabotage and guerrilla warfare may yet be necessary but they will be subordinate elements of our strategy for revolution.

The Nkomati Accords of 1984 dealt a potentially severe blow to the ANC's 'armed-struggle' strategy. South Africa's agreement with Mozambique meant that the ANC had to move its operational headquarters and it lost its major supply routes. But, as the ANC regained influence with the growing mass movement inside the country, and as the pressure for action increased, it raised the call for an extension of the armed struggle and its transformation into 'Peoples War'.

This amounts to a tactical but not a strategic change in the nature of the ANC's armed struggle perspective. The June 1985 Consultative Conference confirmed the need for both the stepping up of guerrilla warfare and the creation of 'mass combat units' in urban areas. The ANC calls for these to be spread and strengthened in 1986, 'The Year of Umkhonto We Sizwe', within 'mass insurrectionary zones'.

There is indeed an urgent need for effective combat units to defend townships, demonstrations and strikes. There is also a preparedness to do so as witnessed by the actions of miners at Bekkersdal township who fought off police and army attacks on a meeting. But the ANC does not call on the working class to form its own militia or defence units. Oliver Tambo's Anniversary address in January 1986 called on the masses to continue 'protection' of the ANC combat units and for cooperation with them. There was no reference to defence in relation to strikes, township committees, still less the fight for soviets.

The demands of the struggle itself will undoubtedly ensure that defence units are established. But the ANC's strategy will not build units that are responsive to the needs of struggle and controlled by the working class itself.

### **The ANC, the UDF & the Church**

The United Democratic Front (UDF) was formed in 1983 to organise against Botha's new tri-cameral constitution, which excluded Africans. It was important in organising the successful boycott and went on to provide leadership in the rent and consumer boycotts and to campaign against the fake township councils in 1984 5.

While having considerable working class support through

some union affiliates, school students and community organisations, the UDF is nevertheless a popular front. That is, it is an openly cross-class body, including representatives of the petty bourgeois led Natal and Indian Congresses, the African Chamber of Commerce, white liberals and church organisations, which ties the workers, the rural and urban masses to the demands of the most conservative element of this alliance. The effects of its popular frontism have been evident in the last period.

Whereas the UDF is formally committed to fight for one person, one vote, a fact which gives it its enormous support from black organisations and the masses, even this sometimes appears as a negotiable, far off goal. The UDF's first annual conference, held earlier last year, called for a series of reforms which would "mark the beginning of a process of transition to a new democratic state". An UDF statement went on to assert that "there is still time to achieve peace through consultation between the state and authentic popular leaders for a transfer of power to the people". (Anti-Apartheid News June 1985).

This perspective dominates the UDF strategy. It is one based on seeking alliances with sections of the bourgeoisie both within South Africa and amongst the imperialist powers in order to win reforms. Violence and mass action could frighten off these gentlemen and therefore must be avoided or at best used only to 'warn' the government of the consequences of their intransigence. It is this programme and the attempts to tie the workers' organisations to it, through calling on them to affiliate to the UDF, which is so dangerous to the current struggle. It is utopian to believe that reform can be negotiated via the progressive bourgeoisie, which means tying the hands of the proletariat, which alone has the power to smash the apartheid system.

The ANC is undoubtedly a major ideological force within the UDF. The ANC is able to exist happily alongside the clerics and the small businessmen, despite its emphasis on the armed struggle. It can do so because of an agreed perspective on the goals of the present struggle. The ANC is at pains to reassure sections of what it calls 'domestic' or 'indigenous' capital that its programme is not a threat to their existence. In a recent article in *Sechaba* (official magazine of the ANC) on the Freedom Charter, which embodies the ANC's programme, Jack Simons emphasises that this is not a socialist document and that "Congress is not a workers' party with a socialist programme". This is because: "At the present stage of the revolution, the liberation movement aims to release the economy from control by transnational monopolies. It is not directed against the owners of domestic capital". (June 1985) He goes on to denounce the "workerist tendencies" (within the trade unions) "and self-styled 'marxists' (who) reject all forms of capital, emphasise the class struggle and set their targets at the achievement of socialism".

Confining the struggle of workers to the struggle for democracy means, in practice, subordinating the demands of the workers and the struggle for socialism to maintaining an alliance with the church and a hoped-for alliance with domestic capital. The willingness of the ANC/SACP to tie the trade unions to the programme and perspectives of the UDF, despite the objections from the unions that its structure gave middle class organisations far too much weight, is a reflection of this policy.

The bankruptcy of this strategy was proved decisively in the 1970's with the massive explosion of trade unionism and working class organisation which virtually bypassed the ANC. After a short period of trying to dismiss the independent trade union movement, the ANC was jolted into recognising its enormous growth and potential. But still the working class struggle is not seen as the central means of struggle against the apartheid state.

Despite the enormous potential of general strike action demonstrated by the November 1984 'stay away' and the 1986 May Day general strike, the ANC/SACP have never made the fight for general strike action central to the current struggle. Despite on occasion calling for 'extended stayaways' the ANC has posed different methods of struggle under the state of emergency.

Oliver Tambo, in a statement issued after Botha's Durban speech, appealed to "the business community of our country, the professionals and the intellectuals, the religious community and others" to join the struggle to destroy Apartheid. He appealed not for international working class action in solidarity, but for the West and "the entire business community to cut all links" (ANC press statement, 16th August 1985).

Despite its talk about the leading role of the working class, the ANC has not changed its spots. Its leaders still see the working class as a helpful adjunct to the struggle. In the 1980s, it was seen only as a recruiting ground for the guerrillas' underground struggle, in the 1980's it is assigned the role of foot soldiers for the popular frontist leaders of the UDF.

Ominously, the meeting that ANC leaders held in Zambia with white South African capitalists (described as 'useful' and 'cordial' by Anglo-American boss Gavin Reilly) points to the ANC leaders' appetite for a counter-revolutionary deal with sections of the bourgeoisie. The talks confirm the dangers with the ANC's strategy of looking for progressive sections of capital at home and abroad.

If this strategy is victorious inside the black trade unions and opposition movement, it could tie the working class into a fatal alliance with their present exploiters. In this way, the ANC/SACP, for all their talk of destroying 'apartheid capitalism', could actually abort the South African revolution.

In this task they will be helped by the churches. In recent years, the churches have played an increasingly prominent role in the opposition to Apartheid, especially within the UDF. They occupy an important position of influence amongst the black population. Where political and cultural life has been brutally restricted for decades, where poverty and oppression reign, there is fertile ground for the churches. But the preaching of resignation and promising pie in the sky could not last in such circumstances either.

Pushed by the desires and actions of the masses, influenced by the young radicals for whom the church provides one of the few outlets to a decent education, the churches have increasingly taken a stand against the Botha regime. But they also hold back and mislead the movement. They call for peaceful protest. They cannot tolerate talk of mass action to 'smash' the regime.

Bishop Desmond Tutu, Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg, has been a consistent advocate of non-violent opposition to Botha. This position of peaceful reform through mass pressure has been increasingly difficult to maintain in the

face of the Botha regime's intransigence.

Tutu declared himself "shattered and devastated" by Botha's Durban speech of late 1985 which refused to consider any serious reforms. "More and more I will be seen as increasingly irrelevant" he complained to a Sunday Times reporter, "I am using terms which are increasingly irrelevant. I talk of peace and non-violence".

Dr Allan Boesak, another clerical leader, patron of the UDF, and President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, was a central organiser of the visit by Edward Kennedy to South Africa. This move reflected the hopes that the leadership of the UDF place in wooing 'progressive' American bourgeois politicians to their cause.

This move was similar in intent and similar in import to the ANC's meeting with white businessmen. In the absence of a significant black bourgeoisie, the church, through organisations like the World Council of Churches which provide it with a line of communication to the bourgeoisie in the imperialist heartlands, can become a lynchpin in the popular front. While many Christians will be in the front line against apartheid, their leaders, like Tutu, will be ready to sell the struggle short. Revolutionaries must strive, in a non-sectarian fashion, to drive a wedge between the ordinary black worker and youth who go to church and the Tutu's and Boesak's.

Tutu's fears that the pacifist preaching of the church may go unheeded have been increasingly confirmed as the struggle has intensified in the course of 1986. As heroic self sacrifice meets Afrikaner intransigence, there is little room left for the peaceful reform that the likes of Tutu and Boesak advocate. These figures have been eclipsed by others, such as Winnie Mandela, a supporter of the armed struggle, and therefore more in tune with the demands and expectations of the masses. Tutu has been relegated to the role of international globe trotter, pleading with the international bourgeoisie to take action which will defuse the crisis in a peaceful manner.

### The Black Consciousness Movement

The foremost critics of the UDF, within the opposition to Apartheid, are the National Forum Committee (NEC) and the major organisation within it, the Azanian Peoples' Organisation (AZAPO). The NFC criticises the UDF's courting of capitalist politicians. For instance, it opposed the visit of Edward Kennedy which was supported by the UDF. It speaks in general terms of the need for socialism and the centrality of the working class in the struggle. The Manifesto of the Azanian Peoples' Organisation asserts that the struggle for national liberation is directed against "the historically evolved system of racism and capitalism" and therefore that the struggle against apartheid is no more than the "point of departure for our liberatory efforts."

These features, together with the fact that the NEC contains within it established critics of the Congress Charter tradition, such as the Cape Action League and Neville Alexander, have led sections of the left internationally to consider the NEC to be the socialist alternative to the UDF/ANC. Veteran exiled South African Trotskyist C. van Gelderen, for instance, has argued that the NFC holds a fundamentally different class analysis from that of the UDF. This is not born out by an examination of the propaganda or re-



cord of the NFC.

The NFC was formed in 1983 with the object of organising opposition to the new Constitution. Its main components were organisations coming from the black consciousness tradition. The 'Africanist' current within the liberation movement goes back to the leadership provided by Anton Lembede to the ANC Youth League in the 1940's. But Lembede's opposition to collaboration with whites foundered when the Youth League discovered that the CPSA (or its ex-members in the period after it was dissolved) provided their main allies in the campaign for mass action. Subsequently, the SACP led the ANC into a Popular Front Alliance with the white Congress of Democrats in the Congress Alliance.

In reaction to this, the Pan African Congress (PAC) led by Robert Sobukwe, revised the ideas of African black nationalism, rejecting collaboration with white liberals and also with communists. But its failure to build significant support in the wake of the Sharpeville massacre led it into equally dubious alliances, including with Patrick Duncan of the Liberal Party and with Peking.

In the 1970's, black consciousness was the dominant set of ideas amongst youth organisations and also amongst some of the growing independent black trade unions. Reacting against the patronage of white liberals and criticising the Congress Alliance tradition for its collaboration with white democratic forces, the black consciousness movement insisted 'Black Man, you are on your own!'

In this, black consciousness reflected the influence of the U.S. 'Black Power' movement as well as the Africanist tradition in South Africa. It fought to achieve independence from the political tutelage of white liberals in all spheres of the life of black people. As such, it undoubtedly helped train a new generation of leaders and activists, teaching them self respect and self reliance. But even the most clear sighted of the leaders of the mid-seventies failed to develop a coherent strategy for revolution. Thus, Steve Biko said:

"The Black Consciousness Movement does not want to accept the dilemma of capitalism versus communism. It opts for a socialist solution that is an authentic expression of black communalism."

Biko argued for collective enterprises and co-operatives but also envisaged 'black' banks and businesses.

The black consciousness movement went through a crisis after the murderous repression aimed at its leaders after 1976. The outcome was AZAPO, founded in 1978. The re-growth of the ANC and the strengthening of the black trade unions both exerted a pressure on AZAPO; it moved leftwards. When the National Forum was formed in 1983 it appeared that a radical alternative existed to the leadership of the ANC.

The NFC/AZAPO forces make very wide ranging criticisms of the UDF. The NFC's Manifesto of the Azanian People claims to put the struggle for national liberation in South Africa on a socialist course:

"The Black working class, inspired by revolutionary consciousness, is the driving force of our struggle for national self-determination in a unitary Azania". They denounce the UDF as a popular front in which, "worker organisations have no independence...will lose their voice and will not be able to fight for working class demands. Instead they will simply be supporting voices for middle class de-

mands."

The Cape Action League (CAL), another constituent body of the NEC, categorically rejects alliances with the bourgeoisie:

"an alliance between workers and bosses (popular front) can only serve the interests of the bosses The UDF is such a popular front."

This overt rejection of both the popular front of the Stalinists and the stageist 'Freedom Charter' represents both the continued influence of 'Trotskyism', albeit of centrist-liquidationist variety, and the pressure towards class independence emanating from the growth of the black proletariat and its independent trade unions.

Yet the 'Manifesto of the Azanian People' does not represent a fundamental programmatic alternative to the 'Freedom Charter'. It speaks about the 'maximum programme of socialist transformation' but this is left as an abstract and distant perspective. Its immediate programme for a 'workers' or 'socialist government' is the entrenchment of a series of 'rights'; to work, to free education, to adequate and decent housing, to free health, to legal, recreational and other community services. It further demands the abolition of all discriminatory laws based on 'colour, sex, religion, language or class, the re-integration of the Bantustans into a unitary Azania, the formation of trade unions that will 'heighten revolutionary worker consciousness' and the development of a 'national culture informed by socialist values.' It is noticeable that the manifesto, whilst it calls for "workers' control" and for the nationalisation of the land, nowhere calls clearly, explicitly and unambiguously for the expropriation of all the large enterprises; that is, for the socialisation of the means of production.

Without a bedrock anti-capitalist programme, all talk of "socialism" and "workers' control" is a deception and a snare for the working class. In this respect, the Azanian Peoples Manifesto fails to confront the touchstone of the Freedom Charter's popular front strategy, namely, the defence of private property in the means of production.

Also, the black consciousness tradition does not produce a correct orientation towards the trade unions. Supporters of this tendency dominate the AZACTU and are influential in the CUSA federations. They fight against being drawn into the UDF popular front behind the slogans of non-political trade unionism. The opposition to entering the UDF is correct but the compromise with non-political unionism is seriously wrong when the unions are faced with the task of leading the mass resistance to Botha's crackdown. Likewise, the refusal to enter, or acceptance of exclusion from, the "super federation" (COSATU) by AZACTU is a potentially disastrous error. All unions should be within COSATU, fighting to direct the working class into a decisive political struggle with Apartheid and capitalism.

Neither does the Cape Action League have an understanding of the united front which would enable it to do this. They define the united front as a stage in advance of mere 'tactical unity', calling it a 'strategic unity'. A united front is when "two or more organisations with different principles and conceptions of struggle define their political goals during a given phase of the struggle in the same terms .... United fronts are usually fertile soil for creative and constructive debate about the ideological and theoretical questions. The members of the different parties or organisations, as they learn to act together and through

struggle to trust one another, in spite of party differences, and to influence one another. The prevailing spirit in a united front is one of tolerance for other parties' point of view within the framework of the common strategic goal. Often, the successful united front leads to a converging and even a merging of parties that were previously opposed or in competition to one another". (Cape Action League; Documents)

This approach to the united front is totally at variance to the principles of the revolutionary Comintern and it is no surprise that the document above cited gives, as an example of a successful united front, Frelimo in Mozambique. It cites as the goal of its united front "liberation from apartheid and capitalism" and its political slogan "for a non-racial, democratic and undivided Azania/South Africa." The 'united front' is to contain "the vast majority of black workers and the radical black middle class". This view clearly guided and influenced the setting up of the National Forum in June 1983.

Its error is that it rules out the united front to organisations which have a bourgeois standpoint but which are based on the organised workers and urban and rural poor, in particular, the ANC and components of the UDF. Since these are the dominant force in the liberation movement, to abandon united front tactics with regard to them will prove a fatal mistake for the CAL. Thus, as a united front, the CAL's position is too narrow, in fact sectarian. However, as a political force, as the organised vanguard of the proletariat and as a programme of action, it is too broad, too amorphous, a mish mash of nationalism, populism and 'socialism'. What the black proletariat needs is a revolutionary communist party, whose doors are open to every one in the 'radical middle class' who abandons a petit-bourgeois outlook.

It is instructive that the CAL seems to have no clear priority of orientation towards the union movement. Rather, it orients towards the community based struggle and to the student movement. Whilst it is vital to orient to such struggles and to train Marxist cadres from them, "intellectuals" will only become "organic" if they fuse with the main body of the working class, that is, become party cadres working with the organised black proletariat of the large factories, the mines as well as the farm workers.

The experience of Frelimo and the work of Samora Machel will help them little in this. The works of Lenin and Trotsky, the experience of the Bolsheviks, in a country more backward than South Africa, and with difficult and varied national problems, can far better serve as a guide.

The militants of AZAPO and the Cape Action League are more radical in their nationalism than those of the ANC. They have been subject to physical attacks from the Stalinists. Revolutionaries should obviously orient to these militants, seeking to show that the programmatic and tactical logic of rejecting the UDF popular front is the espousal of a transitional programme for workers' power in Azania and a united front now against the Apartheid regime's reign of terror.

Self-isolation within small "united fronts" or semi-permanent blocs, or the maintenance of small union federations such as AZACTU, will only strengthen the ANC's hold over the awakening but still politically inexperienced masses. Class independence, which the AZAPO and the CAL aspire to defend, can only be established by building

a revolutionary workers' party based on the programme of permanent revolution.

### Centrist Trotskyism

Two groupings which claim to stand in the revolutionary tradition of Trotsky and the Fourth International have a presence in South Africa. Inqaba, the Marxist Workers' Tendency (MWT) of the ANC, is linked to the British Militant grouping of Ted Grant, while the Cape Action League is clearly influenced by the positions of the Mandelite wing of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USEC).

### The USEC Divided

As in other revolutionary situations; Portugal 1975-76, Iran 1979-82, the USEC has split down the middle. This time it is over tactics and strategy for the South African revolution. For the first time, however, these divisions have centred on the actual class nature of the revolution being fought for. The 'Barnesite', Socialist Workers Party (U.S.) has hurriedly drawn the practical conclusions of its rejection of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution and it has declared itself opposed to any fight for a socialist revolution in South Africa in the current stage of the struggle:

"the South African revolution today is a bourgeois democratic revolution . . . It is a democratic revolution, a national revolution. The working people are striving to lead it to victory and to create for the first time a South African nation state.

"The South African revolution today is not an anticapitalist revolution, but no one can predict how long, or short, that stage will be. That will be determined by the relation of class forces in South Africa and internationally that will emerge from the revolutionary overthrow of apartheid." (The Coming Revolution in South Africa, Jack Barnes)

Barnes pours scorn on those who dare to criticise the ANC's strategy or its programme the Freedom Charter, as 'ultra left sectarians'. The AZAPO/NFC are attacked for "their ultra left standpoint. They criticise the Freedom Charter for not raising socialist demands".

Instead, for Barnes and the SWP(US):

"The Freedom Charter is a solid programme for the national revolution in South Africa . . . It is the minimum programme of a revolutionary workers' party, of a communist party in South Africa today . . . ANC leader Nelson Mandela was accurate when he said the Freedom Charter is no blue print for socialism. And it shouldn't be." (ibid) Barnes positively revels in the SWP's born again Menshevism and Stalinism. Like any convert, he overdoes himself in heaping praises on the stages theory and its nationalist and Stalinist protagonists. Barnes rails against those who would raise socialist demands as being guilty of ignoring democratic demands. However, this is just setting up a "straw man".

The fight for permanent revolution does not 'ignore' democratic demands. It bases itself on the perspective that such demands will be fought for and won, indeed, can only be fully won, via a socialist revolution. It is the Menshevik method which counterposes the two. Barnes would exclude virtually any working class goals and tactics from

the struggle in South Africa. The majority class in South Africa must boycott its own historic interests. Not for the SWP(US) the struggle for workers' control in the factories, the fight for the general strike, the struggle for soviet type bodies linking the struggles in the factories to the communities, the expropriation of the capitalists. Along with its Stalinist allies in the ANC, the SWP(US) is in the forefront of denouncing such struggles and demands as 'ultra left'. The SWP's perspective amounts to a criminal disarming of the South African working class, not only with regard to the perspective of a struggle for socialism but also in the here and now in the fight to smash Botha's dictatorship. Barnes blithely declares:

It (the South African revolution - WP) is a bourgeois democratic revolution that will be made and led by the working people, and it will open the road to the transition to the socialist revolution. But these are not merely stages of a single revolution: they are two revolutions." (Barnes *ibid*) And what historic law is there to compel a bourgeois regime, once established in power, to 'open the road' to a socialist revolution? All experience answers that there is none. With the self-proclaimed 'Marxist-Leninist' Robert Mugabe at its head, in Zimbabwe, no road to socialism was "opened up". On the contrary, the halting of the anti-imperialist struggle with the establishment of a regime defending capitalism ensures that it will, under pressure from the 'world economy' (ie imperialism) turn on the working class and poor peasantry, cheating them of the social gains of the struggle they gave their lives for.

And if such a regime stood up to the IMF or US and European imperialism, as Nicaragua has to some extent done, then imperialism will open up with all the weapons of economic blackmail and armed counter-revolution. What role does self-limitation to a capitalist stage play in such a situation? Only the artificial protection of the internal counter-revolution and the demobilisation and demoralisation of the proletariat and the poor peasants. Imperialist intervention poses harsh historic choices. Either forward to the proletarian dictatorship to smash internal and external counterrevolution or succumb to its offensive and allow the triumph of a brutal bourgeois dictatorship.

The best, indeed in the long run the only, effective counter to the forces of reaction is the mobilisation of the working class and the rural poor. To do this effectively they must not be deprived of their own immediate and historic class goals. Only in this way can a bourgeois-democratic, nationalist counter-revolution on the one hand or a brutal imperialist restoration on the other, be avoided.

Indeed, in the event of the smashing of apartheid by the masses, it would be precisely the extent to which the working class had fought for and won its own demands and had built soviets, workers' militias, which would determine the possibility of the growing over into a socialist revolution. But these are exactly the demands the Barnesites fight against.

In any case, South Africa's rulers would only be forced to accept a real and total dismantling of apartheid (a democratic revolution) if they were faced with a working class movement threatening their very existence as a class. It is inconceivable that anything less would force them to dismantle their system of super-exploitation. With the struggle in the hands of the ANC, which the SWP(US) uncritically supports, such a perspective for the struggle has to

be fought for tooth and nail.

The greatest danger is an aborted revolution, a Lancaster House type settlement at best; one which preserves some form of white minority veto, along with the power of the capitalists. Such a solution would deprive the South African black masses even of a thoroughgoing democratic revolution. One thing is certain when faced with this threat. With the ANC already in the field, the Barnesites perform the ridiculous task of fifth wheel on the cart of Menshevism in the South African revolution.

Despite their formal "defence of Permanent Revolution" the Mandelite wing of the USEC do not provide a revolutionary communist alternative to Menshevik stageism.

The majority resolution on South Africa was passed by the USEC in January 1983 (International Viewpoint 25, March 1983). While in itself inadequate, the major tactics and slogans put forward in this resolution to guide work on South Africa have subsequently been completely abandoned following the upsurge of the struggle around the election boycott and the formation of the UDF and NEC.

Here we see the classic method of Mandelite centrism. As with the Nicaraguan revolt, at the first explosion of the mass movement the last remnants of "Trotskyist orthodoxy" are thrown overboard in order to "relate" to those who are thought to be leading the mass movement.

The 1983 resolution is riddled with 'processism'. While formally defending the theory of permanent revolution, the USEC turns the struggle for a socialist revolution into a inevitable process which flows from the nature of the South African state:

"The South African revolution will conform with class reality, that is with the social, economic and political structures of the country. It will take the form of a process of permanent revolution . . . . The South African revolution will begin on the terrain of the national question. The struggle in the factories expresses above all the will of blacks to organise as black workers to win their emancipation. Their mobilisations combine diverse immediate demands (salaries, work conditions, residence rights, solidarity against repression) with the struggle for national democratic demands for national liberation (equal rights, freedom of expression and organisation). The development of the revolutionary process from a struggle for national democratic demands into a fight for anti-capitalist objectives will thus be uninterrupted." (emphasis in original)

Such inevitablism and verbal hymns to the objective process have nothing in common with the method of Lenin and Trotsky. It has far more in common with the pre-1914 Karl Kautsky. The leaders of Bolshevism posed objectives and slogans of struggle; tasks to be fulfilled by the proletariat and its leadership. These tasks, if unfulfilled, would lead to different and opposite results, not revolution but counter-revolution. Making the South African revolution permanent is a task of the proletarian vanguard in South Africa. It can be fulfilled by revolutionaries fighting not only for immediate democratic demands with the methods of class struggle but also by winning the proletariat to transitional demands. Unless revolutionaries are fighting for the forms and methods of struggle which guide the working class to victory, for the general strike, factory committees, councils of action or soviets, then the perspective of permanent revolution remains a dead letter. But none of these demands appear in the USEC's resolution



which relies on the “revolutionary process” to automatically give the movement its “anti-capitalist objectives”.

Having “noted” that the ANC in the past was ‘dominated by the Communist Party’ and that its:

“greatest weakness remained the absence of a class perspective and its strategy of revolution by stages”,

the USEC goes on to speculate that the mass struggle might open up ‘serious divergences within it’. AZAPO on the other hand has failed to understand the “necessity to unify all the mass movements (and not only the ‘African’)” despite its recognition of the “importance of the working class”. The perceived “weaknesses” of these forces, together with the growth of the black trade unions, leads the USEC to call for a:

“Workers’ Party devoted to the interests of the whole working class and oppressed people.”

This might appear to be one step forward but the USEC immediately jumps two steps back. The programme of such a party turns out to be a purely democratic one; abolition of apartheid laws and repressive legislation, for a constituent assembly. Again there is no connection between these, in themselves absolutely correct, democratic demands and the struggle for socialism, the fight for permanent revolution. And this in a programme put forward for the formation of a Workers’ party. Little wonder that the USEC declares:

“this process may lead to the constitution of a Workers’ and Peasants’ government”. (our emphasis)

Courtesy of the ‘revolutionary process’ no doubt. Certainly not through any fight for it on the part of the USEC

But even these centrist genuflections in the direction of Trotskyism were unceremoniously broken off once the mass upsurge against Botha reappeared. With the formation of the UDF and the NFC as opposing forces with mass influence, these opportunists were faced with a terrible dilemma. All the instincts of the USEC were to fall in behind the most popular force, the UDF. The Barnesite’s did precisely that. But the NFC, AZAPO and CAL were attacking the UDF for its class collaboration and many unions made similar criticisms. The USEC decided that abstention was the best policy. While the UDF was of a ‘hybrid social nature’ (it included employers’ associations) they were worried about the NFC’s ‘sectarianism’. Thus the USEC declaration of September 1984 stated:

“Recent struggles have also shown the need for political centralisation; in their own way the UDF and the NFC are seeking to fill this vacuum.” Q.V. 60.)

One searches in vain for any warnings about the policies of the UDF or the ANC/SACP. On the dangers of the popular front, the subordination of the workers demands to the maintenance of an alliance with the black middle class, the USEC is silent. In International Viewpoint 83, a major article comments on the UDF:

“some currents see this form of organisation as involving a danger for the long term interests of the masses.”

And the USEC? What is their opinion? This revolutionary leadership will no doubt tell us after the revolutionary crisis has passed. The Workers’ Party? The Workers’ and Peasants’ government? Vanished without trace, such slogans, even when gutted of the slightest trace of an anti-capitalist programme, are obviously still too much for the USEC when it comes to the actual struggle. The USEC shows what Lenin called the ‘servility of theoreticians’.

In practice there is not a ha’penny worth of difference between the two wings of the USEC. The pragmatist Barnes wants to bring the organisation’s “theory” into line with its actual practice in every revolutionary situation since the late 1940s and formerly abandon permanent revolution in favour of the Stalinist stageist theory. The Mandelites want to retain permanent revolution as a “theory” of the “objective process” leading to a maximum goal. Yet this perspective is immediately boycotted as soon as the forces of Stalinism and petit-bourgeois nationalism achieve leadership in the struggle. The Mandelite worshippers of the accomplished fact roll up their unnecessary theories and fall in behind the ANC.

### Imperialist Power or Settlers’ State

If the Mandelites put forward a bankrupt strategy for the South African revolution, then their “theoreticians” do no better when it comes to providing a Marxist analysis of the South African state itself.

We explain in this pamphlet how South Africa passed from colonial settler-state, through semi-colony, to imperialist nation. We believe that our analysis remains true to the Marxist theory of imperialism initiated by Hillferding and Bukharin and developed by Lenin. A break from their method, however, is to be found in the characterisation of South Africa by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI).

In the USFI’s 1983 Theses on South Africa the Republic is designated: “a semi-industrialised country, still dependent, despite important industrial development, on investments and technological assistance from imperialism”.

More recently, in New International (Vol. 2 No. 2) Mandel has written; “it suffices to characterise the state of South Africa as a semi-industrialised settlers colony and as such a military arm of imperialism.” (original emphases) (p.174) Mandel’s definition of South Africa is but one part of a general reclassification of a range of countries traditionally recognised by Trotskyists as “semi-colonies”.

At root, the USEC’s method of analysis owes more to the modern “dependency theorists” than it does to the Marxist method of Lenin’s Imperialism. Our dispute with Mandel is not over the possibility of “intermediate” or “transitional” regimes. But by this Lenin did not mean the development of a group of countries existing over long periods which were neither imperialist nor imperialised. He was talking on the one hand of countries such as China, Persia, Turkey, which still retained to one degree or another a form of political independence, but which were being increasingly subordinated to finance capital, and whose “independence” Lenin thought could well be short lived. On the other hand, he was talking of countries like Argentina, which while a semi-colony of Britain and USA was developing quickly in the early 19th century. Lenin did not rule out the development of new imperialist powers. As we now know, Argentina was not to be one of them, and remains in semi-colonial servitude. While South Africa, Canada, Australia made the transition to minor imperialist powers; part of the new world system of imperialism after World War II.

Our differences with the USFI over the characterisation of South Africa are at three levels: certain economic facts; the significance attached to them; and finally, the method of

approach to the problem of categorising South Africa. Let us begin with the last, the most important point. It is well known that Lenin's seminal work of 1916 was:

"a composite picture of the world capitalist system in its international relationships. . . ." (p189).

Extremely important was his insistence that in the study of imperialism one must not take:

"examples of isolated data (in view of the extreme complexity of the phenomena of social life it is always possible to select any number of examples or separate data to prove any proposition), but all the data on the basis of economic life in . . . the whole world." (p189)

This approach implies, as a crucial aspect, a historical approach to the development of imperialism. Lenin was aware that new imperialist powers were developing at the turn of the century:

"Capitalism is growing with the greatest rapidity in the colonies and overseas countries. Among the latter, new imperialist powers are emerging (eg Japan)." (p274 emphasis in original, *ibid*).

Their further development (or the cutting off of that development) depended on the antagonistic re-division of the world through war. Lenin, in other words, far from excluded the development of imperialist powers. This would have gone against his whole dialectical conception of the uneven and combined development of capitalism:

"The uneven and spasmodic development of individual enterprises, individual branches of industry and individual countries is inevitable under the capitalist system." (p241 *ibid*)

The social-liberal economist J A Hobson, whom Lenin praised for his objective approach to the question of imperialism, in fact came nearer to Lenin's approach than the USFI. He made some remarkably far-sighted observations on the question of South Africa. As early as 1903, Hobson predicted the possibility of a South African Imperialism. His starting point was the contradiction developing between Great Britain and the "self-governing colonies" of Canada, Australia and South Africa. Incapable of subordinating them militarily, Hobson believed that Britain would be forced to sponsor South Africa's independent transition to imperialism in order to make sure it carried out a political role for the more powerful imperialism in an "imperial federation":

"Independently of the centralised imperialism which issues from Great Britain, these colonies have within themselves in greater or less force, all the ingredients out of which an imperialism of their own may be formed . . . These men at the Cape, in the Transvaal and in Rhodesia, British or Dutch, have fostered a South African Imperialism, not opposed to British Imperialism, willing when necessary to utilise it, but independent of it in ultimate aims and purposes . . . their absorbing aim hereafter will be to relegate British imperialism to what they conceive to be its proper place, that of an ultima ratio to stand in the far background while colonial imperialism manages the business and takes the profits . . . Such a federal state (SA) will not only develop an internal policy regarding the native territories different from, perhaps antagonistic to, that of British imperialism, but its position as the 'predominant' state of South Africa will develop an ambition and a destiny of expansion which may bring it into politics on its own account." (*Imperialism, A Study*. p345-6)

Of course, the political pre-conditions and possibilities that Hobson observed were not a guarantee of the imperialist development of South Africa. Yet as our pamphlet shows, this development occurred due to a range of factors after WW2; the transference of capital ownership (especially in mining) contingent upon the weakening of British imperialism in two World Wars; the redivision of the world as a result of the 1939-45 war and the boom period in the two decades after; the escape from dependence based upon steady native capital accumulation arising from fixed gold prices.

Lenin did not deal with South Africa in his pamphlet of seventy years ago. Yet his approach to Portugal of that time has significance for our treatment of South Africa. Lenin states:

"Great Britain has protected Portugal and her colonies in order to fortify her own position in the fight against her rivals, Spain and France. In return Great Britain has received commercial privileges, preferential conditions for importing goods and especially capital into Portugal and the Portuguese colonies . . ." (p264)

We think that this relation between Portuguese imperialism and British imperialism was to find a striking echo later in South Africa itself.

In place of this approach to the question, Mandel and the USFI substitute a method that Lenin specifically inveighed against; namely, the arbitrary isolation of certain facts and investing them with decisive importance. South Africa, it is claimed, is a semi-industrialised dependant nation because it shares the three main characteristics of this supposed category. Firstly, because its exports are mainly composed of raw materials. Secondly, because it is dependent on foreign technology. Thirdly, because economic growth is dependent on foreign capital.

The first two characteristics can be dealt with quite simply. When we define whether a country is imperialist or not, we do not ask what is produced but how it is produced. The fact that South Africa exports raw materials and imports high technology does not determine whether it is imperialist or not.

This speaks more for the international division of labour and the restricted nature of the South African market than it does about the level of the development of capitalism in South Africa. If we had to apply this criterion, what would we say about the USA, whose single biggest export is food, or Hong Kong where manufactured goods account for over 90% of exports? Would this mean that the USA is a dependent nation and Hong Kong an imperialist nation? We think not. It is the export of capital, not commodities as such, that is decisive.

South Africa's import of high technology is to be expected from such a small economy. Most of the imperialist economies to a greater or lesser degree, including the USA and Japan, are dependent on the international division of labour. What we could expect in a minor imperialist nation like South Africa is its lack of dependency on any particular major imperialist nation, its ability so to speak, of being able to play off the major imperialist nations against each other. And indeed this is so. South Africa is not dominated by US, or British or Japanese or German multi-nationals, even though they are all present in South Africa.

Finally, the dependence on foreign capital. The Marxist method is to always examine things in motion, to examine

trends. As we have shown elsewhere, exports of South African capital are rising much faster than imports of capital. In fact the inflow of capital has slowed markedly. South Africa is today far less dependent on capital imports than before. What better proof than its ability to weather the recent flight of capital and its ability to declare a moratorium on debt repayments?

Nor does the weight of foreign-sourced, investment in itself prove that South Africa is not imperialist. We only need to remember in this regard the example of Russia itself at the time of the First World War. Lenin regarded Tsarist Russia as an imperialist nation, one of the oppressor countries. The chief determining characteristic of this imperialism was undoubtedly its possession of colonies in size second only to those of Great Britain. Its export of capital was relatively slight compared to Germany, GB and France. Moreover, Russian capital formation was overwhelmingly dominated by French loan capital exported to Russia. What does the USFI make of this fact?

It is vital to recognise that Lenin (and Bukharin) painted a 'composite picture' of world imperialism. Lenin argued that:

"If It were necessary to give the briefest possible definition of imperialism we should have to say that imperialism is the monopoly stage of capitalism." (p266)

Elaborating on his brief definition, Lenin argues that under imperialism monopolies play a decisive role; that finance capital rules supreme; that the export of surplus capital becomes decisive as against the export of commodities; that international monopolies have divided the world up and that territorially the division of the world is complete, that is, it can only be forcibly re-divided.

At the time of Lenin's work, certain imperialist powers exhibited certain of these features and others hardly at all. Finance capital (the fusion of banking and industrial capital) was highly developed in the country that had least colonial possessions, Germany. Precisely the opposite polarity existed in Great Britain. The forms of capital export were radically different in the cases of France and Germany. Apply this method to South Africa today and we can say that, above all else, it exhibits the dominance of monopolies and finance capital which is mainly domestically controlled, together with considerable colonial/semi-colonial territorial 'possession' in Southern Africa. We have no doubt that Lenin's method applied to South Africa can lead to only one conclusion: that the apartheid state is definitely in the camp of oppressor nations as a junior partner in the coalition of world imperialist powers.

### **Inqaba Ya Basebenzi**

Inqaba, the journal of the 'Marxist Tendency of the ANC', like the British 'Militant' group with which it is in political solidarity, is equally reliant on the 'objective process' to deliver a socialist revolution in South Africa. While the SWP(US) positively revels in the idea of a democratic stage in the South African revolution, Inqaba seeks to prove that such a stage is 'impossible'.

The two documents South Africa's Impending Socialist Revolution and South African Perspectives: Workers Revolution or Racial Civil War, far from presenting perspectives to arm the black working class to overthrow capitalism, present a thoroughly opportunist 'schema' into

which the class struggle is distorted to fit. This schema holds that there is currently no revolutionary situation in South Africa. Workers are told with monotonous regularity throughout Inqaba publications that it is wrong to think that the revolution or the overthrow of the regime is imminent. "It will require years of drawn out tenacious struggles". It will take "five, ten or even more years" we are told to "prepare the ground" for such an eventuality. (Inqaba issue 16/17). Having declared in advance that the mighty struggles rocking the Apartheid regime have little hope in the near future of destroying the apartheid system, Inqaba goes on to explain why its schema proves this to be the case.

For Inqaba, "apartheid and capitalism are inseparably bound together". This means the only revolution in South Africa which is possible is a socialist one. The fact that the ANC, one of the major forces in the struggle, and now quite influential in the Trade Unions, is arguing for a democratic revolution which involves a popular front with progressive capitalists, will have no effect on the likelihood of this outcome because such an eventuality is an 'impossibility'. A negotiated settlement, as well, is absolutely ruled out. We are told that if there were negotiations about a transfer of power to the black majority:

"it would be impossible for talks to succeed . . . even if the ANC leadership, on the one hand, and the S.A. regime on the other, wished to achieve a negotiated settlement with each other . . . because the constituencies, the respective class bases on which the two sides rest, are irreconcilable, even temporarily." (Inqaba 16/17 emphasis in original) Quickly looking over their shoulder at the obvious embarrassing parallel of Zimbabwe and the 'Lancaster House' deal, Inqaba is forced to bluster about the 'objective conditions' being completely different in South Africa. It declares that the crucial difference with South Africa is that in Zimbabwe the proletariat "remained passive during the decisive stages of the struggle up to independence", a fact which laid the basis for the sell-out.

Here we see the fatal reliance of the Militant/Inqaba on 'objective conditions' and the 'revolutionary process' to sweep away false leaderships, petit bourgeois and reformist, and a complete underestimation of the grip these ideas have on the working class. Inqaba might like to console itself that it is 'impossible' for a Lancaster House type deal to be achieved, but precisely where a massive rising of the black struggle threatened the very basis of South African capitalism such schemes could be resorted to by a desperate ruling class. And the ANC with its enormous influence would play a major role in leading the working class into such a debacle.

And since when has the arousal and militancy of the working class been a guarantee against a reformist (social democratic) or Stalinist leadership compromising and betraying such a struggle? Do the wisecracks of the Militant not remember the lessons of Germany 1919, Spain 1936, Chile 1973 just to mention three instances? But perhaps these proletariats also were 'too passive'?

But to admit this possibility would be a severe embarrassment to Inqaba, for they have been consistently trying to direct the mass organisation of these workers into the popular front of the ANC and the UDF. The basis of this 'tactic' is that is necessary "to go where the masses go" As Inqaba puts it:



"The history of revolutionary movements in all industrialised countries shows that the main body of the proletariat returns to its traditional organisations, despite even the worst defeats and betrayals by its leaders in the past." (No 16/li p40) This flaccid prostration before reformism has nothing in common with Marxism, Leninism, or Trotskyism. If the working class has been obliged to return to social democracy or Stalinism despite the 'worst defeats' it is not due to some kind of congenital fixation but to a failure to find an alternative revolutionary leadership. But in South Africa the Militant recipe blithely ignores the fact that this 'traditional organisation' is not even a workers' organisation (in the sense that Lenin defined the British Labour party as a bourgeois workers party) but a popular front of different classes. Its leadership is predominantly petit-bourgeois, while its programme, a commitment to preserve capitalism, is openly bourgeois. If Militant were consistent, such a position would lead them to work to build the Democratic party in the USA, the 'traditional organisation' of the US working class and certainly the Peronist party in Argentina

This is not to say that revolutionaries should ignore the workers in the ANC/UDF or refuse to enter its base organisations whenever those assume a mass character. We would fight to win those workers away from their popular frontist leaders via the United Front. This was always Trotsky's position towards the popular front in France. Intransigent opposition to it, combined with intervention via united front action with its base organs, where they were involving the workers' organisations, in order to win them away from it. Inqaba, on the other hand, wants to build the ANC on 'a socialist basis'.

Of course revolutionaries have developed tactics for precisely these situations where a mass upsurge and unionisation of workers finds only bourgeois or petit-bourgeois led parties in existence, this was the Labor Party (or Workers Party) tactic developed by Lenin and Trotsky in relation to the USA. But it is precisely this revolutionary tactic that the Militant/Inqaba reject. In fighting against the formation of a workers' party based on the trade unions, Inqaba declares:

"The mass of the workers already look to the ANC. They obviously do not have need of a reformist party." (Inqaba No 16/17 p38) We have already dealt with, elsewhere, how Trotskyists fight for a revolutionary workers' party, a tactic Militant/Inqaba clearly do not understand if they think it's a fight for a reformist party. But to justify its position Inqaba finds it necessary to consistently exaggerate the influence of the ANC in the working class.

Inqaba has argued for 'building the ANC' since 1979. It was necessary for them to totally downplay the weakness of the ANC as a mass formation in the succeeding five years and to hush-up its hostility toward the fast emerging Black trade unions.

Inqaba is quite willing to join in the denunciation of the Trade Unions' refusal to join the UDF/ANC as evidence of 'syndicalism', but quite unwilling to direct the justified suspicions of many workers' leaders of committing their trade unions to popular front organisations into the fight for a workers' party. Again, as if to absolve itself from directing the working class into the jaws of the popular front, it declares:

"There could never in South Africa be a coalition govern-

ment between the ANC and the bourgeoisie although many ANC leaders might earnestly desire it. We cannot conceive of conditions which would permit an ANC government on a bourgeois basis." (ibid p30) These are people who have learnt nothing from history.

Another argument used by Inqaba is to stress the difficulties of forming a workers' party. They point to the lessons for South Africa of the emergence of Social Democratic and Labour Parties in the west to argue it was 'a very complicated' and long drawn out process, while pointing out that in South Africa today "revolution is knocking at the door". (Inqaba No 1) Firstly this contrasts rather strangely with their "it is 5, 10 or even more years to revolution in South Africa" refrain. (But obviously any argument against a workers party and for the ANC is worth using for Inqaba.) Secondly, the situation in South Africa is far more favourable to the speedy construction of a mass workers' party, a massive growth of trade unions, a revolutionary crisis, mass strikes, than in, say, Brazil where, nevertheless, a workers' party, albeit still with a minority of the working class, came into existence over a short period of time. But how much more difficult it is to transform the ANC? An organisation which, as Inqaba points out, is dominated by the SACP, whose leading organs are in exile and who expel bureaucratically at the first hint of opposition e.g. the Marxist Workers Tendency itself.

And neither would a mass influx of the workers' movement magically transform the ANC, as Inqaba seems to think. It is more likely to come about as a result of the dominance of the ideas of the leadership of the popular frontist ANC within the workers' movement. Inqaba virtually admits this to be the case when having argued consistently for workers to join the Popular Front UDF since its formation, it now reverses its position, it admits:

"In the main, the unions have not entered the UDF, and those which have entered have not at all transformed it although this could easily have been done." (Inqaba 18/19) What a confession of bankruptcy for a major tactical line! Certainly there is no guarantee that the fight for a workers' party within the trade unions would result in a revolutionary, rather than a reformist or centrist, one. But that fight would be carried on within a workers' organisation, not a cross-class one, where the mass working class base could be mobilised against any attempts to produce a bureaucratically dominated party. There is no question that in conditions of illegality or semi-illegality this would be difficult (but so it is in the totally illegal ANC) but the traditions of rank and file control and democratic stewards systems built up in the black trade unions, precisely because of their origins in these conditions, would undoubtedly weigh in our favour.

There is a further element behind Inqaba's schema which leads it on many questions to take positions far to the right of the current policies of the SACP/ANC. For Inqaba, the winning over of the white working class and, in particular, the rank and file of the white army and police, is virtually an essential precondition for a successful revolution. Workers Revolution or Racial Civil War, as its title implies, holds out the scenario of mass destruction of both contending sides. It talks of "a long war of mutual destruction" the unlikely outcome of victory being gained only "at the cost literally millions of (mainly black) lives", of 'laying waste the productive forces the basis of civilised existence' etc

etc. For Inqaba, the, "more real prospect (is) a victory of the revolution under the class conscious leadership of the black working class, which proves able to split the whites decisively on class lines." Indeed, they make the winning over of the bulk of the white army a precondition for a successful outcome of the struggle. In arguing that: "the winning over of the white troops is absolutely indispensable".

This, of course, is only possible where, "the revolutionary working class movement fights on a clear programme for the socialist transformation of society, and with a conscious Marxist leadership". Beneath its lengthy verbiage, Inqaba is in fact arguing that it is only possible or, indeed, desirable, to smash apartheid in South Africa when the workers' movement is under a Marxist leadership. That is why they have to deny there is a revolutionary situation in South Africa at the moment, why they argue it will take "5, 10 or more years" to achieve it. Militant and Inqaba prefer to wait for a pure revolution before they enter the fray. And as Lenin said:

"Whoever expects a 'pure' social revolution will never live to see it. Such a person pays lip service to revolution without understanding what revolution is." (The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up) Is it "indispensable to win over" the white army? In South African conditions to argue such a position is a recipe for passivity. The army must certainly be smashed by the mighty crisis and explosion of working class insurrection that would be necessary to smash the apartheid state. The army would certainly not be unaffected by the inevitable vacillations and divisions which will be produced in the ruling class itself. Whether major sections of the white working class and petit-bourgeoisie faced with a bloody civil war of destruction will be forced to acquiesce to majority rule or resort to a mass emigration, only the class struggle, will determine. To build ones perspective on the 'indispensability' of winning them over is in fact to accommodate, indeed to surrender, to the privileged white labour aristocracy.

This perspective lies at the root of Inqaba's attacks on the ANC and SACP's "insurrectionary" turn. Far from attacking the SACP and ANC for failing to fight and organise for the only tactic which can achieve this, a massive general strike which brings the working class to the leadership of a mighty upsurge which could paralyse the country, they criticise it from the right. They denounce the very idea of an "Iran type insurrection" as an "adventure". They pour scorn on the idea of "popular organs of power within the townships along the lines of soviets" emerging until there is a "direct fight for power", i.e. "5, 10 or more years" in the future. They castigate calls for the organising of an all out indefinite strike for the same reasons. Here we see the real bankruptcy of Inqaba. On every key tactic which would strengthen the working class and its organisation in the struggle for power, the fight for soviet-type organisations, for an all out general strike and for the insurrectionary movement necessary to smash the armed might of the regime, they argue against.

Inqaba and the Militant tendency offer the black working class no revolutionary alternative to Stalinism, despite their abstract criticisms of that tendency's stageism. Far from applying the communist perspective of "permanent revolution" to South Africa/Azania, they offer only warmed over Kautskyism, much verbiage about the unstoppable

"revolutionary process" to lead the working class to victory in the future. But this is combined with a rejection of every tactic which can lead to it in the here and now.

If this is Trotskyism then the sooner the South Africa workers learn that Trotsky was no such 'Trotskyist' the better. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) declares it is for a socialist revolution in South Africa and, like the Militant!Inqaba tendency, is critical of the ANC/SACP perspective of the need for a bourgeois 'democratic stage' of the revolution. However, when it comes down to putting forward a strategy to achieve a workers' revolution, to build a party that can lead it in the midst of the revolutionary crisis that grips South Africa, the SWP is completely at a loss. While Alex Callinicos thinks that the Militant-aligned Marxist Workers Tendency's perspective of transforming the ANC into a revolutionary party "has some merits", he has no time for the formation of a revolutionary workers' party based on the black trade unions. "Any such quasi-syndicalist strategy fails to confront the fact that the mass of black trade unionists are likely to look towards either the ANC or the Black consciousness movement for political leadership." (Socialist Review September 1985)

And why are they likely to look towards the ANC or the National Forum? Clearly because there is no alternative political party representing the interests of the workers, fighting for socialism and leading the democratic struggle against the Apartheid regime. This struggle is now left precisely under the leadership of the UDF and ANC. Callinicos rejects any struggle to involve the mass of black workers in political leadership through their trade unions and a workers' party. This is in fact a recipe for not challenging the hold of the ANC and UDF.

Besides, Callinicos, like the Marxist Workers Tendency, exaggerates the degree to which black workers, especially trade unionists, look to the ANC for leadership. In the past few years, South African workers have been engaged in a historic task, that of constituting themselves as a conscious class, building a mass organised labour movement. From trade union tasks they are beginning to raise the question of a workers' political party.

The October 1985 Socialist Review carries an interview with a leader of MAWU, the Metal Workers' affiliate of FOSATU, Moses Mayekiso. Mayekiso represented an important current within the old FOSATU unions, one which sees the need to build a workers' party. "The general feeling is that the workers must have their own party and their own freedom charter" declares Mayekiso. "The (ANC's Freedom) Charter is a capitalist document. We need a workers' charter that will say clearly who will control the farms, presently owned by the capitalists, who will control the factories, the mines and so on. There must be a change of the whole society." (SR October 1985)

Mayekiso clearly represented a trend within FOSATU which saw the need to counterpose a working class political programme to that offered by the UDF/ANC. At the time of the interview, Mayekiso tentatively suggested that such a party could be launched by the new Trade Union federation which was about to be formed. Since the formation of COSATU, which obviously saw a compromise with the UDF/ANC supporting unions, the comrade has retreated from this position, arguing that forming such a party would be "divisive", while sticking to the need to develop a programme for the working class which would

be socialist (See Socialist Worker 5 April 1986). Clearly, a programme without a party to fight for it is impossible, unless Mayekiso is proposing a syndicalist strategy for the unions.

But how did the SWP respond to this positive desire to urge the trade unions to build a mass Workers' Party on a revolutionary working class programme? Predictably Nigel Lambert in the same issue of Socialist Review takes up Callinicos' theme that it is not possible to build a mass revolutionary party in South Africa at the moment. "Any mass workers' party formed under existing circumstances would end up with 'fudged' politics. It would be a centrist and not a revolutionary party." (Emphasis in original)

So what does the SWP tell workers who want to struggle for a mass workers' party, one which can really influence events, and break the hold of the multi-class and non-socialist organisations like the UDF and ANC have on the struggle? It is of course the identical recipe these bankrupt peddles in Britain, "recruit the ones and twos".

Such a proposal is laughable when transferred to a country convulsed by revolutionary upheaval, involving hundreds of thousands of the toiling masses. The "Leninist Party" is grotesquely misrepresented in Lambert's article as coming about by "the conscious decision of a handful of likeminded individuals".

Why a handful? It is described as a "grouplet" and of course, "it is unlikely that such an organisation would be able to lead the masses in struggle". Indeed. So this is the wretched perspective that the SWP offers the South African working class. This is the politics of a pathetic sect, not

a revolutionary group claiming to be a "party".

A revolutionary party would grasp at the desire of significant numbers of workers to form their own party, not discourage it. It would intervene in the struggle for such a party.

Rather than standing on the sidelines declaring "it will all end in tears", it would fight to win such a party to a revolutionary perspective, a revolutionary programme. It would have on its side the enormous energy of a new proletariat, with only an embryonic trade union bureaucracy to hold it back.

In such circumstances, even if such a party came into being as a mass centrist party, the revolutionaries would have gained a serious influence with the best elements, providing they had fought alongside them for revolutionary not centrist politics. But this approach is quite beyond the ken of the SWP. At the decisive moment of the mass upsurge they offer a "grouplet" unable to "lead the masses in struggle".

The unspoken logic of their position is that the trade unions and their mass membership should not mess with politics. If they did it would only end in a centrist mess. So what should they do? Leave politics to the Stalinist popular frontists of the ANC/UDF and get on with the good old "economic struggle". That is the inescapable logic of their position.

"Leninist Party", "workers' revolution" - for the SWP this is the music of the future, and a very distant one at that! What is this political method? Economism and tailism, just as Lenin characterised it in 'What is to be Done?' ■

## NEW RCIT PUBLICATION ON RUSSIAN IMPERIALISM!

### Russia as a Great Imperialist Power

#### The formation of Russian Monopoly Capital and its Empire

By Michael Pröbsting, March 2014

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## The National Question (1986)

By Dave Stockton, Published by Workers Power (Britain) and the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International  
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The National Question is probably the most extensively debated issue of the South African revolution. This is because it has become the central ideological question for all the contending parties.

For the white racists their multi-national and multiracial theory is central, both to the maintenance of their rule over the black majority through splitting it into a series of "minorities" and to a justification of it to the 'public opinion' within the imperialist democracies. To this end the whites have attempted to consolidate the old 'native reserves' into 'homelands' for the so-called nations; Zulu, Tswana, Sotho and so on.

These linguistic and cultural groupings owe their origins to the consolidation and creation of Bantu kingdoms during the great period of upheaval, war and migration in the early Nineteenth century. This was known as the Mfecane (the crushing') among the Zulu or the Difaqane ('forced migration') amongst the Sotho. In this period, the cattle raising Bantu tribes were led by figures such as King Shaka, who founded the powerful and expansive Zulu kingdom. King Moshoeshoe founded the Kingdom of Basotho, Mzilikazi that of the Ndebele, Sothangane the Gaza empire.

These states and their peoples had hardly come into existence before they were disrupted by the trek of the Boers and the expansion of the British Cape colony. Economic development in the Twentieth century has thoroughly mixed the peoples of South Africa despite all the attempts of the racists to prevent it.

The apartheid state and the employers have long tried to divide their black workforce by playing upon 'tribal' (in reality linguistic) differences. They have long used the Zulus in particular as policeman in the mine compounds. In addition the Bantustan system has artificially preserved or restored the system of 'chiefs' and 'kings'. This has left a legacy of division which every progressive movement has sought to overcome.

Therefore within the liberation movement - the Congress tradition, the Pan-African tradition, the Black Consciousness Movement and the Unity movement - there have always been compelling reasons to address the National Question. Has South Africa one, two, four or even more nations? Let us look first at the majority tradition, that of the ANC and its Stalinist core.

### The ANC & the National Question

At the heart of the ANC's and the South African Communist Party's (SACP) programme is their analysis of South Africa as a 'colonialism of a special type'. Obviously it is the case that every country possesses a unique combination of features in its development. But revolutionaries should always beware of a method that counterposes the exceptional to the general, or the nationally specific to the

international. Stalinism, with its multitude of 'national road' programmes, always pleads unique circumstances in order to come to the conclusion that the overthrow of capitalism is not a task of the coming struggle. In common with its counter-revolutionary twin - Social Democracy - it holds that working class power and socialism are a distant and not an immediate goal.

The South African racist state certainly has its origins in colonisation by white settlers and was for a whole epoch a colony of the Dutch and then the British. But South Africa has long been ruled by an indigenous bourgeoisie. To confuse the present situation with colonialism is to mistake the past for the present. In reality, however, this 'mistake' is not an accidental error on the part of the ANC/SACP theoreticians.

It enables them to give the struggle against apartheid the character of an anti-colonial struggle - just like those that have taken place in all the other states of Africa. What interests the ANC in doing this is the fact that not one of these anti-colonial struggles led to the overthrow of capitalism. They stand in the ANC's view as testimony to the separate 'historic stage' of national independence. Of course the ANC stresses that this colonialism is 'of a special type': "What is 'special' or different about the colonial system as it obtains in South Africa is that there is no spatial separation between the colonising power (the white minority state) and the colonised black people . . . . The special features of South Africa's internal colonialism are also compounded by the fact that the South African state, parliament and government are juridically independent of any metropolitan country . . ." (Apartheid South Africa - Colonialism of a Special Type, issued by the ANC)

The 1910 Act of Union, the 1931 Statute of Westminster and the 1961 Declaration of the Republic are not seen as the legal and constitutional reflections of South Africa's shedding of its colonial and then semi-colonial status. Rather, they are treated simply as acts of deception. The ANC believes that these juridical formalities should not be allowed to cloud the colonial content of the white supremacist state, and that:

"Flowing from this analysis of the South African racist state as essentially colonial, the South African struggle is an anti-colonialist national liberation struggle."

The means to attain this objective, as in the rest of Africa, is: "the abolition of the colonial state and the transfer of power to a national government elected by popular suffrage".

Again and again the SACP repeats: "What needs to be stressed here is that national self-determination, as in all other national liberation struggles, is the decisive issue."

The ANC has altered its position on the national question several times since the SACP's rise to dominance within it. But its analysis has always been made to fit both the stages theory and the popular front strategy. The position

enshrined in the Freedom Charter reflected the Congress Alliance popular front of the 1950s. The Charter therefore talked of 'national groups'. Later SACP writers spoke of an 'African Nation' in counterposition to the tribalisation attempts of the racist regime, adding to this a 'Coloured nation' and an 'Indian nation'.

After the Morogoro Conference in 1969, heavy stress was placed on the idea of the African nation as the 'majority nation' whose national liberation was to be 'the main content of the present stage of the South African revolution'. The upsurge of the Black Consciousness Movement in the mid-seventies, with its insistence on the unity of the non-white population, plus the effects of the Nationalist Government's multi-nation policy designed to minoritise all the black 'nationalities', obliged the ANC to abandon its own theory of national groups:

"Today both the ANC and the SACP recognise the existence of two nations in South Africa, the oppressed and the oppressor nations . . ." (Selected Writings on the Freedom Charter 1985)

Yet, even here, the ANC is not consistent. It seeks to limit the nationhood of the whites, elsewhere referring to them as: "the colonising 'nation', the white national groups". ('Questions on the National Democratic Revolution.' Sechaba October 1982)

B Molapo writing in African Communist (1977) reveals the reason for clinging to at least a two nation or nationality thesis: "The great disadvantage of the one-nation thesis is, then, that it obscures the colonial nature of our society and in consequence the national character of our liberation struggle".

The SACP/ANC view of the national liberation struggle against colonialism claims to stand in the tradition of Marx and Lenin. Before we can finally reveal all its errors it is necessary to honestly explain the Marxist position on the National Question.

### Marxists & the National Question

The classic definition of a nation comes from Stalin's one work of theoretical significance in the history of communism, namely, Marxism and the National Question (1913): "A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make up manifested in a common culture." (Works Vol 2, p30.)

Trotsky was later to concur with this view;

"This combined definition, compounding the psychological attributes of a nation with the geographic and economic conditions of its development, is not only correct theoretically but also practically fruitful, for then the solution to the problem of each nation's fate must perforce be sought along the lines of changing the material conditions of its existence, beginning with territory." (Leon Trotsky, Stalin vol I, p230.)

The views of Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin were developed in counter position to the subjective-idealist national theory of the Austro Marxists. Otto Bauer in The National Question and Social Democracy (1907) arrived at this definition of a nation; "The nation is the totality of men bound together through a common destiny with a community of character." This is an entirely circular description of national consciousness. Elsewhere, Bauer says explicitly that

"a nation exists if its component parts believe it to be a nation".

Karl Renner - another Austro Marxist - brought out the full idealism and subjectivism of this approach ten years after Bauer's book was written. In 1917 he wrote: "Long before the nation emerged as a political factor it existed unconsciously as a national character, semi-consciously as national feeling and finally as a clear national consciousness. The feeling, and awareness of the feeling, that someone who has the same language and culture belongs to us, that 'we' are different from 'foreigners' that we have to stand with our own people and against foreigners, is naive nationalism: that primitive, certainly genuine and, in a sense, eternal, impulse in the life of the emotions." The subjective emotional expression of modern nationalistic ideology is here projected backwards as a cause of the nation's existence and forward as its eternal nature.

This view insists that today's national community is a result of destiny or fate. The nation is locked between an unalterable past and an inevitable future. This thoroughly ahistorical bourgeois approach leads inevitably to the fatal national chauvinism which the Austro-Marxists espoused in the First World War. Against it, Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky defined the nation in materialist terms.

Nevertheless one must make certain criticisms and corrections to Stalin's famous formula. To use it as a check list of characteristics is wrong. Stalin himself erroneously proclaims:

"There is no nation which at one and the same time speaks several languages."

What about Switzerland? It speaks three major languages and several dialects of a minor one and has existed as a nation for centuries. What is important is, firstly, inter-communication and community of culture, not necessarily a single language and secondly absolute equality and absence of privileges. Under these conditions differences of 'mother language' will not be sufficient to split a nation united by economy, culture and history.

A second, more substantial, objection to Stalin's definition is that it deals with being rather than becoming. In other words it is a static categorisation that fits existing nations but cannot grasp a struggle for national existence. The third objection is that, in Stalin's 1913 definition, national culture and psychology or character ignores class differences within the nation. These criticisms are not true of Stalin and Lenin's whole corpus of work on the national question in the years 1912-14, but Stalin's composite definition does have this weakness.

A nation is a community composed of exploiting and exploited classes which has developed within a definite territory on the basis of a common economic life, a common language(s) and a common culture which expresses a conscious identity distinct from that of other nations.

The development of nations must be understood historically. The nation state is the typical state form of the bourgeois epoch. It sweeps away the political and state forms of earlier epochs. Thus, for example, the feudal state with its local or provincial particularisms was based on fiefdoms held together in personal union and transmitted and modified by dynastic means. Its subjects, divided into Orders or Estates, were ruled via a series of privileges (private laws).

Modern nations began to form in the final disintegrat-

ing phase of feudalism. National struggles centred on the tasks of unity and independence. Merchant and manufacturing capital sought the formation of a wider arena for the development of exchange and production, free of the multiplicity of customs duties, legal systems, local currencies and arbitrary plunder or extortion by the aristocracy. It sought the freeing of the land from what it regarded as parasites.

In short, capitalism needed an expanded arena for the development of its own productive forces. This necessitated a compact, contiguous bloc of territory, a common language or mutually understood languages as a means of verbal and above all literary communication. It meant the creation of a common economic life based on a uniform currency, weights and measures, external but not internal customs barriers and a uniform legal system. In short, it needed a unified national market.

The ideology of this struggle was 'nationalism' and involved the revolutionary bourgeoisie and its petit-bourgeois allies in the creation of a national culture, with a standardised national language which was a written medium first and foremost, a national education system and a literary culture. All this was enormously progressive as against the remnants of feudalism with its dynastic loyalties, its dialects and its 'rural idiocy'.

Yet, despite the progressive nature of this struggle against all pre-capitalist modes of production, the nation and the nation-state are composed of antagonistic classes. The national state is a state of capitalism's ruling class. All 'national culture', though shared by other classes, remains predominantly bourgeois (it has as its purpose the domination over these classes). Of course, such national cultures have 'democratic' and 'popular' elements within them. These elements are contributed from the life and struggles of the urban petit-bourgeoisie, the poor peasantry and the proletariat against their class enemies. But these are either appropriated into the bourgeois national culture in so far as they do not clash with fundamental bourgeois values, or they are subordinated into regional, local or class sub-cultures.

This phase of development was experienced in Europe, North and South America and Japan in capitalism's earliest and progressive phase. By and large, however, in Africa and Asia large-scale capitalism came with their domination by imperialism - an aggressive external force which trampled on the existing pre-capitalist modes of production, breaking them up militarily and economically. Consequently, modern nationalism was born in these continents as a response to this onslaught, with the petit-bourgeoisie usually having to stand in for a 'national bourgeoisie' that was either very weak or tied to imperialism.

Petit-bourgeois nationalism found itself in conflict with the bourgeoisie and in fear of the class independence of the proletariat. In the colonial and semi-colonial countries it faced the task of unifying states where the productive forces had not developed sufficiently to create national markets, and where the state borders reflected the division imposed by inter-imperialist rivalries. As a result, the peoples of these states were made up of various language groups, often lacking literacy, and with a history of the cynical exploitation of these differences by the imperialist administrators or rival imperialisms from outside.

This has left to the formally independent states of Africa,

the Middle East and Asia a legacy of internal and external divisions which have either prevented or stunted the development of a nationalism within these states. They face constant pressure from imperialism. This pressure comes economically from the IMF and the World Bank. Militarily and politically it comes from US and European imperialism either directly or through their minor imperialist stooges and semi-colonial gendarmes. This has led to trans-state nationalisms such as 'pan-Islamism', 'pan-Arabism' and 'pan-Africanism'. Yet the existing states with their particular history, their economic structure, their culture inherited from capitalist development has made these 'pan-nationalisms' a utopian project, constantly breaking down when faced with the class interests of the semi-colonial bourgeoisie and their military bonapartist representatives.

Thus, the national struggles of the oppressed peoples are on the one hand a justified and progressive force against imperialism and against backward feudal, tribal or collaborationist elements within their own states. Yet, as nationalisms, they are utopian in that in the imperialist epoch no prolonged period of national development (on a capitalist basis) is likely to intervene. This utopian nationalism is in addition reactionary wherever it clashes with the development of the working class into a conscious force defending its own interests and seeking to lead the rural poor and the different nations oppressed by imperialism against it.

The attempt to create a pure non-class nationalism or even a 'proletarian nationalism' is a utopian and reactionary project. Lenin and Trotsky's approach was quite different. Trotsky summed up Lenin's position on the national question succinctly:

"it was Lenin's view that the right of self-determination was merely an application of the principles of bourgeois democracy in the sphere of national relations. A full bodied, all-sided democracy under capitalism was unrealisable; in that sense the national independence of small and weak peoples was likewise 'unrealisable'. However, even under imperialism, the working class did not refuse to fight for democratic rights, including among them the right of each nation to its independent existence. Moreover, in certain portions of our planet it was Imperialism itself that invested the slogan of national self-determination with extraordinary significance." (Stalin Vol 1 p229)

For Marxists, as opposed to all forms and types of nationalists, the national question which arises from this demands only a consistent and total opposition to all national oppression. It does not oblige the proletarian vanguard to become nation builders. Lenin was quite clear on this question: "For Marxists the national programme . . . advocates firstly the equality of nations and languages and the impermissibility of all privileges in this respect and also the right of nations to self determination . . . secondly the principle of Internationalism and uncompromising struggle against contamination of the proletariat with bourgeois nationalism, even of the most refined' kind." (Critical Remarks on the National Question)

When Lenin talks of the 'mow refined' nationalism he means that of the oppressed - indeed he refers to that of "the most oppressed and persecuted nation - the Jews.". He concludes that: ". . . it is the Marxist's bounden duty to stand for the most resolute and consistent democratism on all aspects of the national question., Its task is largely



a negative one. But this is the limit the proletariat can go to in supporting nationalism, for beyond that. begins the 'positive' activity of the bourgeoisie striving to fortify nationalism." (ibid) The argumentation about how many nations or 'nationalities' or 'national groups' exist in South Africa, while interesting in itself, bears no decisive importance for our programme. What decides the existence or non-existence of nations is not the cognitions of theoreticians or the chop-logic of politicians trying to bolster up artificial stages, but the existence or development of national struggles.

In South Africa, the 'national' question is an aspect of the general democratic revolution, that is, the destruction of the racist dictatorship over all non-white South Africans. Without recognition of this reality all 'nationalisms', tribalisms or religious community ideologies will play a divisive role in the general democratic struggle. The apartheid state has realised this from the outset, hence its Bantustan and community policies aimed at Balkanising South Africa.

Yet a 'positive' espousal of 'Black Nationalism' or a two nation and even a one nation theory, also disarms the proletariat. The 'national' question par excellence is to end the brutal oppression by, and monstrous privileges of, the whites and to unify the artificially separated people of South Africa. But the proletariat's programme and its demands cannot stop here. It has to overcome the 'tribalist' ideologies of the Bantustan leaders like Buthelezi here and now and counter the constant attempts of Botha and company to set the linguistic groups and communities at one another's throats. This means allaying the fears of any language group or community amongst the oppressed that it will be a helpless minority in the new state.

Therefore, the proletariat should make clear that it is fighting for a unified South Africa which is free of all 'racial' or 'national' privilege and oppression. This would mean the free use of all languages in education and cultural life, the creation of local government which ensures no oppression of one community by another. It would also mean that, whilst the working class, whether under capitalism or under its own dictatorship, needs as large and centralised a state as possible, this must be a voluntarily chosen centralism.

The workers' party should, therefore, include in its programme for the morrow of the destruction of apartheid, the right of self-determination for all non-oppressor peoples; for all those for whom autonomy or even separate statehood would not mean oppression for another people. This programme alone enables the working class to assemble around it all the oppressed peoples without succumbing to bourgeois nationalist influence itself.

Seen as Lenin saw it, the question' is not an obstacle to the seizure of power by the proletariat. It does not necessitate a separate national liberation stage as the ANC/SACP claim but is a task of the permanent revolution that will only be fulfilled progressively if the proletariat seizes power. The history of the other African states shows that, where 'national liberation' installs the bourgeoisie or its military-bonapartist caretakers, this does not solve the question of nationalism, tribalism and separate communities. The bitter and bloody experience of the Congo, Nigeria, Uganda and Zambia have shown this. The South African proletariat can and must solve this question - as the Russian

proletariat did in 1917 - under its own class rule.

The ANC/SACP's repeated insistence that national self-determination is the decisive issue is the stance of petit-bourgeois democracy, of nationalism as opposed to proletarian revolution. The apartheid state's repressive apparatus exists to ensure the super-exploitation of the black proletariat and the exclusion from the land of the great mass of toilers. It is the fight against this unendurable exploitation and oppression that is the main explosive charge of the South African revolution. The masses see democracy - one person one vote - as the means to end this nightmare.

South African Stalinism is a priori wedded to keeping the struggle against apartheid within the limits of a bourgeois revolution. It has subsequently arranged and re-arranged its view of the national question to fit this strategic commitment.

### Permanent Revolution

Trotsky neither confused the national question nor indeed any other major bourgeois-democratic struggle (the land question, the democratic republic) with the struggle of the proletariat for its own social emancipation. Nor did he draw from their distinction the conclusion that separate historic stages and distinct class rules (dictatorships) were imposed by this fact. If he had conflated bourgeois-democratic and socialist tasks by calling the former socialist he would have thereby been a petit-bourgeois populist, whose 'socialism' would become an instrument of deception for the proletariat. If he had espoused a stages theory he would have been a Menshevik.

Despite Stalinist slanders, Trotsky was neither. The theory of permanent revolution neither ignores the democratic revolutionary tasks nor confuses them with socialist ones. What this means was expressed by Trotsky quite clearly in the one major article he devoted to South Africa. (On the South African Theses. Writings of Leon Trotsky 1934 35). He stressed heavily the fact of racial and national oppression exercised by the whites;

"The South African possessions of Great Britain form a dominion only from the point of view of the white minority. From the point of the black majority, South Africa is a slave colony".

This gives the starting point, the enormous explosive social force to the revolution in South Africa. It is, Trotsky says: "unthinkable without the awakening of the native masses" involving the growth of "confidence in their strength, a heightened personal consciousness, a cultural growth." Trotsky continues; "Under these conditions, the South African republic will emerge first of all as a 'black republic' . . . But it is entirely obvious that the predominant majority of the population, liberated from slavish dependence, will put a certain imprint on the state. Insofar as a victorious revolution will radically change the relation not only between the classes but also between the races and will assure to the blacks that place in the state that corresponds to their numbers, thus far will the social revolution in South Africa also have a national character.

We have not the slightest reason to close our eyes to this side of the question or to diminish its significance. On the contrary, the proletarian party should in words and deeds openly and boldly take the solution of the national (racial) question in its hands. Nevertheless, the proletarian party

can and must solve the national problem by its own methods. The historical weapon of national liberation can be only the class struggle”.

Trotsky goes on to criticise the alternative method developed by the Stalinised Comintern which turned national liberation into “an empty democratic abstraction that is elevated above the reality of class relations”. In this schema “different classes liberate themselves (temporarily) from material interests and become simple ‘anti-imperialist’ forces.” To encourage them to perform this act of class amnesia they are promised a “national-democratic” state.

Reference to Lenin’s pre-1917 position is, says Trotsky, entirely fraudulent; “Lenin always spoke about a revolutionary bourgeois democratic dictatorship and not about a spiritual ‘people’s state’. Moreover he drew no strategic class alliance perspective:

“he did not offer a bloc of all ‘anti-Tsarist forces’ but carried out an independent class policy of the proletariat. An ‘anti-Tsarist’ bloc was the idea of the Russian Social Revolutionaries and the Left Cadets, that is the parties of the petty and middle bourgeoisie”.

Again Trotsky stresses: “The Bolshevik Party defended the right of the oppressed nations to self determination with the methods of proletarian class struggle, entirely rejecting the charlatan ‘anti-imperialist’ blocs with the numerous petty-bourgeois ‘national’ parties of Tsarist Russia (the Polish Socialist Party - PPS the party of Pilsudski in Tsarist Poland, Dashnaki in Armenia, the Ukrainian nationalists, the Jewish Zionists, etc etc). The Bolsheviks have always mercilessly unmasked these parties, as well as the Russian Socialist Revolutionaries, their vacillations and adventurism, but especially their ideological lie of being above the class struggle. Lenin did not stop his intransigent criticism even when circumstances forced upon him this or that episodic, strictly practical, agreement with them.”

There could be no question of any permanent alliance with them under the banner of ‘anti-Tsarism’. Thus, Trotsky rejects the grossly opportunist use of the ‘anti-imperialist united front’ developed by the Stalinist Comintern into a strategic alliance committed (deceitfully) to the establishment of a bourgeois nationalist regime and later openly developed as the Popular Front. Trotsky agrees that it is completely wrong to “compete with the African Nationalist Congress in nationalist slogans” as the South African Trotskyists’ theses put it, but makes clear that this must mean neither abstention from the democratic tasks nor capitulation to nationalism.

The Bolshevik-Leninists (Trotskyists) must “put themselves in defence of the Congress, as it is, in all cases where it is being attacked by the white oppressors”. They must recognise and support the progressive tendencies in the program of the Congress. They must “unmask before the native masses the inability of the congress to achieve the realisation of even its own demands, because of its superficial, conciliatory policy. In contradistinction to the Congress, the Bolshevik-Leninists develop a programme of revolutionary class struggle.”

Trotsky stresses that united action, temporary united fronts are possible. “Separate episodic agreements with the Congress, if they are forced by circumstances, are permissible only within the framework of strictly defined practical tasks, with the retention of full and complete independence of our own organisation and freedom of po-

litical criticism”.

Trotsky sums up the perspective of permanent revolution for South Africa. It does not leap over the “national or the agrarian questions” but points out that these “can be solved only in a revolutionary way”. That this “leads inevitably to the dictatorship of the proletariat, which guides the native peasant masses; and that the dictatorship of the proletariat will open an era of soviet regime and socialist reconstruction”.

Lastly, Trotsky stresses that it would not be sufficient to repeat this “cornerstone of our programme” as an abstraction; “the masses must be brought to this general ‘strategic’ formula through the medium of a series of tactical slogans. It is possible to work out these slogans, at every given stage, only on the basis of an analysis of the concrete circumstances of the life and struggle of the proletariat and peasantry and the whole internal and international situations.”

### AZAPO & the National Question

The main representative of the Black consciousness tradition, Azapo, oscillates between a two and a one nation theory. More specifically, its ‘final goal’ is ‘One Azania, One Nation’ yet its present definition of the national struggle to overthrow white rule centres on the black working class and its black middle class allies and excludes the whites on principle; “For us the class alliances that need to be forged

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are those between the black working class and sections of the black middle class, those willing to act on the dictates of the working class . . .”

Azapo sincerely denies being anti-white but draws from this a false conclusion: “Black people are incapable of racism. By racism we mean the discrimination against a group of people by another group with the aim of subjugation.” (Cape Action League News, June/July 1984) Class alliances can only be based on common class interests. To talk of an alliance with the middle class on the basis of the latter accepting ‘dictates’ and the goal of a ‘socialist’ Azania is typical petit-bourgeois populism. Whilst individuals from the middle classes, possibly in large numbers, can join the working class forces, accepting their socialist goal, they can do so only on the basis of forsaking and renouncing their own class standpoint. If they do this it is in no sense a class alliance. On the other hand, the working class can win allies, form blocs or united fronts with other classes for limited common goals. There will, however, always be a probability that the bourgeoisie will betray such temporary alliances out of fear of the proletariat, preferring subordination to its oppressor ‘class brothers’.

This is one more way of saying that the ‘national’ bourgeoisie, despite its oppression, cannot consistently and firmly fight against external imperialism or internal reaction. The petit-bourgeoisie is more radical but whether it will hold firmly to the struggle depends on the strength and the forward march of the proletariat. Otherwise its nature is to vacillate. If the proletariat, however, is misled into sharing not only a struggle but an ideology (nationalism) and an organisation (a people’s party or front) with the petit-bourgeoisie it is heading for disaster.

The black workers need first and foremost not two class or non-class parties, organisations or strategic united fronts but a revolutionary class party whose programme is internationalist. All nations and all nationalism can become oppressive and racist. Unfortunately, present oppression does not give immunity from the future possibility of becoming an oppressor. The tragic history of Zionism in this century proves this all too clearly. Black exclusionism is not racist, as the Stalinists falsely claim, but it is nationalist and, therefore, not socialist.

Azapo want to merge socialist and nationalist ideologies. In reality they abandon a purely democratic position without achieving a proletarian internationalist one; “We reject the concept of race. There can be no two or three different races or nations in South Africa, We are striving for the emergence of a single undivided nation in South Africa and for a society which is non-exploitative.”

This is an inconsistently democratic position. By espousing positively a ‘one-nation’ position its defenders deny self-determination to the various potential minorities within South Africa.

Of course now, under the apartheid state, the claims of the Bantustan leaders to be exercising national self-determination are completely bogus since these statelets are not the result of a free choice for separation by their peoples but were brutally imposed by the racist regime. Forcible population transfers gave them what spurious homogeneity they can claim.

Nevertheless, the Xhosa (18%), Sotho (13%), Zulu (20%), Vhacenda (2%), Tswana (9%), Swazi (2%) and Ndebele (2%) speaking communities or peoples certainly exist. Equally,

the ‘coloured’ (9%) and the Asians (3%) constitute as yet distinct communities. These distinctions may have dissolved in the trade union or anti-apartheid struggle for the vanguard elements and for large sections of the working class. It is indeed vital for the struggle against apartheid that there is the maximum unity. Therefore, the oppressed peoples should combine wherever they are willing to do so in non-racial, non-‘national’ organisations.

The class best able to accomplish this is the working class whose organisations can, do and should be formed on this basis. To fight the bosses and the state this unity is essential. But, in the homelands and outside them, there remain ‘backward’ sections of the masses. To maintain and strengthen unity and to bring the ‘backward’ sections in behind the vanguard it is vital to undercut any suggestion that any of these ‘peoples’ or communities will on the achievement of majority rule be coerced into a unitary state or that in a Black republic they may expect to find themselves an oppressed minority. Apart from anything else, this is important in order to undermine the demagoguery of wretches such as Buthelezi.

Given the fate of the Ugandan Asians or the ‘tribal minorities’ in Zimbabwe, It would be foolish to suggest that a black republic would be incapable of national oppression. All bourgeois states and even deformed workers’ states ruled by a bureaucratic caste can and do oppress national minorities. The need to fight to abolish the Bantustans of today does not release black South African - Azanian democrats and revolutionary socialists from maintaining within their programme the right of oppressed nations to self-determination. Moreover, these peoples must themselves decide if they are a nation and if they wish autonomy or separation, freely and by democratic means.

The reality of South Africa today is that there are divisions in the oppressed majority. These divisions have been fostered by Botha and aided by the ‘homeland’ leaders. The spring 1986 clashes over land between Ndebeles and Sothos indicate this. The existence and serious threat that Inkatha poses, with its murderous attacks on militants and its attempts to split the trade unions, must be politically combated and undermined in Natal. And here the assertion of the unity of the Azanian people is insufficient to win over the masses who are not directly involved in militant union struggles or school and community boycotts.

### Neville Alexander

The principal writer on the national question opposed to the ANC/SACP tradition is Neville Alexander (No Sizwe) author of *One Azanla, One Nation - The National Question in South Africa* (1979) and *An Approach to the National Question in South Africa* (Azanla Worker vol 2, No 2, Dec 1985)

Alexander mounts a powerful critique of the racist regime’s nationalities policy and of the multi-national positions of the SACP and the ANC. He sets out to combat both the Balkanisation policies of the apartheid regime and its ‘homeland’ stooges and the Stalinist stages theory that dictates a bourgeois democratic solution to the anti-apartheid struggle. He does this because he believes that “a pluralist position on the national question carries the inevitable implication of a two stage revolution” (No Sizwe p106) Alexander wishes to give the proletariat the leading role



in the national struggle, to proclaim its unbreakable linkage to the struggle against capitalism and to give it a socialist goal. This leads him to advocate one form, and one form only, of resolution to the anti apartheid struggle - a unitary South African/Azanlan nation state. Not only is the "reactionary 'nationalism' of the 'homeland' leaders" bogus, but consequently "the 'nations' they claim to represent, be they 'Tswana', 'Coloured', 'Indian', or anything else are non-existent entities which no recourse to theory can create." (No Sizwe p 180)

He is willing to grant only that the "so called 'ethnic groups' are specifically either language groups, colour-castes, religious groups or administrative groups and no more." (ibid) However he makes a serious hole in his own case when he concedes that they could attain national identity but only as a result of counter-revolution and defeat (e.g. the formation of Israel out of Palestine or Pakistan out of India). As we have seen in the struggle to prevent such divisions, the refusal of recognition of the nationhood, ethnic group status, etc. of these groupings will be of no help whatsoever.

The other problem with Neville Alexander's nationality theory is that it leads to a merging of nation and class and a simple identification of the anti-apartheid struggle itself with the struggle against capitalism. In his position, the racial oppression of the black people is understood as a function of the capitalist system itself . . . What is necessary is the liquidation of those institutions and practices which have given rise to national oppression, to the exclusion of the majority of the people from the body politic and from the enjoyment of equal rights in all spheres. This means nothing else than the abolition of capitalism itself". (No Slzwe p 178)

Alexander argues that because of apartheid the struggle assumes a national form. But its content is necessarily a social one. It cannot be halted at the mere integration of the black people into the existing economic relationships on a basis of 'equality'." (ibid) The national question is thus released from its basis in bourgeois society and becomes the basis of a struggle against bourgeois society. The nation for Alexander is to be formed without the bourgeoisie and indeed against the bourgeoisie; "The nation - consists of all the people who are prepared to throw off the yoke of capitalist exploitation and racist oppression." (ibid) Therefore Alexander concludes that "The working class, in short, has become the leading class in the nation and is about to constitute itself as the nation of South Africa." (ibid p 180)

By 1985, Alexander was posing this proletarian nation approach even more vigorously; "The positive historical task of the black workers in solving the national question in South Africa is the construction of the (socialist) nation of Azania." (An Approach to the National Question).

By giving the proletariat a positive approach to the nation, Alexander espouses a form of nationalism - albeit one that he insists has a proletarian class content. He has already rejected Lenin and Stalin's views on the national question as Euro-centred. He claims that in Europe it was natural to think that the national question was a bourgeois one. In the imperialised world it is different. Again, Alexander confuses national struggles with nationalism and (falsely) ascribes to Lenin the view that he assigned to the bourgeoisie the role of the leading class in this bourgeois-dem-

ocratic question. Lenin no more did this than he assigned this role to the bourgeoisie in the agrarian question or the question of the democratic republic, he fought for the proletariat to take the lead in the resolution of all these questions (questions which together comprise the 'bourgeois revolution').

Nor did Trotsky disagree with this approach. He simply insisted that they could only in fact be resolved by the proletariat establishing an alliance with the peasantry and passing uninterruptedly from bourgeois-democratic to proletarian social tasks. This did not lead in any way to Trotsky confusing the class nature of these tasks.

If one insists, as Alexander does, in confusing these tasks via an eclectic 'form and content' analogy - which the Stalinist charlatans resort to in order to yoke together vulgar contradictions - then you turn the national struggle into a utopian ideology and rob the proletariat of its internationalism.

"It can be stated clearly, therefore, that in historical practice in the 20th century, working class movements and their organisations in different countries have in fact led struggles for national liberation and national re-unification, and ipso facto, taken the lead in building or consolidating the particular nations in the national states. Of course this does not imply that Marxists or socialists are or should be nationalists in any chauvinistic or exclusivist sense. The point is simply that the working class starts from a national perspective rather than an internationalist one." (An Approach to the National Question . . .)

This positive espousal of nationalism leads to a subjective idealist approach to the national question. Alexander adopts this from the writings of various 'Academic Marxists' originating from the post-Althusserian school, especially Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1985) which defines the nation as "an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" ..

Alexander himself remarks that this 'smacks of idealism' but merely offers a corrective to it by adding that this imagined community must be "a social reality to which individuals inside and outside the nation have to respond" and that it must be "embedded in very concrete capitalist or socialist relations on concrete national territory". Alexander thus merely insists that it be a collective i.e. a class 'imagining' and this must rest itself in either capitalist or post-capitalist social relations.

This, however, does not escape from idealism and it creates as its subjective standpoint 'the class' whether bourgeois or proletarian. Naturally, this ideal nationality that the proletariat has positively to establish has to have its consciousness prepared for it by specialists in the production of ideas - intellectuals. Alexander praises Anderson's work because it "enables us to concentrate on the nation as an ideological construct" (ibid p 5) From this it is clear that "The positive historical task of the black workers in solving the national question in South Africa is the construction of the (socialist) nation of Azania" (ibid) and that: "It is the nature of the process of liberation that the political and ideological construction of the new nation precedes its socio-economic realisation."

Alexander believes that in the task of 'ideological construction' it is the role of 'organic intellectuals' such as himself to assist the working class: "to fashion an opposi-

tional or, more accurately a counter-hegemonic ideology. This they do by, amongst other things, careful attention to the language which is inserted into and generalised in the political programmes and actions of the organisations of their class. The importance of this scholarly activity derives from the fact that it is in and through language that the individual is constituted as a subject". (ibid)

From this approach, adopted from 'semiology', flows the obsession with language and terminology, with denying the terms, nation, national group, ethnic group to the various groupings of South African society as well as his insistence on the one-ness of the Azanian nation. It leads also to an essentially propagandist role for the 'organic intellectuals'.

Indeed the role that Neville Alexander and the Cape Action League seem to have set themselves is to 'permeate' Azapo with a 'correct' view of the national question, namely, that "the struggle for national liberation is, from the point of view of the exploited classes, the inescapable political form of the class struggle".

This view can indeed be accepted - in words - by the Black Consciousness Movement without it altering their petit-bourgeois populist practice one iota. Indeed, Alexander is in effect manufacturing an ideology, in the negative sense of the term, one that can be used to demagogically deceive the proletariat in the way that Mugabe, Machel and others have done before.

The duty of the proletarian vanguard in South Africa is to defend a consistently revolutionary democratic position on the national question which opposes all existing national oppression and which will give no ground for any future oppression. This means adopting an Internationalist not a nationalist viewpoint.

Trotsky once observed with regard to Marx's famous slogan, 'The workingmen have no fatherland' that it has "more than once been evaluated by philistines as an agitational quip". The slogan has not been outdated either by the incorporation of the working class within the democratic system, as the social-democrats of Europe claim, or by the contradiction between imperialism and the oppressed nations, as the 'Third world' petit-bourgeois nationalists assert.

All positive espousal of 'national interests' involves the fracturing of the working class' unity both 'at home' and 'abroad'. Whilst the working class is not at all indifferent to national oppression, it fights it from the vantage point of consistent democracy, that is to say, no privileges for any nation. It fights it with the purpose of overthrowing 'its own' ruling class and helping its class brothers and sisters to do likewise. In short, revolutionaries must take their part in the national struggle, their banner held aloft, and on it must be inscribed the words of the Communist Manifesto:

Workers of all countries, unite! ■

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## New Books from the RCIT

### Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South

Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism

The RCIT is proud to announce the publication of a new book. It's called *THE GREAT ROBBERY OF THE SOUTH*. The book's subtitle is: *Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism*. The book is in English-language. It has 15 chapters, 448 pages and includes 139 Tables and Figures. The author of the book is Michael Pröbsting who is the *International Secretary* of the RCIT.

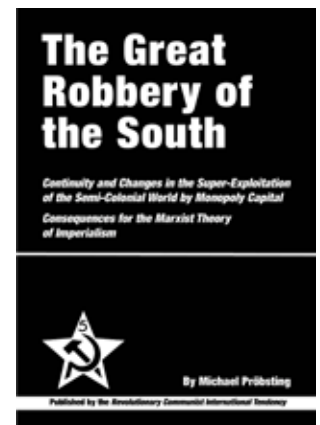
In *The Great Robbery of the South* Michael Pröbsting analyses the super-exploitation and oppression of the semi-colonial world (often referred to as the "Third World") by the imperialist powers and monopolies. He shows that the relationship between the small minority of rich capitalist countries and the huge majority of mankind living in the semi-colonial world forms one of the most important elements of the imperialist world system we are living in. The Great Robbery of the South shows that the past decades have been a complete confirmation of the validity of Lenin's theory of imperialism and its programmatic conclusions.

*The Great Robbery of the South* demonstrates the important changes in the relationship between the imperialist and the semi-colonial countries. Using comprehensive material (including 139 Tables and Figures), Michael Pröbsting elaborates that never before has

such a big share of the world capitalist value been produced in the South. Never before have the imperialist monopolies been so dependent on the super-exploitation of the semi-colonial world. Never before has migrant labor from the semi-colonial world played such a significant role for the capitalist value production in the imperialist countries. Never before has the huge majority of the world working class lived in the South – outside of the old imperialist metropolises.

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### Michael Pröbsting: Cuba's Revolution Sold Out?

The Road from Revolution to the Restoration of Capitalism

The RCIT is proud to announce the publication of a new book. It's called *Cuba's Revolution Sold Out?*. The book's subtitle is: *The Road from Revolution to the Restoration of Capitalism*. The book is in English-language. It has 5 chapters plus an appendix, 108 pages and includes 19 Tables and Figures. The author of the book is Michael Pröbsting who is the *International Secretary* of the RCIT. In *Cuba's Revolution Sold Out?* Michael Pröbsting analyses the character of the Cuban Revolution 1959-61, its bureaucratic degeneration, and the recent march of the Castro leadership towards capitalism.

The author demonstrates how the Cuban Revolution, despite the initial modest intentions of its leaders, was spurred forward to more radical policies by grass roots struggles of Cuban workers and peasants. In fact, the very abolishment of capitalism by the Cuban regime was no part of the original game plan of either Castro's Movimiento 26 de Julio or of the official Cuban communist party (PSP), but rather was a product of precisely such pressures from below.

*Cuba's Revolution Sold Out?* describes in detail how a number of relatively recent political, economic, and social measures were purposely taken by the Cuban government to open the road back

to capitalism. Pröbsting elaborates the key role of the world's new great imperialist power, China, in Cuba's state policy as exemplified in the June 2011 Sino-Cuban agreement for a first Five-Year Plan of cooperation between these two states.

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Price: 8 Euro / 12 US-Dollars / 7 British Pound (plus delivery charges) ■



**The Author:** Michael Pröbsting is a revolutionary activist since 30 years. He is the author of many articles and pamphlets in German and English language. He published books or contributed to books on *Rosa Luxemburg* (1999), on the *World Economy* (2008), on *Migration* (2010) and the *Arab Revolution* (2011). His latest book, *The Great Robbery of the South* (published in 2013), analyses the super-exploitation and oppression of the semi-colonial world (often referred to as the "Third World") by the imperialist powers and monopolies. He is the *International Secretary* of the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency*.



# Revolutionary Communist International Tendency:

## What does the RCIT stand for?

The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) is a fighting organisation for the liberation of the working class and all oppressed. It has national sections in various countries. The working class is the class of all those (and their families) who are forced to sell their labour power as wage earners to the capitalists. The RCIT stands on the theory and practice of the revolutionary workers' movement associated with the names of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

Capitalism endangers our lives and the future of humanity. Unemployment, war, environmental disasters, hunger, exploitation, are part of everyday life under capitalism as are the national oppression of migrants and nations and the oppression of women, young people and homosexuals. Therefore, we want to eliminate capitalism.

The liberation of the working class and all oppressed is possible only in a classless society without exploitation and oppression. Such a society can only be established internationally.

Therefore, the RCIT is fighting for a socialist revolution at home and around the world.

This revolution must be carried out and lead by the working class, for she is the only class that has nothing to lose but their chains.

The revolution can not proceed peacefully because never before has a ruling class voluntarily surrendered their power. The road to liberation includes necessarily the armed rebellion and civil war against the capitalists.

The RCIT is fighting for the establishment of workers' and peasant republics, where the oppressed organize themselves in rank and file meetings in factories, neighbourhoods and schools – in councils. These councils elect and control the government and all other authorities and can always replace them.

Real socialism and communism has nothing to do with the so-called "real existing socialism" in the Soviet Union, China, Cuba or Eastern Europe. In these countries, a bureaucracy dominated and oppressed the proletariat.

The RCIT supports all efforts to improve the living conditions of workers and the oppressed. We combine this with a perspective of the overthrow of capitalism.

We work inside the trade unions and advocate class struggle, socialism and workers' democracy. But trade unions and social democracy are controlled by a bureaucracy. This bureaucracy is a layer which is connected with the state and capital via jobs and privileges. It is far from the interests and living circumstances of the members. This bureaucracy's basis rests mainly on the top, privileged layers of the working class - the workers' aristocracy. The struggle for the liberation of the working class must be based on the broad mass of the proletariat rather than their upper strata.

The RCIT strives for unity in action with other organizations. However, we are aware that the policy of social democracy and the pseudo-revolutionary groups is dangerous and they ultimately represent an obstacle to the

emancipation of the working class.

We fight for the expropriation of the big land owners as well as for the nationalisation of the land and its distribution to the poor and landless peasants. We fight for the independent organisation of the rural workers.

We support national liberation movements against oppression. We also support the anti-imperialist struggles of oppressed peoples against the great powers. Within these movements we advocate a revolutionary leadership as an alternative to nationalist or reformist forces.

In a war between imperialist states we take a revolutionary defeatist position, i.e. we don't support neither side and advocate the transformation of the war into a civil war against the ruling class. In a war between an imperialist power (or its stooge) and a semi-colonial country we stand for the defeat of the former and the victory of the oppressed country.

The struggle against national and social oppression (women, youth, sexual minorities etc.) must be lead by the working class. We fight for revolutionary movements of the oppressed (women, youth, migrants etc.) based on the working class. We oppose the leadership of petty-bourgeois forces (feminism, nationalism, Islamism etc.) and strive to replace them by a revolutionary communist leadership.

Only with a revolutionary party fighting as its leadership can the working class win. The construction of such a party and the conduct of a successful revolution as it was demonstrated by the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky in Russia are a model for the revolutionary parties and revolutions also in the 21 Century.

For new, revolutionary workers' parties in all countries!  
For a 5<sup>th</sup> Workers International on a revolutionary basis!  
Join the RCIT!

*No future without socialism! No socialism without a revolution!  
No revolution without a revolutionary party! ■*





