

# inqaba

# YA BASEBENZI

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

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**Bigger storms brewing  
over South Africa**

**Mandela  
release**

**Soweto ■ Natal ■ Railworkers ■ Garment workers**  
**Plus: World economy ■ Crisis of Africa ■ Burma ■ Yugoslavia ■ Namibia**



# Bigger storms brewing over South Africa

Despite the optimism of Nationalist government spokesmen over the results, the October 26 municipal election has shown a continuing polarisation of South African society between revolution and reaction. Botha's apartheid "reforms" have failed. The middle ground of negotiation and compromise is eroding away. A new upsurge of revolution by the black working class and further shifts to the right in white politics are brewing.

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By Paul Storey

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The government's relief came from the fact that the swing to the Conservative Party did not become the avalanche they feared.

In fact the CP came within a hair of winning Pretoria (with 19 seats to the NP's 22), and gained control of about two-thirds of the local councils in the Transvaal. Yet Transvaal NP leader De Klerk claimed the CP had "not made any significant progress", while a "delighted" Pik Botha called the result the "greatest moment of my life"!

This brings to mind *Monty Python's Life of Brian* (banned in SA), in which the hero, having been nailed to the cross, sings a song about "Looking on the bright side of life".

However, the failure of the CP to achieve its intended breakthrough in the OFS, and its still patchy gains in northern Natal, let alone the Cape, do show it has a way to go before the prospect of taking over government fully materialises.

Nonetheless, it has proved the fastest-growing white party in the country's history. In six years Treurnicht has gathered round him the greater part of the mass base of 'Africanerdom', and is not about to lose it.

The NP's capture of Johannesburg has been interpreted as the government "cementing its hold on the middle ground". The implication is that Botha can look forward to widening white support for so-called "reform" in future. But in 1984 he got a two-thirds endorsement from the

whites for the new constitution, and has been able to do next to nothing with it. His programme has become a fiasco, as the deadlock over Group Areas highlights.

What the Johannesburg (and Pietermaritzburg) results really show is an accelerating swing of English-speaking voters away from the PFP, away from liberal illusions in a negotiated settlement with the blacks. They want Botha to succeed in imposing his structures of collaboration on the blacks, thus strengthening the existing government and state power.

They support the stepped-up military-police repression -- the overriding feature of Botha's policy ever since he pulled the plug on the Commonwealth Eminent Persons mission in May 1986 and dashed hopes of talks with the ANC.

They vote against Treurnicht now mainly because they fear he would provoke the revolution. But under the further impact of the revolution these voters will travel in droves still further to the right, in search of "strong government".

The Nationalists' cheery tone rang even more hollow when it came to the African voting figures.

In the 1983 township elections the turnout of registered voters was around 20 per cent. Now, after using every trick, including a fraudulent registration, they have mustered "far over 20 per cent"... meaning, under 30 per cent! In Soweto only 11 per cent of those registered voted, or less than 3 per cent of Soweto's estimated million adults. As a proportion of the adult African population countrywide, the total turnout was about 3,5 per cent.

It showed the overwhelming mass rejection of collaboration with the apartheid power structure -- in a situation where campaigning for a boycott was illegal, where the UDF and SAYCO remained banned, where police and military intimidation pervaded the townships, and where wholesale rigging took place through the two-week "prior voting" system.

The government's TV and press campaign to blacks produced a backlash against the insult of this "animal election". The R5 million spent worked out at R14.30 per actual voter!

Nearly half the black council seats in the country went uncontested. In much of the Eastern Cape, and in "upgraded" Alexandra, for instance, elections had to be cancelled on account of the residents' solid rejection of any participation.

Yet Information Minister Stoffel van der Merwe, as credible as a talking squirrel, claims the election turnout "proves that the black majority is in fact moderate" and supports the government's reform programme!

## Votes without power

The black majority will not be conned into collaborating in their own oppression. Votes without power, puppet authorities -- these merely fix the sights of millions of toiling and suffering black people more firmly than ever on the non-negotiable goal of majority rule.

Meanwhile the impotent manoeuvres of the government, its inability either to appease the blacks or to crush their resistance, the accompanying economic impasse with job insecurity, rising prices and falling living standards affecting white workers and the lower middle class also -- all fuel white racist reaction against even token reform of apartheid.

The writing is on the wall for the demise of Botha's strategy, which depends upon abject submission by the blacks. In fact the ground is being prepared for much bigger explosions of revolution -- and counter-revolution -- than ever before.

However, the October elections have given a certain breathing-space to the government. The dodo of "reform" is still flapping its wings in the hope of somehow taking flight. New attempts will be made by Botha to launch the "National Council", per-



Mamuhlalwe phansi ngomhla ka 26 ku Octob

# MAKUNGAVOTWA KWIKHETHO LIKABOTHA!

L'Botha ufuna ukuthi uvote ngomhla ka 26 ku Octob voteli amakhansela akhe obandululekayo izimbume ez

Abantu bafuna ihungelo lokuvota. Kodwa asifika angalethi mandla. UBotha akafuni ukunika abantu emi-okuqinisekisa abaningi amandla. Sifika emuntwini ngamunye ngamunye kwikhetho ngebala, kwiNingizimu Afrika engahlukanisiwe.

**UNYULO LUKA BOTHA**

**UNGA**

**KULONYULC**

**Stay-away on October 26!**

# DON'T VOTE IN BOTHA'S ELECTION!

Botha wants you to vote on October 26. Don't vote for his puppet apartheid councils! People want the right to vote. But we don't want "votes" without power. Botha refuses to give power to the black majority. We demand one-person-one-vote in non-racial elections, in an undivided South Africa.

This is a "local" election. But it is not only about local issues. Botha will claim every black vote as support for the National Government's policies. A total boycott. We reject your "municipal parliament", your Bantustans, and your puppet councils. Apart from all apartheid bodies! Away with white minority rule!

**"I'm not considering even to discuss the possibility of black majority government in South Africa."**

- P. W. Botha, 16/8/1988

**Undemocratic**

The township councils are not democratic. They were imposed with our consent. In many areas the people chased them out in 1984 and '85. Democratic street and area committees arose. Botha has harassed and charged comrades with treason for organising them. He has forced his councils on us again as puppets.

Now he wants us to vote so he can tell the world we accept this. Don't vote!

There is nothing to be gained from voting for these councils. First, they are puppets. Botha's black dogs are powerful. Even if they wanted to, they would not improve the lives of black workers. Second, the wealth of this country is taken by the houses of the white government. They spend it for their own benefit and keep us poor.

The township councils have no power to take the wealth and spend it on the things we need. Instead they increase the rents and service charges by corruption.

In some areas charges have been frozen, to trick people into voting. There will be big increases again after October 26.

A vote for the councils is a vote for corruption, higher charges, bad housing, alien conditions, precarious and hazardous working conditions, and Bennett Botha's election! Stop! Stop from work and school on October 26 to demand majority rule over the whole of South Africa!

Botha is telling you to vote for "upgrading" the townships -- for electricity, tarred roads, better housing and facilities. He lies. Voting will not bring these improvements.

The government is spending some money in a few townships -- R500 in Alexandra, for example. It intends these as showpiece -- so you can pretend that everything will benefit eventually if you vote.

**"All bodies of minor rule, advisory boards, councils and authorities shall be replaced by democratic organs of self-government."**

- Freedom Charter

9 Sept. 1988  
5 cents  
Marxist Workers' Tendency of the African N.A.A.

Supporters of the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC produced and distributed thousands of leaflets in six languages, to mobilise for the municipal election boycott. The leaflets were eagerly received in factories and townships wherever we could reach. At the same time, students in Durban reported to us that the state (probably jointly with Inkatha) put out fraudulent leaflets in the name of the UDF and our Tendency, urging people to vote. This dirty trick failed.

haps in the context of Nelson Mandela's release. But failure will be the end result.

Because the barnstorming momentum of the CP has been temporarily halted, it is likely Botha will hold general elections for the tricameral 'parliament' in April next year, or possibly earlier.

This would be before the full effects have been felt of the economy's current downturn, and while the white civil service still remembers its 15 per cent pay rise, promised for January.

Another Nat victory over the CP seems certain (although probably again with a reduced majority). So long as the regime can stave off a complete ignominious collapse of its policy, most white voters will probably not want to gamble with a change of government.

The bonapartist Botha, although appearing increasingly beleaguered and feeble in recent months, can still squeeze the juice out of a good many chances for manoeuvre. All this will tend to draw out the timescale before any really radical shift to the right.

Nevertheless, that should not blind us to the fundamental process of

class and race polarisation which is going on, and which will inevitably force itself through to the surface.

The consolidation of apartheid, and the strengthening of the repressive state under NP rule after 1948, was the reaction of capitalist society in SA to the rising strength and militancy of the urban African proletariat, formed by industrialisation.

The apartheid "reform" strategy with which the Botha presidency is identified, arose out of the failure of the apartheid system in the 1970s and '80s to hold down the still mightier black proletariat as it built its organisations and moved again on the road of struggle, the road to revolution.

Now it is the failure of Botha's strategy to contain the black proletariat, the hardening and deepening of mass resistance, and the inevitable eventual collapse of so-called "reform", which is producing, and will in future reveal in dramatic form, the swing of the pendulum of capitalist society back to the right -- and further than before.

Against the revolutionary pressure of the proletariat, it is the strength and

cohesion of the white-based state apparatus that is the decisive question as far as the ruling class is concerned -- the essential pillar of its dictatorship over society.

A shift to the right is evident throughout official society -- with the so-called "liberal" bosses' support for the reactionary Labour Act, which they hope will help them to reassert their dictatorship in the factories against trade union strength. This, not 'democratic' sweet-talk, is what counts with the black workers.

It is possible that the present wave of support for the Conservatives -- based on white farmers, workers and petty bourgeois especially in the smaller towns -- has more or less peaked. For a time, there could be a slow continued crumbling away of the NP's base, without necessarily producing either an outright CP win or a sudden crossing over of a large body of Nat MPs to Treurnicht.

There could thus be a further period of inconclusive zig-zags by the regime, further repression, further tired "initiatives" of "reform" leading to failure, further inertia and discrediting of the government. However the situation is pregnant with the possibility of sharp crises, leading to sudden political shifts or turns to the right in white politics even in the short term.

In this regard, the development of a massive new upsurge of the revolutionary movement would most likely play the precipitating role -- although developments in the economy could also bring this about.

## SA capitalism

South African capitalism is in the grip of a long drawn-out terminal sickness.

A relatively industrialised country, its industry is nevertheless no match for the giant factories and assembly-lines of the advanced capitalist world.

Depending upon the payment of poverty wages to black workers in order to stay profitable, the SA capitalists cannot find enough buyers for their products here at home. Yet on the world market the competition is too fierce for exports to provide the basis for industrial growth.

Some capitalists, who are obsessed with the idea of "free trade", talk of turning SA into another Taiwan, by driving down wages still further while



cutting jobs and automating production. In this way they hope to get an edge over the advanced countries' highly mechanised industries.

But they would have to smash the resistance of the black workers to get this -- which they can't -- and even then would find their plans ruined by the oncoming crisis of the world economy, stagnation of trade, and barriers put up against their exports as the advanced countries move to protect their own interests.

Realising this, other capitalists in SA argue against illusions in "free trade". They are asserting once again the idea that the SA state should play an even greater role in the economy, sponsoring and protecting domestic industry against competition from foreign imports.

The SA economy is still essentially based on gold. Gold revenues fund the state. And gold exports earn the biggest proportion of the foreign exchange needed to buy crucial imports, like the fuel, machinery, electronic instruments, etc. which SA is not capable of producing locally.

## State intervention

Other industries, banking and commerce developed around the success of gold mining. The state played a crucial role in directing resources to the transport infrastructure, water and power, as well as financing corporations like ISCOR to establish a steel industry.

Tariffs were raised against imports so as to shelter, for example, the SA textile industry, which would otherwise have gone under. This still applies. Motor vehicle production has been fostered by the state through the requirement of a definite "local content" (soon to be changed from mass to value). Various measures to promote local production in place of imports have been used.

"Import substitution" played a big role in the past, on one estimate accounting for more than half of the economy's growth between 1926 and 1957. But then these policies started running out of steam. In the 1960s import substitution accounted for only 16 per cent of growth, and by the 1970s it was clear this provided little scope for further advance, except in certain sectors such as chemicals.

State intervention could not overcome the basic contradiction of capi-



talism: exploitation, essential to the profit system, prevents the workers buying back enough of the goods they produce. The market stagnates, and investment with it.

The average yearly growth rate of the economy has slid from 6 per cent between 1961 and 1967, to 5 per cent between 1968 and 1971, to about 3 per cent in the following decade, to less than one half per cent between 1982 and 1986. New fixed investment in real terms has shrunk right through the 1980s.

Artificial expansion of the market, through easy credit mainly to whites to buy what they could otherwise not afford, has piled up inflationary pressures. Increases in state expenditure, beyond what taxation can be made to finance, have done the same.

High inflation (at 14-18 per cent, many times higher in SA than its overseas competitors), combined with declining profitability, stagnating investment and therefore low productivity, all have the effect of driving down the value of the rand against other currencies. This in turn fuels inflation, because imports are more expensive, and gives a further twist to the vicious spiral.

When the gold price shot up in 1974/5, and rose again to \$800 an oz. in 1980, against the background of rampant inflation overseas, SA capitalism proved unable to invest the bonanza of profits in expanding production. The government had to agree to let the capitalists send much more of their "surplus capital" abroad, because *sloshing around here it was just pushing prices up.*

Government economic policy has veered drunkenly from one side to the other of the *cul de sac*. To stimulate growth, it has generated consumer

credit spending booms. But, then, to stop inflation rocketing, it has had to move quickly to squeeze credit and induce recession again. Despite austerity measures like no house-building, eroding pensions, and this year's public sector wage freeze, state expenditure goes on rising uncontrollably with massive increases of the military and police budget, as well as higher education spending.

## "Stagflation"

The economy presents a classic picture of "stagflation" -- stagnation combined with inflation. Constant raising and lowering of interest rates has in no way cured the underlying problem, but contributes to the stop-go cycles of the economy.

Mass unemployment continues to climb. A sustained growth rate of 5 per cent would be needed just to hold unemployment steady. But as soon as growth exceeds 3 per cent, economists now agree, the resulting contradictions force an immediate cutback.

A boom sucks in great amounts of expensive imports, not only adding to inflation but threatening SA's ability to pay its foreign debt.

The debt (now \$22 billion) has risen sharply exactly as the inflow of investment capital has dried up -- partly as profitability has slumped, and partly because of investors' fear of revolution, which together with campaigns against apartheid overseas is leading to 'disinvestment'. The SA government and bosses have thus had to depend increasingly on foreign loans.

In 1985 there was an absolute contraction of the economy, followed by a



credit boom which started in 1986 and pushed the 1987 growth rate towards 3 per cent. In the first quarter of this year it rose above that figure. But already growth has faltered, and a new downturn has begun, which could result in an absolute contraction once again in 1989. Higher inflation alongside this is expected.

The depth of the recession will depend to a considerable extent on the gold price, which is very volatile, and is presently low at slightly over \$400.

South African capitalism's inability to derive benefit from the protracted Reagan 'boom' of world capitalism, indicates its chronically diseased character. Today Oppenheimer's Anglo American, the virtual 'owner' of South Africa and itself one of the big international monopolies, is trying, through its Minorco bid for Consolidated Gold Fields in London, to open more conduits for getting capital out of this country. This expresses its lack of faith in the viability of SA capitalism.

Botha's "privatisation" speech last January was presented as a decisive new direction in economic policy -- intended to finance the government's spending and to provide profitable openings which the capitalists need for private investment. But already this has turned sour. Major slices of the state sector are not expected to be made profitable enough for privatisation for at least five years.

## Government thinking

While the attempt at some privatisation will probably continue with less fanfare, there is evidence of a turn in government thinking towards a new phase of state intervention and controls.

Botha's need to retreat from attacks on the white civil service, for fear of losing to the Conservatives, forms an element in this turn -- which is thus partly a by-product of the swing of the political pendulum to the right. But it is mainly because, given SA's inability to compete economically on equal terms on the world market, there is no way forward along the road advocated by the free-marketters.

At the same time, conditions have emerged which make a new round of "import substitution" possible. Ironically, the collapse of the rand against other currencies, which has made imported machinery etc. horrendously expensive, has made it potentially vi-

able for SA to produce, by some estimates, R4 billion worth of goods annually which are presently imported.

To do this will require an elaborated programme of further import controls and probably direct state involvement in planned development ventures.

We have to stress, however, that whatever short-term advances that may bring in the industrial economy, these will soon reach their limits as before and end up exacerbating the essential economic impasse of SA capitalism.

The economic upturn in 1987 played a part in the unprecedented strike wave that year (which also represented a switching of revolutionary energy from the terrain of the townships, where it was blocked, to the industrial plane). The current downturn could dampen wage struggles somewhat, especially if a big round of redundancies occurs -- but it could also create conditions for a massive new explosion of struggle against rent, fare and price increases, homelessness, unemployment and oppression.

Depending on the recession's depth, it may also provoke a further drift of white workers and the lower middle class to the Conservatives, as they too feel the bite of unemployment, inflation and falling living standards.

However, to slow this process, the government could well be forced into measures to aid impoverished whites. When political necessity dictates, it will cynically channel state spending in even more obviously discriminatory ways in favour of whites.

The main uncertain element in economic perspectives is just when the inevitable world economic recession or slump is likely to set in (see pages 9-12) -- and what its consequences for SA will be.

A major contraction of world trade will have severe consequences for sections of SA mining and agriculture. On the other hand, the gold price could rocket to previously unimaginable levels as a result of world currency instability and inflation, offsetting at least initially in the SA economy the general effects of slump.

Depending on the scale of the crisis, the government could be compelled to take control of much of the gold surplus and/or increase deficit spending, and channel money into public works and infrastructural development to try and stave off the explosive social consequences of a depres-

sion.

In 1933 it was the effects of the Great Depression which brought about the fusion of Smuts' and Hertzog's parties. The political and social crisis resulting from slump in the period ahead could precipitate a realignment of the Conservatives and the main body of the Nationalist Party into a 'national' government.

**However such a realignment is entirely possible even in the absence of a slump, as the reaction of capitalist society to a new upsurge of the revolution.**

## Countrywide eruption

Despite having brought the township uprising of 1984-86 partially under control, the government can do nothing to stop the molecular process of radicalisation continuing among the black working class as a whole. On the road to changing society, the mass movement has been temporarily blocked but not defeated.

The ingredients for a new countrywide eruption are gathering together. The June 6, 7 and 8 general strike in which 5 million workers and youth took action, and now the October election boycott, have given the clearest proof of the masses' willingness to fight.

The spreading resistance in the rural areas, from the Western Cape to the Northern Transvaal; the elements of civil war in Natal; the movement now fermenting throughout greater Durban; the tenacity of the rent boycott in Soweto -- all these are symptoms of the continuing shift of the underlying relationship of forces against the ruling class, its collaborators and its state.

Most of this issue of *Inqaba* is filled with graphic indications that the 'mole' of the revolution is busily burrowing its way through the working class.

From this situation will come a massive new take-off of the revolution -- possibly within months, although there could also be a further period of inconclusive turbulence stretching over a year or two, and possibly longer.

Despite similarities, a new upsurge could not repeat exactly the pattern of 1984-86. That phase of the revolution was marked to an important extent by the illusion that, by simply generalising the township insurrection, and by "one big push" of the oppressed majority as a whole, the regime would either col-



lapse or be forced to negotiate an end to apartheid.

The harsh and bloody repression, with the unleashing of vigilante forces and the successive states of emergency, followed by the virtual banning of the UDF and Youth Congresses and the curbs on COSATU, have shown that an uncompromising fight for power will provide the only way forward.

But while local battles of great intensity and heroism are fought, there has so far been a complete failure of the present ANC, UDF, SAYCO and COSATU leaders to draw the necessary conclusions, and advance a clear programme of mass mobilisation to concentrate the full strength of the working class in action against the bosses and the state.

For a time, this can partially paralyse the movement, at least retarding a nationwide take-off of struggle -- which would have been possible at the time of the miners' strike last year, as well as on several occasions this year, if the leadership had been prepared to generalise the movement.

## Difficulties

The difficulties now facing the activists are much more formidable than in the past, and the lack of a developed underground network of political resources, cadres and leadership is now a real impediment.

Nevertheless, as the pressure of revolt within the factories, schools and townships builds up, it will at a certain point furiously break through these barriers. As in the past, there will be a more or less 'spontaneous' movement towards creating the instruments needed to advance.

In the next upsurge the question of arms against the state will be posed more sharply as a practical necessity from the outset. What we have seen in outline among the youth in Natal is likely to be generalised. As compared with 1984-86, there will be far less waiting in the hope that "MK will provide". The initiative of the youth -- and also, decisively, the workers -- will turn in the direction of acquiring arms and organising to use them.

In consequence the scale of the repression will be all the more savagely increased, raising the consciousness everywhere of the need for **armed self-defence** to be organised on a mass

scale. Features of the incipient civil war that faces South Africa will become much more pronounced.

The need of the youth to combine effectively with the power of the industrial workers in action campaigns will be taken up with unprecedented urgency, and underhand efforts of conciliators and reformists to obstruct this will be more vigorously pushed aside. A resurgence and renewed radicalisation of the Youth Congresses would take place.

While the street committees in the townships would most likely revive strongly with mass participation once again, it is also probable that there will be a development of joint worker-youth committees of action centred on the industrial areas. This would give an impulse to the development and radicalisation of "locals", with union officials being pushed more into a back seat as the pressure of the active rank-and-file mounts.

Occupation-strikes, with the possibility of barricades and armed defence at times -- and therefore furious battles with the army and police within the industrial areas -- could develop as a feature of the situation. Whereas the insurrection of 1984-86 was largely confined within the townships, the next upsurge could well involve a link-up of the townships and the industrial areas in this way.

In the last upsurge, one- and two-day general strikes developed as a **demonstration** of the proletariat's will and strength. Already the 3-day strike in June has shown the urge within the class towards making its sacrifices more telling, and its actions really bite.

The next upsurge could well bring to the fore the possibility of longer general strikes -- and even of an **unlimited** general strike breaking out. The dangers of serious setbacks or even defeats would become much more pronounced, if the Congress leadership were to fail to give clear direction to this revolutionary wave.

There would be a much increased danger of splits opening up in the movement if any significant part of the Congress leadership were to recoil from its revolutionary responsibility and pursue a compromise with the ruling class.

This danger is a further reason why a clear analysis and perspective is so vital for the struggle.

In the coming upsurge, the crucial question facing the government will be

to ensure the cohesion of the white-based state power against the threat from the black masses. This would over-ride pettier considerations of inter-party rivalry among the whites.

## Realignment

The inevitable swing to the right among the whites under these conditions could create the basis on which the coming to power of the Conservative Party, either directly or through a realignment with the Nats, could take place.

It is necessary to see that even Botha's "hand of friendship" offer to Treurnicht in September, while serving then as an election manoeuvre, bore considerable symptomatic significance in the broader context which this article has attempted to outline.

Under conditions of acute national emergency for the ruling class and the state, it is entirely possible that Botha himself could head a move towards agreement, coalition and indeed fusion with Treurnicht and the CP.

These perspectives will be elaborated in more detail in a perspectives document.

The point we need to stress here is this: Our movement must begin now to prepare itself politically to face up to a further development to the right -- even if that is somewhat postponed -- so as not to be shocked and disoriented.

A more right-wing government would solve none of the problems facing the ruling system, and even Treurnicht, after stepping up repression, would eventually be compelled towards similar unviable "reform" manoeuvres as Botha -- all the time dragging the society deeper into crisis.

To arm our movement for the harsh test of events, it is above all necessary to see that a negotiated settlement with the regime and the capitalist class is a foolish illusion, and that no alternative exists for us in the struggle for democracy and socialism but the armed overthrow of the state.

Although the coming revolutionary upsurge will probably not bring the SA revolution to its culmination, nevertheless, by using to the full all the mighty struggles that impend, steadfastly building and strengthening the forces for the revolution, we can prepare the way for certain victory in the end.



# Boycott Botha's "tricameral elections"!

## For a programme of mass action led by Congress!

**inqaba**  
**YA BASEBENZI**

The dilemmas facing the Botha government are vividly shown in its hesitation over the release of comrade Nelson Mandela.

Besieged by a black majority determined to win freedom, the racist regime which has held the ANC leader in jail for 26 years now finds itself more of a prisoner than he is. Although Mandela has been moved from Pollsmoor to the Constantiaberg clinic while recovering from TB, at the time of writing Botha is still hesitating over whether and when to let him out.

Mass rejection of the apartheid "reform" constitution has led to a position where even eager collaborators like Buthelezi have refused to enter the proposed National Council unless "Mandela is free to do likewise". But Mandela's release will only heighten the masses' confidence to press forward the struggle for majority rule, thus once again frustrating the collaborators' hopes of a credible compromise with Botha.

But there is more than this to Botha's dilemma. He is aware how volatile is the mood in the townships, schools and factories. A new country-wide upsurge of rebellion is simmering, which Mandela's release could bring to the boil. Botha fears as well to give the Conservative Party a new opportunity for reactionary agitation among the whites in the lead-up to the tricameral parliamentary elections which are considered likely by April.

Yet the longer he vacillates over the question, the weaker the government seems -- and this too could lead to the very same consequences which releasing Mandela might produce.

For these reasons it is impossible to say with certainty whether comrade Mandela will be released within the next few weeks, or after the next elections ... or even at all. The most likely prospect seems to be that Botha will wait until securing a fresh parliamentary mandate from the whites.

### Frustrate Botha's manoeuvres

Despite these dilemmas, however, Botha is an astute manoeuvrer. Whatever course he follows, he will seek to turn it against our movement.

Botha has been dangling the prospect of Mandela's release as an inducement to the Congress leadership "not to rock the boat" -- for example, by mobilising a boycott of the impending tricameral elections. And were he to release Mandela now, it would be with the aim (he would hope) of creating a climate of co-operation among blacks with his constitutional reform schemes.

One thing is certain: Mandela's release would not indicate that the regime is prepared to enter into a negotiated settlement with the ANC.



**Nelson Mandela**

**It is the responsibility of the Congress leadership, and of all of us, to make sure that Botha cannot get away with manoeuvring against our movement.**

In 1987, when comrade Govan Mbeki was released, Botha partly succeeded in getting Congress leaders to damp down the enthusiasm in the townships for a mass action campaign. And how did this end up? Eventually even the mildest reception rallies planned for Mbeki were banned, while tight restrictions have been placed on him personally.

It was also at this time that right-wingers within Congress -- notably Archie Gumede -- began floating their proposals for UDF participation in the tricameral parliament. He even went to the lengths of meeting representatives of the President's Council. Only uncompromising rank-and-file rejection of this position prevented it from being carried further within the leading echelons of Congress. What a disaster that would have been!

Now we must make doubly sure that Botha cannot derive any advantage from releasing comrade Mandela. Every one of us wants to see Mandela and all political prisoners released at once. We demand their release unconditionally.

At the same time we all recognise that their sacrifice is for the wider cause of the freedom of the people. Mandela



rightly refused to accept any of Botha's conditions for his release.

Mandela's release, if and when it occurs, will be due to the rising power and uncompromising determination of the movement of the black working class. Even the increased pressure overseas against the SA government has been the result of the revolutionary movement here at home.

**It is this movement which we must now step up.**

Botha and his collaborators would like to sell the idea that concessions come from a willingness to co-operate with the oppressor. But it is clear that the October 26 boycott has heightened, not lessened, the pressure on Botha for Mandela's release.

Given the likelihood of a tricameral election early next year, it is urgent for Congress to launch now its campaign for a boycott. It is by repeating the success of the 1984 rejection of racist parliamentary structures that we can frustrate Botha's next round of constitutional manoeuvres, destroy any possible credibility of his National Council, and reassert the demand for majority rule.

## Serious boycott campaign needed

If this campaign is not undertaken seriously, but the boycott left to take a purely spontaneous course, this will play right into Botha's hands.

The October 26 municipal election boycott was not the resounding success in many coloured and Indian communities that it was among the Africans. This was principally because the Congress leadership did not mobilise a serious boycott campaign.

Moreover at the present time the appearance may have been created by the press that the coloured and Indian Houses have stopped the progress of Botha's Group Areas legislation.

Actually the President's Council can override these Houses at any time. But temporarily Hendrickse -- the famous "swimmer of King's Beach" who hastened to crawl to Botha when threatened -- may be able to pose as a lion of resistance for the purpose of the elections. The similarly corrupt stooges of the Indian House of Delegates could do the same.

Therefore the launch of Congress's boycott campaign, with clear practical tasks for the activists, is an urgent necessity.

## Programme of action

However, even a successful boycott will not be enough. Firstly, the government will continue with its intended structures of collaboration despite overwhelming popular rejection. Secondly, the African majority is not involved in the tricameral elections, and will need more than the boycott to make its strength felt in action.

The success of the October 26 boycott must be carried forward into a campaign to paralyse the puppet councils and ensure that Botha's National Council gains no shred of credibility.

There is thus a need for a comprehensive campaign of

action now, to mobilise the full strength of the black working class under the banners of the mass Congress organisations.

There is no shortage of issues round which to build. At least the following should be key components of a nationwide programme of action:

**\* Spread the rent strike to all parts of the country!**

The rent strike in Soweto and elsewhere, already costing the government some R400 million, has proved one of the most effective weapons against the councils. Anger against rising rents and charges is boiling up everywhere. The leadership must generalise the rent-strike movement as a national campaign.

**\* United worker action for a national minimum wage of R160 rand for a 40-hour week!**

Build on the enthusiasm of workers and their families everywhere for the Living Wage campaign by setting a minimum figure for everyone to struggle for. Hundreds of thousands of new trade union members can be recruited to strengthen COSATU through this campaign.

Union leaders of the big battalions, like the mineworkers, metalworkers and transport workers, should agree on joint action to win wage demands, and so bulldoze the road clear for weaker sections of workers.

**\* When bus and train fares rise, organise to ride and not pay!**

In the same way as the rent strike, we could begin to take more effective action against the constant increases in fares. We have a tradition of hard-fought bus boycotts. Now, if enough people are organised to take action together, and if transport workers are defended against victimisation for joining in, we could build an even more powerful campaign against the government and the bosses -- by riding to work but refusing to pay.

It will need a clear call by the Congress leadership to explain and popularise this idea.

**\* Strengthen organisation in the schools, and link the students and the workers!**

The movement of the school students, which led the township revolts, is once again rising strongly. Congress must give active backing to the struggle for democratic SRCs in all schools; link up the organised school youth nationally as COSAS did in the past; and help join the struggles in the schools with the strength of the workers.

Against apartheid education for slavery! For free and equal, democratic and socialist education!

**\* Organise and arm for self-defence against vigilante and state attacks on schools, communities and workplaces!**

**\* Away with the tricameral parliament, the bantustans, the puppet councils, and all apartheid bodies! Build a mass ANC on a socialist programme! Forward to One-Person-One Vote in an undivided South Africa!**



# WORLD ECONOMY: Why no downturn yet?

It is a little over one year since the 19th October, 'Black Monday', stock exchange crash in which \$2 trillion were lost off the value of shares on world exchanges in three days.

"At that time it looked -- and felt -- like an earthquake, an event that would change the economic direction of the world," wrote the *Financial Times* (14/10/88). Panic spread with fears of another 1929. Now twelve months later the crash seems to have had little impact on the world economy and has been dismissed by many capitalists as the mere bursting of a speculative bubble.

But closer analysis shows that the situation remains highly unstable and volatile. All the fundamental problems in the system remain uncured.

In 'The world economy heads for slump' (*Inqaba* 24/25, October 1987) and in our Special Bulletin the following month, the reasons for the extended but weak 'boom' during the Reagan presidency and the inevitability of a capitalist recession or slump were analysed.

Perspectives can never be an exact prediction of future events, especially in regard to timing. They are a conditional outline of the most likely developments.

Although in our past material we clearly pointed to the possibility of the boom continuing as late as 1989 or 1990, the emphasis was placed on the likelihood of a slump developing even in the course of 1988. This expectation may have been reinforced by the correctness of our earlier perspectives for a crash on the stock exchange which took most of the bourgeois by surprise.

Many comrades are puzzled why a slump or recession has not taken place more quickly. On the surface it may seem there has been no change in the world economy as a consequence of the crash.

## New stage

The stock exchange crash of 1987, however, did mark a definitive new stage. It marked the beginning of a move towards recession or even deep slump. But there has been a delay in the process which it is necessary to explain.

There was also a certain delay after the 1929 stock exchange crash before the onset of the depression in the

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## By Lesley Reed

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1930s. But there were unique factors at work in 1929, making an exact repetition of the 1929-31 events very unlikely.

In 1929, before the stock market crash a downturn in the economic cycle had already begun. Production peaked in Germany in April, in the US in June and in Britain in July 1929. In the US there was a 20 per cent decline in industrial production between August and October 1929 -- ie. before the crash.

After the crash the US administration pursued a tight money policy which contributed towards a large number of bankruptcies for debt. Many farmers went under. The Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930 led to a world trade war. Thus protectionism, competitive devaluations and other measures combined to turn recession rapidly into a deep slump.

In contrast, after the 1987 crash the seven dominant imperialist powers -- the so-called G7 countries (US, Japan, West Germany, Canada, Britain, France and Italy) -- have been desperately trying to establish some agreement in order to hold off recession. They are all terrified of the consequences that would follow.

All parts of the world economy are far more inter-linked than 60 years ago. A shock in one part of the developed world is immediately felt everywhere. More than in 1929, the capitalists have to try to huddle together when threatened with crisis. But that does not lessen the contradictions between them or within the system as a whole.

To ward off recession they pumped

\$100 billion from the world's central banks into the US economy. At the same time through cheaper credit, increased government spending, and tax cuts, there has been a reflation of all the advanced capitalist economies. They have all done the opposite of what their 'monetarist' philosophy would dictate.

But it has very quickly become clear that this policy was resulting in the growth of inflation in almost all the developed capitalist countries. Official inflation is nearing 6 per cent in Britain. It has risen to 4.6 per cent in the US and is creeping up in the other countries.

They are trapped in a situation where, if they continue to reflate in that way, it would have the same consequences as in 1973-74. Then inflation in the OECD countries averaged 14 per cent with 25-30 per cent in some economies. As a reaction to that, for fear of inflation's destabilising effects, the capitalists world-wide turned to a policy of 'monetarism', with massive cuts in welfare spending, high interest rates, and other austerity measures which pushed the economies towards the recession and mass unemployment of 1979-81.

## Deficit spending

The recovery from that recession was principally the result of Reagan's massive deficit spending on armaments, mounting up budget deficits greater than the total accumulated under all previous US governments. Financing these deficits involved attracting capital from round the world on the basis of high interest rates.

The other main factor in the feeble 'boom' in the advanced countries through this decade has been the heightened exploitation of the poor countries through unfair terms of trade and debt servicing.

It has been a symptom of the underlying disease of world capitalism that the massive surplus produced by the labour of the working class has not been turned into a real upswing in investment and production, but went into services, speculation and take-overs between the giant corporations.

A bigger and bigger paper mountain of "fictitious capital" has accumulated, more and more inflated beyond the real value of production. The vast speculative over-valuing of stock pre-



pared the way for the October 1987 crash.

The relative value of currencies should, under capitalism, reflect the relative strengths of their real economies. But, increasingly, this is offset by currency speculation -- whose volume is now 10-20 times that of world trade itself. The financing of the US budget deficit drove the dollar up to artificially high levels.

## Sucked in

On this basis, the unsound US 'boom' sucked in vast quantities of Japanese and European imports, creating an astronomical US trade deficit -- of \$175 billion in 1987 -- exposing the weakening of the US real economy, and threatening to send the dollar diving. Fears of this gripped the international bourgeoisie especially after the October crash.

After October, interest rates were lowered in particular in the US. The aim was to sustain consumer credit spending and stimulate investment, while a falling dollar encouraged US exports and made imports less competitive.

The risk then was of sudden uncontrollable shifts in exchange rates, which would force competitive devaluations, and trade wars, as the competing countries tried to hold onto their markets. That alone could have precipitated a world slump.

While the immediate crisis was averted in that form, the increased liquidity pumped into the Western economies has emerged as inflation. In response to this, in spite of the solemn promises to avoid the mistakes of 1929-30, the G7 powers have been very quickly forced back to raising interest rates.

They are obliged to act in concert in this situation to try to avoid sharp shifts in exchange rates. In addition, a massive collapse of the dollar would undermine the whole edifice of "fictitious capital", which is held very largely in the form of dollars.

Similarly, it is the instability in the whole situation of world capitalism which produces the danger that what begins as a collective raising of interest rates can turn into a competitive interest rates 'war'. That could itself trigger a downturn in industrial growth and a sharp recession or slump.

The consequence of higher interest



*The Chicago stock exchange: speculating on currency and stocks.*

rates has been that the dollar has risen again to above its level of last October. An additional factor in the dollar's recovery was the decline in the US trade deficit in the first half of 1988. At the present time, however, the dollar is falling again and the trade deficit has in no way been cured.

Despite the present outward calm, and the apparent recovery from the stock exchange crash, the capitalist class is in an impasse. Whatever economic policy they follow in the coming period, it will lead to disaster. If they try to use reflation, to increase money in circulation to stimulate growth, this will lead to runaway inflation and then recession. Or, if they try to put a squeeze on through higher world interest rates, this will stifle investment and lead to bankruptcies and recession.

## Unexpected

In the present unstable equilibrium, the bourgeois have been congratulating themselves on their good fortune and pointing to the unexpected continuing boom. In fact there are recent indications of a surge in world production, trade and investment with optimistic projections of this continuing for possibly as long as three years.

The IMF forecasts 4 per cent growth this year in the Western na-

tions, slowing down to 3 per cent in 1989. In Japan the forecast is between 5 and 6 per cent growth. In the industrialised capitalist countries output is rising faster than at any time since 1984. Demand in many of these countries rose "by an annual 5 or 6 per cent in the second half of 1987. That demand has triggered an investment boom in the US, Japan and Europe." (*Financial Times*, 28/9/88)

According to the World Bank 1988 Annual Report, the rate of growth of world trade and of the market for US exports has been rising since mid-1987. Exports from the US grew in volume during 1987 and early 1988 at a rate of over 20 per cent a year, while estimates show that world trade increased at about 11 per cent from the first to the second half of 1987.

The major capitalist powers have recorded lower unemployment in the last period than a year previously. Overall the OECD countries last year showed employment growth of 1,6 per cent, one of the strongest rates ever recorded -- although this is expected to slow in 1989 and is unlikely to lead generally to a significant reduction in total unemployment, still 30 million in the advanced capitalist countries.

In the US, unemployment has come down from more than 7 per cent in 1985 to 5,4 per cent in September this year, one of the lowest rates for a dozen years. This factor partly explains the re-election and *relative* stability of right-wing governments in the US,



Britain, West Germany and Japan.

The United States economy is bigger than the next six biggest capitalist countries added together. Its enormous size has an effect on the world economy -- maintaining some growth in smaller economies when its own economy is going forward. Conversely, a downturn in the US would drag the others down too. At the same time the condition of these economies has an effect on the US.

The huge devaluation of the dollar, when it lost 40 per cent of its value against the currencies of its competitors between early 1985 and October last year (making exports cheaper); an investment boom which gathered momentum in Japan in 1987; the improved performance of several European economies in late 1987 -- fed through to the US domestic economy and produced a partial turn around in US trade.

The relative boom in exports since mid-1987 has had an inevitable spin-off in the creation of jobs and even an increase in investment in US manufacturing, particularly the aircraft industry. But the strength of this should not be exaggerated.

## Peak

In September for the second consecutive month there was a decline in US manufacturing jobs by 18 000. (*Guardian*, 8/10/88) The world automotive industry "is reaching the peak of its present cycle" and a decline is forecast in all the main vehicle markets next year. (*Financial Times*, 5/10/88)

Among the more sober bourgeois analysts there remains a sense of tremendous foreboding and uncertainty. "What is striking is that the global economy is much as it was feared to be before the crash, but more so: growth is very rapid, inflation is again a greater fear than recession and, according to the IMF, the balance of payments adjustment is even expected to slow in 1989." (*Financial Times*, 14/10/88)

In the agreements between the G7 powers it was intended that there be drastic corrections of the imbalances in trade, especially the huge American deficits and the corresponding Japanese and West German surpluses which remain dangerously high at about \$80 billion and \$40 billion a year respectively.

The US trade deficit has continued

to widen, from \$93 billion in the second quarter of 1988 to \$95 billion in the third quarter. There has also been a sharp rise in the British trade deficit.

The IMF itself suggests that the US current account deficit will remain at around \$130 billion in 1989, and then increase again. Financing this would involve a build-up in the US's external debt to well over \$1 000 billion during the early 1990s.

The huge deficit in US trade will be a continuing source of financial instability. Likewise the budget deficit -- now almost \$5 billion more than last year, at \$155 billion. Because of these deficits, interest rates and exchange rates will continue to be volatile in such a way as to threaten the "real" economy of jobs and output.

Therefore, although there has been a temporary and relative stabilisation, the dangers are no less than they were before, and in some respects worse. Although foreign investors are prepared to finance the deficits at present, at any stage in the future a panic could set in, leading to a crash in the value of the dollar or a big lift in interest rates to attract funds, or both.

If the US administration was able to slash its budget deficit, that too would so cut the market for US and world production that it would provoke a recession.

Whatever policy the capitalist class choose will lead by one route or another to a severe economic recession or slump in the US and the world.

A few months ago the *Financial Times* (24/6/88) noted: "If anything can justify the present edginess of the US international financial markets, it is this combination of financial weakness and cyclical economic vulnerability... It would not take a 1930s style depression to severely damage the US financial system. A moderate recession like that of 1981 or 1974 would do harm enough.

"If such a recession began to loom on the horizon, Black Monday might go down in the history books as only a prelude to the real crash of the 1980s."

To keep everything calm until the November US presidential election, no serious attempt has been made by the US administration to reduce its budget deficit. But after the election, "Any dithering by the new US president over cutting spending or raising taxes could again prompt the markets to impose their own solutions -- including a sharp dollar fall". (*Financial Times*, 28/9/88) Bush has specifically rejected suggestions of tax increases or

deep spending cuts after his election. (*Independent*, 29/10/88) Whether he acts or fails to act the accumulated deficits will sooner or later have serious economic consequences.

## Prospect

For all these reasons, despite the present strength of US exports, manufacturing investment and employment, the prospect of a recession or slump is looming larger, precisely as the economic cycle moves into the almost unprecedented seventh year of growth.

Within the US, the build-up of bad debts in the banking sector could itself trigger a crisis. The state bail-out necessary to save the loan institutions could be the largest ever in US history. The present estimate has risen from \$30 billion a year ago to \$100 billion today. Another estimate is even higher at \$200 billion. (*Independent*, 18/10/88)

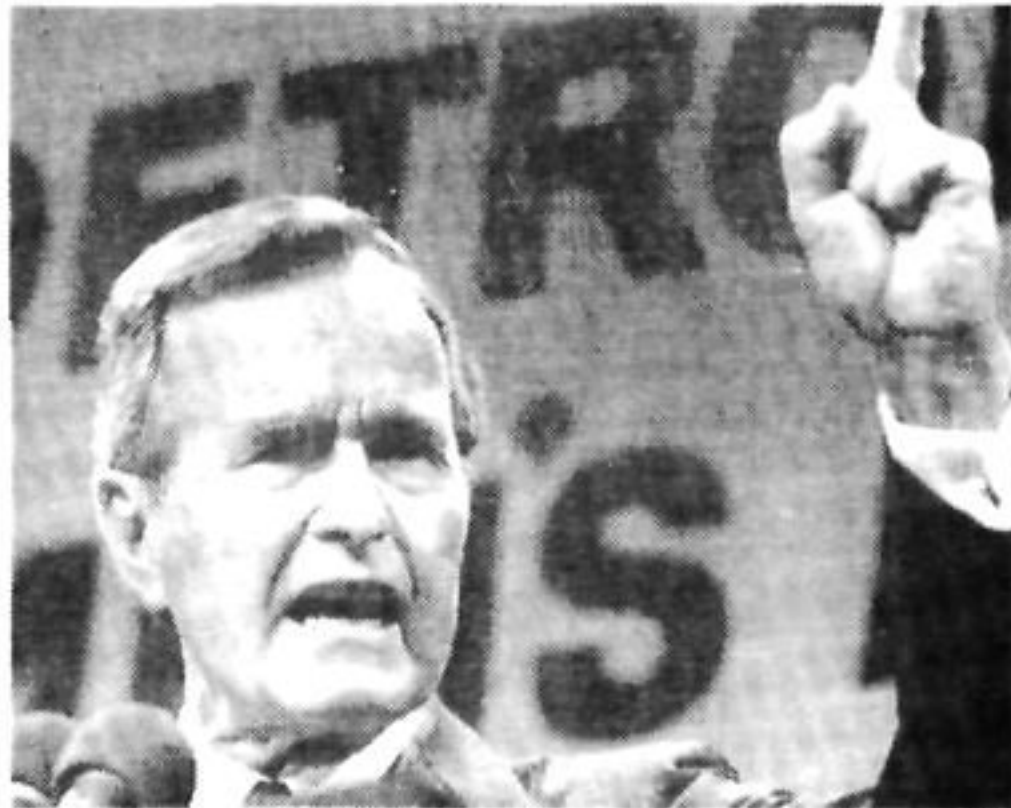
An additional factor, creating short-term boom conditions in the advanced countries but in the longer term threatening political and economic instability, is the unprecedented plundering of the Third World by the advanced capitalist countries, by means of higher interest payments and worsening terms of trade.

Average real commodity prices are now some 30 per cent below their level at the beginning of 1979. Commodity prices by the end of 1986 were the lowest in real terms for 50 years. The World Bank's 1988 Report states that there is "a net transfer of financial resources" from the developing countries to the advanced countries of well over \$30 billion a year. That is before adding their losses through unfair terms of trade.

On the basis of these policies, the World Bank says, "the present economic uncertainty may soon be followed by worldwide recession". The developing countries face the risk of "prolonged stagnation in real per capita income and greater poverty".

A recession in the advanced capitalist countries would very quickly have a devastating effect on the Third World's heavily indebted countries. Already, by 1987 real income per head in the middle-income indebted countries was 8 per cent below the 1980 figure. Their total debt burden is now \$1 trillion!





'Reaganomics' transformed US capitalism from the world's leading creditor to leading debtor. Now Reagan's successor, US President elect George Bush, will be faced with the consequences.

"The ratio of external debt to gross domestic product in the highly indebted middle-income countries has risen to 50 per cent in 1987 from 42 per cent in 1982....the risk remains that a recession or just significantly higher dollar interest rates (both probable rather than merely possible over the next several years) will bring an increasingly unstable structure down around our ears." (*Financial Times*, 23/9/88)

Mexico's debt burden is equivalent to 80 per cent of its GNP. (*Economist*, 15/10/88). Between 1982-1986 it transferred abroad resources "one and a half times larger in relation to national income than German reparations after the First World War and there is virtually no end in sight. It can be small wonder that the stability of the Mexican political system is showing the strain." (*Financial Times*, 23/9/88)

The recent bridging loan of \$3.5 billion from the US highlights the administration's fear of the revolutionary consequences in Latin America and among Hispanic people in the US if Mexico's crisis gets out of hand.

## World trade

The growth of world trade through the development of a world market has been the key to the development of capitalism since the Second World War. But its limits have been indicated by the threat of trade wars between Japan and the US, Japan and the EC,

and the US and the EC. That is because they are reaching the limits of their economic development on a capitalist basis.

The European Community recently warned that the new US Trade Act was a "time bomb" that could blast asunder the whole multinational trading system of the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT). At the same time the EC is being accused of erecting fortress walls when it launches a single internal market in 1992.

There is extreme nervousness which grips the serious strategists of the bourgeois at the present time. The *Financial Times* survey on the world economy (28/9/88) concludes:

"If the world economy's present performance is significantly better than expected, the outlook remains clouded by uncertainties. It is worth remembering that at this time last year -- three weeks before the crash -- governments were similarly confident.

"More fundamentally, no major economy has yet managed to correct a trade deficit on the scale of that faced by the US without a sharp slowdown in its economic growth. More frequently, the medicine imposed by financial markets has been recession."

In its seventh year of uninterrupted economic growth the US financial system is still too weak to withstand the pressures of a recession. There is inherent in the whole economic structure at the present time the possibility of sudden and unexpected crises.

The real 'boom' in the economy in all the developed countries has a very shaky foundation. Although since mid-

1987 there has been some investment in manufacturing industry the boom has a large number of artificial elements in it like the massive US arms production of \$297 billion per year.

All the capitalist powers are terrified of slump and are trying to delay it and the resulting consequences. Where recession begins to develop, the capitalists will be able to use some of the enormous resources they have accumulated. Instead of calling for privatisation as they do now, they will call for state intervention to plough wealth back into the economy.

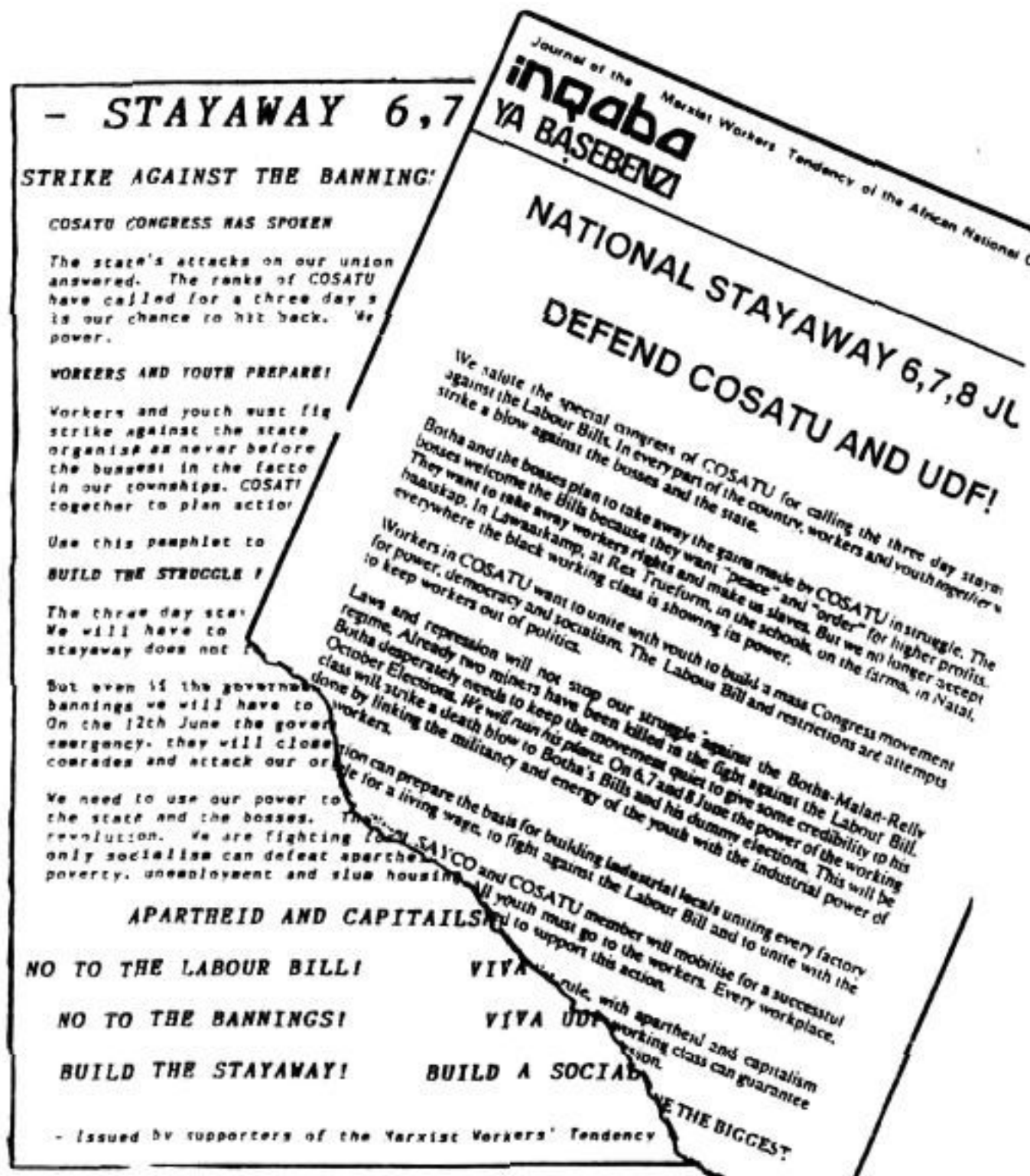
The general law of capitalism in the past has been that a runaway boom always preceded a slump, and when the boom had reached its highest point the basis was prepared for the collapse of the economy. This is inevitable.

When exactly a fall in production will take place is impossible to forecast. It is possible that there could be a recession or slump of the world economy and especially of the US economy in 1989. It might be delayed until 1990. There is even the remote possibility of it being delayed until 1991. But the longer the delay, the worse the slump will be.

Neither in the under-developed nor the advanced countries should the working class hope for a way to real prosperity under capitalism. The system will mean increasing nightmare for the mass of working people everywhere. The period ahead, through sharp changes and sudden shocks, will drive home the need for socialist policies in the international labour movement.



# Follow-up the June 6-8 general strike: FIGHTBACK TO DEFEAT THE LABOUR ACT!



Two of the pamphlets distributed by *Inqaba* supporters to mobilise for the strike. As a result Radio Metro, in the Transvaal, even broadcast that the strike had been called by COSATU and the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC!

The strike by 3 million black workers and 2 million youth on June 6-8 -- against the Labour Act, repression of mass organisations, and restrictions on COSATU -- was the biggest, longest, and most successful in our history.

*Inqaba* supporters played their part in mobilising; distributing thousands of pamphlets in different parts of the country.

A comrade wrote in: "The strike sent a clear message to the ruling class, Botha and the bosses. We, the black working class, our power built the unions. We struggled to form COSATU. No law assisted us. These gains were made by the power of the black working class, which no law

can remove."

At first the government hesitated. But now it has steam-rolled the Labour Bill into law. For all the appeals by COSATU leaders to the bosses and SACCOLA, they have launched an offensive -- even before the law was in place -- dismissing thousands who went on strike on June 6-8, and engaging in harsher harassment, including lockouts.

The black working class is not intimidated; the mood is there for struggle. The COSATU leaders have the duty to mobilise an all-out fightback now to defeat the Labour Act and regain the offensive against the state and the bosses.

Trade union leaders can no

longer rely on the Industrial Court to take liberal decisions. Sympathy strikes are illegalised. Scab unions will be encouraged. "Unfair labour practices" will be redefined against the interests of workers.

But the workers don't accept this law of the bosses. The *Financial Mail* reports that sympathy strikes this year are second in numbers only to strikes over wages and conditions. "This is despite the coming into effect on September 1 of the new Labour Relations Act which, among other things, outlaws sympathy strikes." (7/10/88)

This strength of COSATU must be turned to defend every worker victimised and imprisoned. We will show the bosses and Botha that we mean business. The gains of the past 15 years are not going to be undermined!

Where there is widespread action by workers, the bosses won't find it worth their while using the courts to enforce the Labour Act.

The key to fighting back to defeat the Labour Act lies in the COSATU locals.

Already, demonstrations against the Labour Bill in the industrial areas, drawing workers on the streets from factory after factory, have laid the basis for the fightback.

\* Every COSATU local needs now to resolve that if the bosses try to enforce the provisions of the Labour Act in any factory, workers will come out throughout that industrial area.

\* Where no local exists in an industrial area, shopstewards need to go factory to factory to get agreement among workers on the same policy. This can be the basis for building a COSATU local in that area.

An effective fight back against the Labour Act will win hundreds of thousands more to the Congress movement through COSATU!

Laws have never, and will never, be able to hold down the working class. The Labour Act will only harden the determination of the working class to overthrow the state, gain power, and write its own laws!



# About the general strike

From a KwaThema worker  
(7/6/1988)

Here at Kwa Thema we have had very good support for the stay-away. Yesterday there were no buses or taxis, just like today. Except today empty buses are being escorted by the army.

This morning when I was going down to buy a paper I saw about six buses. One had 3-4 passengers. The others were empty. There were Buffels and Hippos escorting them.

But it was peaceful and quiet. There was no need for the Hippos, because there was nobody stoning the buses. Even if they had come yesterday morning, everybody was at home.

Yesterday I made a survey in town. I found some whites doing the scrubbing in most shops. There were no blacks.

In Benoni centre the same thing prevailed. I talked to some whites from our plant. They do day shift -- strictly day shift. But they told me they were forced to do night-shift because of the shortage of workers.

I heard management can't decide what action they should take, because most workers are not at work. It is very difficult for management to punish workers if it affects the whole plant! They can only get away with it if there are a few people they can act against. I was really pleased about that.

## Government failed

The government has failed in its propaganda to smear COSATU by saying COSATU 'couldn't come forward with an amendment' to the Labour Bill. Most of the workers heeded the stay-away call.

We can see why they want to pass this Bill. Last year the miners were on strike, the railway workers and the postal workers. Then all of a sudden

this year the government is announcing a new Labour Bill!

Before, all these years, there have been strikes and all those things...but there were no Labour Bills. That means that after last year the bosses got scared.

It also means that Anglo-American is really ruling the government. It's not a government for the workers. It is a government for the ruling class.

It is very satisfying at last to stay-away and put a rubber stamp on our dissatisfaction with the restraints we are having from the government. We have no say. We cannot say anything. All we can do is take some action. It is going to be registered for ages that at least the working class have voiced their dissatisfaction.

It says in today's newspaper that COSATU organised people not to go to work. If they say 'COSATU' they forget there is no single person who is COSATU. The membership is COSATU. If they fear COSATU, they fear us.

## Workers are many

This puts the government in a serious predicament. They can act against the leaders of COSATU. But now the decision is taken by the workers, who are many. If you get rid of one worker, another one comes. It is going to be very difficult for the government to stop COSATU.

The government's policy is divide-and-rule. Now they are sitting on top of a time bomb because workers are organising themselves. They have been trying to crush us, but we are getting more organised instead of being crushed.

By banning all these organisations they are making a big mistake. Because the very person you ban is under the table and he will burst out suddenly. You don't see him or know what's going on, but you can be sure he's busy under the table.

From a NUM shop steward

In our mine only a few workers stayed away on June 6-8. By dismissing me and five or six comrades the bosses are trying to show their muscle. They think that if they deal with the 'big mice' (shop stewards)

the 'small mice' (workers) will be forced to obey.

I have registered my appeal with the general manager. But they are still uncertain what to do with me because they fear the workers. In other companies workers were also dismissed.

## Won't shake me

Dismissal won't change me. The pillars of apartheid won't shake me. You see, if your knees are shaking then it would be easy for them to finish you. They will not change my mind and the ideas I believe in.

This is the type of life we live in South Africa. Some people are pedestrians, others are motorists. This has been done on purpose. I always tell my sister about it. And she tells me "Now you are politicking again. You want to get arrested?" Yet she is a victim of apartheid as well.

I have come a long way in the struggle trying hard to identify myself. I found myself caught in between. But finally I accepted the ideas of the movement.

In the Eastern Cape, where I come from, there was a successful consumer boycott starting from PE led by Mkhuzeli Jack. Not a single person bought from the white shops. People with nothing to do cleaned the townships. The Queenstown Adhoc committee organised it there.

Unions must educate workers about things like community boycotts. Some, especially migrant workers, say 'I have come here to work for my family and I do not want to get involved with the community boycott.'

The fact that the unions did not do much to help that boycott was bad. Workers and youth are the only people who can see the struggle-through.

We really need political education. Often I have much work to do for the union and myself. It is demanding.

But after discussing and teaching one worker what needs to be done he got down to the job and things became easier. Education is very important in our struggle.



# SOWETO on the frontline



*Striking Soweto municipal workers on the march.*

**Soweto, with well over two million people, is on the frontline of the battles waged by the black masses against national oppression and capitalist exploitation across the country.**

The struggles and tenacity of the Soweto workers and youth have revealed the weakness of the regime -- its inability to control the situation either through its policies of reform or repression. Most importantly, Soweto clearly illustrates the unbroken resilience and willingness of the South African black proletariat to struggle through to the end.

The development of these struggles can open a new way forward for the movement as a whole and spur a new upsurge throughout the country.

Soweto entered the scene of revolutionary battles of 1984-86 at a very late stage. It lagged behind.

Having led the uprisings of 1976, Soweto had already passed through the phase the rest of the movement was going through in 1984-86. The youth had fought heroic street battles, with only sticks and stones, against the armed forces of the state and the vig-

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## By D. Sikhakhane

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ilantes unleashed by the state with the assistance of Gatsha and his Inkatha. It proved impossible to defeat the state on this basis alone -- without linking up fully with the organised workers and arming the movement for self-defence. This proved very difficult without proper leadership.

Having come up against these limitations, and also having suffered many deaths during that period, there was greater caution and hesitation in Soweto when the rest of the country was gripped in the revolutionary battles of 1984-86.

But the strength of the Soweto proletariat was not broken. This revealed itself when Soweto moved to the forefront in the advancement of defensive battles in the aftermath of 1984-86, through the means of the rent strike. The people are refusing to pay rents and are not prepared to vacate their houses. Never before has this battle been taken up in such a manner.

The rent strike has remained solid

since June 1986 despite the brutal attacks and dirty tricks by the regime and its forces to break it.

Soweto is determined not to give in until there are real improvements in wages, better facilities are provided and the undemocratic and corrupt system of township councils is completely smashed, and indeed all the structures of apartheid and capitalism.

## Determined

The confidence and determination, the absence of fear in confronting the state forces, was revealed by one Soweto worker who owes more than R2 000 in unpaid rent, who told me:

"The municipal police and SADF troops came to my house at around three in the morning. They kicked the front gate violently. I went to open. They asked whether I had paid the rent or not. My reply was this gate does not belong to the municipality, it belongs to me. If it is damaged, you will have to repair it." He continued,



"I then told them they knew very well we were not paying rent, and I am not going to pay it. Their threats were to no avail. They left without getting anything."

## Strength

The unity and strength shown by the Soweto community throughout this period has crippled the government structures in the township. The municipal workers, on whom the council is supposed to rely for the collection of rents, are participating in the rent boycott. Since June this year, the 4 000 Soweto municipal workers have been on strike in protest against a wage freeze introduced by the council on the grounds that "some council workers are participating in the rent boycott".

Even more significant, 60 per cent of the municipal police, who were responsible for the eviction of rent defaulters, joined the strike and rejected

the collection of rent and eviction of residents.

It is upon this force that the council and the regime relied for their dirty work and repression. However, this force is reliable and apparently invincible only in so far as the movement itself is disjointed and demoralised. But in the face of strong and united action by the masses, it crumbles and disintegrates. This feature is likely to repeat itself even on a larger scale, in all the townships, with the development of a new upsurge engulfing the whole country.

Not only has the rent strike paralysed the machinery of the authorities in the township, but it has also welded together, in action and organisationally, the workers and youth of Soweto. This is a vital element if victory is to be achieved.

Everywhere the youth played a key role, imparting their revolutionary spirit to the whole movement, showing audacity and courage without which the great movements of 1976 and 1984-86 could not have taken place. But the frustrations resulting

from the inability to defeat the state affected them most. Their links with the workers got strained, weakening the movement as a whole politically.

Today, the youth of Soweto are retying the knot as they clearly indicated during the magnificent three-day general strike of June 6, 7, and 8, when in their hundreds of thousands they boycotted classes to stand shoulder to shoulder with their worker parents.

The parents have not paid and their sons and daughters have protected them. In areas where the council succeeded in evicting people, the youth have ensured no new tenants occupy the houses. On many occasions the evicted families have come back and are protected by the young comrades against any harassment. Where electricity is disconnected because of non-payment, the young comrades have re-connected it; where doors were smashed by the police, they replaced them.

In the schools, the students, supported by their parents, have kept the flame of revolution burning. Since the beginning of the year, and particularly after the three-day national strike during which the students were invigorated by the power of the working class, virtually every school in Soweto has experienced a class boycott. It culminated in a week's general class boycott from July 4 during which the students were demanding the release of more than 200 leaders and activists of the Soweto Student's Congress detained under emergency regulations.

## Crackdown

This crackdown by the state on the students is no accident. Class boycotts are erupting around the country with students demanding better education, defending victimised teachers and students, protesting against the militarisation of schools and defending the Student Representative Councils through which they can have a say in the running of the schools. The regime fears that the development of student strikes in Soweto might spark a repeat of the national student movement and mass strikes by workers as in 1976.

In 1976, the movement of the Soweto students provided the first nationwide challenge to the government and its policies. Today, on a na-



*Comrades replace doors, ripped off by the council to try and break the rent boycott*



tional scale, the students are better organised and far more conscious of the absolute necessity to win the active support of workers in their struggles. It is for this reason that the government, through the Department of Education and Training, has been forced to make some concessions and release some students hoping this will bring an end to the class boycotts.

## Repercussions

But at the same time the regime is forced to clampdown. If the Soweto students are seen to have scored a victory, albeit a partial one, this will have tremendous repercussions nationwide. It will give encouragement not only to students throughout South Africa, but to the working class generally to press home its demands. But still, more repression provides no solution. It only forces new rounds of battle.

The unfolding events in Soweto indicate both the extreme volatility in society and the willingness of workers and youth to struggle. On October 26 there was a massive boycott of Botha's dummy elections. The poll was a miserable 10,8 per cent, or rather less than three per cent of the total adult population of more than one million in Soweto. A substantial number of those who voted did so because they had been promised either a house, a low rent and service charge of R15 per month or free meat. But still the ruling class will impose these councils.

Undoubtedly, the masses will resist. Even if it is not directly against the councils, it can be on any other attack the regime might be forced to wage in the future. The events of the last few months in Soweto and other areas give an indication of the likely response by the masses. They will struggle and Soweto could lead those battles.

Increasing numbers are beginning to absorb the lessons of the past, understanding the need for underground organisation. The grassroot organisation of the struggles presently unfolding in Soweto are the underground street committees, composed of workers and youth, men and women, employed and unemployed. It is here that the day-to-day questions of strategy and tactics, of self-defence, are discussed and decisions taken.

Today these committees play the

## School youth still angry

Walking past Soweto schools everything looks normal. Kids are chatting and playing, but when term began in July schools stayed empty for a week. The big newspapers carried small stories and we heard a committee had met the Department of Education and Training (DET) to talk about the students' grievances.

According to a leading Soweto Students' Congress (SOSCO) member the committee is a temporary structure made up of 12 elected representatives -- three progressive principals, three parents from PTSA's, three parents who are workers and COSATU members, and three priests.

I asked why there were no students? He said because in the past students on committees had been detained. Presently over 260 SOSCO members are in detention. This is one of the main grievances behind the boycott.

DET is less interested in education than in militarising the schools. Principals at several schools carry walkie talkies to call in security. Students have been arrested in classes and even when they arrive to write exams.

Students returned to school while the committee met DET to discuss their grievances. They demanded the release of students in detention, that DET stop firing pro-

gressive teachers and principals, and random inspection of schools, and that DET recognise democratically elected PTSA's and SRC's.

What happened to the Soweto Parent's Crisis Committee (SPCC) of 1986? The comrade says "the SPCC was forced to disband because it failed to address genuine problems. It was elected progressively, but in the long run it ceased to be accountable to us students; certain members developed personal relationships with DET, lost contact with the grassroots and took their own initiatives. So students demanded that the SPCC disband.

"That's why we now have a temporary committee structure that we can control from the grassroots. Presently we are strengthening the PTSAs and SRCs step by step. We need to build on the ground before we elect a permanent structure. Material conditions have given rise to the temporary committee."

Despite 1976 and the uprisings of 1984-86 the struggle in the schools continues. Students up against the hard wall of Bantu Education develop new tactics and forms of organisation. The struggle in the schools is part of the daily struggle to transform society.

**By Adrian Rogers**

role of preparing the masses for action. In future, as the process of revolution unfolds, they will be more representative and could develop into embryonic organs of self-rule.

## Self-defence

More sharply than in the previous struggles, the question of arming the movement for self-defence will be raised. Last year in White City the municipal police who were attacking residents, were shot at during a demonstration against evictions. During their strikes in 1987, the miners and railway workers looked for the means of self-defence. In September this

year, squatters in Natal fought back against forced removals by firing shots at police. This will be a feature nationally of the coming wave of struggles in South Africa.

Workers who have passed through the experiences of the past struggles will introduce new habits and new attitudes in the coming upsurge. They understand that the questions will have to be solved by force. But they have firmly assimilated from the previous struggles that a successful application of force requires correct tactics and strategy. The same applies to the working class youth who have grown up amid the sounds of revolutionary battles. These forces will march into battle but what is needed is a firm leadership and serious preparation.



# COSATU/Inkatha agreement fails

## THE WAR GOES ON



*In the Valley of a Thousand Hills: UDF comrades at the funeral in September of Eliot Ntinga, murdered by Inkatha thugs.*

There is no singing in the rolling hills of Natal. Instead, the ever-present fear of death. The ground underfoot is drenched in the blood of the militant youth, but also increasingly with that of their murderers.

In the Valley of a Thousand Hills there is the atmosphere of war. Low-flying planes and helicopters patrol overhead. In many areas houses are abandoned or burnt out.

Military bases are being set up next to the mushrooming settlements between Durban and Pietermaritzburg. At night the death squads of Inkatha and a special SADF unit prowl under cover of the security forces to hunt the youth. The youth making up the self-defence units sleep in the bush or sugar plantations.

Since July, Mpumalanga, Kwa-Ndengazi, Molweni and the rural townships between Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg, where chiefs are at large, have suffered severely under the extortion and terror of the vigilantes.

In Pietermaritzburg area the chiefs and warlords strut around with the repeating shotguns so loved by their police instructors. The chiefs in the more outlying townships can see the threat from the Congress militants and consequently try to keep their areas 'clean'.

They realise there can be no peace with Congress and are arming them-

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### Compiled from Natal correspondents' reports

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selves in the vain attempt to recapture the political ground they have lost in past months.

In police stations controlled by Inkatha in Durban, kids of 5 years old are being held. From a number of areas there are reports of youth as young as 10 years old disappearing.

In the area around the Valley of a Thousand Hills alone, some 200 people have been killed in July and August. In Laganda people reported a huge mound of dead, with some youths unburied because Inkatha said "the dogs must eat them".

This barbarism is the result of the open collusion of the Inkatha warlords with the police and SADF, the pillars of apartheid and big business.

Many townships, like Sobantu and Molweni, have been swollen by refugees.

Some 500 000 people have been displaced in Natal in 1987 by two floods and the fighting.

In the Embo, Riverview and Molweni area where people have sought refuge, two recently appointed younger chiefs, Bhengu and Mkhize, under the direction of Inkatha, suddenly announced over the weekend 27-28 August that all people who had not lived long in the area, were not married, or who were Catholics, would have to get out in two days. This was said with the support of police and SADF in Casspirs.

In the next few days 37 people were killed as Inkatha and Congress youth fought for control of the hills. As a woman said of the Inkatha gangsters: "They did not just kill the comrades (comrades). They started killing everyone." (*Weekly Mail*, 16-22 September 1988)

The police and army watched from a distance. In raids on homes and on the St Theresa Catholic mission at this time by police commandos, youth leaders were shot or rounded up.

9 000 people have had to flee for their lives.

The massacres and killings in the semi-rural areas are all Inkatha can do to try to hold the ground against the youth and workers who are joining the national resistance to apartheid and capitalism. The death toll of 511 for the year so far has already overtaken the figure of 497 deaths last year.

Very little of these atrocities has been reported in the press. Instead we find pages devoted to praise of Buthelezi by Zach de Beer and Dennis Worrall, and to praising the latest 'peace agreement' between Inkatha and COSATU.

### A 'peace agreement' with Inkatha can never work

Instead of taking up our policy of organising self-defence units and campaigning on the burning social issues (housing, wages, education, etc), the COSATU and UDF leaders pursue talks after talks with Inkatha to try to end the killings.

As we explained after the 1987 Christmas 'truce' (*Inqaba*, 26, April



1988), Inkatha has been losing its grip on the Zulu masses and could be crushed if there was an effective leadership prepared to mobilise the masses in action. We called on the ANC to provide arms to the revolutionary youth for self-defence, but this has not been done.

Instead now yet another 'peace agreement' signed between Congress and Inkatha early in September has been hailed as an enormous breakthrough.

"If Inkatha is determined to shed the image of violent confrontation, forced recruitment and tribalism, the accord offers the perfect opportunity", writes the pro-Congress *New Nation* (8-15/9/88).

The same article said that the "historical significance of the accord" was that Inkatha now recognised basic democratic rights, including freedom of association!

Jay Naidoo, General Secretary of COSATU, insists: "This [agreement] represents the only way out of a nightmare of murder" (*Weekly Mail*, 9-15/9/88).

The peace talks did not succeed over Christmas last year when Inkatha took to the offensive and killed more than a hundred. This agreement held layers of youth back from organised self-defence and led to this slaughter.

Why should the latest piece of paper make any difference? Already there have been 79 political deaths since the agreement was signed.

What is the point of court injunctions when the warlords treat them with derision. Recently a warlord was 'restrained' by the courts from attacking people. The next thing, he killed a Congress supporter, and he was summarily charged with...contempt of court!

## Inkatha cannot allow freedom

Much has been made of Inkatha secretary general Oscar Dhlomo distancing himself from some of these warlords -- and of the fact that the Shaka Day rally passed off without much violence. But all this is superficial: there are fundamental reasons why all agreements will break down.

Inkatha cannot allow Zulu people to flock to Congress organisations. Inkatha is based on the Bantustan apparatus -- it has to defend the existing system and try to crush any action by Zulu people not under its control.

It is out to paralyse any real resistance to apartheid and big business. Why else did Inkatha butcher leaders of the BTR strike?

Buthelezi has tried by every means to isolate the Zulu masses from the revolution. But now nothing will stop the Zulu workers and youth from the struggle against racial oppression,

corruption, and for houses, decent wages, and jobs.

As a British journalist wrote: "Confrontation is developing between an archaic, heavily-corrupted system of hereditary chiefs and tribal laws, and a steadily-spreading awareness of the democratic age" (*Independent*, 26/1/88).

All this shows that there is a relentless objective process taking place -- Inkatha is based on the dying Bantustan and capitalist system and must itself die out.

Peace talks with Inkatha cannot lead to real peace. Instead they allow these gangsters to wash the blood from their hands, and "shed" their violent image -- before returning to massacre defenceless people on a bigger scale.

Congress needs to unite the whole of the masses in struggle in full strength against Buthelezi.

Congress should be demanding: where are the emergency supplies promised us after the floods, where are the houses we need, where are the school places for our children, where are the jobs promised?

Show that Buthelezi can deliver none of these things! Show that the only basis for gaining improved wages, houses and living conditions is through struggle under the Congress banner! Rapidly that would leave Inkatha without any vestige of support.

It is no use complaining that the

# WHAT PEOPLE WANT

**We asked four young comrades (aged 17-22) to survey opinion in the townships around Pietermaritzburg. This is the report they sent.**

**STUDENTS** want the freedom of joining any organisation they like, SRC's to represent them, and freedom of association. They want equal education similar to whites. They want other broadcasting companies to be allowed to operate in SA, not only the SABC which is serving them with propaganda. They want free education.

**WORKERS** don't want big businessmen to exist, they want everything to be controlled by the working masses. They want houses from the state, to work 40 hours weekly, and the rest of the time to spend with their families and children. They want to be protected in their jobs. They want freedom of speech, association, and a living wage.

**THE COMMUNITY** are against the municipal elec-

tion. They say it is the system of the government to use the councillors to test the feelings of the community and then control from a distance. Inkatha's violence is escalating because people want revolution and socialism.

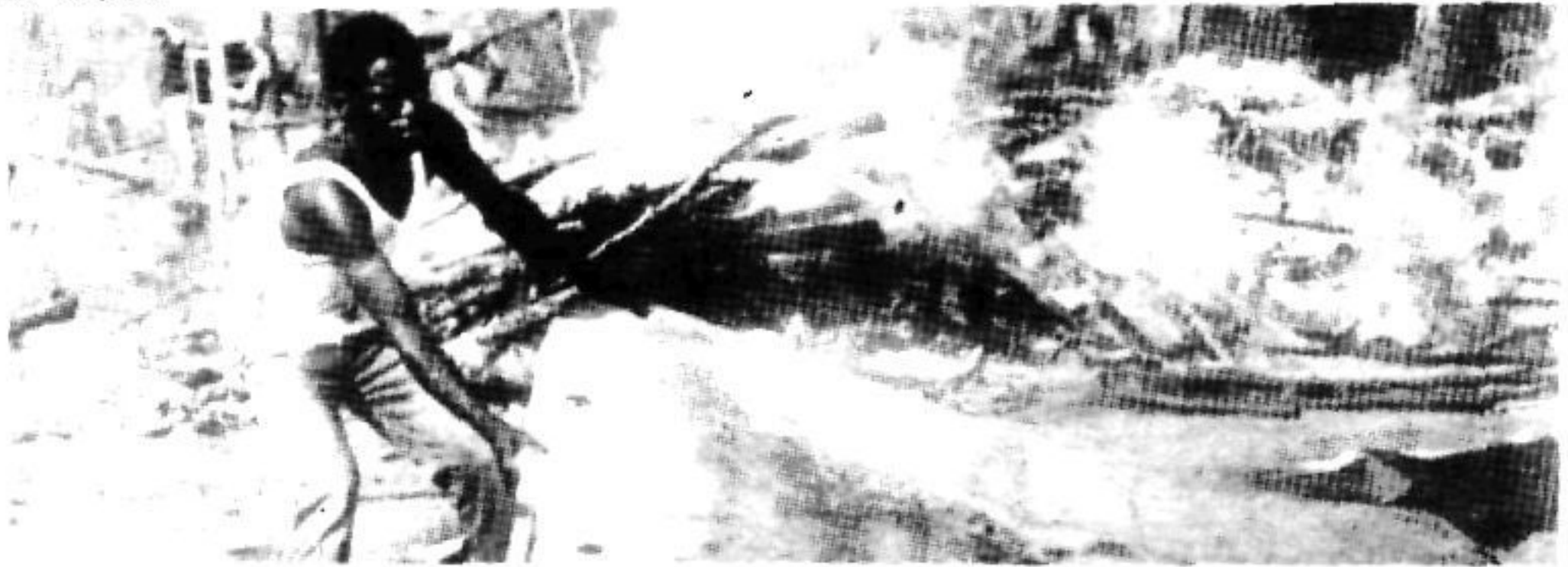
They say the government is using the councillors to continue apartheid. It is using the policy of divide and rule, proposing these elections which they know we won't accept.

We are going to fight these councillors. They will be working for the state which of course is the enemy of the workers and a liberated South Africa. These councillors will be giving information to the Botha-Malan junta, who will use them against the most desired thing -- socialism.

**From Hosi Mkhize, Mxolisi Mkhize, Khungulani Dlamini, Khaye Shangani.**

**September 1988**





*While shacks are burnt under the eyes of police at Emzomusha, a squatter tries to salvage his smouldering possessions.*

youth are undisciplined and out of control. Undoubtedly there must be excesses by the thousands forced out of the schools, fleeing for their lives, and having to live in the bush.

Many of these youth are unorganised -- they are waiting for the ANC to organise them on an underground basis to link up with the strength of the organised workers and youth in the cities.

But there is a deeper problem -- many Congress youth now feel let down by the Congress leaders trying again and again to make peace with the murderous Inkatha leaders at their expense.

## Carrying the brunt

In many areas they are carrying the brunt of the Inkatha attack. Some time ago they have concluded that the masses have to be protected against Inkatha, the Zulu Police, and kitscops. Over weekends militants (and comrades) go to the townships where the fighting is severe. Weapons are moved around to defend threatened communities.

These militants are showing to the whole movement the general way forward. Building on the advances of the past, there should be a systematic campaign by the Congress leadership to link the weaker townships to the stronger ones.

Bring the masses of workers of Umlazi, KwaMashu and the Edendale valley together with the youth! Build semi-underground locals with representation of the fighting youth and

their structures to campaign in the factories, hostels and townships!

## Natal squatters fight back

Squatters in a number of places have been forcibly ejected and their shacks demolished. The most recent and maybe biggest demolition was Emzomusha (known as Lovezone), bordering on KwaMashu.

Property owner Grant Trebble moved in late August this year, protected by police, and burnt down the shacks of 6 000 people.

The squatters, armed with pangas, attempted to prevent Trebble and his gang from entering the camp. Shots were fired at him, but in the end the camp was razed. It was the third time since last October that many of these people had lost their homes.

What seems to happen is that KwaZulu authorities take rent from people to squat on the land, but in the end they have to move again.

We salute the squatters who have organised to defend their homes. Together with the people of KwaMashu it would have been possible to repel the efforts to demolish Lovezone.

The issue, however, is to secure proper housing -- to demand of the government to provide decent houses for all the people that are homeless or squatting.

In fact, build cells of the ANC as the organ for revolution throughout the province, linking up with the rest of the country.

This is the activity which should be encouraged as well as struggle around the social demands.

Congress leaders so far have done nothing to campaign against the evictions and the shortage of houses. All townships should be united in the demand for "Houses, security, and comfort". This is not a problem encountered by the displaced or refugees alone. The townships are among the worst in the country.

The youth of Pietermaritzburg district, Hammarsdale, KwaNdengezi, and Inanda Valley, have made an enormous sacrifice in the struggle against Inkatha and the apartheid state.

But the warlords are still in place and the people terrorised by Inkatha chiefs and the security forces in many areas.

The youth need to turn to the organised workers to build the strength of Congress to defeat Inkatha and stop the murders. Where the workers have acted, gains have been made: after the one-day strike against the killing of bus drivers, Inkatha was forced to hold back.

In the BTR factory in Howick the scabs are now turning away from UWUSA and some are joining NUMSA.

The organised workers have the power to drive UWUSA and Inkatha from the factories and townships. When the youth in the rural and semi-rural areas link up with the workers, the days of Inkatha will be numbered.



## SATS strike shows:

# Durban could lead the next upsurge

In a marvellous display of workers' power, Durban and district SATS workers came out on strike against poverty wages and anti-union management on 19 September.

The 10 day strike showed the enormous reserves of strength in the working class, and the determination among growing ranks of workers in Natal to join the struggle for freedom and socialism.

Initially a few thousand dock workers demanded the reinstatement of two comrades, but as the strike spread the workers demanded an end to the pay freeze and a 300% increase to R1 500 a month!

Durban good yards and harbour facilities were paralysed.

In desperation the SATS management tried to turn to Richards Bay to the north of Durban, but this only spread the sympathetic action.

The strike, almost as strong in numbers as the 12-week strike last year in Johannesburg, terrified the SATS bosses. In days they said they would recognise SARHWU, grant pay increases of 14-20%, and suspend the dismissal of the two workers.

At the time of writing, 6 000 Durban SATS workers are again on strike. "Botha does not keep his promises", they say. SARHWU has not been recognised; the wage increases have not been implemented. They are also demanding reinstatement of 133 SATS workers in East London.

The rise of the black railway workers in the heroic Transvaal strike last year has been a huge step forward. Now Natal SATS workers are taking strike action.

In these pages on transport workers *Inqaba* also publishes:

- \* reports on conditions faced by SATS workers (p.22).

- \* a pamphlet issued by SARHWU and TGWU comrades posing the need for a single union of transport workers (pp. 23-4).

- \* an article by a SARHWU activist who played a leading role in the 1987 strike, on his life working for SATS, and the way forward for railway workers (pp. 25-6).

The September strike led to some 1 000 SATS workers joining SARHWU on a single day. But its significance is far more than stimulating a new wave of unionisation.

The strike immediately enthused all sections of the black proletariat in Durban. Its influence has already been shown in the 4 500 garment workers and 1 150 PPAWU members who had taken strike action by the time of writing.

In October 1972 the stevedores strike was the herald of the 1973 mass strike wave in Natal. That led to the new era of mass industrial unions among black workers nation-wide.

In the present situation the 1988 rail strike could prove to have an equally significant political effect. This is because of the pent-up frustration and anger of workers throughout Natal against poverty and oppression.

The situation throughout Natal is ripe for struggle. The social conditions are some of the worst in the country.

The Durban area has the second fastest urban growth rate in the world, after Mexico City. At this rate 3 million people will be living in squatter camps there by the year 2000.

Many families cannot afford to send their children even to primary school. Unemployment and poverty wages force millions to a desperate struggle for the next meal.

The collaboration of Inkatha with the state and capitalism has meant a terrible social and political burden for Zulu people.

## Fightback

The fightback against Inkatha has so far centred on the area around Pietermaritzburg. But everything now points to a hardened mood in Durban and surrounding settlements.

The grip of Inkatha is only as strong as that of the state -- it has no real base of political support as it has been totally incapable of improving the life of working people.

Any advances which have been achieved in Natal over the past 15 years have been as the result of struggle and workplace strength.

The unions in Natal are some of the strongest industrial unions in SA. But these unions also have a leadership which is recognised to be one of the most conservative.

With the grip of Inkatha, particularly over the rural areas from which many workers in Durban come, the trade union leaders have long attempted to avoid political confrontation and to reach some form of peaceful co-existence with Buthelezi.

## Congress

Holding the workers back from politics in this way is one of the reasons why Congress organisations have been relatively weak in Natal.

This in turn led to the position in 1985 which allowed Buthelezi to cut across the movement in the townships by stirring up hostility between Indian and African people.

But the accumulation of bitterness and anger against Inkatha, the bosses, and Botha, will eventually force the workers to break through the limits on the unions set by the leadership.

The death of every workers' leader and the killings of hundreds of Congress activists by Inkatha will be in the mind of workers as they strengthen and revitalise the unions.

Already the participation of Natal workers in the 6-8 June general strike showed the growing mood. This is now spreading to the farms -- Camden, Kenhym, and others -- where there have been bitter struggles.

An explosion of the working class in Durban in the next period would involve the organised workers in a central role and demand the transformation of the unions, and the radicalisation of leading structures.

This would open the way for effective worker-youth unity and build an impenetrable barrier against Inkatha. This, in turn, would transform the situation in Natal and beyond.

With the working class building on the developments of the last 15 years it would mean that Durban could once again play the leading role in the next upsurge that it did in 1973.



## Working in the docks

Early in the morning, quarter to six, I clock in my work number. Six o'clock I start working.

We're unloading a Chinese ship with a tuna cargo. We're loading the tuna in a cold SATS truck. The cold trucks are very cold. We, young militant SATS workers, demanded protective clothing against the cold. The bosses refused, but gave in after we fought for them.

Secondly, we also demanded money for the cold we're working in. But the bosses do not want to give us.

But we are the energetic youth-workers. We are sure through united action we will win every demand including a Living Wage.

If the foreman do not like your face, he will go for you. For example, one worker was sent to the bar by the foreman to buy him a bottle of brandy. It so happened on the way he broke the bottle of brandy. "I'll show you. I'll work you out of the gate (meaning out of SATS)", said the foreman.

Since that day that foreman have campaigned against that worker. Wherever that worker goes he's been harassed by the bosses and their fore-

### By Sipho Lonzi

men. The bosses are putting false charges against him and force him to sign those charges under threat.

Here at SATS there is this disciplinary code they have which is very heavy and repressive towards the workers. If you have signed one of the disciplinary reports it means you have been found guilty and charged even if you deny the charge placed against you. If you refuse to sign it means suspension and your salary freeze.

They usually suspend the worker. You are suspended for a very long period, even for more than a year, till you get tired of waiting and decide to go and seek another job. Then they won't give you your back money. Even after that you'll have to wait a long time for your money and they will give you half, only half.

Every month SATS deducts pension money. If you go on pension, they only give you your pension money. Where is the interest of the money while it was at the bank? SATS takes the interest for himself. **WE WANT OUR MONEY!**

I'm a member of SARHWU. I live at the compound where I was promised a comfortable living, nice clean food. Only to find out when I arrived at the hostel -- the food is bad.

In the morning we get sour porridge (suur-pap), weak or too strong coffee or tea, and usually old slices of bread which we call pellets. This sour porridge always has flies or cockroaches or sometimes mice droppings.

In the afternoon you get soup which contains beans, rice and breadcrumbs. We the residents of SATS compound don't like that recipe.

We have tried to speak against unhealthy living conditions, but the bosses have threatened individuals with kicking them out of the hostel. As we do not have other places to stay, the bosses just say "it is for you to choose where to stay." The bosses know that we won't be able to afford to have houses with the present rate of money they are giving us!

**Forward with a Living Wage!**

## Hostel: not fit for human beings!

### By Andile Jabu

I visited a friend at the hostel where African railway workers stay. It is surrounded by a 4 metre high cement wall. At the gate I met two watchmen who asked me who I came to see, how long am I gonna take.

Judging the hostel wall outside, it was like I am going to jail. Coming inside, I couldn't believe human beings can stay in such a place.

I found the place unfit and unhealthy for people. The workers, they stay under an unceiling roof, dirty walls inside and outside, never painted, uncovered cement floors, beds with 10 cm thick mattress, no rooms but just halls, no plugs for playing radios or making tea.

All must be in by 10pm. One day a week they give bioscope.

The food they get from the kitchen is terrible. They call it rejects, looks like a week's old food, not thoroughly cooked, not allowed to bring their own food inside.

People who make the food are always drunk and dirty, no-one cleaning these halls after working hard.



*SADF Hippos at every station during the 1987 railworkers' strike.*



# UNITE SARHWU AND TGWU!

## Transport workers should support merger

Produced by transport workers  
in SARHWU and TGWU  
who support the  
Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC  
August 1988



We urge fellow workers in SARHWU and TGWU to support a merger of our unions.

All transport workers will gain strength by uniting in a single national union covering railways, road, air and sea transport.

The transport network is like the veins and arteries of the body. The bosses cannot move their goods, or move labour to the mines and factories, if the transport workers together say "No!"

Only a few hundred thousand in number, the transport workers have the potential to paralyse the whole economy. The government and bosses got a taste of this in the 1987 railway workers' strike in the Transvaal.

All the oppressed workers of South Africa will gain strength in the fight for better wages and conditions, and in the fight for freedom, if transport workers are united and strong.

COSATU's policy is "One Industry One Union". It is a progressive policy, aimed to prevent division and make the workers powerful in each industry.

We are all proud of the traditions of our own different unions. Our unions were born in struggle. Through our unions we have stood up and refused to be slaves. Now let us join our separate fighting traditions together into a greater force.

Some union officials are opposing a merger of SARHWU and TGWU. They say it would be better to have separate unions for public sector and private sector workers.

It is true that workers employed by the government -- on the railways, in the post office, in the health services, in education -- have a common interest in fighting together against Botha's wage freeze, against redundancies and privatisation, for an end to discrimination, and for better conditions generally.

There should be close co-operation between unions representing workers in the public sector. Within COSATU there could, for example, be a joint council of delegates representing public sector workers, to agree on joint action.

But this does not lessen the need for transport workers to be organised in a single national union.

When a strike takes place on the railways, the bosses try

to divert goods and passengers onto privately-run trucks and buses. SATS and the private employers join forces against the workers.

And when a strike takes place in a road transport company, they try to use rail transport, as well as other road transport companies, to break the strike.

To prevent this, we need one union uniting workers in all types of transport.

About half of passenger transport (by road and rail) is done by private companies, and half by the public sector. What sense would it make to divide the transport workers into different unions?

A bit more than half of goods traffic on land goes in privately-owned trucks; a bit less than half goes by rail and by SATS trucks. Again, what sense would it make to split up these workers into public sector and private sector unions?

On the docks, the workers who unload the ships are usually employed by private companies. But the crane drivers and handlers on the dockside work for SATS. This has always been a problem. How can the dock workers struggle effectively unless they are organised in one union?

Strong organisation of all dock workers is essential -- or else the railway workers will be weakened country-wide. Why? Because, in the event of a national railway strike, the bosses would do everything possible to keep the docks working. To and from the docks, they would organise road haulage of goods to get round the railway strike. So everything is linked.

A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. That is why we need a single powerful transport union, so we have no weak links for the bosses to break.

Also, the "public sector" is not fixed. Botha plans to privatise profitable parts of government-owned corporations, to sell them off to private monopolies. SATS has been cutting jobs fast to prepare for privatisation. Work which today falls under the public sector could tomorrow become private sector.

On the other hand, if private companies running important parts of the transport network go bankrupt in future, the government could be forced to nationalise them to keep them going.

In all these cases, if transport workers were divided into



two unions -- public sector and private sector -- they would suddenly have to switch unions. The idea makes no sense.

"But," some might say, "surely it would help to have other public sector workers acting in support of the railway workers when they go on strike?" Yes, absolutely! But our approach to worker solidarity should not be limited to the public sector alone.

In fact, we all need the active support of other workers in both the public and private sectors when we go on strike. That is exactly why workers decided to form COSATU in 1985, to help bring together the whole power of the working class against the bosses and the government, to ensure victory in important disputes.

Workers in all unions have to see to it that the different national union leaders and the COSATU leadership actively organise solidarity action. Not enough of this is done. If the leadership shows the determination, and seriously mobilises the unions' ranks, then workers across all the different industries will be ready to take action in solidarity with each other when major battles take place.

As members of SARHWU and TGWU, our first priority should be to organise the tens of thousands of unorganised transport workers into a single union together with us.

May 1988 figures show that SARHWU had 23 685 members, and TGWU had 21 046 members. SARHWU's strength is still mainly confined to the Transvaal. Nationally there are over 100 000 black workers employed by SATS. A further 100 000 black workers are employed in private and municipal road transport.

Much has been achieved, but we still have a long way to go.

The 1987 SATS strike inspired the working class throughout the country. The fighting strength of the railway workers would reinforce the confidence and militancy of truck and bus drivers, inside a merged transport union.

A single mighty transport union would be a magnet for thousands of unorganised road, railway and dock workers.

It would also help us draw the 8 000 members of NACTU's Transport and Allied Workers' Union towards us, preparing the way for them to join our ranks and COSATU.

A big merged union would also help us to attract white workers, who are a big part of the workforce on the railways. They have been used as scabs against us. Now many are becoming disillusioned with their tame racist unions which collaborate with the employer and do not even fight for the interests of their members when their jobs and wages are attacked. Although blinded by race prejudice, these workers are beginning to look enviously at the organised power of the militant black workers.

A powerful merged SARHWU and TGWU, fighting for decent wages and conditions for all workers, can prepare the ground for non-racial workers' unity in the future in the vital transport industry. That would shake the bosses and the apartheid state to their foundations.

Those among the union leaders who hope for peace with the bosses and the government may oppose a merger, because they fear that a more powerful union of transport

workers will mean "trouble". They know that workers, when they feel stronger, press harder for action. With this will come greater hostility and perhaps more attacks from the enemy on our unions.

That is true -- but we have to face up to it. What alternative is there? The alternative is to continue as slaves.

To break the chains of exploitation and oppression, to end the helplessness of the worker under the bosses' heel, to stand up and fight for a better life, to fight for power -- this is the very reason our unions have been built.

This is the reason other unions are merging nowadays to form one union in each industry. This is the reason COSATU has been created. This is the reason so many unions, and COSATU itself, have adopted the Freedom Charter -- because the organised workers are determined to join their strength to the Congress movement and use it to the full in the political struggle for liberation.

A merger of SARHWU and TGWU will weaken reformist influences, and strengthen the voice of militant workers, throughout the trade unions.

As part of COSATU, as part of the Congress movement as a whole, we are fighting to rid South Africa of the racist regime, to overthrow the bosses, to take the wealth of the country into the hands of the working people, and to build socialism.

A single powerful union of all transport workers will strengthen the daily struggle for better wages and conditions. And it will be a big step forward in the political struggle too.

#### **If you agree, this is what you should do:**

\* Show this pamphlet to your fellow-workers, discuss the points in it, and spread the ideas as widely as possible to other workplaces.

\* Pass a resolution through your branch of SARHWU or TGWU, supporting merger, and calling on the officials to bring it about without delay. Send the resolution to the national executive of the union.

"Merger" shouldn't mean just an agreement among the officials. The ranks of our unions must be drawn together in joint meetings to discuss it.

When merger has been agreed, there should be a delegate conference of the new union (including the scooter drivers, cleaners, security guards and other workers joining with us) to launch a programme of action on wages and other demands, and to begin a campaign to organise the unorganised transport workers throughout South Africa.

## **FORWARD TO ONE UNION IN THE TRANSPORT INDUSTRY!**



# Our struggle is for workers' power

I was born in Lady Selborne, Pretoria, in 1936. My father was a migrant worker from Potgietersrus.

My parents, two sisters and myself all stayed in one room. The situation was real bad. It was used for a kitchen, dining room, bathroom, and bedroom as well.

At 7 I went back to Potgietersrus to school. Pretoria schools were

costly and overcrowded.

My father died when I was 12, in Std. 3. I had to quit school and seek work to fend for my sisters and mother. She couldn't find work.

I began working as a garden boy, wages 75c - R1.25 a month. This couldn't make ends meet. So at the end of 1951 I joined the flood moving to the mines.

Working conditions there were dangerous and bestial. When we parted with our families, we used to say, "If I am seeing you for the last time, we will meet in heaven." The devourers of men, we called the mines.

In 1956 I quit, headed for Jo'burg, and joined SATS.

When I joined SATS in 1956, my pay was R15.00 a month. To support my child, mother and sisters, I had to do odd jobs after hours. Only in 1966 we got a pay increase -- to R28.00 a month.

Because I was staying in the hostel, my wife and two kids stayed with my mother. We used to work for a whole year or more without going home. When I saw him, my younger son could not recognise me.

We worked like animals. I worked a 13 hour shift for twenty years, sometimes 15 hours. They did not pay overtime. At Kaserne we had to load huge containers on trucks using only our muscles.

SATS did not compensate for injuries at work. When my arm broke in 1972, they only gave me R4 to go to the clinic. Others were even less fortunate. One worker lost his leg because huge paper rolls fell on it. His 'compensation' was to be kicked on the buttocks for ruining expensive paper, and sent home.

Those were hard times. But somehow we managed to survive. The problem was we were not organised.

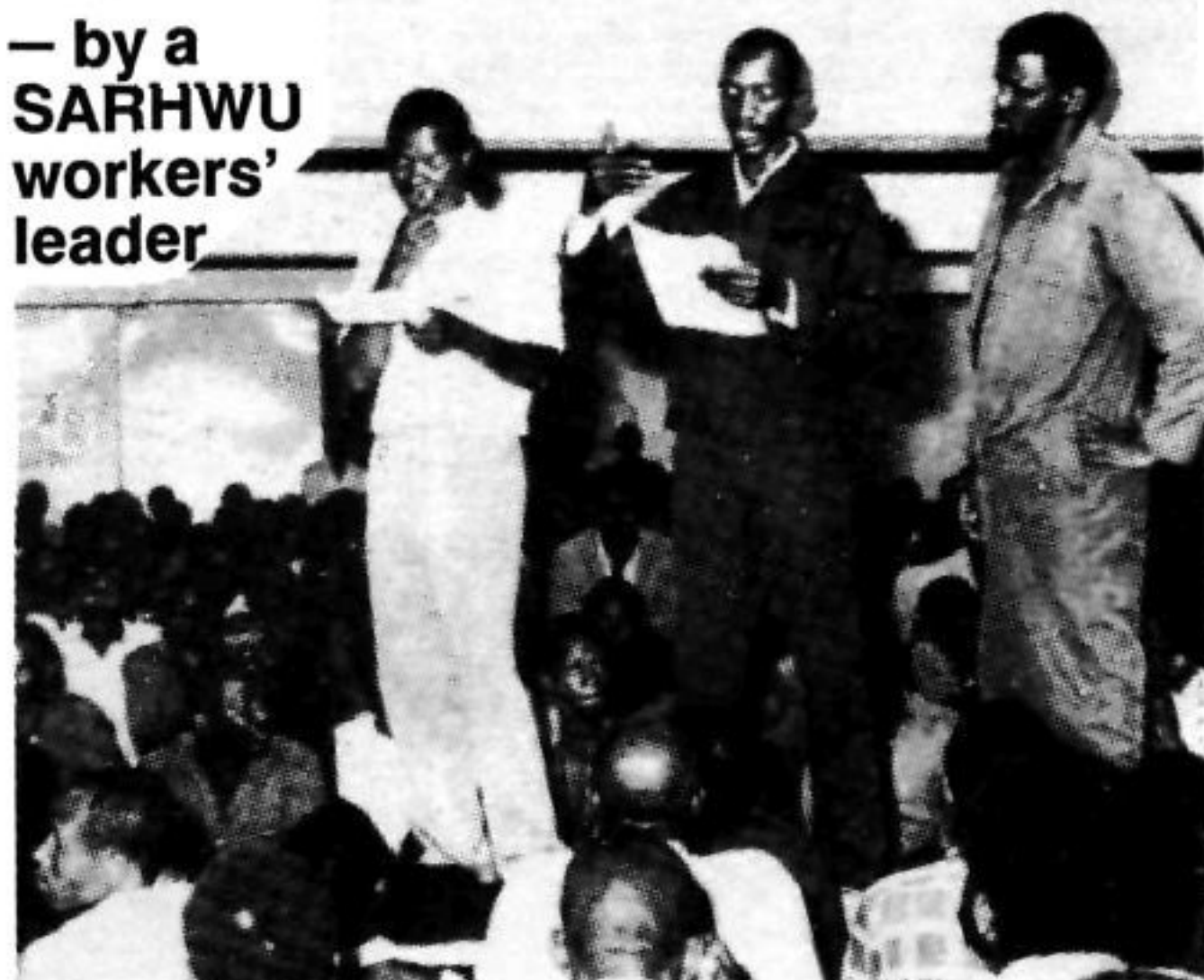
Only since our strike last year have things begun to change. Until 1987, we stayed twelve to one room. Now we can even receive our families, though only for one or two nights. The police no longer raid our hostels late at night. Our union is strong.

Our first confrontation with SATS was in November 1986, when we challenged them on the conditions in the hostel. We were crammed into rooms like sardines. We were fed like pigs. We wanted to put an end to all this rubbish.

We wrote to the hostel manager, demanding that he recognise our hostel representatives.

The main issue was money deducted for board and lodging. They

— by a  
**SARHWU  
workers'  
leader**



*Railway workers meeting in 1987 to discuss action.*

**One incident I'll never forget. In 1968 my home burned down. My nephew was burned to ashes. I asked my white foreman for two weeks leave. He replied, 'Your house burned down, so what? Can you bring your f... nephew back to life? Who the hell do you think you are, Jesus Christ?!'**

didn't deduct a stable amount. It depended on a person's wages. The higher your wages, the more was deducted. But everybody was fed the same food, and we all endured the same conditions.

The manager agreed to meet with us. He had to agree in any case, we did not beg, it was a solid demand. By January he yielded to all our demands. This really boosted our membership in the hostel. Almost every worker wanted to join SARHWU after they

saw it was fighting for them.

When we saw that SATS retreated we pressed with more demands. We agreed in March 1987 to demand a 38% pay increase as from end of May. But then they suspended a driver in City Deep. On Friday 13 March workers there put tools down.

Management had a bad timing, because the victory of January was still fresh in the workers' minds. None of the union officials said to the workers "go on strike". It was the workers



## Struggling for a union

In earlier days nobody explained to us the dynamics of a trade union. So most of us joined the wrong unions. At first I thought a union was a life insurance!

In 1971 I joined Black Workers Aid Service. It claimed to be a union, but as I remember it was more like a liaison committee. It was useless -- BLATU of 1971.

Then some of us joined Black Allied Workers Union. At least something was being done. But we didn't have proper structures. There wasn't even local, regional and national office.

Our main problem was that people found to be in unions were victimised. So we organised underground.

After 1976 railway workers and others began to join General Allied

Workers Union, in a trickle. We could see our efforts weren't in vain.

After UDF was formed, the trickle turned into a stream. The youth helped us, organising their parents, uncles, aunties. But real change came after COSATU was formed. The stream turned into a flood.

SARHWU was resurrected in 1982. Workers were keen to join. Some even wanted to join COSATU before they joined SARHWU. By the end of 1986 SARHWU had just over 8 000 members.

But it is since SATS has seen we meant business, and begun to yield, that workers have become convinced that a union is for them.

Now we have to make sure that workers really control the unions.

We have come a long way since I joined SATS.

themselves who put the tools down.

The strike really began on 18 March. What we did was to report for work every day and occupy the workplace, stations, workshops, etc. They didn't think we could hold out for a long time. After the end of March, they used the army to force us out of work depots. From then on COSATU House became our sanctuary.

We received a lot of support from COSATU members. But more could have been done.

NUM and NUMSA were in wage negotiations at this time. We could have all gone on strike together. But the officials failed to reason. They said to the workers, "Let us not go on strike now, let's wait for SARHWU to finish first." This is where they went wrong.

If there was strong national action of SARHWU, NUM and NUMSA together we could all win much more.

## Clash

On April 22 we clashed with the police. By then we had already organised a defence committee.

We were in a meeting in COSATU House when we got the message that our comrades in Germiston had been attacked by the police. We all agreed that 55 should go to help defend them. They armed themselves with anything that they could lay their hands on --

pangas, knives, knobkerries etc.

They only managed to reach Doornfontein when they were confronted by a police Task Force. The battle broke out. Our comrades fought courageously and managed to overrun that contingent.

Two comrades were shot, one with two bullets, the other with three. But they did not die. They are still alive even today. That's how strong our comrades are.

The police responded by attacking COSATU House. There were 2-4 000 of us there. They packed all of us into vans and took us to John Vorster Square. Everybody was in high spirits. We were all singing when we got there. The group I went with was singing "SARHWU inyunyoni yethu ... Sihamba nayo."

One worker in our cell said we must pray. He said the children of Israel suffered the same fate at the hands of the wicked Egyptians. But the police interrupted us and moved us to another cell. There we strategised about our next move, but mostly we just sang and chanted slogans. The whole John Vorster joined us.

At about midnight the police opened the gates for us and we went home. We all said to ourselves, "There is no turning back, forward until we win!" In the end we won our strike.

But the police were cunning bastards. They wanted us to end the strike so they could arrest our comrades. They have arrested more than 100

since the strike. Most are charged with public violence, arson and intimidation. Eight have been convicted of murder. We won't sit back and watch them being taken to gaol or hanged.

Now we must organise more workers in our unions to make COSATU stronger. The youth must also build Youth Congresses. Workers and youth must unite together, through building COSATU locals, for example.

Nothing will change as long as the bosses can tell us what to do and what not to do. Things do not change if workers do not act. It's only workers who will change things.

## Finish the system

We are fighting to end horrible living conditions in the hostels and the townships. We are fighting for a living wage. We all want to see our children receive a better education.

Ja, we want to finish the whole system. It is only when workers control everything that we will all even be able to stay with our families.

Who will listen to us? The boers? The police and the army? The bosses? Dit sal die dag wees. Nobody from that camp can help us. We must fight to the end.

If I'm not mistaken, they took power by guns. We will have to take power from them by the gun also. Nothing else will be enough.

We must get arms to defend ourselves against them and to prepare to defeat the state. That will also show workers in other countries that we are serious about our fight and they will support us.

We must build a mass ANC to fight for power. To know how to build we need a clear understanding. We must not be political chatterboxes. We must discuss, but also engage in action.

We are fortunate that we have a tendency that is committed to freedom through workers' power. So we must build the Marxist Workers Tendency of the ANC.

Our struggle is not only for workers in South Africa. It is for oppressed people throughout Africa. It is for workers all over the world.

People are fighting very strongly now. More and more are joining the struggle. We must not lose hope when things become difficult. I tell you, we will win.





# The garment workers advance

The Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC salutes the victorious struggle of the garment workers in the Western Cape. Indeed, the Rex Trueform strike was a victory not just for Rex workers but for all garment workers in South Africa.

For the majority of garment workers, this strike signalled the beginning of the fightback against the intolerable miseries imposed by capitalism and apartheid. For the first time, hundreds of coloured garment workers began to sense their industrial power through united action against the bosses. Gar-

**By Susan Van Wyk**

ment workers began to question their exploitative working conditions and low wages. They began to question the huge profits made by the bosses. They began to realise that if they want an improvement in wages and conditions, they had to struggle for it.

This development made a qualitative change in the consciousness of the coloured proletariat in the Western Cape.

Like an electric current, the strike sent ripples through all the garment factories in the Western Cape. A number of factories responded by demanding to go on strike -- Derman, Manhattan, and Bonwitt wanted to take strike action in support of their Rex comrades. Workers raised money in every factory in support. This indicated their determination to win. "Die Rex strike moet wen, hulle strike vir ons almal!"

## Rex Trueform workers strike!



**We stand with garment workers in the struggle for:**

- \* Unity of GAWU and ACTWUSA in one national textile and garment workers union under COSATU.

- \* A fightback by all COSATU unions together to defeat the Labour Act.

- \* An end to sweatshop conditions and

practices in the garment industry;

- \* A national minimum wage of R160 for a 40-hour week, with automatic increases in line with rising prices.

- \* One-person-one-vote in an undivided SA. Away with apartheid, and an end to the bosses' profit system!

## Main topic

Everyone talked about the strike. Everywhere, on trains, in the buses, in doctor's surgeries, in the streets, the main topic of the conversation was the strike for a living wage. "An injury to one is an injury to all" was the cry of women workers young and old. "If the courts threaten to sue our union then we'll all strike!"

Such was the mood displayed by the garment workers, many of them coloured women in their 40's. Such was their burning anger ... anger at their life, bad housing, bad health, alcoholic husbands; anger at the years of collaboration between the bosses and their union; anger at the bosses for low wages and bad conditions; anger at Botha and the bosses for being respon-



sible for their misery. With one loud, angry voice, the downtrodden aunties in the clothing factories said: "WE'VE HAD ENOUGH!".

Thus, the Rex Trueform strike was no accident. For decades, garment workers have suffered the most appalling conditions: travelling long distances, rushing to be in time for work, being shouted at by supervisors, being pressurised to push up production, to meet targets and deadlines; being body searched every night; working long hours in noisy factories. This has been

the humiliation borne by garment workers for years.

## Starvation wages

For decades too, clothing workers have earned starvation wages. In fact, they have been among the lowest paid manufacturing workers in the country!

Before the R14 per week increase came into effect in May 1988, the aver-

age wage of a machinist was R94 per week. This is the equivalent of R407 per month. No family could survive on this wage! It is a starvation wage -- lower than the lowest estimated poverty datum line of R427,20 estimated by the Bureau of Market Research.

On the other hand, the clothing bosses were making huge profits. In 1987, the Seardel Group (the owners of Cape Underwear, Derman Fashions, New Name, Venus Clothing etc.) made a total profit of R23 million while Rex Trueform made a total profit of

# "Ons kan ook amandla"

**This is the story of a coloured garment worker. She is 43 years old and has spent 30 years of her life in the garment industry. Here's what she told an *Inqaba* reporter.**

"Our work starts at 7.45am. If workers come late, then they subtract money from your wages. Oh yes, they want to know why you were late.

They do not understand, you know. There are some of us who live in Stellenbosch, Paarl, Khayelitsha and Heideveld and our factory is in Woodstock.

You know, one day we were all early. All of us were at work by 7.45am. But the manager was late. He came to work at 10am. Jong was ons kwaad! We nearly went on strike.

We insisted that money should be taken off from his wages or that he be forced to work till 10pm the night. He chose to work till 10 o'clock instead. That taught him a good lesson!

Anyway, when I arrive at work, I have to go to my section or department. I am an examiner.

You see, first the markers-in get the material. Then they send it to the cutters. The stuff then goes to the fusers and overlockers. Then the button-hole people and then the clean-

ers. Only after that, I get the garments.

I must check whether the collars are straight, whether the seams are neatly sewn and so on.

At least I can sit and do this work. In other factories that I worked for, I would work in the cutting room and I would stand the whole day. Yes, for about 25 years I've worked in the cutting room of other factories.

You see these veins in my legs. They call it varicose veins (No, not very-close veins like they say in our factory). You get this from standing for long hours. Did you know that?

Our factory is actually very small. We are about 60 workers all together. The factory is partitioned. Like the cutters work together, the machinists work together and so on. I work with four people. We get along very well.

## Noisy

The factory is a bit noisy. The machines actually make the most noise. But we can at least hear the music. We have a radio in our factory. Here we are very lucky because at Ensign they don't even listen to music.

You know about the programme "2.30-date"? We don't actually listen to the words that the man speaks -- I think his name is Tony Hatt. We just listen to the music. Did you know that one day the workers from another factory, I think it was Manhattan, they sent him a letter which said: "Tony Hatt, we are not machines. We can't just 'push up production' every time. So you must put your push-up production in your Hatt!" Yes, I agree with that. What does he know about factory life.

Ten o'clock till 10.15am is tea time.

During the tea break, we all sit in the Rest Room. We just sit on benches and talk about things like what happened over the weekend, the rising food prices.

Sometimes workers would tell us how the people preach in the trains or how long they waited for their trains or even about their children.

Like my one friend told me yesterday that she had to take her sick child to Somerset hospital and she had to wait the whole day. Now they are going to take off a whole day's wages from her weekly pay.

Her name is Waydie. She lives in Bonteheuwel. Her one son is in Pollsmoor for robbery. She has a baby of three and she has no-one to look after him. From next week onwards, she is going to bring him to work with her.

Tea time ends with two bells. The first bell means that you must be at your machine and the second bell means that you must start working.

Then we work until lunch time -- 1pm till 1.30pm. During this time we go to the shop to buy the day's bread and milk. Some workers read Mills and Boon. Some just sit outside and enjoy the sun.

After lunch we continue with our work till 4.45pm. We don't get tea in the afternoon. That's why we come home so early.

Before we leave we are searched by the security. Sometimes this was terrible. Once we had a security who would search us in a bad way. She would even feel our bums to check whether we stole any garments.

That day we went on strike. The one worker told the manager "Ons is mos nie diere nie. Sy (the security) voel 'n mens se hele gat. Ons disagree met daai." All the workers refused to work.

The boss really panicked that day.



R10m (a 49% increase on 1986 profits).

The strike in demand of a R14 per week increase and the right to plant level negotiations should therefore not have taken anyone by surprise.

## Union bureaucracy

Never before had the Garment Workers' Union led its workers in

struggle against the bosses.

For decades, the bureaucratic, reformist leadership of the union collaborated with the bosses, holding the garment workers back from concerted struggle. This 'tradition' goes back to the 1930s, when the GWU (WP) leaders and the bosses combined to fight off a challenge by the then-militant Transvaal Garment Workers' Union to build a national organisation including the Western Cape.

A number of factors helped this bureaucracy to entrench itself and

maintain its control over the garment workers for so long, despite the low wages and atrocious conditions in the industry.

Garment workers, relatively speaking, are isolated and divided from each other by the nature of the industry. The garment industry in the Western Cape employs 60 000 workers in over 400 factories, many of them being small and medium sized establishments.

In the larger factories (some em-

You had to see his face. The workers said, "Ons kan ook Amandla!" He had to give in. The security is now very careful with us.

I know that workers steal from the factory. Sometimes the boss would complain about garments going missing. Yes, sometimes sommer 300 garments go missing when there are meant to be 1 000 garments.

Jong, we earn low wages already and if we need clothes, we have to buy the clothes that we make in the shops for twice the price. They must be mad! That's why workers steal.

Wednesdays and Fridays are the best days at work. On Wednesdays we get our *Clothesline*. A driver usually drops it at the factory and the security guard signs for it.

When the *Clothesline* comes, some of the workers sommer run to the toilet to read it. This is how you get to know what's in the *Clothesline* during working hours.

## "Labour Bill"

"Hey, did you read about the Labour Bill? Viva! Nou sê ek ook NO to the Labour Bill" -- one worker would shout to the others.

You know this is so funny. I asked one of the workers whether she heard about Labour Bill. And she said "Wie is daai? Ek hoor so baie van die man. Hy maak seker 'n klomp nonsense. As ek hom in die hande kry, gaan ek neuk!" I explained to her that the Labour Bill was not a man, but that it was going to become part of the law.

During tea-time, everyone sits in the Rest Room and we read our *Clotheslines* and talk. Even Mercy puts down her Mills and Boon this time.

Last week, while we were reading the *Clothesline* during teatime, one worker said "Jong, dit mean as hulle die Labour Bill gaan pass, gaan ons mos kak! (Excuse the language) Dit mean dat die government gaan nou die factory rules oor vat." Everyone nodded their heads in agreement.

The other favourite is pay day -- Fridays. We get paid before lunch time. I get R108 per week. Everyone gets that. I think it is just the cleaners who get less. But everyone got an increase after the Rex strike.

But now you see, the prices have gone up since the R14 increase. The train fares, the bus fares, bread, rent, petrol. And every time you go shopping, there's something new that has gone up. Every bloody week. It's like they're giving with the right hand and taking away with the left hand.

Yes, we've had exciting times in our factory. The Rex strike got the support of everyone. You know it's the first time when we actually had a meeting where the shop stewards came to give us a report.

I was even surprised that I wasn't afraid to speak. I told the workers that the Rex workers were striking for us all. We must support them. I said we should give them something, that we must sacrifice our cigarette money and so on and give it to the Rex workers.

Did you know that Dermal's workers wanted to go on strike in support? But the union people said no, they must first get the Rex thing sorted out.

My husband works for a big clothing factory. But he was against the strike. He says it was the result of "opstokers" who want to take over the union and after the strike they'll look for other things to let the workers take action. I just told him that he talks too much to the manager.

On Labarang (that's like our

Christmas) everyone spoke about the Rex strike. I really wanted to smack my cousin when she said that the *Clothesline* is different now. She says the *Clothesline* just has politics, politics. "Dit lyk soos 'n blierie pamflet." I got so cross. I said to her that everything is politics. Your whole life is politics!

## Refusing to work

My brother's daughter works at Dermal Fashions. They belong to the Seardel Group. She says that their workers are refusing to work nowadays because of the Labour Bill.

And at Alpha Rose the workers have walked out against the Labour Bill. It seems as if all the workers want to do something now. Even at Ensign Clothing, the workers had a 3-hour strike against the Labour Bill. The bosses took down their names and gave them no pay for those 3 hours.

I think it is the new union. Yes, we have the same union but it is a new union. The reason why I say so is because since there are new people working for the union, the workers are just taking action.

Even Cedric Petersen resigned. Hy's bang! That was the first thing I thought when I heard this. He's scared now that all this is happening.

I'm telling you, it's the new union. We have to do something together now. That's what the union must do now. Bring us all together and with the workers in COSATU and the students. That's how all of us will win a living wage. We must just stand together."



ploying thousands), workers are split up into autonomous groups. Like the worker (p. 28) explains: "Die machinists werk een kant en die buttonhole mense werk een kant ens." They are partitioned off, and confined to their particular departments in small numbers.

They are also set against each other by piece rates, complex wage structures, and competitive target systems, and closely supervised on the line.

All these factors have hampered a sense of unity and strength within the factory and solidarity between factories.

The coloured garment workers of the Western Cape at first remained relatively isolated from the industrial movement of the African working class, which has risen to shake the relations of power in SA since the early 1970s.

Nevertheless, discontent of the Western Cape garment workers has been expressed before in some shop-floor struggles and in occasional action in regional and national stayaways since 1976.

The conservative bureaucracy of the GWU(WP) did its utmost to hold back the garment workers. It advanced no program of demands and action to build the strength of workers on the factory floor, and to unite and generalise struggles across the industry.

Instead, it relied on the system of benefits, negotiated with the Industrial Council, to maintain control over the workers and encourage passivity.

In fact the union can boast one of the most advanced benefit schemes in SA industry -- a small oasis in the desert of welfare provisions for blacks as a whole.

## Benefits

These include sick funds, bursary funds, retirement funds, funeral and legal aid, distress funds, housing loans etc. The sick benefit fund for example, allows garment workers to see any doctor on its panel, free of charge, and get free medicine.

What lies behind these benefits?

The garment bosses agreed to them not out of charity towards workers, but as part of a long-standing deal with the conservative union leaders who have helped them police the workers and hold down wages.

In 1984, for example, a worker

explained how, when they staged a go-slow, "After two days the boss threatened to call in the union."

On this basis, real wages of machinists, for example, have been in decline since 1948.

Now, with the Rex Trueform strike, the workers have shown their determination to change the situation. While struggle can compel the bosses to pay increased wages, the bosses will find it impossible to take away the benefit system previously conceded.

Formally speaking, the union was 'democratic', but the leadership always stifled any democratic worker participation in the affairs of the union. Louis Petersen was GWU general secretary for more than 30 years and served on the editorial board of *Clothesline* since its first issue in 1977; his son Cedric became assistant general secretary and editor of *Clothesline*.

## Resources

In controlling the membership, and sustaining its position, the bureaucracy has been assisted by the resources at its disposal. With 55 000 members, it gets a monthly income of R106 000 in dues. It owns Industria House, valued at R3 million, and prints *Clothesline* on its own printing press.

With all of this, the elaborate Industrial Council infrastructure, and

the backing of the bosses and the state, the GWU developed into one of the biggest union bureaucracies -- able, for example, to pay substantial meeting "attendance fees" to control its shop stewards.

But worsening conditions for garment workers, together with the rise of the black working class nationally, caught up with the old bureaucracy. Sensing the mounting pressures beneath them, they initiated "reform from above" and gave way to a new leadership.

## Trying to change the union

Two attempts had already been made to change the nature of worker organisation in the industry. Both failed abysmally.

In the early 1970's, a group of organisers -- the Action Committee -- tried to oust Louis Petersen from the union leadership. They hoped to do this by taking over all the official positions.

The Petersen bureaucracy simply relied on the security police, the union constitution and the "ignorance" of the majority of garment workers to deal with the Action Committee.

The Action Committee correctly tried to change the GWU from within but their strategy of democratising the union from above was bound to fail.



*Seardel Group shopstewards after negotiations with management*



## "Klim op GAWU se wa"

1/9/1988

Dear Inqaba,

Yesterday something very exciting happened at our factory. I want to tell you about it because I will remember it for a long time.

For the first time workers at our factory decided to go on strike, because management refused to sign a letter from the union against the new Labour law.

The girls at our factory sat still from 1pm to 5pm.

Immediately after 1pm the management stepped in and said a lot of things which did not make any sense. He said that we cannot expect him to break the law of the country even if there are some people who oppose the laws.

He said, "You can't just drive over a red robot. It is wrong because it is against the law. I can't sign a letter to the government to say I oppose the law. It is wrong. I support the law. We can't just decide not to stop at a red light."

All we understood from this is that management supports the Bill. He supports the law and the government because they have made him rich and kept us poor.

After this I suggested that we discuss things in groups. But this didn't work very well. One of the girls then got up and sang "Klim op die wa,

klim op GAWU se wa, klim op COSATU se wa." We all joined in and I felt very strong and militant!

At 3pm management put up a notice stating that all the workers would be dismissed if they didn't start working at 4pm. We then called the union officials to assist us. Meanwhile the workers decided not to go back to work at 4pm.

At 4pm we were all in the canteen -- counting down to the last few seconds. All the workers counted down the last five seconds: 5... 4... 3... 2... 1... 4pm! No-one moved! Then we all started singing again. We were really making history today!

Eventually the union officials made an agreement with the bosses. We would not be dismissed but we would not be paid for the time we were on strike.

We insisted that management sign the letter but he refused.

At 5pm the workers went home very happy and excited about the strike. We all knew we did something great today. We are still strongly united against the Bill.

My question is, how do we fight from this point? Many of the girls are ready to fight against the bosses and the Labour Bill.

Viva GAWU! Viva COSATU! No to the Labour Bill!

From a Cape Town garment worker.

The other attempt involved the establishment of a "brand new union" -- the Clothing Workers Union (CLOWU) -- by leading activists in the UDF after its launch in 1983. But this attempt to solve the problem from "outside" was doomed from the start.

CLOWU had no understanding of how the system of benefit schemes, combined with the closed shop, bound the garment workers to the GWU. Instead of a patient approach, based on concrete work on the day-to-day issues in the workplaces, to build up an opposition to the leadership within GWU, until workers felt confident enough to act *en masse*, the CLOWU organisers looked for short cuts.

This was shown in the 1984 Cape Underwear strike, which CLOWU thought would "ignite the industry". Instead only 157 (out of 600) struck, and they were not supported by other garment workers in joint action against

the bosses. This made striking workers feel their weakness.

CLOWU never gained a mass membership. It diverted the most militant and politically conscious garment workers from their task of fighting the bureaucracy in the GWU, and separated them from the majority who wanted a fighting union but did not want to split it.

### Stormy

CLOWU's sectarian and politically stormy approach opened itself to effective counter-attack by the GWU bureaucracy, which consolidated support for itself among the members. Clearly, the 55 000-strong GWU posed a stronger pole of attraction with its weekly newspaper, its mass mem-

bership and all its benefits.

### Bureaucracy under pressure

In times of relative "peace" this trade union bureaucracy appeared to be all powerful. But, in a time of crises, under the impact of the revolutionary movement of the masses, the bureaucracy loses its grip over its base.

The impact of the revolutionary struggles of 1984-86, the collapse of TUCSA, the birth of COSATU, the massive wave of industrial struggles in 1987, the political general strikes, the struggles of the textile workers in the NUTW -- all this led to sharp turns and sudden changes in the approach of the bureaucratic leadership of the GWU -- achieving what CLOWU could not.

Confronted by the revolution and militant trade unionism, and haunted by the effects it was having on the consciousness of garment workers, Petersen and company were compelled to shift to a more left position.

Suddenly Petersen discovered that garment workers were suffering. Suddenly the style, tone, and whole discourse of *Clothesline* changed -- featuring more than the Spring queens. In 1986, it condemned detention without trial for the first time.

Tremendous pressure built up for unity in the clothing and textile industry. ACTWUSA was formed in 1987, linking textile workers nationally with the mainly-African Transvaal garment workers.

In late 1987, GWU linked with mainly coloured and Indian garment workers in the Eastern Cape and Natal to form GAWU (Garment Workers Union of SA) with 102 000 members. The leftward shift was marked by the appointment of Youth Congress activists with experience of student struggles into the leadership of the new union.

The resolutions adopted at the launch strongly favoured COSATU's living wage campaign and supported the demands for March 21, May 1 and June 16 as paid public holidays.

All this -- together with the upturn in the economy -- developed the mood and boosted the confidence of garment workers to take action.

It was no accident that the first major strike occurred at Rex Trueform. In 1976, the police had to fire tear gas into the factory when workers





supported the high school students. In 1980, at the height of the school boycott, after the increase in bus fares, the Rex workers came out on a wildcat strike. The union asked for a seven per cent wage increase; the bosses, sensing the anger of the workers and the political climate, gave a 10% increase!

Again in 1988, workers at Rex Trueform, the largest employer of garment workers in the Cape, paying the worst wages and employing among the longest-serving coloured women, led the victorious fight for a wage increase.

The strike lasted three weeks. But the GAWU leadership tried to restrict the action in other factories to the donation of money.

Bonwitt, Manhatten and Dermal Fashions -- who wanted to strike in sympathy -- were told to return to work. This was not the correct approach to take. Had Bonwitt, Manhatten and Dermal Fashions been allowed to take action in support, and had an action campaign been taken up in all garment and textile factories, coupled with the building of industrial locals and linked to the struggles of the youth, the whole movement could have been taken forward.

## The way forward

The victory of the Rex strike gave renewed confidence to workers throughout the industry. Different garment workers have been moving into struggle nationally. Struggles against unfair dismissals, retrench-

ments, body searches and the Labour Bill have hit many factories.

In Natal, for instance more than 90% of the GAWU members (ie. 35 000 workers) supported the stay-away on June 6, 7, and 8. Recently many garment and textile factories in the Western Cape have taken protest action against the Labour Bill.

Never before has there been such an outcry for unity in the garment and textile industry. With the economy heading for recession, workers need to be united in battle against the bosses who will try to force the cost of the recession onto their backs.

The need for one national textile and garment workers' union under the banner of COSATU is vital! Now is the time for all GAWU shopsteward locals to approach all ACTWUSA factories for joint struggle. Now is the time for ACTWUSA and GAWU members to tell the union leaders that they want to unite. It is unnecessary and a waste of valuable time to fight in Botha's courts over membership.

A united union is the only way to fight for a national minimum living wage. This is the only way to fight the Labour Bill, the body searches, the long hours and unhealthy conditions.

In this way too, the power of all garment workers can face the bosses nationally. It will also bring the largest force of organised women workers into COSATU. Working-class women will have a powerful and organised voice in the Congress movement, opening the way for increased participation of women in the revolution.

The campaign for a national minimum wage with a specific figure set by

COSATU is the key to uniting workers in struggle in the garment and textile industry, defending and raising their living standards.

This has to be coupled with the building of industrial locals of all factories -- to unite garment and textile workers with other COSATU members, older workers with young workers and African and Coloured workers in every industrial area.

Garment and textile workers understand that worker-youth unity is the only way to struggle against Botha and the bosses. Like one garment worker remarked during the Rex strike: "Al die jare het die kinders alleen baklei, nou gaan die werkers baklei en die kinders gaan met hulle saam staan." Most garment workers are mothers who want to have a chance to unite with their children in struggle, to build the Congress for democracy and socialism. Building worker-youth unity to fight Botha and the bosses is an urgent task facing SAYCO, GAWU, ACTWUSA and COSATU.

The Rex Trueform strike shows the entrance of the coloured industrial proletariat into struggle. It opens the way for COSATU to become a much more powerful mass force among industrial workers in the Western Cape.

The initiative, the anger and power of working women will make its mark felt throughout the country as tens of thousands of garment and textile workers raise their heads and straighten their backs from those old machines to fight for the revolution.

Forward to a single union in the garment and textile industry!



*Cape Town GAWU members attend a protest against the Labour Bill*



The last year has seen bitter struggles spreading to rural townships, farms and Bantustans -- inspired by the movement in the cities.

The fightback against Inkatha in many parts of Natal/KwaZulu, fierce battles against Mangope in Winterveld and tribal chiefs in Venda, the bus boycott in Kwa-

Ndebele and strikes by thousands in Botshabelo -- are all part of this.

This raises the possibility of a future countrywide movement in conjunction with an upsurge in the cities. A comrade reports on one of these struggles -- and the lessons our Congress movement needs to draw.

## Venda joins revolution: ANC must lead rural revolt!

"*Vhaisala*", ("the people are hurting"), a new greeting among the Venda, has also been used as a demonstration of solidarity against their Bantustan leaders.

In mid-August a 4-day general strike, 90% effective, combined with a 4 week old schools boycott in a magnificent show of black working class power -- to signal that there is now no corner of SA which is not prepared to struggle against the apartheid regime.

Venda, with half a million people, was known for its "tranquility and beauty". They were the last of the tribes to be conquered. And, far from the industrial and political centres, the backwardness of the area has been reinforced by the divide-and-rule policy of apartheid, which the big bosses use to stay in power.

The old tribal society, and any role ordinary people had in the determination of their own affairs, was smashed by colonial conquest and capitalist rule. Chiefs are appointed by the government, in an attempt to use pre-colonial and pre-capitalist structures to keep control.

These puppets have taken what they can. It is known that in Venda, to get a job with the largest employer, the civil service, you must bribe someone with a video or TV. If you are sacked, you cannot appeal.

Added to this web of favouritism and corruption, is the use made of tribal practices, such as *mushonga*, or ritual killings. There have been 15 this year in Venda. Supposedly necessary to "bring good luck", ritual killings are now used by the Bantustan leaders for their own political and business purposes.

Lutheran pastor Zwo Nevhutu told the *Weekly Mail*, "The parts must be taken while the person is still alive. Only later is the person killed, usually

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By Alan Green

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hanged." (26/8/88.)

Until recently, with this background, workers from Venda were referred to jokingly as "country bumpkins" by the people in town. Their tribal ways, including polygamy, meant they were avoided by women in the urban areas.

In 1980, Venda scabs were brought into Johannesburg to break the municipal workers' strike of that year. That cannot happen easily again.

In 1987, the most militant strike we have yet seen took place on the railways -- and 50% of City Deep's workers are Vendas!

The revolutionary struggle in the rest of South Africa, plus the rottenness of the apartheid-supported tribal regime, have combined -- following the death earlier this year of "independent" Venda's first president, Patrick Mphephu -- to open the floodgates of mass bitterness.

The cutting tool of this anger has been the youth.

### Boycott

In July, a 30-year old teacher, Mukosi Mavhina, victim of a ritual murder, was found hanged. The students at his school went on boycott -- demanding the exhumation of his body, an independent post-mortem, arrest of the culprits, and a trial by the people.

Every classroom in Venda joined the boycott.

The University students followed, with a mass march on the parliament

on August 5th. It was broken up by police, and many were detained.

The brutality of the police attacks, and the torture which followed in detention, led to a protest meeting of school students, who proposed to call a general strike.

Workers, many getting less than the R110 minimum monthly wage, and not legally allowed to join trade unions, solidly supported the stayaway.

The Venda government was forced to sack its second most powerful member, "AA" Tshivase, who held four cabinet posts, and who is most prominently identified with the ritual murders and corruption in the territory.

This victory means Venda will not be the same again.

"Worried citizen" of Tshakhuma, the town west of the Venda capital Thohoyandu where the schools boycott began, wrote to the *Sowetan* (22/8/88): "oppression and tyranny will change the day. We shall take steps ourselves."

The 'commoners', as the vhaVenda are patronisingly called by the tribal/Bantustan leaders, have spoken. Now, the rest of the movement must respond.

These events are of the greatest significance. They show the ruling class's attempt to rely on black puppets is coming apart. Every so-called 'tribal homeland' is tottering.

This means millions more for the struggle, and a very great weakening of the apartheid regime.

Every active worker and youth should study these developments, drawing all the lessons.

In every plan of action now, whether it be to achieve higher wages or organise armed self-defence, we must combine the revolution in town and country.

The key instrument for achieving this is the building of the ANC.

With a socialist programme, we can sweep clean our communities of barbaric practices.

The unity and strength of a mass working class -- as a SARHWU activist from Venda told *Inqaba* -- can cut the root of ignorance, fear and weakness which feeds superstition and the witchcraft which it gives rise to.

In 1989, it will be 200 years since the Great French Revolution which combated feudal and reactionary religious ways in Europe. Now the youth and workers of Venda are showing we will need a workers' revolution and socialism to free South Africa.





## STELLENBOSCH YOUTH CONGRESS

JEUG EN WERKERS IN DIE DORP EN OP DIE PLASE STAAN SAAM VIR BETER LEWENSOMSTANDIGHEDDE !!

### OORWINNING VIR WERKERS EN JEUG OP ELSENBURG

Die Harmse gesin was op die punt om onregverdig uit hul huis op die regeringsplaas Elsenburg gegooi te word. Die vader van die gesin, wat onlangs oorlede is, het 23 jaar op Elsenburg gewerk. Toe hy weens swak gesondheid moes aftree, is hy beveel om sy huis binne 3 maande te verlaat. Sy bekommernis dat sy familie geen dak oor hulle koppe sou he nie het bygedra tot sy dood. Mevrou Harmse se dogter is baie siek. Wat moes hulle maak? Moes hulle hul naam sit op die lang waglyste vir huise in Cloetesville, Kayamandi of Idas Valley?! Die familie het nêrens gehad om heen te gaan nie. En nog steeds wou die gewetenlose base hulle uit hulle huis forseer.

Die Harmse-gesin is nie die eerste plaaswerkersgesin wat voor hierdie probleem te staan kom nie. Op Elsenburg alleen is daar die afgelope tyd 'n hele paar gesinne uit hul huise gegooi. Maar hierdie keer het die werkers en jeug van Elsenburg 'n baie groot oorwinning oor die base behaal. Hulle het saamgestaan, en saam opgestap na die administrasiegebou waar hulle vir die verskrikte base duidelik gestel het: Hierdie gesin moet hulle huis behou. Die base, wat vroër nie eers met Mevrou Harmse wou praat nie, het onmiddelik ingegeë.



**FARM WORKERS MARCH . . .** Workers at Elsenburg Agricultural College march on management offices yesterday to protest against the impending eviction of a family who have lived there for 23 years.

### OORWINNING OP ELSENBURG 'N VOORBEELD VIR ANDER WERKERS

Hierdie oorwinning op Elsenburg bewys dat wanneer die werkers en jeug saamstaan, dit moontlik is vir ons om die uitsetting uit huise stop te sit. Die oorwinning op hierdie regeringsplaas is 'n baie belangrike voorbeeld aan alle ander plaaswerkers reg oor die land. As hierdie voorbeeld nie gevolg word nie, sal baie ander gesinne nog uit hulle huise gesit word.

**DIE STELLENBOSCH YOUTH CONGRESS (STEYCO) SÊ :** "Een se pyn is almal se pyn."

Die Stellenbosch jeug vra al die werkers en jeug van die Boland om die stryd van die plaaswerkers te ondersteun. Ons weet: van alle werkers kry plaaswerkers die swaarste. Hulle word die ergste uitgebuit deur die base. Miljoene plaaswerkers word nog behandel soos slawe. Baie werk 12 tot 18 uur 'n dag. Hulle staan vroeg in die oggend op en kom eers terug by hulle gesinne lank nadat die son al onder is.

*Inqaba is reprinting this pamphlet by the Stellenbosch Young Congress (Steyco) because it clearly expresses the nature of the struggle developing among farm workers. Furthermore the victory it relates is a fine example of worker-youth unity in action, and the strength it brings to our movement.*



Baie plaaswerkers kry bitter min geld (sommige R15 'n week) vir hulle harde werk. Sommige boere betaal nog hulle werkers met wyn. Baie plaaswerkers kan nie bekostig om die kos te koop wat hulle self deur hulle harde werk uit die grond gehaal het nie. Die African en Coloured werkers ervaar wrede rassisme van die base en plaasbestuurders. Soms word werkers geslaan.

### ONREGVERDIGE UITSETTING UIT HUISE

By al hierdie swaarkry kom nog by dat die base die plaaswerkers en hulle gesinne uit hulle huise kan skop wanneer hulle lus voel. Dit gebeur wanneer werkers te oud of te siek is om verder te werk, of wanneer hulle as gevolg van beserings soos byvoorbeeld rugbeserings nie verder kan werk nie. Die base gee meer om vir hulle plaasgereedskap as vir die werkers. Dit kan nie so voortgaan nie.

### BEHUISING-KRISIS

Ons almal weet dat die mense bo-op mekaar woon in die African en Coloured townships. Ons weet dat dit amper onmoontlik is om 'n huis te kry. Baie mense wag al vir jare om 'n huis te kry. In Vaaldrain, op Koelenhof, by Mariendal, in Kayamandi, in die flats in Cloeteville, oral leef werkersfamilies in haglike omstandighede. Ons betaal hoë rent en kry min geld. En nog altyd wil die base ons uit ons huise gooi - soos hulle nou met die Harmse-gesin in Vaaldrain probeer doen het. Hulle maak asof ons ouers geen reg op hulle huise het nie! Die jeug sal saamstaan met die werkers om terug te veg.

Ons eis dat alle plaaswerkers 'n reg het op 'n huis. Die base behoort geen reg te hê om ons huise te vat wanneer ons te oud of te siek is om verder vir hulle te werk nie, of wanneer ons ons werk verloor nie. Op al die plase is dit die taak van die werkers, hulle unie en gemeenskaporganisasie om beheer oor te neem oor die huise.

### BOU ORGANISASIE - PLAASWERKERS IS NIE SLAWE NIE!

Die oorwinning op Elsenburg is nie net 'n oorwinning vir die Harmse-gesin nie, maar is 'n oorwinning vir die hele Boland. Elke werker en elke jongmens moet aan elkeen met wie ons praat vertel van hierdie oorwinning. Ons weet dit is slegs as ons saamstaan dat ons ons omstandighede kan verbeter. Plaaswerkers en werkers op die dorp het dieselfde probleme: probleme van behuising, van geen kos in die huis nie, van lae lone, van swak gesondheid. **HIERDIE PROBLEME KAN SLEGS OPGELOS WORD AS ONS ALMAL SAAMSTAAN.** Oral begin plaaswerkers opstaan teen die base. Elsenburg werkers het 'n oorwinning behaal. **LAATDIT NIE DIE LAASTE OORWINNING WEES NIE!**

Dit is **NOU** die tyd vir plaaswerkers om hulself te organiseer sodat hulle kan saamstaan teen die base. Werkers wat reeds in 'unions' georganiseer is, wat reeds lede van COSATU is moet help om plaaswerkers te organiseer. **STEYCO** sal die Food and Allied Workers' Union (FAWU) help om alle plaaswerkers te organiseer. Werkers en jeug op die dorp en op die plase moet nou sterk organisasie bou!

**AFRICAN EN COLOURED WERKERS EN JEUG STAAN SAAM!**

**BOU DIE STELLENBOSCH YOUTH CONGRESS!**

**BOU COSATU!**

**THERE SHALL BE HOUSES, SECURITY AND COMFORT!**



## The Marxist Workers' Tendency of the African National Congress

### WHAT WE STAND FOR

The Marxist Workers' Tendency of the African National Congress stands for the overthrow of the racist South African government.

We stand for the overthrow of the bosses, too, and for common ownership of their wealth.

We stand for national liberation, democracy and socialism.

We are part of the ANC, and of the Congress movement -- COSATU, SAYCO and the UDF.

A "tendency" in politics means a definite line of thinking. The Marxist Workers' Tendency is the group-name for comrades in Congress who share the following ideas, and work together to further them. We say that:

\* Freedom for the black people can come only through majority rule.

\* Majority rule will not be given by the racist oppressors or the masters we work for; it will have to be taken by force.

\* This means armed revolution is necessary, and cannot be avoided by negotiations.

\* Victory depends on the power of the black working class (workers united, together with youth) to conquer the state and the bosses.

\* We must aim to split the white army, to isolate the bosses, pulling working-class and other less-privileged whites towards our struggle.

\* We will need an ANC government of working-class power, based on an armed people.

\* This will be necessary to crush the resistance of the racists and the bosses, so that the Freedom Charter can be carried out.

\* Such a government alone can ensure democracy, and with such a government the socialist reconstruction of South Africa will begin.

\* In this way, and by uniting with the working class world-wide to change society, we can build a future of freedom, prosperity, dignity and equality for all.

**Do you agree? If so, we urge you to join us in building the ANC and the Congress movement to achieve these aims.**

In January 1988, an explosion of fighting in KTC squatter camp outside Cape Town left at least six dead, 400 shacks burnt, and 3 000 homeless. The killing by youth of a member of KTC's governing committee, 'Masinedane', had sparked murderous retaliation by its supporters.

Fears were evoked that the violence would erupt on the scale of the events in nearby Crossroads in May-June 1986. Then at least 100 died and 70 000 were left homeless in a rampage by state-backed vigilante *witdoeke* against the community.

Though state agents may have provoked it, the fighting in KTC took place between supporters of two groupings allied to the UDF. It was preceded, and followed, by acute tensions and divisions within CAYCO and the United Womens' Congress.

Why did this happen? Have the issues which sparked off the conflict been resolved? In this article sent to *Inqaba* in April, BERNARD FORTUIN discusses the lessons for our movement.

## The lessons of KTC

KTC was one of the communities ravaged by the *witdoeke* organised by Johnson Ngxobongwana, Crossroads' vigilante ruler, in 1986. In that battle, from June 9 to 11, Masinedane ("we help each other") and the local CAYCO branch fought together against the vigilantes and the state. Some Masinedane committee members even went to jail for allegedly arming the youth.

Since then Masinedane has stood for improvements in KTC -- fresh water, proper sewerage, decent housing. Based on promises to do something about the social conditions, the committee at present has the support of the overwhelming majority of KTC residents. It collects R5 a month from every family for the purpose, it says, of building houses.

Last year the Western Cape Civic Association, a UDF affiliate, began recruiting in KTC. Its leaders said they wanted to organise it as an affiliate. Masinedane claimed that it was being bypassed. A dispute arose over who represented the people and was democratic. In reality the WCCA leaders wanted KTC under their own control.

The WCCA based itself on the discontent of sections of youth with Masinedane. Youth are looking for a way forward in struggle against the state. They had become suspicious of the Masinedane leadership and its reformism. More seriously, they saw this committee doing exactly what Ngxobongwana does in Crossroads, i.e. collect money for "housing", and use it for self-enrichment.

Many youth succumbed to very 'left' arguments put to them of "No house-building because it will allow for effective policing and make MK's

life difficult." Such arguments are not convincing to the mass of people desperate for homes.

This confusing situation was made more so by the fact that the regional UDF leadership sympathised with Masinedane. It regards Masinedane as a "progressive" organisation that is in "the people's camp". Youth were correctly exasperated with this position.

In politics, as in time, change is the only constant. The Masinedane committee had their origins in the politics of the Church and the white liberals disguised as "do gooding." Their stand against Ngxobongwana in 1986 was heroic. But it was motivated by the desire to maintain control over their own resources, and by the hostility of the white state towards them at the time. Moreover Masinedane of 1988 is not the "progressive" Masinedane of 1986.

### Reforms

The victory of the *witdoeke* in Crossroads in 1986 made the Masinedane leadership in KTC more open to trying to win reforms from the state. In 1986, on the advice of the UDF leadership and the liberals, they applied for a court interdict against Le Grange, the police and the army. It was granted -- but they saw that this did not prevent the destruction of much of KTC. For them, it seemed rather to prove the "invincibility" of the state and its armed forces.

The *witdoeke* could have been defeated, if clear policies of struggle and armed self-defence had been put for-



ward by the ANC and UDF leadership. The failure of the leadership to do this, or mobilise effective support for KTC in 1986 is a factor which pushed Masincedane in the direction of the state.

Also, the Masincedane leadership is likely to have been affected by the relative ebbing of struggle after mid-1986, particularly in the townships. The fact that some prominent UDF leaders, such as co-president Archie Gumede, floated the idea of participation in Botha's tricameral parliament as a means of "breaking the violent political stalemate" (*South*, 9-14, 1987) could in no way have discouraged Masincedane from the reformist course they were taking.

## Attempts

In their attempts to secure improvements in KTC, Masincedane turned to the Urban Foundation, and also to the Administration Board. Just before the January violence, they had signed an agreement with a building society for the provision of homes.

On at least one occasion, they handed over to the police a person found stealing a car in the area.

The youth sensed the possible catastrophe of the Masincedane leadership going the way of Ngxobongwana, to outright collaboration. They feared a repeat of 1986 in KTC. Despite the

## KTC: a youth activist writes

The Masincedane are not like Inkatha vigilantes. They started new KTC with the people and they were with them full-time in the struggle.

I remember when Sqhaza was killed and all his followers were chased out of KTC. Masincedane took over all KTC new or old with the support of CAYCO KTC.

Each and every thing done or discussed by CAYCO KTC, they brought the report-back to Masincedane committee. When Nyanga bush was defeated by Ngxobongwana and the police at Crossroads they formed one group to fight the system and the vigilantes.

Now the state is trying to cause division. They are using people to form KTC Ngxobongwana. They want to impose community councils on KTC.

It is important that the UDF and COSATU now play its proper part to unite all the people of KTC in the struggle. As Allen Boesak said, "there is a lack of leadership in KTC".

What is needed now from the leadership is to unite people with a

clear programme. Unite the people to form defence committees to fight against any vigilante group.

In this way, undisciplined elements in KTC using violence to kill people and burn shacks can be stopped.

The leadership must put forward a campaign for the houses and better conditions in KTC. We must go out and campaign to demand houses and better facilities like roads, street lights, and other things.

If there are any that disagree with this programme we will be able to see clearly who they are. It will be clear that those who refuse to struggle against the state are the ones being used by the state to cause division.

When peace talks and negotiations are held, they must not be behind the back of the youth, workers and the unemployed. The leadership must consult us at every step and keep us fully informed.

We must go to all organisations and unions in UDF and COSATU to get support.

continued popular support for Masincedane, they were concerned that the UDF leadership was unconsciously preparing more destruction and slaughter by recognition of Masince-

dane as a "progressive" organisation.

The youth could not forget that the reactionary Ngxobongwana himself was supported as a "progressive" by the UDF as late as 1985. It is true that



Armed groups in KTC



## Lack of leadership creates paralysis within the movement, which encourages collaboration.

he spoke demagogically at that time against forced removals, and even spent a few months in detention. But his rule of fear and corruption in Crossroads was by then common knowledge.

The vocabulary of "progressive forces", "people's camp", "sectors of the people" to label people or organisations is in reality no help in understanding the processes taking place in the politics of the oppressed.

All political action is shaped by the struggle taking place between the main class forces in society. Terms like "progressive" are not scientific; they do not explain the class forces acting on political leaders.

The shifts and zigzags of Ngxobongwana, Masincedane etc must be understood in terms of the changing relations in the struggle between the apartheid state and the bosses on the one hand, and the working class on the other.

### WCCA leadership

The WCCA leadership, for its part, entered KTC claiming to really represent Congress. In fact it resented the "upstart" leadership of Masincedane, and wanted to gain control of the committee's income. Rashid Seria, editor of *South*, wrote that the WCCA "representatives are more settled and more urbanised" than Masincedane, "with more sophisticated demands." (7/2/88) In truth they are just more middle-class.

These WCCA leaders started a whispering campaign among the youth about the Masincedane committee's "deals" with the state and Ngxobongwana. But while the evolution of the Masincedane committee in the direction of the state is clear, its support among the majority of the residents is undisputed. It is not like Inkatha, whose rule of terror relies on the Kwazulu state apparatus and whipping up tribal feeling. At this point it is still not like Ngxobongwana, who extorts money like a feudal ruler, regardless of the consent of the people.

After the January violence, the

regional UDF and COSATU leadership organised peace talks. A joint monitoring committee was set up to try to prevent further bloodshed. But these efforts cannot succeed unless the issues which underlay the conflict are addressed.

**The need for a clear policy of struggle to improve the social conditions in KTC is vital. This cannot be conducted in isolation. It must be part of a regional and national campaign of action mobilised by the UDF and COSATU leadership on our social and political demands.**

Why has the leadership not done this, when it is so obviously needed? It is because they are still hoping to get democracy without a revolution. They hope to persuade the "liberal" capitalists, and eventually the government, to come to an agreement with the ANC.

They fear that mass mobilisation and revolutionary struggle will frighten away the liberals and verligtes, and so spoil the chances of a settlement.

This non-revolutionary approach creates paralysis within the movement which encourages the Ngxobongwanas -- and the rightward drift of Masincedane.

**To solve the problems of KTC, to carry forward the struggle nationally, and to strengthen the forces of our revolution, it is vital that the leadership abandons the pipe-dream that the ruling class will surrender to majority rule. The state will have to be overthrown.**

### State

Now, in KTC, having instigated and stoked up the violence, the state is posing as the "peace-maker." It is -- in reality -- trying to tip the balance in favour of would-be collaborators in Masincedane, to pave the way for participation in the October community council elections. This must be resisted.

Mobilisation of a total boycott of these elections, and campaigns on wages, housing, social conditions etc., could restore morale in KTC and turn the tide against the state and its

agents.

The Masincedane leadership must be called to mobilise the whole of KTC in such struggles. This will be their test. In that way those elements of the Masincedane leadership who want to tie their fortunes to those of the state will become exposed. Through such struggles the mass of Masincedane supporters can be broken from wrong leadership.

### Mistake

Any incitement by WCCA elements of youth to terror tactics against the Masincedane leadership was a big mistake. Assassinations of Masincedane leaders could only unite the KTC community behind them. Now the UDF leadership must show the way for the youth to mobilise together with the rest of the community in social and political struggles, and in establishing defence committees to protect KTC against vigilantes and the state.

In the course of the fighting in January, there were disturbing examples of collaboration by Masincedane leaders with the state's forces. On the other hand, many workers and youth gained valuable experience in defending themselves with arms. Every household in KTC was armed. Here were the first outlines of a future worker-youth militia.

Instead of this futile factionalism, supporters of Masincedane and the WCCA need to combine their forces to defend KTC against the real enemy: the apartheid state.

The events in KTC in January caused confusion in the minds of many workers and youth. Our movement must learn the lessons. Lack of political clarity, hesitation and paralysis on the part of the leadership can lead to divisions, splits, and violent infighting in our own ranks. In the future this could mean worse slaughter than KTC, worse than Crossroads in 1986.

But this setback now has not cut across the determination of the working class to struggle. The Transvaal rent strike, the fightback against Inkatha in Natal, strikes by fresh layers of workers, renewed school boycotts, are signs of the fundamental strength of our forces, and of the determination of workers and youth to win freedom. Let us together take that forward.



# We live our whole lives in poverty

I've been unemployed for 7 months now, since I completed Std. 10 last year.

I come from a small town outside Krugersdorp. There's no real industry. Most people work on the railway, in shops, or as domestics for the whites. Many have to go to the bigger towns to look for work.

We have no local high schools. To finish your schooling you'll have to go to a neighbouring town. Most people actually leave school after Std. 5 because they can't afford to continue.

For us blacks to get educated is very expensive, and it seems to get even worse today. Then, even with a Std. 10 certificate you can't find a job.

Getting through school was not easy. At school I used to think my burden was the heaviest. But since I've been looking for work for so long I've learnt a lot, and think differently.

All of us are more or less in the same boat. It is difficult for most, especially we who come from the rural areas.

When I left home to attend high school in a bigger town, I did not have much money or a place to stay. I knew nobody in the township. I had to go door to door looking for a place.

The family that took me in asked R40 a month. This was a lot for me. But for the family an extra mouth to take care of at R40 a month is a burden. Soon your landlady will ask you to seek another place. You can't blame them.

Often you would have to move three to five times in a year.

On top of that is the problem of

## By an unemployed black youth

my friends very seldom had money.

It was difficult to do your best at school under such conditions.

I wanted to go to university, but my results were not high enough. So I'd have to write a special test. I hoped to work this year, to cover expenses if I could get into university. But now I can't even find a job.

I can't think of a time when we had enough food, clothes, money and

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## I can't think of a time when we had enough food, clothes, money and other things we need.

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other things we need. I'm not talking only of my family or friends. I'm talking of most people in the townships.

We live our whole lives in poverty, struggling to get out of it. But at the end we still die in poverty. If you just sit and think of your neighbour or the man down the street, how they live, their problems -- you'll see it. All of us are in the same boat.

At my school we had no organisation, but we often had political discussion. It was mostly about history. Sometimes when we had a newspaper we'll use the political articles for discussion. We never had real political material to use, but we were very ea-

We did have some battles in the township in 1986, but it did not last for long. At the beginning everyone joined in. But they just sent in the police and SADF and people got scared. But for many days afterwards people were still talking about it, explaining what we should have done or must do next time.

This was the first time this town took part in the struggle. We did not really know what was going on in the rest of the country, or what the local demands were. We only saw it as fighting against the government. We knew that everywhere people were fighting against the government and wanted to destroy apartheid.

Now that things are quieter, I think

it is time that we can use to educate people about the struggle so that we can be more determined next time.

One of the things we could not understand at the time was the fighting between blacks. I thought this will just destroy the unity we need. But when we had the problem of KwaNdebele here in the Transvaal I started seeing that some blacks are doing the government's dirty work.

A lot of things happened that I didn't understand. But it just made me eager to read more, to understand, so that I in turn can explain to other people who do not understand.

The way I look at it we must have a revolution, otherwise we'll die in poverty and unemployment.

I've been walking the streets for almost a year. My two elder brothers are also unemployed. It is only my mother who works, and she works in a kitchen. There are four younger brothers and sisters still at school.

When I walk around the streets looking for jobs I see so many people looking for work. Some of them are old and probably the breadwinners of their families. I think how much their families must suffer. Most of the unemployed are young like myself, and we don't seem to have any prospect of getting work.

Do you think we have a future? No, only with a revolution will we have a future.

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## The way I look at it we must have a revolution otherwise we'll die in poverty and unemployment.

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money coming late from home, or not arriving at all. But in most cases the people with whom one stays understand. It is because they are also poor. Sometimes they will even help with seeking alternative boarding.

Many times I had to borrow money to go home to get money to pay the landlady. Then when I come from home, pay the rent, and what I borrowed, I'd have nothing left for the whole month.

I used to be shy about my poverty. But I soon came to realise that most of

ger to develop and understand more about the struggle.

At the time of the school boycotts in 1985, we thought of joining the other students. But before we could have a boycott or form an organisation, the police had the names of those they saw as the leaders. We got scared and did not boycott classes, but we continued our discussions.

I think most black people are interested in politics. They might be scared, but still they want to know more about the struggle.



# “We will not be trampled on any more” domestic workers build SADWU



*Women workers at a SADWU rally: domestic workers unite!*

“I am sick and tired of this. Botha is robbing us!”

These were the first words of a domestic worker when she looked at the prices of foods at a Checkers store.

“I am 54 years old now, but I have to work 6 days a week cleaning my boss’s flat and cook from very early in the morning.”

“She pays me very little. From my wages I have to pay rent for my house in Mannenberg. Now the rent is going up again.”

“What about food and clothes? I have grown-up kids but they are all unemployed. My husband passed away last year. At my age I’m still the bread winner of the family.

“During the week I live in a small room close to the flat of my boss. This room is very cold but I can’t afford a heater. I also have to buy my own food. The boss won’t allow me to take the left-overs because that is for the dog.

“I only see my family once a week. I must pay my own transport to see my family. By the middle of the week there

is no money left. Sometimes I am forced to steal from the boss’s food. Otherwise I’ll starve.

“Now Botha is saying that we must tighten our belts. He says we must save our money. I don’t even have enough money for my next meal. Botha and my boss work together. She gives me low wages and he steals it with high prices!

## “Piece of my mind”

“I really can’t stand it any more. We must fight them. You know if I didn’t need this job so badly then I’d really give that boss a piece of my mind. She gives me R54 a week and I must do her dirty work.

“These people make me very angry. I am just waiting to join the union (SADWU). I’ll march to her with the union behind me and demand from her the money she owes me. She thinks I’m scared. But with the union we will all be

much stronger and there is nothing she will be able to do.”

These sentiments were echoed by a SADWU member at a COSATU rally held recently at the City Hall. She explained what terrible conditions domestic workers have to work under. Unlike other workers they don’t have any laws protecting them. Bosses therefore have a free hand to exploit and maltreat workers without any fears.

But SADWU has vowed to fight for the rights of domestic workers. The speaker said to loud applause from the 4 000 strong crowd that it was time that men and women united against the bosses and the state.

“Domestic workers have had enough. We will not be trampled on any more. Together with SADWU, COSATU and the youth we are going to crush the Labour Bill, the bosses and Botha.”

**From Yusuf Gamiet**



## “Socialism says everybody must be equal”

**Three women cleaners employed by Anglo American spoke to an Inqaba correspondent:**

**On Anglo American:**

Anglo owns so much wealth yet we who make Anglo rich, get poorer every day. When there were wage negotiations they said they had no money. Yet they own nearly the whole of Johannesburg!

They are protected by the state which owns the police, jails, everything. So they've got the power. Our power is our unity, and our mouths.

**On the Freedom Charter:**

The people must share the land, the wealth of SA. That's the main clause. Black people are digging the wealth, but whites are owning it. Unions launched the Freedom Charter because every worker must be free.

If it was carried out there would be schools everywhere, and nice houses. As long as the bosses are here it is impossible.

**On the unions:**

The unions give us a lot of things. Even the tar in Soweto was given us by the unions.

In the past if I saw a white man passing I would run away until I broke my feet. Now I'm not going to. If a white passes, then he should just say 'hello' to me. We were just like slaves. That is why we joined the union and now we've have rights.

COSATU gives me hope. It has the right to challenge government. COSATU is strong and is fencing government. Through it workers became strong. Now we've strong representatives to face the government.

The bosses see COSATU as a strong umbrella of the unions, that is why they are trying to divide us. They say unions must only talk about things to do with our work. Not politics.

Really they're afraid.

**On the Labour Bill:**

The government drew up the La-

bour Bill so the bosses could solve their problems. They want to give us a strong pill. They want to go back to the past.

I don't think we can allow that law.

The government supports the bosses because unless they make profits they will be weakened. They are a pair. Capitalism is like this, the laws are to protect them, and they are combined.

**On the youth:**

The youth have power. They saw our grannies and mothers and all of our families suffering. They don't want to suffer. That is why the youth say 'we can rather be killed than live like our parents.'

As long as there is a new generation like that there will be a struggle. Unless we have socialism it will be hard. Socialism is the same as the Freedom Charter, because socialism says everybody must be equal. Socialism means equal rights.

## National Women's Day at Wits

On 9 August 1956, 20 000 women marched on Pretoria to hand in thousands of petitions opposing the pass laws and the extension of passes to African women. This day is observed as National Womens' Day by the Congress movement.

This year there were celebrations in various parts of the country. The FEDTRAW rally at Wits started at 9am, and went on till after 9pm. Everybody enjoyed themselves.

There were lots of *toyi-toyis*, the highlight being the *toyi-toyi* led from the stage by a group of 3-5 year olds from a FEDTRAW child-care centre in Soweto.

There was poetry from everywhere: the youth, the students, the rural areas; original, Brecht; workers' poems, womens' poetry, and even Mzwakhe the famous poet recently released from detention.

Plays were also in abundance. The most striking was staged by old women mostly in their 40s and 50s, from the rural areas of the Transvaal, talking and singing about their struggles against forced removals, starvation and other issues facing rural people.

Then there were many choirs from

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**By Neville Jacobs**

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the unions, the Youth Congresses, the womens' organisations, etc., etc.

All these events were interspersed with bursts from the floor of "Viva!" "Amandla!" in appreciation. The words "socialism" or "proletariat" or other Marxist terms usually received the most enthusiastic Vivas.

Who can still argue that the workers are not yet ready for socialism? Who can still argue that the workers don't see the need for the smashing of capitalism and apartheid at the same time to solve their problems?

The highlights of the day were the jazz groups playing tunes that remind us of the '50s and the legends like Zakes Nkosi and Kippie Moketsi of Sophiatown. These groups had the old and young alike on the floor dancing the styles of their generations.

This was probably the best cultural day we had for a long time. However, missing was a focus on womens' oppression and the issues

and campaigns which can draw greater numbers of women into the struggle.

We could have focussed on unemployment of women, who, after the youth, are the most affected. There is the Living Wage campaign, which if properly carried forward, could enormously boost not only trade union membership, but also that of womens' organisations.

There is the idea of a campaign against the migrant labour system, which could unite women of the Bantustans and the urban areas, as well as uniting migrant workers with the township communities.

We also had the metal workers' strike and that of the Soweto municipal workers on at the same time. It would have been good if we had had a financial appeal at the meeting to raise money to assist these workers.

The issues facing the majority of women are class issues. Oppression of women flows from the class society we live in. Until working class women and men in struggle together overthrow the racist state and end this vicious capitalist system, women cannot be free.



# A discussion on armed struggle

**NKULULEKO NOMJI reports on a discussion with a fellow Youth Congress activist.**

We discussed with a comrade who was very disappointed by the Congress leadership's talks with the bosses and Thatcher. He was very confident that they are a waste of time and energy.

We asked him what we should be doing. He saw no other way except intensifying the armed struggle.

We asked what he meant by this and it was clear that he was talking about stepping up the bombing campaign carried out by MK.

This is a guerilla struggle of small armed groups trying to take on the oppressor by themselves. In our view, it is completely different from an armed struggle carried out by the masses themselves.

We spelt out the difference between these two things. Guerillaism can't defeat the SA state, but will have negative consequences. MK has existed for 23 years but what successes can we show?

The comrade at first stuck to the view that we should increase the bombings. He is very disgusted of the way whites treat us.

He informed us of how one youth ended up joining MK. Comrade Z was brought up on a farm under extremely difficult conditions. He had very little education and white kids he grew up with used to tease him a lot. They took him as their toy.

The boy grew up and became a man. Influenced by his experience and his eagerness to change this system, he joined MK. At the height of the 1984-86 upsurge he planted a bomb which left a few people dead. He was arrested and sentenced to death and that was the end of comrade Z. This comrade told us that comrade Z had no choice but to avenge himself.

We said that we need to avenge ourselves against the whole system that oppresses us, to put an end to it completely. Guerilla struggle can't do this. There is no way short of the organised working class taking up arms if we are to overthrow the rule of the whites and the bosses.

We asked him how he thinks bombing whites will solve our problem? We

explained that such acts strengthen white reaction and make it possible for the state to consolidate its forces.

If we are to split the whites, we have to show them our struggle is against the ruling system, and not against them as whites. The bombs at Ellis Park, in the Wimpy bars, and at the white bus station in Johannesburg merely have the effect of driving ordinary whites to the SADF.

## Excuse

Whenever there is a blast the state uses it as an excuse to terrorise the townships. It becomes a justification for house to house search, mass arrest, etc. Activists pay the price. Therefore bombings in most cases have a negative effect.

The comrade was beginning to get our point but still felt that we must satisfy his feelings: teach the whites a

lesson; bomb quite a lot of them.

We made clear that we are not "sorry for whites." It is true, especially in a small town like that one, that whites usually take us as toys. But the question is political. Is guerrillaism a way forward?

What is armed struggle for? What is needed to take our struggle forward? We cannot at all allow feelings and anger to prevent us from seriously addressing these vital questions. There has always been repression from the whites and it will increase as the struggle intensifies.

In South Africa there are nearly five million whites. They are armed to resist any threat to overthrow the state. This shows that if we fail to split them away from the state we will have a most vicious and devastating racial civil war.

The MK strategy drives us in that direction, while failing to provide any realistic method of defeating our enemy.

Surely the whites will only stop taking us as their toys when we rule

## Inqaba says:

\* We stand for the armed overthrow of the racist South African state.

\* The role of arms in our struggle now must be to defend and strengthen the power of the mass Congress movement, to prepare it for this victory.

\* The organised workers and youth must arm, just as the factory workers take tools in their hands to work upon stubborn materials, as an extension of their own brain power, muscles and manual skills.

\* The MK policy of bombs in bus-stations, Wimpy bars, and other public places is futile and counter-productive.

\* Such a policy cannot defeat the state — but makes this task more difficult by uniting the whites more behind the state's repression, and strengthening the cohesion of the army and police.

\* It slaughters ordinary blacks

and whites to no purpose; it wastes the lives of courageous young militants who are needed to organise defence within the mass movement arms in hand; and it does nothing to increase the confidence and power of the working-class to defeat the state and transform society.

\* We stand for organised armed self defence by Congress workers and youth against the state and vigilante reaction — combined with energetic campaigns of mass action on the key democratic and economic questions — to strengthen our movement's power.

\* This will prepare the way for splitting the white state on class lines and carrying through a mass armed insurrection to overthrow the state, and the bosses with it.

\* Comrades who have had weapons training and are in possession of arms should cease their guerilla activities and devote themselves to the implementation of this policy.





South Africa and the most important question is how we get there. For this, the masses must be armed.

The comrade was not pleased that MK does not arm the masses. He recalled the Crossroads experience where a 'squatter camp' was destroyed by a handful of vigilantes assisted by the SADF. He pointed out that the workers and youth were prepared to lay down their lives for their community but there were no arms. The youth had to face armed forces with stones and sticks.

Then he told us of the Duncan Village massacre. Masses were not armed for self defence. After the massacre nobody listened to our calls to the ANC for arms.

We spent a few hours discussing how we see armed struggle. We made it clear that MK does not at all conduct armed struggle as we mean it. We say that people must be armed for self defence and ultimately for insurrection. It will mean arms are provided for Crossroads and all other struggles.

## Heroic struggles

We informed him of the heroic struggles in Natal against Inkatha because the youth and workers refused to allow Inkatha thugs to terrorise them. MK did not provide them with arms because the leadership wants peace with Inkatha. They must improvise to get arms by other means.

His feeling was still that MK should

carry on with a fight against the state and we must assist and not cry for its assistance.

We explained that the state is too strong to be brought down by a few youth no matter how determined and courageous they are. South Africa has more than 300 000 soldiers, plus police force plus vigilantes and the most sophisticated dangerous weapons on top of that.

He made a point that AK47 is more

powerful than R1 used by South Africa. We answered that if you compare the few AK's, grenades, etc. that we have, to the tanks, Casspirs, air force navy, etc. then you can see that we are still far from matching with this regime. Nothing except the power of the armed working class can bring this regime down.

Our struggle is not simply military. It could not succeed just by supplying arms to the people. Mass mobilisation around social issues -- wages, housing, education, political rights, etc -- by the Congress organisations is vital.

It is as this struggle rises that the need for arms will more and more become a reality for everyone. The mass movement will begin to arm itself, in addition to whatever weapons MK might provide.

But right now arms are needed in Natal and many other places for self-defence in struggles.

The victory of the revolution will also depend on winning over layers of the white working class and middle class. For this, we will not only have to take up arms. COSATU, SAYCO, the UDF and the ANC must use their non-racialism, together with socialist policies, to show a different future to the white working class.

He asked why the leadership could not see that MK is not playing the right role? We threw the question back to

## Talking with a black policeman

*Dear comrades,*

*I am a nurse. One morning at work, I had a policeman as one of my patients. When I realised this, I asked him the following questions:*

*C: Why did you join the police force?*

*P: I joined because I want to help the people. I want to help them if they are being robbed and raped.*

*C: What do you think of the school boycotts?*

*P: To be quite honest, I will never work in that department. They can rather put me in jail.*

*C: Are you aware that you are supporting apartheid and that the government is just using you?*

*P: I do not support apartheid and I want to help the people. For instance, if someone robs you then I want to be there to protect you.*

*C: Do you think that you alone can protect the people? The government is*

*just using you to gain support from the community but they never will because the people see the police as an obstacle, not as some helping hand. Why do you think people rob each other?*

*P: It is the gangsters that are causing this.*

*C: But why are there gangsters?*

*P: Well, people want to be like that.*

*C: I think the problem lies with the fact that there are not enough jobs for everyone.*

*P: I agree with you but that is not the main reason. I still feel they want to be like that.*

*Unfortunately I did not have enough time to continue with the discussion. I personally feel that the answers he gave me were due to his lack of understanding. I will see him again and I hope to proceed with the discussion.*

*Yours in the struggle,  
Julia Fields*



him. What do you think?

He responded by saying the leadership is trying to compromise with the bosses and Thatcher. MK uses Russian arms and the Russians are probably hoping for a compromise. The leadership fear that the Russians would be cross if the arms are given to the people. We took his point further to show that the Russian bureaucracy fear any successful revolution because of the impact it will have on the Russian working class. They stole the democratic power of the Russian working class and refuse to hand it back.

## Justification

We also explained how the Russian bureaucracy tries to work out political justification for not arming us. They do this through the SACP.

He asked if the leadership refuses to arm us, where will we get arms? We asked him who makes the arms? Who offloads them at the docks? What do the miners use to blow up big rocks?

There is no shortage of arms in our country. In most white households where domestic servants work, there are firearms. Vigilantes, blou doek, green flies, Zulu Popays and the SAP all walk up and down sometimes drunk with guns in their hands.

He was very worried that the wholesale distribution of arms would make people terrorise each other. How could we control that?

Without political organisation and clear purpose, lumpens and undisciplined elements would create big problems. Even now the MK commanders admit that there are uncontrolled units carrying out unauthorised bombings. That explains the need for the ANC to be built as a mass organisation of the working class with clear revolutionary policies and discipline.

At this stage one of our comrades had his favourite rave about how the Bolsheviks led the Russian working class to victory.

The discussion started at 8pm and did not finish until 2am the next morning. By this time we were all speaking the same language:

**Build a mass ANC on a socialist programme to unite the working class into a powerful force and arm it for the overthrow of the state and capitalism!**

# White workers : what future?

The South African ruling class has for many years rested on the social basis of millions of whites to suppress the black majority. This base has only been possible to sustain on condition of granting them privileges as a reward.

Apartheid is well known for offering better conditions to the whites while condemning the blacks to absolutely terrifying conditions. This has been the only basis for the rapid growth of South Africa's economy.

Now with economic growth stagnating, the ruling class finds it increasingly difficult to offer these privileges anymore. On the other hand the whites are strongly demanding these privileges.

Caught up with the most militant struggles of the black working class resisting attacks, the ruling class has been forced to begin attacking the white working class as well.

While unemployment is increasing among them, Botha has attempted to freeze the wages of the public sector

**By Nkululeko Nomji  
SAYCO activist**

which is hitting a lot of them. Some white working class families are already kept going by soup kitchens and other feeding schemes.

The depth of the crisis is shown by the preparedness of some whites to take a job for R5.00 a day. The last SAB strike saw a lot of white youth scabbing on black workers' jobs.

## Just beginning

Just like black housewives, some whites have to supplement their income by selling homemade stuff. And all this is just the beginning.

Already in the central towns we see whites begging -- these aren't hobos at all. One decent-looking guy I saw was

## On Arrie Paulus

Dear Comrades,

We all know Arrie Paulus as the extreme racist ex-leader of the white miners' union, and presently Conservative Party MP for Carletonville.

We remember him for calling black mineworkers "baboons" and leading the white miners to defeat in 1979, when they tried to maintain job reservation on the mines.

Less well-known however is the role that Paulus has played in government-appointed commissions on health and safety on the mines.

Consistently, he has submitted his own minority reports putting forward the interests of the white miners, which disagree -- sometimes greatly -- with the majority of white lawyers, academics and businessmen who also serve on these commissions, and defend the bosses' standpoint.

Today, white miners have some of the best safety standards in the world. Free medical examinations if they do just one shift in 6 months. A free post-mortem. And compensation for the effects of cigarette smoking! (This in the event they become short of breath whilst working on the mines.)

For me, this shows the price the

big bosses and state have had to pay to bury the memory white miners have of their forefathers, who were bombed from the air by the "liberal" Smuts during the 1922 white miners' strike.

It shows how much the capitalists have depended upon the white miners to police the black workers.

It shows the white miners are part of the working class, although blinded to this by racism and great privilege.

But the cracks are appearing among the whites -- between white workers and lower middle class people, and white bosses. The black workers' struggle, and the inability of the big bosses to keep up their bribes to the white workers as their profits are squeezed, is contributing to this process.

Let our movement use this situation to remind white workers where they belong!

*Inqaba* was right to say NUM should have called the white miners out on strike as well, to protest the deaths at Kinross.

Let us show the white miners who has the real interests of the whole of the working class at heart!

From  
N. Walker, Transvaal.





Many unemployed white workers acted as scabs during the 1987 rail strike.

with a placard reading: "Looking for a job of any sort, PLEASE help with clothes, food or anything".

All those, including those who for cooking use electric irons turned upside down because they can't afford a stove, vote Conservative Party.

There is a fear among the whites, particularly the working class, of what this ever increasing fall in their living standards will mean. This is what the extreme right-wing gamble with to win support.

The National Party has been revealed as a party of big-business, despite their echoing of Afrikaner nationalism.

## Movement

The movement of the white working class away from the Nats to the far right terrifies the bourgeois politicians. All of them have come to the fore to win the whites back. Their main fear is to where the white working class and some layers of the middle class will resort once the bankruptcy of the right wing is exposed.

The crisis of the white working class is caused by the inability of the economy to guarantee them any lasting security. This inability is the result of the stagnation in the productive forces, which can only be freed by the complete overthrow of the system of private ownership.

All right-wing parties are very far from preparing this. They are led by terrible racist petty-bourgeois elements. These crooks are linked in many ways to big business. The fate of the white working class lies with those who are preparing for the overthrow of capitalism -- the mighty black working class.

The bourgeois politicians in the

### Black worker chats to white soldier

Worker: Morning.

Soldier: Morning friend, how are you?

W: Not too bad, just hard working and low wage.

S: Terrible, haa.

W: Yes, are you working?

S: No, its two months now. I am from the army but I haven't got a job yet. I am looking for a decent job with decent wages.

W: Look, friend, if you think you gonna get a job for living wage, you are dreaming. It was like that before but not any more now. Under this government you not get job.

S: Well, if I don't, I am gonna turn to robbery.

W: That won't help you either, brother. You will end up spending your life in jail.

S: What can I do to get money?

W: My friend, we have one choice: you and me to unite and build a new South Africa.

NDM, FFF, PFP, etc. are as bankrupt as the right wing. They can't even agree in uniting their forces. It is very bad that the Congress leadership is looking for some "alliances" with these bourgeois representatives.

It is true that we should look into some ways of splitting the whites away from the state. The white working class cannot on its own solve its problem. Even its trade unions are controlled by the most compromising lot you can get.

## Railway workers

It is not accidental that white railway workers in their dispute came up against their leadership. "We will strike. If we don't have the right to strike then we will strike for the right to strike." This was the mood of the white railway men.

Big struggles will open up among the whites. The white proletariat -- once it discovers the bankruptcy of the ultra-right -- will become open to the road of revolution.

The support which the white working class is giving to the right wing is a threat to our revolution. It clearly explains that if we fail to win over a substantial amount of them then a racial civil war will open up.

Whites won't be won over by glorious speeches of how immoral apartheid is or how democratic South Africa will be without apartheid.

Recently the so-called white left met the ANC leadership and agreed on "plans" for a future South Africa. Not surprisingly the agreement is vague on the most basic demands of the working class. Sometimes these futile attempts are done in the name of impressing the white working class to join the Congress. All these will fail. The white working class will only be impressed by the struggles of the black working class.

Already some white railway workers respect the last SARHWU strike. They speak of the black railway workers' militancy.

The task is clear. Build a powerful black working class force under the Congress banner. Arm it for self defence and ultimately for the overthrow of the big business and their state.

To the white working class we say: Join us in the struggle to free the whole working class. Nobody will ever stand in our way to democracy and socialism.



## A white railway worker interviewed

I waited at a crowded station. A bus full of black railway workers arrived – there was one white face among them – Sampiel

Aged about forty, he has a thick neck, huge rough hands and a large beer-boep. Black workers told me laughingly: "Hy is 'n dik boer, but he is powerful!"

He looks like a street fighter but he was direct and friendly.

Sampiel, the white railway worker interviewed here, is one of a number of whites who, in a confused and contradictory way, are groping towards the alternative our movement presents.

In the early stages of the revolution, however, most middle- and working-class whites will turn to the ultra-right in the vain attempt to recover the past of privilege and security. So may Sampiel.

It will require big shocks plus the uncompromising power of our movement, before they could turn to join us decisively.

The Congress leadership needs to put forward bold non-racial socialist policies to encourage every step white workers take in the direction of our movement.

"I got my apprenticeship as a mechanic and joined the motor union. I was interested, but didn't know much.

Then I was in construction. Daar het ek geleer dat dit nodig is om te struggle. Ek het gestrugle maar verloor. Dan was ek by die railways. Ek was 'n stoker. Ek het niks van die wit unie geweet nie.

Verlede jaar toe SARHWU gestrike het het 'n paar van ons T-shirts by hulle gekoop. Nou hoekom moet die base „nya, nya, nya” as ons die hemde dra? Die wit werkers het almal gepraat, wanneer dit op die push kom doen hulle niks, en ons staan alleen. But ek is nie gepla nie.

Ek sien dinge. Ek hou dop. SARHWU is beter. Daardie unie kry reg, en ons? Ons fail. Daardie mense kry wat hulle moet kry, en ons....hoekom begin ons nie met 'n top salaris nie? Why don't we make it one union? The blood is the same. As ek siek is kan ek hulle bloed kry.

Almal raak upset oor die T-shirt. They want to know what is behind it, they say it's ANC business. But what can they tell us? We're feeling all the

we survive on this?

The blacks, they show us man. Ek vra vir jou wat is die verskil: ons werk saam, ons loop saam -- wat is die verskil? I told them they should ride the bus then you'll see the bosses will „nya nya nya” soos canaries.

Because of the T-shirt I got a "last warning". If they want to fire me how am I going to stop it. Maar ek weet dis nie ANC business nie. Hulle baklei vir 'n Living Wage. En hulle weet hoe om te baklei. Ons wou ook 'n Living Wage hê. Dis nie ANC business nie.

En baie van hulle is intelligent, ek gaan na hulle meetings en sien dit.

Have you thought about joining SARHWU?

Ja, I have. I have already filled in the forms. I'm just now waiting. But if I wear my T-shirt, I get fired straight away. Ek was 'n stoker gewees maar ek stook nie op nie. Ek dink hulle unie is goed sover.

What do you think of the government's attitude?

Ek sien die changes op die treine, dis goed. Dis alright as hulle hul plek hou!

The government wants to sell SATS. What will happen if they do?

Well the private sector has already taken all the graft. I don't want to go back to the private sector.

They can keep all their benefits. What I want is a cabin -- and they don't give you one. In the private sector is jy in en uit. In SATS, ons staan. I still have my graft, if they want to fire me they must have a reason. If a man has got a graft its easy. But its not easy for 'n ou that must graft with his hands.

Things are very bad for white workers. Why must the government give things and take them again? And now, where is life again? Bread is up, petrol is up, every blerrie thing is up.

Would you vote for PW? Of sal jy KP stem?

Ek stem nie. Ek is 'n draad sitter maar ek is nie alleen nie. Daar is baie van ons. I can see the difference. Waar is die geld?

Wat dink jy van die AWB?

Ek kyk wat gaan aan. Ek stel nie belang in die politiek nie. Die government vat hulle almal vir 'n ride. As jy enige iets doen sê hulle dis die ANC. Hulle wil jou mind control. Botha is 'n tweede Hitler! (moenie dit skryf nie

Is daar ander wit werkers wat saam met jou sou stem?

Ja. Maar hulle is bang. Maar hoekom moet ek bang wees? Wie se lewe is dit? Wat kan iemand sê?

How can workers get what they want?

As ons saamstaan -- dan sal alles stilstaan, dwarsdeur. En die government sal nie kop of gat uitmaak nie. Jy sien die private sector vat oor. And now they take all these deductions without asking me. Even for medical aid they take money and I must still pay when I go to the doctor.

Ons is nie tevrede nie. Ek kry R720 per maand. How can you have a happy family with so little? Ons wou ook 'n bietjie ryk wees.

Don't you think that people will be surprised that a white South African worker thinks the way you do about blacks?

Hulle gaan surprised wees as ek SARHWU join, dit kan ek vir jou sê!

Daar is hulle by die werk wat baie geleerd is. Hulle het 'n vark attitude. Hulle sit in die busse en vloek en carry on. Jy kan nie so met mense werk. Hulle praat van kaffirs en sulke goed. Dis nie reg nie. As 'n ou geleerd is loop hy as of hy 'n big shot is. Ek het net Std 6 maar ek ken meer as hulle. Hulle en die base met hulle degrees kan terug skool toe gaan.

Hulle van SARHWU, hulle het geveg. Hulle het baie gekry, ek sê vir jou. Nee, ek gaan join. Die ander werkers gaan sien. By my depot gaan die meeste van ons join. We must get the whites to come in one clique. But we don't want to strike.

But if you can't get what you want what do you do?

Well then gaan my attitude dieselfde wees soos hulle s'n. Maar hulle moet nie sê ek is 'n ANC, 'n terroris, 'n kommunist en al daardie rubbish.

Maar ek stel nie belang nie. Dis 'n ander joint hierdie land, dis 'n ander mafia. This Bruce ou doesn't want to go to the army so they lock him up for six years. Is that a free country? God, in the army they don't even pay you out when they shot you dead.

But I say we must get equal money in the graft -- but there is no graft anyway if you lose your job. En daar is baie mense wat nie werk het... miljoene. Baie wit mense ook.

Kyk die geld, kyk die lewe -- dis nie reg nie. Ek wou my eie huis betaal, my eie huis bekostig. Dan sal die lewe nog grand wees. 99



# What is "workerism"?

The term "workerism" has acquired a certain currency among activists in our movement. But what is "workerism"?

In 1986, the UDF journal *Isizwe* (Vol I, No 3) -- to which many activists have looked for theoretical guidance -- published an article on "Errors of Workerism". At first glance, this article may seem both radical and convincing. But, the more closely it is examined, the more confused it can be seen to be.

"As the name shows", begin the *Isizwe* authors, "workerism concentrates more or less narrowly on the working class. Workerism correctly states that this class is the most progressive class in capitalist societies. But workerism then clings to this truth in a very mechanical, one-sided way.

"Depending on the time and place, workerism has some or all of the following features. In the first place, workerism is suspicious of all issues that are not 'pure' working class issues. What is more, workerism tends to have a very narrow idea of working class concerns. It tends to think mainly of factory based struggles over wages and working conditions. These are the really important problems for workerism. Insofar as other issues, beyond the point of production (beyond the factory) are taken up, these are seen as secondary matters. This means that workerism tends to under-rate the very important struggle for state power. By state power we mean control over the police, army, courts, parliament and administration.

"Workerism also tends to be highly suspicious of any kind of popular alliance, and of any struggle that involves more than just the working class." (pp. 13-14; emphasis in original.)

Within this passage *Isizwe* identifies criticism a number of ideas which are indeed harmful for our movement. As the article proceeds, however, *Isizwe* adds to the list, combining under the same label of "workerism", other ideas which are in fact correct. That, as we shall see, was the real purpose behind the article.

*Isizwe* says it is in favour of socialism: "A genuine interest in socialism and its propagation is not to be equated with dissidence, workerism, or any other deviation." (I, 4) Yet close examination will show that *Isizwe* is in fact carrying out an attack on Marxist, scientific socialist, ideas -- lumping

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## By Peter Fisher and Richard Monroe

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them together with both reformist and ultra-left errors under the convenient amalgam: "workerism".

As we proceed, we hope to show how the *Isizwe* authors performed this trick.

## Terminology

A word about terminology, to begin with. The purpose of terms and concepts in politics should be to distinguish clearly between different ideas or things, to bring to light different social forces and political tendencies. For this, concepts need to be precise, and clear.

"Workerism" is not such a concept. It does not help to illuminate the real divisions which exist on the way forward for our struggle. It jumbles up

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## Use of the term "workerism" can only serve to confuse activists on issues of vital importance.

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quite different things, quite contradictory tendencies and ideas. In fact, use of the term "workerism" can only serve to confuse activists on issues of vital importance.

"In the late 19th century and early 20th century", says *Isizwe*, "workerism was one of the false approaches that the new, international workers' movement had to deal with."

"Workerism"? In that case, one would imagine the term was in use at the time, for example in the 45 volumes of Lenin's works, and in the writings of other political analysts and leaders in the international workers' movement

who engaged in sharp polemics against opposing approaches and tendencies. Yet they did not use this term!

*Isizwe* is right in telling us that wrong ideas were promoted by important sections of the leadership of the workers' movement in Europe. It was Marxism which identified these and relentlessly combatted them.

These wrong ideas had characteristics which *Isizwe* includes in the long list quoted above. But they were not called "workerism". They were called *economism* and *reformism*. Why coin a new name for them now?

## Economism and reformism

The idea that the working class should confine itself mainly to "factory-based struggles over wages and conditions" is more correctly called *economism*.

Economism -- identified as such -- arose in the workers' movement in Tsarist Russia at the turn of the century. It wanted to limit the working class struggle to 'trade union politics' "viz., the common striving of all workers to secure from the government measures for alleviating the distress to which their condition gives rise, but which do not abolish that condition, i.e. which do not remove the subjection of labour to capital." (Lenin, *What is to be Done*)

Economism is inseparably linked to a reformist approach to politics. The tendency to "under-rate the struggle for state power" -- or, more precisely,

to deny that the working-class needs to overthrow the state in order to liberate itself and the whole of the oppressed people -- is more correctly called *reformism*.

The foremost exponent of reformism at the turn of the century was the German social democrat Eduard Bernstein. He argued that parliamentary democracy based on extension of the vote to wider sections of society, meant that the state no longer served "purely" the interests of the capitalist class.

The state had become an autonomous body, suspended above the



classes. Through parliament, he argued, the working class could, step by step, "fill" democracy with a socialist content -- and achieve its goals without the need to overthrow the state.

These ideas were combatted, notably by Rosa Luxemburg in Germany and the Russian Bolsheviks led by Lenin. They explained that Marxism was not against a struggle for reforms. On the contrary, Marxists support and join in every such struggle by the working class.

Marxism has always explained, however, that all such struggles run up against limits. Capitalism is a system of exploitation and competition, compelling the capitalists to attack the conditions of the working class for the sake of its profits. What they are forced to concede with one hand, they take back as soon as possible with the other.

Improvements are won by sections of the working class, in some places, at some times -- but under conditions where the general, global, tendency of capitalism is to promote impoverishment. Capitalism, based on the anarchy of private ownership, is again and again subject to crises which wipe out reforms that have been achieved by the working class.

No reform, therefore, is permanent. The struggle for reforms, while important, cannot remove the burdens suffered by the working class. Reformism bases itself on the idea that the working class can put up with a "tolerable" degree of exploitation, rather than moving to challenge the whole capitalist system. In reality the question of socialist revolution returns again and again to the agenda of the working class.

The working class wins, defends, and regains, both economic and politi-

his co-worker Engels had explained in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), "is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy." However, the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871, when the working class briefly took power, had confirmed for Marx that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes." (*The Civil War in France*).

It could not achieve its goals simply through parliamentary means, leaving intact the courts, administration, police and army of the old state. It must dismantle these, and replace them with its own organs of workers' democratic rule.

Shrinking from this task, the *economist* and *reformist* leaders end up betraying even the mass struggle for economic concessions and political reforms.

Both economism and reformism lead inevitably to another false idea: that, in struggling for democracy, the working class shares aims in common with "liberal" capitalists and needs to "co-operate" with them and their political representatives.

Rosa Luxemburg explained that the rise of monopoly capitalism, imperialism, and militarism had driven the whole capitalist class in an anti-democratic direction, however much they might disguise this with "democratic" talk. Defending democracy and overcoming capitalism's crisis demanded working-class revolution.

She ridiculed Bernstein for advising "the proletariat to disavow its socialist aim, so that the mortally frightened liberals might come out of the mousehole of reaction." (*Social Reform or Revolution*)

Bolshevism implacably opposed such an "alliance". The Russian bourgeoisie, explained Lenin, was too tied to the landlords, imperialism and the Tsarist state, and too hostile to working-class power, to join in a real struggle for democracy. The real counter-revolutionary character of the liberals, hidden behind 'democratic' sweet-talk, had to be ruthlessly exposed.

It was the working-class in Russia, in alliance with the oppressed peasantry, which must lead a revolutionary struggle for democracy and workers' power, in complete opposition to the bourgeoisie and their representatives.

On this basis, the Russian working class established the first workers' state in the 1917 revolution.

"Workerists", says *Isizwe*, are "highly suspicious of any kind of popular alliance." Lenin and the Bolsheviks were not merely "highly suspicious" of, but **denounced**, the idea of an "alliance" of the working class with the liberals. Did this make Lenin a "workerist"? *Isizwe* doesn't say. The fact is, "workerism" is not a helpful term in clarifying ideas and distinguishing real tendencies in politics.

## Economism and reformism in SA

Do *economist* and *reformist* tendencies exist in our own movement in SA today? Undoubtedly, yes.

In identifying and criticising some of these, *Isizwe* makes some valid points -- which *Inqaba* has also made in a number of earlier issues.

The *Isizwe* authors identify one of these tendencies among those in the leadership of pre-FOSATU and FOSATU trade unions of the 1970s and 1980s.

Prominently identified with this tendency is the writer Steven Friedman. In his book on the rebirth of the trade unions, *Building Tomorrow Today*, he argues for a "new style of politics" in which the trade unions gradually extend the negotiating procedures used in industrial bargaining to the political arena.

He writes of the FOSATU period: "so began the first attempt to build an independent worker politics in Africa -- and to bring to the communities a style which stresses the power of ordinary workers, rather than great leaders, to shape their own destiny -- and to do it through negotiation." (p. 439, our

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### The struggle for reforms, while important, cannot remove the burdens suffered by the working class.

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cal reforms by struggle, i.e. by the exercise of its collective force. But, in the final analysis, the ruling capitalist class exercises a monopoly of force through its control of state power. Thus the limits to the struggle for reforms bring the working class again and again up against the state, and the need to overcome and defeat it.

Claiming to follow Marx, Bernstein had in fact turned Marxism upside down. "The first step in the revolution by the working class," Marx and

Bernstein, she pointed out, had replaced the Marxist explanation of the material necessity for **class revolution** by the idealistic notion that progress depended on humanity's "love of justice".

Lenin led the struggle against the reformism of the Mensheviks in Russia. The Mensheviks claimed that the working-class needed to "ally" and subordinate itself to the liberal politicians to end the Tsarist dictatorship and achieve parliamentary democracy.



emphasis)

The idea of an "independent worker politics" is an attractive one. And the rebuilding of the trade unions from the early 1970s by black workers; the formation of FOSATU and then COSATU -- has been a magnificent achievement, through which many hundreds of thousands of ordinary workers have indeed gained confidence in their power to shape their destiny.

Obviously, compromises in the day-to-day economic struggle are an unavoidable necessity -- so long as the working class lacks the means to overthrow the bosses. Negotiated agreements arise because of this: because of a clash of two forces, the capitalists and the workers, neither in a position to defeat the other entirely.

While such conditions exist, the working class is compelled to accept the necessity of such negotiations and compromises -- **but not to make a virtue of it.**

Moreover, industrial negotiation, as every worker knows, is toothless without struggle or the threat of struggle. And the power and confidence that has been gained in building the trade unions spurs the working class forward politically not towards compromise with the class enemy, but towards democratic and social revolution.

Friedman, however, advocates his "independent worker politics" of

local government system rather than relying on a boycott they are unable to organise." (*Weekly Mail*, 22-29/7/88) His "independent worker politics" is here reduced, not even to the politics of "negotiation", but to the politics of **submission.**

What a classic example of an attractive, apparently radical, and fancy-sounding concept -- "independent worker politics" -- being used to conceal essentially **reactionary, class-colaborationist** ideas.

Real working-class politics in SA is the struggle of the working-class to build the organisations it needs to liberate itself from the problems it experiences, **to overthrow the existing state by all the means at its disposal.**

But to Friedman, and to all brands of *economism* and *reformism*, this is wholly unacceptable. Such tendencies peddle radical phrases to try and gain credibility -- in order to confuse and divert our movement from its tasks.

Apartheid rule defends capitalism, and SA capitalism depends on the apartheid state to enforce the cheap labour that is the basis of its profits. The *Isizwe* authors themselves point out, in criticising the avowed trade union reformists, that: "Without an oppressive machinery (police, army, courts, jails, administration) the bosses would not be able to continue for one single day their exploitation of the workers in the factory."

Under the mounting pressure of

dencies in our movement. *Isizwe* criticises **that brand of reformists** who want to **restrict** the working class to "trade union politics" -- to "the common striving of workers to secure from the government measures for **alleviating** the distress to which their condition gives rise, but which do not **abolish** that condition." (Lenin; our emphasis)

But in making its criticism, *Isizwe* by no means goes as far as Lenin did. Nor does it extend, as he did, the criticism of reformism to include **every** variety of this error.

When we look at how *Isizwe* takes up the question of popular alliances, we will see that its term "workerism" is used in fact to cover over reformist features in its own position.

## "Workerism" is an amalgam

"Workerists", says *Isizwe*, tend "to be highly suspicious of any kind of popular alliance, and of any struggle that involves more than just the working class"; they are "suspicious of all issues that are not 'pure' working class issues". (pp. 13-14) Then, later in the article, they add that some workerists "would like to see the UDF become a socialist, workers' party." (p. 26)

To use the single term "workerism" to cover all these ideas, which are clearly different, is not helpful in distinguishing tendencies. It is true, for example, that the avowed trade union reformists in FOSATU argued against trade union participation in the UDF on the grounds that it was a "popular alliance." But these criticisms by *Isizwe* are not directed solely against this tendency.

Far from being "suspicious of any alliance" with other classes, for example, economists and reformists of the Friedman stripe believe that the black working class should ally itself with the bosses to pressurise the state to bring about "orderly change" as an alternative to revolution.

This tendency in FOSATU did **not** want to build the UDF as a "socialist, workers' party", but wrongly argued that organised workers should not affiliate and take the leading role in the UDF.

Here it is clear that *Isizwe* is taking economist and reformist ideas, and lumping them together with other ideas by means of the label "workerism". The term "workerism", in short, is an amalgam. The totally false impli-

## The democratic question in South Africa cannot be solved through negotiations with the bosses or the state.

"negotiations" as an **alternative** to revolution, as an **alternative** to **struggle.** "It [negotiation]," he concludes, "offers ... the **powerful** a prospect of **orderly change** instead of a **violent struggle** they must one day lose." (p. 455, our emphasis)

Offers to... "the powerful": in other words, to **the bosses and the state!** This so-called "independent worker politics" which Friedman claims to be offering to the workers, he is in reality offering to the bosses and the state as an alternative to a revolution which "they must one day lose"!

In recent months, Friedman has gone further -- to publicly advocate blacks to vote in the October elections for the puppet councils: "groups who oppose the system might make more headway, using seats to challenge the

the movement of the black working class, the bosses can at times urge the government to change particular policies -- **because of their fear of the impending revolution.** But all the "pressure" and "negotiations" in the world will not persuade the bosses to surrender their state to black majority rule. Nor will the state surrender.

**The democratic question cannot be solved in negotiations with the bosses or the state.** To achieve national liberation and democracy, to win decent wages, jobs, homes and education for all, the apartheid state must be overthrown by workers' revolution, and the rule of the bosses with it.

It is this understanding which constitutes the essential dividing line between *reformist* and *revolutionary* ten-



cation is created that any "workerist", i.e. person holding any one of these ideas must then believe in all of them!

For what purpose is *Isizwe* trying to create this confusion? Let us try to disentangle their arguments.

## Narrowing the horizons of the working class

Economists and reformists, it is true, in trying to limit the horizons of the working class, promote a narrow idea of what constitute "working-class issues." Together with this, they promote a narrow conception of "the working class" -- as those who can be organised in trade unions, i.e. employed workers in the factories, mines, docks, farms, etc.

In reality, of course, the unemployed, pensioners, housewives, youth -- all those who own no means of production and depend on wage-income for survival -- are part and parcel of the working class. Social issues outside the workplace -- homes, fares, education, health -- are no less working-class issues than wages or safety at work. In fact there are no mass demands in SA, including the demand for political rights, that are not essentially working-class demands.

Any attempt to divide the different detachments of the working-class from each other in struggling for these

*reformism*, which does not require a new label to identify and criticise.

Today, to build the strength of the Congress organisations equally requires action campaigns uniting organised workers, youth, the organised and unorganised, in the townships and countryside -- in struggles which develop their common class consciousness and confidence in carrying through a democratic and socialist revolution.

To mobilise such campaigns -- for a national minimum wage of R160 for a forty-hour week; for a national rent strike; for one-person-one-vote in an undivided SA -- is the joint responsibility of the COSATU, UDF, and SAYCO leadership.

The *Isizwe* authors write, correctly, that "The position, outlook and discipline of the workers must provide direction not just within the confines of the factory -- but also in the political struggles, in struggles against gutter education, and community oppression."

But they then introduce a muddle. "To ensure that our struggle is advanced to the maximum", they say, "the working class needs increasingly to provide leadership not just to its own members -- but to all democratic and oppressed South Africans -- to the black middle strata, to the rural masses, to the unemployed, and to the youth."

Here *Isizwe* itself promotes a con-

ing class to what Lenin called **trade union politics**... thus strengthening the hand of the economists?

*Isizwe* criticises "workerists" for

## What kind of "alliances"?

being "highly suspicious of any kind of popular alliance, and of any struggle that involves more than just the working class"; for being "suspicious of all issues that are not 'pure' working class issues."

*Isizwe* is correct in emphasising the need for the broadest possible unity of all the oppressed in the struggle.

It is true, moreover, that the concerns of the working class are by no means all "pure" working-class concerns.

In struggles against rent or fare increases, in struggles for decent education, etc., the black working class is protecting the economic interests also of many among the lower middle class, who are oppressed by the power of the monopolies and the state -- and seeks to involve them in struggle also.

In struggling for freedom of organisation, free speech, freedom of religion, the working class defends the interests of society as a whole, and of every person in society who wants and needs these freedoms.

Lenin stressed the need for the working class to "react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it takes place, no matter what stratum or class of people it affects." (*What is to be Done*)

That idea is among the ABC's of Marxism. **The working class has always been the most consistent fighter not only for socialism but for democracy because it has every interest in eliminating, and no interest in maintaining, any kind of oppression.**

But this does not mean that the working class should build just any kind of "alliance", at the expense of its own democratic and socialist interests.

The state must be overthrown: that is the central task. The black working class seeks to lead an alliance of all those able to see that their interests lie in overthrowing the state. **But the working class cannot ally with those who cannot accept the destruction of the existing state power -- its police, army, courts, jails, administration, etc.**

In criticising so-called "workerists in NDS clothing" who "would like to

## Economists and reformists promote a narrow conception of the working class.

demands only plays into the hands of the bosses and the state.

This was why it was wrong for reformist leaders in the trade unions to hold them back from participation in the UDF when it was formed. This tended to separate their members off from hundreds of thousands of other working-class people in struggle.

This was why it was wrong for reformists in FOSATU to oppose general strike actions called by the UDF in the course of 1984-6 -- for example in the Eastern Cape in March 1985.

If there is any core of meaning in the concept of "workerism", it lies in the attempt to persuade organised workers (trade union members) that their own forces are sufficient to achieve their demands. But this is only a particular aspect of *economism* and

conception of the working class as limited to organised workers -- and labels the working-class youth, the working-class unemployed, the working-class rural masses as mere "oppressed democrats" whom the organised workers must 'ally with' in order to "lead".

Such a conception serves only to hold back the remainder of the working class from discovering their common class interest with the organised workers -- and to hold back the organised workers from combining with the rest of the working class in a class struggle for democracy and socialism.

*Isizwe* wants the working class to provide "leadership", but not on the basis of its own class interests. Isn't this an idea which, if carried out, would also tend to reduce the politics of the work-



see the UDF become a socialist workers' party", the *Isizwe* authors continue: "They would like to see the petty bourgeoisie and all those democrats who are not socialist 'weeded out' from our ranks." (p. 26)

What "workerists in NDS clothing" actually means, and who these people are, is not made clear by *Isizwe*. If, however, *Isizwe* is here referring to Marxists, then they should say so. If that is the case, the *Isizwe* authors would be engaging in scandalous slander.

Marxism explains that the black working class has every interest in uniting and leading all the black oppressed in struggle. The black middle class, a tiny section of society, is elevated above the conditions of the masses, but is oppressed both by apartheid and the domination of the mo-

supposed to be doing, except talking against apartheid. Moreover, even if we were to try to conceal and dilute our aims for the sake of such "allies", this does not deceive the class enemy. When they present themselves as "allies" their real purpose is to divert it from its revolutionary aims, in order to maintain their own power and wealth.

This was the position relentlessly explained by the Bolsheviks against the reformist Mensheviks in Russia -- a position vindicated by the victory of the Russian working class in 1917 under Bolshevik leadership.

As Lenin put it in 1908, "The experience of alliances, agreements and blocs with the social-reform liberals in the West and with the liberal reformists (Cadets) in the Russian Revolution, has convincingly shown that

tion with the "liberals".

## Should our movement promote its socialist aims?

At the same time, the *Isizwe* authors wish our movement to conceal its socialist aims.

Arguing against those unidentified "workerists" who "would like to see the UDF become a socialist workers' party", the *Isizwe* authors say:

"The UDF sees as its main task the mobilisation and organisation of all South Africans committed to non-racial, majority rule in an undivided South Africa. On the basis of this fundamental goal we have achieved major victories.

"For those within our ranks who are committed to socialism, these victories have created the space and possibilities of raising the question of socialism not within the confines of a narrow, small sect, but at a mass level.

"But there are also other patriotic democrats, who are not necessarily socialist, who are making a large contribution to the struggle. While encouraging debate and discussion about the nature of change in a future South Africa, we must also safeguard and deepen our unity."

So it is acceptable to "raise the question of socialism ... at a mass level" -- but it is not acceptable (indeed it is the terrible crime of "workerism") to seek to win the battle for socialism among the masses and so make the prevailing policy of the UDF itself socialist!

What confusion -- from a journal which has laid claim to the role of guiding UDF activists theoretically.

Let us leave aside what would or would not have been possible for the UDF, trying to operate as an open, legal organisation. It is clear that, to defeat the state, the black working class (which forms the overwhelming majority of the population) needs to build a mass ANC on a programme for the overthrow of the racist, capitalist state -- together with all those who share this aim.

But *Isizwe* is arguing that, to mobilise "all South Africans committed to non-racial, majority rule in an undivided South Africa", in order to build and maintain alliances with non-socialist "patriotic democrats", the working-class must not promote its so-

## The black working class seeks to lead an alliance of all those able to see that their interests lie in overthrowing the state.

nopolies. Black shopkeepers, taxi drivers, etc., etc., have nothing to fear from the overthrow of the apartheid state.

But there is a fundamental difference between such an alliance, and an "alliance" with any section of the capitalist class or its political representatives. Reformism creates illusions that the "progressive" capitalists and the "liberals" have a "common interest" with the oppressed masses in getting rid of apartheid -- and that "allying" with them can achieve democracy on the basis of negotiations. To sustain such alliances, claim the reformists, the working class must hide its socialist aims. The idea is fundamentally false.

For all the sweet talk of the "liberal" capitalists -- the Rellys, Blooms, etc., -- their material self-interest in ownership of the means of production makes them dependent on the state machine, no matter how much they may dislike specific features of apartheid.

Because they are defending capitalism, all the "liberal" politicians -- from Van Zyl Slabbert, to Wynand Malan and Van Eck -- are defenders in the final analysis of the existing state power (its police, army, courts, jails and administration) and of counter-revolution.

What can an "alliance" with such elements mean, in terms of reinforcing struggle? The reformists do not explain this, or what these "liberals" are

these agreements only blunt the consciousness of the masses, that they do not enhance but weaken the actual significance of their struggle, by linking fighters with elements who are least capable of fighting and most vacillating and treacherous." ("Marxism and Revisionism", *Selected Works*, I, 49-56)

And this was in a country with a semi-feudal regime -- against which the capitalists had some genuine oppositional interests!

Today in SA, also, a clear position on this question is precisely what distinguishes reformist from revolutionary currents in our movement.

*Isizwe* criticises "workerists" for "under-rating the very important struggle for state power." The authors claim familiarity with the debates in the workers' movement in the early twentieth century. Yet their article nowhere warns against the fatal dangers for the working class in its struggle for state power in seeking alliances with the 'liberal' bourgeois or their representatives.

In criticising "workerism" for being "highly suspicious of any kind of popular alliance", the *Isizwe* authors gloss over and conceal the fundamental issue: of what kind of "alliances", and with whom. In the name of promoting the "unity of all the oppressed", they leave open the door to the encouragement of class-collabora-



cialist aims.

"There are also patriotic democrats, who are not necessarily socialist, who are making a large contribution to the struggle", say the *Isizwe* authors. But who are these "patriotic democrats", for the sake of whom we need to hide our socialist aims?

It is true that there are many still, even among the working class, who are not yet "necessarily socialist".

The working class does not enter into struggle as "pure socialists", but because it needs to find a way out of its daily hardship. It is through the experience of struggle that layer upon layer, contingent after contingent, gain the understanding of what is involved in this, and the confidence to carry it out.

There are many workers still convinced of the "goodwill" of the liberal bosses, many still under the sway of priests, or even under the sway of vigilantes -- who nevertheless have a material interest in democracy and socialism.

If we were to base our movement on seeking the lowest common denominator among all these, where would we draw the line?

It is in struggle that the working class casts off its prejudices and fears, builds its power and confidence to defeat the state and capitalism, rises to socialist and internationalist perspectives, and gains the capacity to unite all the oppressed under its banner. This is the meaning of working-class leadership in practice.

"The experience of the past two years [1984-6]", claims *Isizwe*, "[has]

*Isizwe* accuses "workerists" of having a "very defeatist, passive attitude towards the oppressed black petty bourgeoisie, and middle strata in our country." (p.27) Truly, that is a characteristic of *economism* and *reformism*.

But *Isizwe's* belief that there are "patriotic democrats, who are not necessarily socialist" who would be alienated from Congress by proclaiming our goals of workers' power and socialism is in reality just as much "defeatist" and "passive".

The only so-called "patriotic democrats" -- in reality not democratic -- who would take comfort from the dilution of our programme are the capitalists and their political spokespersons. Is it these whom *Isizwe* does not wish to offend?

## What approach to the whites?

An article in a subsequent issue of *Isizwe* (I, 4) in fact bears out that this is the case.

"But broadening our political and moral influence", they write, "must go beyond the people's camp. We must increase our influence over sectors within the ruling bloc. At the national level, our call before the whites-only election in May [1987] was a good example (at least on the propaganda level) of what is meant by seeking to broaden our political and moral influence within the ruling bloc.

"This call endeavoured to address

## The working class does not enter into struggle as 'pure socialists', but because it needs to find a way out of its daily hardship.

confirmed once more, in the hard school of struggle, the correctness of our broad strategy of national democratic struggle" -- separated from a struggle for socialism.

But what "experience"? Never before in our history have so many working people in struggle proclaimed that apartheid and capitalism are two sides of the same bloody coin that, standing together, must fall together also.

This bold and confident standpoint has strengthened, not weakened, the unity of our movement. Nor has it in any way alienated the oppressed black middle class, but, on the contrary, drawn wider sections of the middle class into struggle.

a wide range of whites -- PFP members, Independent new-Nats, professionals, big business, etc. To each we addressed specific demands, calling on these different groupings to take, at least, some positive steps in the correct direction."

What does *Isizwe* mean by "calling on these different groupings to take, at least, some positive steps in the right direction"?

To sow illusions that "positive steps in the right direction" can be expected from "big business" is undiluted reformism. And the "positive steps in the right direction" that should be encouraged among "PFP members", "Independent new-Nats" etc., are to break with their political leaders and politi-

cal organisations and for support for the state and capitalism.

Some people maintain that organisations like the PFP, NDM, etc, and their leaders, speak for the "interests" of the middle-class. In reality these organisations and their leaders are the instruments of the capitalist class, seeking to mislead the middle class by holding them to support for capitalism and its state. They are the political deceivers and manipulators of the middle class, who must be ruthlessly exposed by advancing the struggle of the working masses for democracy, workers' power, and socialism.

Merely calling on such "groupings to take, at least, some positive steps in the correct direction" does nothing to weaken the power of the ruling class or its state. Where this road leads, when taken further, is brought out clearly in an article in *Work in Progress* (April-May 1988), "Winning white support for democracy", by the UDF-affiliated Johannesburg Democratic Action Committee (JODAC):

"White politics, i.e. politics in the ruling bloc, differs immensely from politics among the oppressed. The kinds of compromises and flexibility required for building alliances here will be decided by the political, cultural and ideological terrain of white politics. Features of the white political terrain include the following:

"\* while a broad layer of whites oppose apartheid, they do not support one-person-one-vote in a non-racial democracy. They are attracted by the idea of 'group rights' (and privileges);

"\* whites are extremely insecure about the future;

"\* whites are generally committed to parliamentary, reformist politics;

"\* whites generally hold a fundamental belief in 'free-enterprise' capitalism;

"\* they have a benign attitude to the western imperialist countries, and support the Thatcher-Reagan approach to South Africa;

"\* they hold to a very firm anti-sanctions position.

"Building broad alliances with white opposition groupings will have to accommodate to these core-beliefs." (Our emphasis)

For the "sake of" "alliances" with the whites, in short, our movement must abandon not merely its anti-capitalist and socialist aims, but one-person-one-vote in an undivided South Africa (in favour, presumably, of acceptance of white "group rights" and



privileges)" -- and accept "the Thatcher-Reagan approach to South Africa".

What else can JODAC mean when it advocates "accommodating" to the whites in such ways?

"Democrats working in broad white politics may have to march to a different drum from those working in the oppressed communities", continues JODAC. What a muddle! How could either whites or blacks take such a position seriously! It would simply discredit the movement.

These incredible proposals by JODAC could be dismissed with a laugh if it wasn't for the fact that they reflect thinking at the highest levels of the Congress leadership. They show the slippery slope down which the whole approach reflected in the *Isizwe* article would lead: hiding our aims, abandoning revolution itself, for the sake of "broadening" a reformist alliance with the liberals.

Support among the whites is vital for our movement. **But the decisive question, so far as winning over whites is concerned, is not the well-off 'liberal' sections of the middle class, but the ranks of the white workers and the lower middle class.** To defeat the state, the black working class will need not only to rise to its full conscious

all phrase) the Marxists who seek to identify, expose, and criticise this.

## The fundamental issue that *Isizwe* evades

Examined closely, even the most apparently "radical" elements in *Isizwe's* argument show their weaknesses.

Thus, when arguing against the economists, *Isizwe* states that: "Without an oppressive machinery (police, army, courts, jails, administration) the bosses would not be able to continue for one single day their exploitation of the workers in the factory".

"The questions of politics, of who holds state power, of who makes the laws, of who controls the police, the courts, the army, prisons and administration cannot be ignored", they say elsewhere. (p.21) "By state power we mean control over the police, army, courts, parliament and administration." (p.14)

Yet nowhere in their article do the *Isizwe* authors spell out the need for the overthrow of the state and its replacement by organs of democratic workers' rule -- the issue which, in the early twentieth century, constituted

## Nowhere does *Isizwe* spell out the need for the overthrow of the state and its replacement by organs of democratic workers' rule.

strength, leading all the oppressed, but to divide the whites on class lines, and strip away decisive sections from support for ultra-right reaction and the capitalist state.

Diluting our programme, failing to direct an appeal on class lines, appealing to big business to "take, at least, some positive steps in the correct direction" only makes this task more difficult. White workers have an instinctive hostility to big business, and will be driven further to the right by suspicions of compromises taking place between the Oppenheimers and the Congress leadership.

Closely examined, it becomes the clearer that *Isizwe's* critique of "workerism" provides a smokescreen behind which really serious errors are concealed. Their attack on economists and reformists is all very well. But it has been carefully crafted so as to promote their own brand of reformism -- and to label as "workerists" (under this catch-

the fundamental dividing line between *reformism* and *Marxism*.

Perhaps, they might argue, this is not possible in a "semi-legal publication. At the same time, it disarms the working class to use formulations regarding the state which leave open the possibility that national liberation and democracy can be achieved on the basis of the existing state machine.

Taken together with *Isizwe's* positions on "popular alliances" and on the need to hold back our socialist aims, this reinforces the illusion that **democracy can be achieved on the basis of a negotiated settlement.**

Karl Kautsky was a German workers' leader who was, at one time, in the forefront of combatting Bernstein's reformism. Later, Kautsky degenerated into an enemy of the working class movement -- opposing the Russian Revolution, and using his authority to hold back the German working class from carrying through revolution in

1918.

In 1917 Lenin re-examined Kautsky's critique of reformism, and showed how the seeds of his degeneration were contained even then in his evasion of the central question of the state:

" 'We can quite safely leave the solution of the problem of the proletarian dictatorship to the future' " said Kautsky, writing 'against' Bernstein...

"This is not a polemic against Bernstein, but, in essence, a concession to him, a surrender to opportunism; for at present the opportunists ask nothing better than to 'quite safely leave to the future' all fundamental questions of the tasks of the proletarian revolution.

"For forty years, from 1852 to 1891, Marx and Engels taught the proletariat that it must smash the state machine. Yet, in 1899, Kautsky, confronted with the complete betrayal of Marxism by the opportunists on this point, fraudulently substituted for the question whether it is necessary to smash this machine the question of the concrete forms in which it is to be smashed, and then sought refuge behind the 'indisputable' (and barren) philistine truth that concrete forms cannot be known in advance!!

"A gulf separates Marx and Kautsky over their attitudes towards the proletarian party's task of training the working class for revolution." (*State and Revolution*)

Unfortunately, *Isizwe's* polemic against "workerism" suffers also from similar evasions.

Power for the majority can come only through the revolutionary overthrow of the apartheid state, which protects a capitalist system which is bankrupt in South Africa and worldwide.

With state power, we will have democracy; without power, we have nothing. With state power, together with working people around the world, we can abolish for ever the untold misery that capitalism inflicts on millions.

All this is a socialist perspective, in the traditions of Marxism and Bolshevism.

If the *Isizwe* authors were genuine socialists, then, rather than spreading confusion by equating right-wing with socialist ideas, rather than coining misleading "theoretical" terms to conceal their own errors, they would correct themselves and join in taking this struggle forward.



# Revelations of dictatorship and corruption in the Soviet Union raise the question: WHY DID THE S.A. COMMUNIST PARTY LIE?

Developments in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev have come as a shock to many workers and youth in South Africa.

It is now openly acknowledged in the official Soviet press that there is economic stagnation, massive corruption among millions of officials, and a caricature of democracy. At the same time, there are massive demonstrations in different parts of the country of national minorities, protesting against bureaucratic rule from Moscow.

How is all this possible in a country long proclaimed to be socialist -- in which all the basic problems and conflicts were said to have been solved? This, after all, has been the picture of the Soviet Union presented for decades by the SA Communist Party and all the CP's of the world.

Now Gorbachev's *glasnost* is lifting the lid to reveal that this image was completely false. How is all this to be explained?

The Russian Revolution in 1917 was the greatest step forward yet for the world working class. In it, the working class took state power in its own hands, and overthrew not only feudal oppression, but capitalism too. On the basis of a state-owned and planned economy, the Soviet Union has leapt from being more backward than India to become an industrial super-power.

## Immense impact

The Russian revolution had an immense impact on the oppressed and exploited around the world, which echoes to this day. Workers' parties in many countries seeking to follow the Russian example -- including the Communist Party of South Africa, formed in 1921 -- came together to form the Third (Communist) International from 1919.

The revolution aroused the furious hatred of the capitalist class and reactionaries, who have striven to this day to reverse or disparage what the revolution has achieved in Russia.

Around the world, the bosses have poured out a torrent of propaganda through their newspapers, TV, and radio against the Soviet Union -- to try to turn workers away from following the example of 1917.

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## By Sean Kelly

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Now criticism of past and present shortcomings of Russian society is coming from the mouths of its own leaders. What does it signify?

At the special conference of the Communist Party this June Gorbachev admitted that the rule of Stalin from the 1930s to 1953 was characterised by "a wave of repressions and lawlessness", and that the years of Brezhnev's rule -- from 1964 to the 1980's -- were "years of stagnation."

"The principle of democratic centralism", said Gorbachev, "was at a certain stage largely replaced by bureaucratic centralism."

At this conference another Soviet leader, Ulyanov, said that there has been "a period of monstrous flourishing of corruption, bribery, ignorance, and just simply barbarism."

Many trials have been taking place exposing the vast scale and pervasiveness of this corruption among officials.

**Some Soviet leaders are even casting doubts on the superiority of state ownership and planned economy over capitalist market relations.**

All this is being served up in the capitalist press to discredit socialism. Many workers and youth are finding themselves ill-equipped to counter this attack. Some may even succumb to the idea that socialism offers no way out of hardship.

What is going on? How could all these deformations be so deep-rooted in a supposedly "socialist" society?

Why have they never been identified or explained by the South African Communist Party? Why has the SACP, instead, always falsely presented a picture of the Soviet Union as an unblemished model of socialism?

**The working class has nothing to**

fear, and everything to gain, from facing the truth. Learning honestly the lessons not only of victories, but of setbacks, is vital to the victory of socialism.

In fact the Soviet Union is not a socialist society, but a deformed workers' state. But it is only genuine Marxism which has consistently explained this. Marxism has been second to none in defending the gains of the 1917 revolution -- but it has also identified, explained, and criticised every step taken by Soviet leaders in abandoning the ideals of 1917.

## Privileged

Socialism means a society of increasing abundance and sharing to the point where everybody is equal, and classes and the state wither away. Yet in the Soviet Union now there are at least 25 million privileged officials involved in running the state. Top officials live at the level of millionaires in the West. How could this be "socialism"?

The point is that the level of abundance required to achieve socialism could not have been secured in industrially backward post-1917 Russia, or indeed in any single country.

This is why Bolshevism was always international in its outlook, recognising that socialism depends on an international economy which has broken free from the limits of capitalism.

Lenin and Trotsky, the Bolshevik leaders of the Russian Revolution, always insisted on the need to spread the revolution to more industrially advanced countries, particularly Germany at the time. This was the aim of the Third International under their leadership.

But workers' revolutions did not succeed in taking and holding power. The revolution was left isolated in backward Russia.

These were among the conditions that allowed power to be stolen from the Russian working class in the 1920s





*Josef Stalin -- leader of bureaucratic counter-revolution.*



*Brezhnev, as displayed in the African Communist (92, 1983).*

by a bureaucracy of state officials headed by Stalin -- a **bureaucracy which rules to this day as a parasitic caste, by essentially totalitarian means.**

Every form of state apparatus lives off the surplus produced in the national economy. The capitalist class having been overthrown by the revolution in Russia, the new ruling bureaucracy based itself on state ownership and the planned economy.

## Claiming

It took over the mantle of the revolution, claiming to follow in the footsteps of Lenin after his death. But it destroyed all elements of workers' democracy, without which advance towards socialism is inconceivable.

The rule of the bureaucracy is in complete contrast to everything Lenin stood for.

Stalin, the architect of this **political counter-revolution**, proclaimed -- in absolute contradiction to Bolshevik internationalism -- that "socialism" could be built in "one country"!

Stalin's "repressions and lawlessness" (admitted by Gorbachev), which cost the lives of tens of millions, were

not the work merely of a deformed personality.

They were the means necessary for the consolidation of the bureaucracy, the extension of its privilege, and the remorseless elimination of all opposition -- above all the opposition of those genuine Marxists led by Leon Trotsky who held firm to the traditions of Bolshevism, and combatted the degeneration of the first workers' state.

Of the 24 members of the Bolshevik Central Committee which led the revolution in 1917, 22 had been executed, imprisoned, or disappeared in mysterious circumstances by 1940. Many were branded as "agents of fascism" -- a scandalous slander which Gorbachev now admits was false.

The bureaucracy banished Trotsky -- leader of the Red Army which beat off invasion by 21 imperialist armies between 1917 and 1920 -- into exile and organised his assassination in Mexico in 1940.

**All this in the name of "socialism"!**

Retreating within the confines of so-called "Russian socialism", the bureaucracy ultimately abandoned the idea of supporting workers' revolution in other countries. Increasingly they feared that such revolutions anywhere in the world would enable the Russian working class to overthrow bureaucratic privilege.

Instead, trying to conceal its usurpation of power, its crimes, and its anti-revolutionary foreign policy, the Stalinist bureaucracy has for generations fabricated a vast web of lying propaganda which it has fed to the working class in Russia and abroad.

## Communist Parties

From the time of Stalin, the bureaucracy has sought to turn the leadership of Communist Parties in every country into unquestioning promoters of its own narrow interests, and loudspeakers for its lies.

The Communist Party of SA, now called the SACP, has unfortunately been no exception.

As we illustrate in the following pages, the leaders of the CPSA/SACP have propagated, in their time, the lies of Stalin, then the lies of Khrushchev, then the lies of Brezhnev and his successors -- denying facts and realities which are now admitted even by Gorbachev.

**They must explain why they have lied.**

The capitalists would like the working class to believe that dictatorship, corruption, etc are inherent in social-



# Lenin's General Staff of 1917

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## STALIN, THE EXECUTIONER, ALONE REMAINS



ism. To combat this slander, it is necessary to recognise that the Soviet Union is not a socialist society, and to explain why this is the case.

Previously, Stalinist apologists replied to the bosses' propaganda by baldly denying any "problems" in the Soviet Union. But that lie can no longer be sustained. Nowadays they admit at least some of the facts and yet continue to maintain that the Soviet Union is socialist. In that way they assist the bosses to discredit the idea of socialism.

Marxism has never been afraid to look the facts of dictatorship and corruption in the Soviet Union in the face, and to explain that the way forward for the Russian working class is a political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy and restore workers' democracy.

But the CP leaders are just as determined as they ever were to defend the bureaucratic system in Russia. They merely alter their propaganda in accordance with the latest line emanating from Moscow.

Comrade Joe Slovo, general secretary of the SACP, has declared his "enthusiasm for the Gorbachev reforms". These, he believes "will at last release the true creative energy that is inherent in the communist system" (*Observer* 1.3.87).

But hold on a minute! How about explaining to us what has been the problem with the "communist system"

up until now. And why did you never tell us that all its "true creative energy" was previously being suppressed?

A fundamental explanation of the crisis of the Soviet bureaucracy, and why this has necessitated Gorbachev's reforms, has never been presented by the SACP. But the Marxist tendency has long provided the explanation.

Through preserving nationalisation and planning, the bureaucracy has been able to develop a modern economy in Russia. But, bungling, wastage, and corruption -- the features which Gorbachev attributes to the Brezhnev years -- are in reality inherent to bureaucratic rule. Increasingly they are impeding further economic advance, further embittering the Soviet people -- thus posing a threat to the rule of the bureaucracy itself.

### Hold off revolution

Reform from above, to try to hold off revolution from below, is what Gorbachev is really engaged in.

Gorbachev hopes that economic and political "reconstruction" (*perestroika*) -- i.e. reform -- can overcome these problems. Together with this, he is encouraging "openness" (*glasnost*) to defeat the resistance of the conservative bureaucrats. For these pur-

poses, he accepts that it is necessary to expose some of the "problems" of the past.

But his measures cannot solve the problems, because they do not tackle the root cause.

A modern planned economy, requiring the inter-connected production and distribution of millions of different products, cannot be efficiently organised -- or reorganised -- simply "from the top."

It requires the full participation and control of the working class, using its own best knowledge to check and regulate production to serve the needs of all.

This cannot be achieved by any amount of reshuffling, trials, or purges of sections of the bureaucracy -- but only by the bureaucracy getting off the back of the Russian working class, the one thing it will not and cannot do!

Gorbachev is the leader of the bureaucracy in crisis. He does not intend that the bureaucracy should dissolve itself -- but rather seeks new ways to stabilise its bankrupt rule and preserve its privileges.

*Perestroika* and *glasnost* will ultimately fail, giving way to renewed stagnation, corruption, and repression. The real significance of *perestroika* and *glasnost* is in revealing the crisis of the bureaucratic system, unintentionally clarifying for the working class what it must do to overcome it --



rise up to overthrow the bureaucracy, restore workers' democratic rule, and open the way to socialism.

This is what comrade Slovo and the SACP leaders should be using their authority to explain within our movement. If the SACP was a genuine Marxist party, and not an apologist for Stalinism in its changing guises, this is what the leadership would do, rather

than spreading illusions in the deceptions and falsehoods now poured out by the bureaucracy under Gorbachev.

If we are to "release the true creative energy that is inherent in the communist system" both capitalism and bureaucratic rule must be ended world-wide.

Our struggle for national liberation, democracy and socialism is in-

separably linked with the social revolution against capitalism in the West, and the political revolution in the East.

To achieve this, the apologetics and falsifications which are the essential method of Stalinism must be eradicated from our movement, and replaced by the fearless and honest clarity which has always been the hallmark of Marxism and Bolshevism.

## "HIS MASTER'S VOICE?" -- [PART 1] How the SACP has echoed Moscow's line

### Under JOSEF STALIN

Josef Stalin consolidated his power as General Secretary of the CPSU after the death of Lenin, emerging as an absolute dictator at the head of the bureaucracy through a series of purges, 'trials' and murders of his opponents in the late 1920s and 1930s. He ruled until his death in 1953.

During this period backward Russia was transformed into the second most powerful industrial nation in the world. By 1963 total industrial output had risen to 52 times the 1913 level.

The basis for this was state ownership and planned production, made possible by the Revolution of 1917. But under the dictatorship of the bureaucracy, progress was achieved only at huge cost to the working class and peasantry.

Ruthlessly compelling the peasantry to produce on collective farms, employing armies of virtual slave labour, and repressing all opposition, Stalin and the bureaucracy were responsible for millions of deaths.

### "Serious deformations"

In June this year, at a conference of the CPSU, Gorbachev coyly admitted that under Stalin, "the political system underwent serious deformations. This made possible the omnipotence of Stalin and his entourage and the wave of repressions and lawlessness." However, one looks in vain for an explanation of how this monstrous development came about.

An article by I. Bestuzev-Lada in *Nedelya*, (April 1988) (supplement to the Russian government daily *Izvestia*) says Stalin's campaign against *kulaks* (better-off peasants) during collectivisation from 1929-1933 turned at least 19 million into "half-alive or dead people."

"An atmosphere of terror" was created to break the opposition of the peasantry. Mass deportations and famine left 15 million homeless and an estimated 10 million dead, according to Vladimir Tikhonov, a member of the Soviet Academy of Agricultural Sciences (*Argumenty i Fakty*, August 1988).

Soviet agriculture still suffers the consequences.

But South African workers, reading the newspapers of the Communist Party of SA in the 1930s, would have believed everything was paradise in the Soviet Union. On 7 November 1936 the Party's paper, *SA Worker*, dismissed critics of Stalin's collectivisation with these words: "The workers did not listen to them and today the land of the Soviets is independent of weather conditions in its agriculture."

Anyone who took the SACP's word as the truth in the 1930s would also have believed that Stalin's regime, far from being a totalitarian dictatorship, was the very model of a socialist democracy. Any claim to the contrary was "anti-Soviet" and "anti-socialist" propaganda, to be denounced as the work of "Trotskyists" and "fascist agents".

But now, lo and behold, the Gorbachev bureaucracy itself reveals what vicious repression was meted out to any opposition. "The total number of repressed and dead in the years 1935-53 is scarcely any less than the number of those who were 'dekulakised' or starved to death in 1929-33" (*Nedelya*, April 1988) -- i.e. at least 10 million.

One paper, *Ogonyok* (25.9.88) published a photograph of a line of skeletons lying buried in shallow graves after they were shot -- victims of the mass killings between the 1930's and 1941. "In the villages they didn't sleep at night because they could hear the bang-bang-bang of the shootings."

At the height of this slaughter, *SA Worker* (7.11.36), declared "Socialism Victorious" in the USSR: "So a classless society comes into being, making class rule and state force unnecessary..."

**The workers of South Africa have the right to demand an explanation from the SACP. Comrades, why did your party lie to us?**

### Germany

It was not only in the Soviet Union that workers paid bitterly for Stalinism. In Germany the Communist Party, on Stalin's orders, opposed a united front of the workers' organisations against the Nazis, thus allowing Hitler to come to power. In France, Spain and other countries, the Communist Parties, again on Stalin's orders, swung over to a position of alliances with capitalist parties and held back the struggle of the workers to take power. In every case, defeat was the bloody outcome.

But were these errors honestly faced and analysed in the Communist press? On the contrary. A picture was presented of glorious advance under the wise leadership of Stalin.

For example, in South Africa *Umsebenzi* (3.11.34), organ of the CPSA, wrote "Comrade Stalin stands at the head of the proletarian revolution and the construction of socialism in the whole world. His name is the



banner of struggle and the victory of the proletariat and of Communism throughout the world."

A report in *SA Worker* (10.4.37) of Stalin's speech to a plenum of the CPSU in 1937, emphasised his "strong stress on democratic centralism" and praised his "masterly analysis."

**Today, the SACP obediently echoes Gorbachev's criticisms of the Stalin era. But it keeps a terribly discrete silence about its own part in spreading Stalinist lies and misleading the working class of South Africa. If we shouldn't have believed them then, why should we believe them now?**

In an interview in a British capitalist newspaper, *The Observer* (1.3.87), comrade Joe Slovo, general secretary of the SACP, speaks of his "anger and disgust" at "having once been a defender of Stalin".

In another interview (*Independent*, 4.11.88) he admits that "For there to be a cult of the personality, there had to be worshippers, and I was a worshipper."

It must indeed be embarrassing that all the truth about Stalinism is now coming out. But the CP leaders protestations of regret would be easier to swallow if they were combined with an honest explanation of what went wrong with the Russian Revolution, and why the CPSU and all the CP's of the world (including South Africa) degenerated and ceased to be Marxist parties.

But they will not do this. If we look closely, we'll see that the SACP leadership is merely following the latest turn in the propaganda line of the Kremlin. This is something they have done before and will do again.

This is shown by the way the SACP responded in the 1950s to the criticism of Stalin made by Nikita Khrushchev.

## Under NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV

After Stalin's death in 1953 resistance by the workers against the bureaucratic system burst to the surface, notably in East Germany. Fearful of political revolution, a section of the bureaucracy moved in the direction of reform.

Nikita Khrushchev, previously a henchman of Stalin, became the leader of the Soviet bureaucracy in 1953 (until he was ousted in 1964).

At the 20th Congress of the Communist Party in 1956 Khrushchev made his famous "anti-Stalin" speech -- an attempt to rid the Soviet leadership of the dead dictator's stink.

Khrushchev told the Congress: "Stalin acted not through persuasion, explanation, and patient co-operation with people, but by imposing his concepts and demanding absolute submission to his opinion. Whoever opposed this concept ... was doomed to removal from the leading collective and to subsequent moral and physical annihilation."

This was not published for Soviet workers to read, but only became public after it was 'leaked' and printed abroad. CP leaders abroad hurriedly provided 'explanations' to their followers of this surprising turn. They hoped to slip the corpse of Stalin overboard without upsetting the boat of the Stalinist system.

Thus Michael Harmel, one of the leaders of the CPSA, wrote in *New Age* (5.4.56), that although Stalin's "place in history remains secure", and although he rendered "services of incalculable value", he also made mistakes. "It was essential to correct the false picture that, in his later years, was built up of Stalin as an infallible miracle worker, standing above and separate from his party and his colleagues."

## Glossed over

No explanation here of how a dictatorship had come to power in a workers' state. The monstrous crimes of Stalin were glossed over under the guise of heart-felt regrets about the cult of personality.

Stalin "erred" (apparently) in "disregarding specific warnings of the impending Nazi attack in 1941." But no criticism of Stalin's pact with Hitler in 1939! No admission of the unpreparedness of the Red Army because, as is now admitted, 35 000 officers had been killed on Stalin's instructions!

Another "mistake" of Stalin's (apparently) was to allow the Security Services to become "a law unto themselves", enabling them "to defy socialist law and procedure and to frame up innocent people on false charges, for motives of their own." **But no explanation of why.**

Indeed, Harmel compliments Stalin for "his stern struggle against

the Trotskyites, Bukharinites, and other traitors and saboteurs." In other words, the SACP still defended the bloody purges against Stalin's Bolshevik opponents.

How was it possible under "socialism" for "collective leadership" to be so grotesquely violated? Instead of an explanation, just an assurance "that steps have been taken to set right injustice" followed by a statement of loyalty to the "strength, self-confidence, and firmness of principle" of "Mr Khrushchev and his colleagues."

How hollow all this rings now, when Gorbachev is obliged to denounce not only Stalin, but his successors Khrushchev and Brezhnev as well!

## Under LEONID BREZHNEV

Leonid Brezhnev was the chief engineer in the bureaucratic coup to oust Khrushchev as leader of the Soviet Union in 1964. Like Khrushchev, Brezhnev had been a faithful agent of Stalinism all his political life.

During the Brezhnev years, the SACP continued to echo the policy positions of the Soviet regime. Not a word of criticism of Brezhnev was ever raised.

When Brezhnev died in 1983, the Central Committee of the SACP sent a letter to the CPSU lamenting the untimely passing of "a fighter for the best interests of humanity who devoted his whole life wholeheartedly to the task of strengthening the Soviet Union, raising the living standards of his people, and advancing the cause of socialism at home and abroad." (*African Communist* No. 92, 1983). But was that the truth?

Gorbachev now refers to the Brezhnev years as "years of stagnation". By the time of Brezhnev's death, the economy had almost ground to a halt. Yet, under Brezhnev, these were referred to as the "years of developed socialism". The lies of the bureaucracy know no limits.

The festering national question in the Soviet Union is now plain for all to see -- in the movements in the Baltic states, Armenia, etc. Yet only a few years ago the *African Communist* (No. 91, 1982) was explaining with a straight face how the Soviet Union had "solved the nationalities question".



The cult of the individual was re-built around Brezhnev, who awarded himself the highest military awards. "His brilliant and inspired military record during World War 2 made a significant contribution to the defeat of Hitlerism", wrote the *African Communist* (No. 92, 1983). But *Pravda* (3.4.88) now reports that the role Brezhnev claimed to play in decisive wartime victories was untenable because "In his post he could not have carried out such operations."

Reformists led by Gorbachev now use illustrations of the stagnation as a whip to try and awake the bureaucracy from its dangerous stupor. V Syelivanov, a senior official in the Ministry of Aviation Industry, wrote in *Pravda* (2.5.88), that these were years of "planned unanimity of choice from above and an unchangeability of leaders...[when] careers, rewards, privileges, special services, the right connections, getting into the governing and distributive elite became the aim of a series of party members and their families."

## Contrast

What a contrast with the report given in the *African Communist* (81, 1976) of the 26th Congress of the CPSU, by the late Yusuf Dadoo and Moses Mabhida, that "the core of the party remains working class" and that the "inner life of the party is governed by Leninist norms."

On the contrary! Corruption, it is now officially reported, infested the very summits of officialdom. Brezhnev's Interior Minister and police chief, Nikolai Shchokolov, committed suicide rather than face trial for looting 700 000 roubles (R2,3 million). Now his deputy, and Brezhnev's son in law Yuri Churbanov, is also on trial for gross corruption.

Here too the SACP did its best to ensure that all these facts remained hidden from the SA working class during the Brezhnev years. What claim does this Party have to be trusted now?

It is not in the SACP, but in the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC, that the workers of South Africa will find the political tradition of Lenin and the Russian Revolution honestly carried forward.

# Clear Trotsky's name!



*The young Esteban Volkov with Trotsky and family in Mexico.*

**On 19 June 1988, Esteban Volkov, the grandson of Leon Trotsky, spoke to a rally in London of supporters of *Militant*, Marxist newspaper in the British labour movement. This was his message.**

"I should like to send warm, fraternal greetings to everyone participating in this important event. We watch with interest the changes being implemented by Gorbachev in the Soviet Union, which are opening new roads and seem to mark the end of one of the most sinister chapters in the history of this century: the Stalinist era. At the same time, I would like to urge all those countries based on nationalisation of the means of production to return to the road of genuine socialism based upon freedom and worker's democracy and to fully restore historical truth.

After the great victory in Russia in October 1917 of the world's first proletarian socialist revolution, successfully led by the Bolshevik party with Lenin and Trotsky at its head, the process of historical advance was momentarily halted, with the revolution being confined within the limits of its national frontiers.

## Counter-revolution

In the context of tremendous shortages and backwardness, this gave rise to the counter-revolution led by Josef Stalin. It produced one of the most barbarous tyrannies in the annals of history which became a colossal obstacle in the path of bringing about genuine socialism on our

planet. In order to return to the road of genuine socialism it is vital to denounce without any 'ifs and buts', all the wicked lies, falsifications, betrayals, tyranny and crimes of the Stalinist regime.

Silence means complicity. These methods and procedures, more appropriate to the Inquisition and Tsarism than to the ideals of Marxism, must be wiped out. Among the endless betrayals and crimes of the Stalinist regime against socialism and the human race, we must mention the following:

- \* The abolition of all freedom of expression, democracy, and the political power of the working class within the Soviet Union.

- \* The imposition of a system of lies and slander at all levels, and the falsification of history as a 'general method'.

- \* The abandonment of internationalism and the betrayal of the working class, entering into deals and alliances with its most vicious enemies -- Chiang Kai Chek, Hitler, Batista and others.

- \* The sending of ten to fifteen million Soviet citizens to work as slaves in forced labour camps in the most inhospitable regions of the Soviet Union. This forced labour, used on major construction schemes in the country's infrastructure, was an important pillar of the Russian economy at that time.

- \* The extermination of all the Bol-



shevik comrades of Lenin, as well as the destruction of wide sections of the Communist Party at that time, found guilty of the most absurd accusations, and the murder of the most famous leaders after the grotesque farce of the notorious Moscow trials.

The murderous arm of Stalin reached far away to Mexico to silence the voice of that revolutionary Marxist, Lenin's closest collaborator and organiser of the Red Army: Leon Trotsky. In his paranoia, Stalin even decapitated the Red Army, executing its most brilliant and experienced generals and officers shortly before Hitler's invasion. This left the country virtually defenceless in the face of the Nazis, whose armies succeeded without much difficulty in penetrating to the very heart of Russia, literally arriving at the gates of Moscow, inflicting colossal losses and limitless destruction. In fact, in this first phase of the war, the Nazis were only halted by problems of logistics, in the vastness of Soviet Russia, and the arrival of 'General Winter'.

## Placed in danger

By placing in danger the USSR's survival, Stalin stands condemned of the crime of high treason. Very different was the role of Leon Trotsky when he created the Red Army and led the successful fight back against the enemy armies who attacked the infant Soviet state on all fronts.

Yet another crime of Stalin and the system he personified was to stifle the inexhaustible potential for human creativity brought about by the enthusiasm of a genuine socialist society, which was prevented from coming into existence.

Many of Stalin's crimes read more like horrific novels than 20th century history. These events have left behind millions of innocent victims who urgently demand justice before the court of history. The names of each and every victim should be made known. There must be no further delay in cleansing them of all the calumnies and false accusations; their families must be compensated, materially and morally, for the harm and suffering so unjustly inflicted upon them.

The human mind is the most marvellous instrument which mankind

possesses, yet it cannot flourish in a dank and dark dungeon. Motivation, information, and communication are essential for it. This was something that Stalin never understood -- or maybe he understood it only too well! In order to return to real socialism it is vital to be able to think, speak, and discuss freely and exercise the right to decide and vote democratically at all levels of Soviet life.

The task of re-establishing the historical truth about the protagonists of the Russian revolution can no longer be postponed. Outstanding among them is the man who was twice President of the Petrograd Soviet, Lenin's intimate collaborator, the organizer of the Red Army -- the Russian revolutionary and marxist theoretician, Leon Trotsky. That indomitable defender of the working class, one of the key people in the victory of the Russian revolution and the founding of the Soviet Union, was the first man to denounce the deviations and betrayals of Joseph Stalin against the ideas of Marxism and the October revolution. He waged an implacable struggle against them, and for this he became the most persecuted revolutionary on the planet....

Leon Trotsky must now be freed from the avalanche of false accusations, lies, slanders and falsifications poured over himself and his ideas in Russia and other deformed workers' states for over half a century. Justice demands that he should now occupy the place he deserves in the history of the Soviet Union. His works, writings, and political theses must be published, freely discussed and evaluated objectively, as well as the writings of others who played a role in the Russian revolution and in universal human thought.

The ideas of Marxism have in no way lost their applicability. Capitalist society has generated unimaginable knowledge and scientific development, yet it has not found, nor will it ever find, the formula to eradicate hunger, misery and injustice from our planet. On the contrary, it has placed the human race on the edge of infernal atomic conflagration. The alternative would be a socio-economic system in which mankind would master its own destiny and not be just an object to be used and discarded. Real socialism or barbarism -- that is the choice facing us."

**AIR MAIL**

*To the Editors:  
Inqaba ya Basebenzi,  
BM Box 1719,  
London WC1N 3XX,  
Britain.*

## Thirst for ideas

Dear comrades,

I salute you in the name of the struggle. Can you please send me some literature of Marx and of Lenin. I am specially interested in the socialism theory.

I also believe that the working class do have leadership qualification even though we are told that the working class is not ready for a revolution or to forward the struggle. But let me tell you something, in 1985-87 the working class was not ready but we talk to them and when an uprising occurred they were ready.

I don't know a lot of socialism but I am very keen to learn. The reason I don't know about socialism is I am a muslim. Another reason why I want to learn more is because of the conflict between national democratic revolution and socialism now.

I would also like to learn more about the ANC. Include everything from the day they were formed. Also what the real policy is about the ANC and negotiations.

I am a progressive comrade. I started in 1984 with the white election. To me everything is changing. I cannot cope with everything. I sometimes feel that I know nothing, but I need to study a lot more.

Hope that you can help a comrade in need with my request.

Yours in struggle,  
[Name withheld]

## Botha can't fool us

Dear comrades,

The boers think they can fool us. But they're politically bankrupt. A few months ago they said 'the SADF is not in Angola, it's only UNITA'. Then we read 12 soldiers have been killed in Southern Angola. How did they get killed if they were not in Angola?!

From, a NUM shop steward



## Justice for all

Dear comrades,

During the historic NUM strike of August 1987, the Chamber of Mines dismissed 50 000 miners. Only 10 000 were reinstated. The rest are still in the street.

Following this example other companies have increasingly assaulted workers with dismissals, retrenchments and lock outs. The strike avalanche in 1987 had a major impact on the bosses. Now they want to try and stop this human tide of resistance.

They are running 'free enterprise system education lessons' to try and create support for their system! A booklet is being churned out by the Free Market Foundation (an institute for cooking bourgeois lies) entitled *Justice for All*. Ironically, these books start with the quotation; "More powerful than armies is an idea whose time has come." This is supposed to mean capitalism! But we are not fooled.

In one of these lessons a worker explained to his 'teacher' that in wage negotiations for A2 workers they were demanding wages of R400 per week. The current wage is R321. "Even the R400 that we demand is little when one looks at the rising food prices. Gencor owns furniture stores, etc. It seems that they take back what we earn through high prices," he said.

It is clear to workers that there is no 'justice for all'. The only justice propagated by these capitalist education courses is that of exploitation. That is bourgeois justice.

Socialism is the idea whose time has come. It has captured the imagination of millions of workers and youth across the country. Mineworkers declared "socialism means freedom".

In SA under capitalism black people face appalling unemployment, homelessness and poverty. Capitalism cannot play the role of a new historic social force that takes society forward. What has arrived is the epoch of the death of capitalism, and its gravediggers are the black working class. Our desire to be free is absolutely unstoppable.

This proletariat will be more powerful than the SADF and SAP. But it will be able to smash the capitalist state, only if it fully realises its power under revolutionary Marxist leadership. Only then will the masses be able to storm heaven.

Branco Mkhonte

## Working for Goldfields

Dear comrades,

I greet the editorial board and comrades of *Inqaba*. I wish them success with their good work.

I work for a company under Goldfields. In my whole life it is the first time I've seen a company which doesn't help its workers at all, and only wants to use our strength.

They don't even help your family if you die at work. They don't help if you need the money to build or buy a house. They don't care about working conditions. There is no difference in wages between day shift and night shift. If there is a bonus only whites and supervisors are given it.

At present we're fighting for a wage increase; we'll fight till we win.

If black workers make a complaint they do nothing about it. But if a white makes a complaint his problem is attended to within two days.

The hours we work are not written on our payslips. So how can you see if they pay us for the hours we've worked? If you work night shift all week you get R12 a day, and if you work on Sunday it is R10 a day.

We are forced to work here because there's no other work. We work with poisonous and dangerous chemicals. If there's an accident black workers are given X-rays here at the company. But white workers are sent to a company place in Johannesburg (Tassis board). For the company a white man's life is more important than the life of a black.

Sicelo Nqaba

*Okokuqala ngibingelela abahleli nabaphati baleli phephandaba. Ngibafisela impilo nempumelelo ngalo msebenzi omuhle abawenzayo.*

*Ngokusebenza ngilapha kwenye yezinkampani ezinga phansi kwe-Goldfield. Empilweni yami yonke ngiyaqala ukubona inkampani engana sizo kubasebenzi bayo. Ifuna amandla ethu kuphela.*

*Ayina sizo uma ushonele emsebenzini, naku mndeni wakho ngokunjalo. Ayinasizo uma ufuna ukwakha noma ukuthenga indlu, ayinandaba ukuthi lapho usebenza khona kunjani.*

*Akuna mehluko kumsebenzi wamashifu. Nosebenza emini imali iyafana. Uma kutholwa ibhonasi kunikwa abamhlophe kanye nezinduna kuphela.*

*Ngibhala lencwadi siyalwa nabo ngendaba yemali. Sizolwa nabo size siqobe.*

*Uma ukhalaza ngento abayibonayo babhala phansi bathi bazayilungisa kuphelile. Kodwa uma kukhalaza omhlophe emalangenani amabili ilungiswe.*

*Ama awa owasebenzile akabhalwa kusiliphu. Manje ubona kanjani ukuthi baku bhadale kalhe noma cha? Ukusebenza ebusuku iviki lonke yiR12, ilanga langesonto yiR10.*

*Siyasebenza ngoba umsebenzi awukho. Lenkampani isebenza ngamaphoyizini ayingozi. Thina abasebenzi abamyama basisa kuX-ray yenkampani. Kodwa abamhlophe bathunyelwa kuTassis board eJohannesburg yiyo lenkampani. Kusho ukuthi impilo yabo ibalulekile kuneyomsebenzi omyama.*

*Ngiyo jabula kakhulu uma umheli angayamukela lencwadi yami.*

Siqelo Nqaba

## Inqaba is for workers

Dear comrades,

I was walking with another worker and he said to me: "You know, I have always had it in mind to get a camera and take photos of this hostel and send it to *Inqaba*. These people write about workers here, everywhere in this country, and they write about the workers in other countries, which is very nice. But they haven't written about rural workers yet and I want to take photographs and write them something, so they can see there is workers

here too."

[Name withheld]

**Every worker a worker correspondent!**

***Inqaba Ya Basebenzi* needs your support. Write for *Inqaba*! Please send us articles, reports on struggles, letters, and photographs.**



# NAMIBIA/ANGOLA

## Will 'peace' deal hold?

After months of complex negotiations, South Africa, Angola, Cuba and the USA have reached agreement (to be ratified) for SA withdrawal from Namibia and the departure of Cuban troops from Angola. But this is a long way from signifying in reality that the independence of Namibia will be achieved.

It is ten years since the SA regime "accepted" UN Resolution 435. Its 1984 Nkomati accord with Mozambique was soon followed by stepped up aid to the counter-revolutionary RENAMO bandits and further horrific massacres and destruction.

The nine countries of SADCC have suffered crippling losses due to SA attacks and destabilisation -- estimated at \$25-30 billion in the period 1980-86.

Now again, P.W. Botha, responsible for mass murder at home and abroad, is posing as a "peace-maker" in Southern Africa.

### Reason

The reason for the present agreement over Namibia and Angola is that all the powers involved have a real interest in bringing to an end the armed conflict which has dragged on for more than 20 years.

The overall framework is the attempt of the Soviet regime to reach an accommodation with US imperialism over areas of potential global conflict between these super-powers.

The US, facing revolutionary threats to its interests throughout the former colonial world, is trying to "roll back communism", and hopes to use the compliance of the Moscow bureaucracy to stall or reverse the revolutionary process, for example in Central America and Southern Africa.

Gorbachev is ready to concede both regions as "Western spheres of interest", and wishes to withdraw from previous Soviet commitments there.

Moscow wants credits and new technology from the West, and an agreement to reduce arms spending, in the hope of reviving the stagnating Soviet economy. The ruling bureaucracy sees this as their only way of staving off revolt from the Soviet working class which would lead to the overthrow of bureaucratic privilege.

The Soviet regime has provided

money and military hardware for the MPLA in Angola, not because it is committed to extending revolution round the world, but because it cannot appear to be forced back from supporting its allies by an unrestrained advance of SA and US imperialism.

The bureaucracy hopes now to ease itself out of its commitments without suffering a blow to its "revolutionary" prestige throughout the Third World. Hence the pressure it has exerted on the Angolan government, and the Cubans, to come to terms with SA.

South Africa, for its part, cannot forgo its drive to dominate the sub-continent -- but the white regime finds itself overstretched in a region of 100 million blacks.

While it cannot allow a planned economy in potentially rich Angola to flourish when capitalism holds the masses in poverty in SA, Pretoria nevertheless needs to reach compromises with its neighbours. It needs to be able to concentrate the strength of the state against the rising revolutionary threat at home.

For Angola the war has been a terrible drain, with enormous costs in lives and injuries, consuming 50 per cent of the government's budget, and undermining any consolidation of the national economy.

During the past year the military balance has shifted in the war in southern Angola. Despite their efforts for several months from late 1987, SA/UNITA forces failed to capture the strategic town of Cuito Cuanavale. Instead, they got a bloody nose, with losses of 60 white conscript troops, and at the cost of mutinies in the South West African Territorial Force, their puppet Namibian black army.

The aging planes of the SADF have begun to lose air superiority against the Angolan government's new MIG fighters and missile defences. By mid-year, it was reported in the British press, SA ground forces found themselves virtually cut off from retreat by

Cuban and Angolan troops.

Moreover, the war has cost SA -- with its ailing economy -- at least R4 billion in the last year, and further escalation would push this up sharply.

For all these reasons, although SA has stalled for a decade over its promise of independence for Namibia, this question has once again been brought to centre-stage because it is integrally linked with any peace agreement over Angola.

### Namibia

If we were to consider only the forces in conflict within Namibian society itself, it would not be impossible for SA to withdraw its troops and concede independence.

It would be able to rely on the same combination of economic stranglehold and military blackmail to continue dominating and exploiting Namibia, which it uses against its other weaker neighbours.

However, it is the rising revolution within South Africa itself which forms the hub of the strategic calculations of the ruling class as far as the whole region is concerned.

Actually, UN Resolution 435 falls far short of real independence for Namibia. By omission, it concedes Namibia's only deep-water harbour, Walvis Bay, to SA.

During the "transition" SA troops will remain also in other parts of Namibia. SWAPO guerillas will be confined to bases outside Namibia. No mention is made of SWATF and other surrogates of SA. Basic police powers will remain with the present state.

The SA Administrator-General and his bureaucracy will stay in position while a UN special representative with 7 500 troops supervises the passage to independence.

Despite all this, Resolution 435 provides for "free and fair" elections which would allow SWAPO, supported by the great majority of the Namibian people, to gain control of the government.

This has always been anathema to the SA regime, not so much because they fear the SWAPO leadership (itself willing to make all manner of compromises), but because they fear the repercussions within South Africa.

Like the MPLA, FRELIMO and ZANU victories, a SWAPO victory would be a huge spur to the black working masses in SA. However the



agreement is dressed up, it will be interpreted as a major defeat for white South African power.

The most outstanding feature of the Namibian situation this year has been the renewed movement of the working class. On 20-21 June, 60 000 workers struck in support of the four-month old school boycott against the SA regime's ruthless military occupation -- a boycott which started in Ovamboland and spread to 50 000 youth nation-wide.

Any drawing back of South Africa's military grip could result in further outbursts of mass action, which in turn could interlink with a renewed upsurge of the South African struggle.

At the same time, instability and "chaos" developing in Namibia, with even a partial loss of control by the state, would fuel the Conservative Party's drive against the NP government in SA.

The whole white population of Namibia could fit into the Ellis Park stadium. As in Mozambique and Angola, a change to a black government in Namibia would very likely precipitate an exodus.

Without the whites and the SA military occupation, capitalism in Namibia would hang by a thread. The mainstay would have been knocked away from the present collaborators in the DTA "interim government".

While Pretoria and the bourgeois would play the ethnic card -- as in the past whipping up and exploiting divisions between Ovambo, Herero, Damara and other groups -- this would

only increase the instability and provoke further repercussions in South Africa itself.

## Reassure

Attempting to reassure the ruling class and the whites generally, president Sam Nujoma recently repeated that SWAPO "does not intend substantial nationalisation of Namibian industry ... nor to appropriate white farmland." (*Weekly Mail*, 19-25/8/88)

The leadership is ready to knuckle under to the existing "realities" of class and race inequality and power -- if this would allow them to take over government in Windhoek.

**We want to see a SWAPO victory, but what could SWAPO do with government under these conditions?**

Not only are the transport and communications links of Namibia in the grip of SA imperialism, but the very natural resources of the country are owned by a web of SA and overseas corporations.

The core of the economy lies in a handful of mines which (together with government) generate 50 per cent of GDP. According to official reports, unemployment in Namibia could be as high as 55 per cent; 75 per cent of people in Katutura, Windhoek's black township, live below the breadline; households in small towns have to survive on incomes of R30-50 a month; and 99 per cent of wage earners in northern Namibia live below the poverty line. (*Windhoek Advertiser*, 3/4/

86; 20/5/86; 6/2/87)

Without overthrowing capitalism, an independence government in Namibia could not begin to address these problems, but would soon find itself not genuinely independent at all.

Although the agreement could lead to a brief 'honeymoon' period in which the masses held back to give compromise a chance, it is likely that there would very soon be explosive movements to shake off the chains of generations of enslavement.

Under colossal mass pressure a SWAPO government could be compelled, against its own wishes, to move decisively against capitalism.

The hard-headed SA oppressors are not blind to all these dangers. Certainly, as they materialise in practice, there would arise immense pressure on Pretoria to claw back any concessions made and once again screw down the lid of domination over Namibia.

For all these reasons, while all the powers have an interest in bringing off the settlement, it remains extremely unlikely that that will be carried through to a conclusion.

## Manoeuvre

Meanwhile, however, the SA regime has scope for manoeuvre. Botha faces a general election next year, most likely by April.

The starting date for the 7-month transitional process envisaged in Resolution 435 could be delayed on various grounds until after the election. During this delay Botha could use his temporary appearance of "success" -- achieving "peace" and international credibility from a position of "strength" -- to rally white voter support and hold back further CP gains.

Most likely after that, Botha would find a pretext for ditching the agreement. Even if he began to implement it, and the situation deteriorated, he could contrive excuses for turning back.

**However, the question of SA withdrawal from Namibia remains pivotal to the whole regional settlement.**

In terms of the agreement with Angola and Cuba, the bulk of the Cuban troops would not begin to leave Angola until the independence of Namibia has been completed. The last Cuban troops are scheduled to leave only after 30 months.

## How whites in Namibia saw the talks

After visiting Namibia, a *Sunday Star* journalist wrote (14/8/88):

*"Both black and white mistrust the sudden and seemingly miraculous resurrection of Resolution 435..."*

*"As you travel to Ovamboland... the pervasive presence of the security forces makes peace seem a faraway dream."*

*"From the conservative farming and mining areas of Tsumeb to the northern garrison town of Oshakati you will struggle to find a white South-Wester who believes South Africa is serious about 'abandoning' the country to independence..."*

*"But the prospect is viewed with suspicion and fear. 'If the army goes, I will go too,' said a [white] mine-worker from Tsumeb. 'I am not going*

*to stay and be shot like the Portuguese.'*

*"I can't believe they'll do it -- if the RSA gives up South West she will be next."*

*"Even a senior security force source in Windhoek said off the record he did not believe South Africa would allow resolution 435 to go ahead."*

*"They can't afford it strategically", he said...*

*"The consensus in the bars is that the peace initiative is an elaborate hoax designed to secure some advantage."*

*"'Its a foefie', said Mr Andries Horn, a Tsumeb farmer and National Party member. 'You only have to look at the amount of equipment that is going up to see that.'"*



So long as SA forces remain in Namibia, it is surely ruled out that all Cuban troops could be withdrawn. The MPLA government would be left too exposed to new invasions from SA, in support of the UNITA gangsters.

Parallel with the present agreement, efforts are being made by the Soviet Union and the USA to force the MPLA into a compromise -- and coalition -- with UNITA. But this retrograde step would surely prove too much for the MPLA to swallow while SA remained in Namibia, able to use Savimbi as its Trojan horse.

## Perspective

Taking all these factors into account, the most likely perspective is of continued conflict over Namibia and Angola, with temporary interruptions of "peace". The same applies generally to SA's relations with Mozambique and the whole region. The SA imperialist leopard hasn't changed its spots.

However, the underlying relation of forces will continue to grow more and more unfavourable to the SA regime, whose white social base is ultimately too narrow to sustain its ambitions of untrammelled regional power.

But SA's economic and military strength is sufficient to remind us again and again that the fates of all the peoples of Southern Africa are bound together as one. It is together that we can overthrow the apartheid monster, and win genuine freedom, self-determination and prosperity in all the countries of the region.

It would be very unwise to place any confidence in the present agreement as a path to independence in Namibia and peace in Angola.

Within Namibia the key task is to carry forward the advances made over the past few years in rebuilding the mass movement of workers and youth.

The task of our movement's leadership in South Africa is to combine the strength of Congress with the mass support of SWAPO. The Namibian and South African workers and youth must be linked up.

Through joint trade union struggles, political strikes, and systematic arming of the mass movement, we can prepare the way to drive SA imperialism out of Namibia, overthrow the apartheid regime and capitalism, and so bring peace and progress throughout the region.

# Zimbabwe: away with capitalist ministers!

Zimbabwean politics is in ferment. Under the pressure of rising anger among workers and peasants, a former ZANU guerilla commander has been driven to demand action against corrupt pro-capitalist ministers.

Mugabe makes occasional criticism of ministers for gross corruption and enrichment. But none of these bureaucrats has ever been disciplined.

Now Edgar Tekere, a former Secretary General of ZANU(PF), has condemned corruption and a one-party dictatorship.

"We are destabilising our road to socialism because, to begin with, we are not socialists at heart. We don't believe in it", he told a stunned Parliament (*Herald*, 15/7/88).

The students soon took to the streets to support Tekere's criticisms. They demanded that the corrupt and rotten leadership should be weeded out by Mugabe.

But the latest demonstration on 29 September 1988 in Harare was banned by Mugabe and severely repressed. 478 students were arrested, at least two youth shot and many injured -- one died of his injuries. Alarmed by the sympathy for the students, the authorities now deny any shots were fired.

The enormous support of working people throughout the country for Tekere's demands has now been met by Tekere being expelled from ZANU(PF) by the unanimous decision of the 90 member Central Committee.

In response students occupied the university campus in Harare calling on Tekere to form a 'new party' (which they have termed 'Super-ZANU-PF'). But Tekere has correctly resisted these pressures: "Form a new party to do what?" He still considers himself a member of ZANU(PF) despite the action of the CC.

But he has now, for the first time, made direct criticism of his former comrade-in-arms President Mugabe.

"The corrupt are finding comfort under Mugabe's umbrella. It's a major disappointment that Comrade Mugabe has failed to lead this country,

government and party", he said. (*Independent*, 27/10/88).

These events mark the sharpest political crisis in Zimbabwe since independence eight years ago.

Despite promises of socialism, Mugabe has failed to nationalise the monopolies, carry out land reform, and provide jobs. Instead he has defended capitalism, tightened controls over the trade unions and repressed movements of peasants and unemployed to occupy un-used land.

Feeling the pressure from the workers and peasants for change, Mugabe has used the opportunity given by the unification of ZAPU and ZANU(PF) to consolidate his powers as 'Executive President'.

But the conditions of large sections of the working people are increasingly desperate. By 1990 there will be 1,2 million unemployed. Around the tobacco factories which employ casual labour there is a daily scramble for the limited jobs available. The government has yet to keep its promise to provide land for 162 000 families.

## New mood

A new mood of determination is developing in the towns and on the land. It is this mood that Tekere has tapped. But will he prove able to lead it consistently? Despite his widespread support, Tekere is known in his home province for driving squatters off un-used land, and for defending the interests of white farmers. How can that be called socialist?

The task of genuine socialists -- youth, students, workers, and peasants -- in Zimbabwe is to:

- \* turn to the party cells and branches (and to the workers' committees and the trade unions) to demand the reinstatement of Tekere.

- \* demand the removal of corrupt pro-capitalist Ministers.

- \* demand that the leadership of the party carry out socialist policies.

If the leaders of the cells and branches are not prepared to support these demands then they should be replaced by the membership.

The reawakening of the youth and workers to struggle shows that the Zimbabwean revolution is once again moving forward. Capitalism in Zimbabwe hangs by a thread. Linked to the mass power of the South African working class, the working class and peasantry will have the power to bring poverty and unemployment to an end.



# MASS UPHEAVALS IN BURMA

In recent months mass demonstrations, general strikes and upheavals have shaken Burma from top to bottom.

In early September demonstrations of up to half a million took place in the capital Rangoon and in the second biggest city, Mandalay.

This movement pushed out general Ne Win who had ruled since 1962. Since then two other heads of governments have been forced out in quick succession.

On 17 September a coup took place. The military appears temporarily to have regained a grip on the situation. Since the coup at least a thousand have been killed and more than three thousand young workers and youth have gone underground to take up guerrilla struggle against the regime.

In 1962 army officers took power in Burma and ended capitalism. But this did not take place on the basis of a conscious movement of the working class. A deformed workers' state was established with a military bureaucracy ruling on the basis of so-called "Buddhist socialism".

The recent upheavals -- against dictatorship and economic stagnation -- reflect the limits of state ownership and planning in a backward country on the basis of bureaucratic rule.

We reprint here (in edited form) material written by KEITH DICKINSON and PAT CRAVEN for *Militant*, Marxist paper for Labour and Youth in Britain. The material analyses the events as they were taking place and provides a historical background to the developments.

5.8.88

The recent demonstrations and riots in Burma have highlighted the situation of the 38 million workers and peasants of this South-East Asian country for the first time in decades.

The upheavals have forced out the head of the regime, Ne Win, President

San Yu, Prime Minister Maung Maung Ka and other ministers. The convening of emergency meetings of the ruling Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) and 'parliament' have shown the crisis the ruling clique is in.

In March police responded to a mild campus protest with vicious retri-

bution, leading to the worst riots since 1974 with thousands detained and up to 150 dead. Huge public anger was shown at the brutality against the students. From the rooftops, government office workers hurled whatever they could find at police.

The June demonstrations in the capital, Rangoon, started with students demanding the release of those arrested in March. Students were joined by dockworkers, uniformed civil servants and Buddhist monks as they called for democracy and economic reforms.

The government was forced to announce that 41 people had died of suffocation after inhaling tear gas and being squeezed into a police van for hours. They admitted that they had delayed the announcement to prevent unrest spreading.

The regime tried to contain the demonstrations by closing down some universities and colleges. But in the ensuing battles at least five riot police died and 26 were injured. Similar protests and repression spread to the second city, Mandalay, and other major towns of Bassein, Pegu, Meikhtila.

## First to react

The students were the first to react to the developing economic crisis. They rioted in September 1987 when the government demonetised the three highest denomination currency notes, making 75 per cent of all currency worthless. Although officially aiming at black marketeers and "ethnic insurgents", it is believed that Ne Win was also striking against ministers and officials who had amassed illegal fortunes in banknotes.

Incidents such as these were indications of the corruption and splits in the bureaucracy.

At the Extraordinary Congress of the BSPP the resignation of Ne Win and his placeman, San Yu, was accepted. Then, contrary to all predictions by the capitalist commentators, the assembled bureaucrats elected Sein Lwin, responsible under Ne Win for the killings by the brutal riot police, to the chairmanship of the party as well as the presidency.

As a signal to the imperialist money-lenders the bureaucracy elected Tun Tin, previously involved in negotiations with the World Bank, as prime minister. Later reports speak of





# Historical Background

The background to the upheavals in Burma is the economic crisis in this potential land of plenty.

Before World War Two Burma was known as 'the rice bowl of the world'. But during the war it suffered more than any other Asian country except Japan itself. Out of this devastation the long struggle for national liberation from British rule rapidly gained ground.

But there were unique complications. The Burmans were only just over half the population, with around 70 national minorities making up the rest. British imperialism used all its methods of divide and rule and the effects have carried over to the present day.

In 1948 Britain conceded independence. The pro-capitalist government of U Nu came to power, and the struggles of the national minorities continued. Revolts flared up among the Muslim, Mujahids and Karen, while 'Communist' groups launched guerrilla wars in the hills.

In October 1958 army Chief of Staff Ne Win formed a military junta. The guerrilla wars intensified. This was the background to the coup of 1962, which changed the course of Burmese history.

The Marxists who were to produce *Militant* were alone in explaining these developments. As Ted Grant, political editor of *Militant*, wrote at the time:

"It seems to be a tradition in certain left-wing circles to treat all army coups as inevitably reactionary. It is true that such coups are invariably in the interests of the ruling army clique, which seeks to defend its parasitic, privileged position ... But in the case of Burma, we have an economy which is increasingly incapable of serving the interests of the army clique, a diseased economy on which no progress could be made.

"What must also be taken into account is the nature of the army leadership. The generals who seized power were the product of 20 years of anti-imperialist struggle ... The army leadership was extremely sensitive to the pressures of the peasantry and the ruined petty bourgeoisie from which it had sprung...

"After the 1962 coup, the army made a clean sweep of the entire state apparatus: the constitution was abandoned; parliament disbanded; the civil service purged. Mass arrests and detentions decimated all opposition...

"The purges were followed by draconic legislation which eradicated every vestige of capitalism in Burma ... All

foreign firms, all banks and all the larger private Burmese firms were taken into public ownership.

"A most overnight the 'Ireland of Asia' was transformed from a feudal-capitalist satellite of imperialism into a proletarian-bonapartist state (a deformed workers' state fundamentally similar to the Stalinist state in Russia)...

"In the initial stages, Ne Win sought the support of the peasantry ... Village committees were set up, which exclude landlords, merchants and money-lenders ... All peasant debts to the state were cancelled and in 1963 an aid programme (to the peasantry) was launched...

"But the social system in Burma is not socialism. A socialist system would require the conscious participation and control of the working class. This is absent in Burma ... Power rests, not in the armed people, but on the peasant army..."

The abolition of capitalism and landlordism made possible certain reforms. A 1987 UNICEF report on education in Burma shows a stark contrast with the least developed countries of capitalism, where mass illiteracy has continued:

"From 1969 to 1984, 233 townships and 48 000 villages held literacy drives.

Sein Lwin also calling for economic liberalisation.

So it would seem as if the government's immediate attitude will be an even stronger policing and repression of economic protests, combined with 'reforms' aimed at encouraging the private sector and relations with the capitalist world.

Such measures do not add up to the restoration of capitalism, for which a full-scale counter-revolution would be required. Most of industry, as the *Far East Economic Review* wrote on 7 July, "remains in the state sector, whose workers belong to party-controlled unions..."

The regime, basing itself on the official state-owned economy, will make strengthened attempts to control the borders and crush the various guerrilla armies.

But the situation cannot remain stable for long. There are reports of farmers walking off their land in protest at the low prices paid for their produce, and coercion being used to make them supply

enough to feed the cities.

More protests are likely, and possibly attempted coups. The younger officers have less connection with the old guard of the bureaucracy, and their children participated in the student demonstrations. There have already been demonstrations against the appointment of Sein Lwin and new arrests, including the 'dissident' Brigadier Aung Gyi whose demands for reform had been taken up by the students.

The only solution lies in linking the protests to the demand for democratic control over the economy by the workers and peasants. With an internationalist appeal to the workers of the advanced industrial countries, the Burmese workers and students could play a leading role in the struggle for a socialist federation of South-East Asia to resolve the turmoil in all these countries.

19.8.88

The crisis in Burma remains. Two representatives of the ruling bureaucracy have resigned within three weeks -- first General Ne Win, the country's ruler for 26 years, then 'strong man' Sein Lwin, who replaced him.

At least 1 000 people died, as hundreds of thousands of demonstrators in every city and town marched unarmed against police and troops. Guns were seized from police stations by demonstrators ready to fight to the death to force the regime to back down.

On Friday, a special congress of the ruling BSPP meets to select a successor. But the underlying problems, which caused the demonstrations, remain unsolved.

The situation has also been exacerbated by threats by Japan, Burma's largest aid donor, to withhold loans on which the economy depends, unless there are changes in economic policy. Half the loan has now been given but



The campaign has maintained men's literacy at the high level of over 85 per cent and has been especially successful in raising women's literacy to over 70 per cent by 1983".

But the basic problems of poverty and underdevelopment could not be overcome with Burma's meagre resources alone. Ted Grant went on to explain:

"Given the backwardness of the Burmese economy, the only way in which a socialist transformation could be brought about is by the extension of the revolution internationally. But the outlook of the Burmese ruling clique is that of narrow nationalism..."

## Bureaucratic system

The army officers who took over in 1962 nationalised even small stallholders and imposed a rigidly centralised and inefficient bureaucratic system. They made a virtue of trying to develop Burma in total isolation from the rest of the world economy, in line with Stalin's theory of "socialism in one country."

They accepted no aid from other Stalinist states. Indeed the Chinese bureaucracy were backing one of the guerrilla groups fighting against them. Rice production fell as the peasantry received no incentive to increase pro-

duction.

But the main reason for the regime's crisis has been its failure to resolve the national question. Rather than grant the right of self-determination, or at least autonomy, to Burma's minorities, who constitute nearly half the population, the bureaucracy continued to try and crush them militarily and even removed the elements of autonomy which were granted under the previous constitution.

Like the similar regime in Ethiopia, the benefits of a planned, nationalised economy have been cancelled out by the drain of fighting endless wars against guerrilla insurgents. This, more than anything, made it impossible to raise living standards and provide a stable political base for the bureaucracy.

Instead the regime tried to exploit national conflicts, using troops from one nationality to crush resistance from another. They also tried to use the Buddhist religion, with its ideas of being resigned to fate, to rationalise their austerity policies.

Despite the advantages of having a nationalised economy, the ruling military bureaucracy has proved that it is impossible to develop a backward economy in isolation and without democratic control and management by the workers.

The present economic crisis in Burma is a result of the lack of industrial resources, social fragmentation

and bureaucratic inefficiency, combined with the world economic situation which is hitting all the poorer countries.

Inflation has ranged from 200 to 500 per cent. The external debt is over \$4.5 billion, with an estimated 90 per cent of foreign exchange earnings going towards repayment. The bulk of imports are essential capital goods, raw materials and industrial spares. Only six per cent of 1986-87 imports were consumer goods.

The black market (or 'shadow economy') is now estimated to be at least as large as the official economy. A well organised unofficial import market of consumer goods sells almost anything on the outskirts of Rangoon. Leading ministers are reputed to own many of the stalls.

The main way for these goods to enter the country is through the drug trade. The world's leading opium-producing area, known as the 'Golden Triangle', encompasses border areas of Thailand, Laos and Burma.

On the Burmese side the drug trade is largely controlled by the Shan and Kachin guerrilla forces as well as the Burma Communist Party (BCP). Since their aid from China dried up the BCP consciously decided in 1986 to take up opium growing, heroin manufacture and smuggling to raise money for arms.

the rest is being held back.

The kind of "reforms" wanted by the Japanese capitalists are concessions to market forces, the withdrawal of rice subsidies and the legalisation of private trade and opposition parties.

To some students, especially those from middle-class families, these ideas may have a certain attraction, given Burma's crisis-ridden economy and the relative, though very temporary, economic advances of Burma's capitalist neighbours like Thailand and Malaysia.

Even some of the bureaucracy, especially those heavily involved in the black market, may be attracted by the idea of reintroducing capitalism. **It cannot be entirely ruled out that, theoretically, for the first time, a proletarian bonapartist deformed workers' state could revert back to capitalism and landlordism.**

This would lead to a far worse catastrophe for the workers and peas-

ants. The price of rice would rocket. Peasants could lose their land and workers would face starvation. The present regime would be replaced not by democracy but a bourgeois bonapartist regime far more brutal than Ne Win's or Sin Lwin's.

Such a regime could not last long. It would be coming to power just as the brief boom which has benefitted some Asian countries was coming to an end.

This development is therefore unlikely. The bureaucracy's privileges rest on their domination of the military and state apparatus and the majority of them will not risk losing that position. It is more likely that they will make token "reforms" of the economy to head off the the opposition and consolidate their hold on the state apparatus.

They may also select a new leader, possibly Aung Gyi, a former general and Ne Win's right-hand man. He is in jail at present for his criticisms of Ne

Win, but comes from the same military caste as the rest of the bureaucracy. He could give the illusion of change, while the bureaucracy ensured that real power stayed firmly in their hands.

The central problem remains however the national question. It cannot be ruled out that sections of the army will defect. There have already been reports of troops refusing to fire on demonstrators. This could lead to military victories for the guerrilla groups, leading to chaos and the break-up of the country.

For Marxists, the only way forward for Burmese society lies in the mass participation of the workers and peasants in the running of the economy, the right of self-determination for national minorities and the establishment of a South East Asian socialist federation in which the economies of the different countries could be integrated.



9.9.88

The bureaucratic elite at the top of the Burmese government, despite recent changes in its leadership, finds itself increasingly impotent. Mass demonstrations are continuing and growing, and a virtually total general strike grips the country.

The central committee of the ruling Burmese Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) is in constant session. Yet it has only been able to issue whimpering warnings, like that to the activists occupying local government offices that they should vacate them or "face the consequences".

The regime's iron fist is paralysed at present with the fear that if troops are used viciously against peaceful demonstrators it will provoke the masses to take the logical next step and arm themselves.

On the other hand disaffection is spreading in the army itself. Troops have refused in some areas to act against demonstrations, and in others have reportedly begun to express support for the demonstrators.

The courage shown a month ago by those -- mainly students -- who continued to demonstrate despite the shootings and the slaughter of many arrested colleagues has resulted in a new situation. The *Financial Times* on 1 September wrote of "broadcast vans moving freely through streets -- abandoned by the Army and Police -- announcing the call for strike action today".

Such is the involvement of the workers now that they have run the railways and buses for the first time in days, to enable their fellow workers to get to the demonstrations.

## Initiative and ability

The tremendous initiative and ability shown by the students and workers in forming committees and organisations -- even taking over local and national government offices in many areas -- is what the future of Burma could be built on. In the frequency, size and spread of the demonstrations can be seen the confidence gained by the workers and students once they were on the move.

Demonstrations of up to half a million in Rangoon and Mandalay, with almost the whole population cheering them on, take place every other day. Similar proportions of the population



have taken part in other towns, with the army and police standing by.

The government no longer has control in 40 cities and towns. The Rangoon local authority, recognising this, has resigned.

Buddhist monks are playing a major part in the demonstrations, as has frequently been the case in the past. Youth commonly do a period in monastery schools as part of their education, and the monks are part of the community. Doctors, writers and artists joining the demonstrations shows the depth of support for the demand for an end to the one-party system and free elections.

Although the marches and demonstrations have become more organised and co-ordinated, no clear alternative leadership has come to the fore as yet.

A few figures from the distant past who have links -- some rather tenuous -- with the history of Burma's national liberation struggle have come forward and addressed vast audiences of demonstrators. Among these is U Nu who was the pro-capitalist president of the newly independent Burma in 1948, heading a newly-formed opposition grouping, the Committee for Democracy and Freedom.

Another is Daw Aung San Su Kyi, daughter of Aung San, who was the leader of the struggle for independence from Britain and would have become Burma's first president rather than U Nu, but was assassinated with

seven other leaders prior to the hand over of power. She has refused to join U Nu's grouping, as have other popular leaders.

The fact that people such as these are looked to for leadership is a consequence of the repressive regime of Ne Win which ruled from 1962 until this year. This has resulted in a complete vacuum of alternative leadership.

## Opposition groups

Reports speak of a rapid proliferation in the number of unions and committees being set up by opposition groups to take over their places of employment. A Supervision Committee for the Students' Movement now claims to represent 111 affiliated organisations with a membership of 200 000.

They have demanded that the Maung Maung government announce the formation of an interim government by 7 September, otherwise they will call a general strike and mass protests the following day. Demonstrators took up the call for the government's immediate resignation, and opposition leaders declared that the strike would continue until the government has fallen.

Maung Maung is appealing to the demonstrators to wait for the BSPP special congress on 12 September,



where the proposal for a referendum to abolish the one-party state will again be put, and he is implying that it will be passed.

In fact the Burmese people in their millions have already cast their referendum vote with their feet. This is their first strivings towards the political revolution and democratic control of the economy and government. Their task now must be to link up the committees they have formed into area and national bodies capable of taking state power from the bureaucracy.

## Key task

The key to this task is the creation of a leadership with a clearly worked out socialist plan of production and democratic control, linking the struggle in Burma with the movement of the working class internationally. Failing this, the possibility remains of the bureaucratic system surviving.

It would be a mistake to think that the bureaucracy are totally finished. As the *Financial Times* reported on 1 September: "Armed soldiers loyal to Ne Win tried to break the strike at the biggest oil refinery at Syriam which is creating huge fuel shortages. They searched suburbs for engineers to restart it, but failed".

Even in Poland, a far more developed country with ten million workers organised in the independent trade union movement Solidarity, the Stalinist bureaucracy was able to crush the strike movement of 1980-81. This was because Solidarity's leadership failed to prepare for the workers to topple the regime and take power.

The collapse of the Burmese regime at present is far more advanced than was the case in Poland in 1980. Under the conditions of Poland or Eastern Europe, such a collapse would have put the alternatives of workers' rule (political revolution) or bureaucratic counter-revolution on the immediate agenda.

However, with a small working class, a lack of leadership and conditions of backwardness -- further complicated by a series of guerrilla wars waged by national minorities in the jungles on the borders -- the perspectives are less clear cut.

The capitalists internationally are still licking their lips at the prospect of breaking into the Burmese market and

further exploiting Burma's resources.

This was clearly expressed by Tyn Myint-U, a UN official, who has advocated "liberalisation and opening up of all non-strategic sectors of the economy to the private sector. This implies the dismantling of the socialist system of production and distribution (sic), which has proved a complete failure not only in Burma but elsewhere too ... The introduction of a free market for domestically produced goods and, with few exceptions, for imported goods would assist sound monetary and foreign-exchange policies".

If the bureaucracy retain power they will undoubtedly make concessions in this direction, while keeping most of the economy in state ownership, as their attempt to alleviate the dire economic situation. This is indicated by their proposals to "allow foreign joint ventures with state, co-operative and private companies in certain fields".

On the other hand, if the bureaucracy fail to regain control, and the workers and youth fail to take power on a socialist programme, the danger exists of a 'democratic' pro-capitalist government filling the vacuum at the top. Such a regime could return sections of the economy to private hands and, by degrees, allow the return of capitalism.

The army will play a key role. It is possible that a section of officers, unhappy at the regime's protracted war against the national minorities, could link up with the present opposition leaders and stage a coup. Already it

has been reported that a garrison outside Rangoon has declared support for the opposition.

Such a move could also be aimed at taking control of the mass movement out of the hands of its present leadership and establishing army control on the basis of reforms.

## Minority groups

There are no reports suggesting that the various nationalist leaders have been able to take advantage of the regime's problems, although the leaders of half a million Muslims have declared support for the opposition, and the National Democratic Front representing 10 ethnic minority groups has called for a multi-party system.

Nevertheless the guerrilla wars have consistently eaten up 40 per cent of the Burmese budget. The country's economic problems have been the basic motivating force behind the dissatisfaction which has built up and mobilised the opposition.

The regime applied for and was granted Least Developed Country status by the United Nations in 1987. With a claimed per capita income of only \$180 they joined 36 other countries in this category.

One of the opposition leaders acclaimed by the students, the retired Brigadier-General Aung Gyi, expressed the problems very simply in letters earlier in the year to Ne Win:



*Burmese students receiving military training.*



"In 1962 a 150 lb. bag of rice was priced at 11 Kyats (R4,00) now it costs 260 kyats, and Kerosene was 6 kyats per gallon tin and now costs 240 without the tin". He called for economic reforms, citing Russia and China.

He was arrested for allowing the students to circulate these letters, but has been released and has addressed rallies of half a million. Such a figure could come to head the bureaucracy on the basis of promising reforms.

But, whatever regime is established in this potentially wealthy country, the respite will only be brief unless the fundamental problems are solved through the overthrow of bureaucratic rule linked to the workers' struggle in the more developed countries.

Undoubtedly it was in preparation for the coup on September 17 that the bureaucracy tried to give the army an image of impartiality, more or less instructing all army and civil personnel to resign from the Burma Socialist Programme Party, and ending the status of the BSPP as the sole political party.

They have also promised to go ahead with the general election within six to twelve weeks, providing "the situation has returned to normal".

In defiance of opposition demands for an interim government to organise the elections a new cabinet has been announced, made up of eight generals, one admiral and one civilian as health minister.

Saw Maung is now also prime minister and foreign minister. He became defence minister when his hated predecessor, Sein Lwin, was made president to replace Ne Win. He is also on the list of those the students demanded should be brought to trial.

## Pressure

Whether the campaign on the streets can continue and succeed now depends on the leaders' willingness to keep up the pressure and their ability to show a way forward. If they show a lack of confidence, a feeling of intimidation will begin to spread.

Many of the students and young workers, including rank-and-file leaders, appear to have gone underground. It is reported that many have left the capital, Rangoon, and headed for the Thai border where they could regroup with the intention of resurgence.

The ground is being prepared for civil war between the regime and the guerrilla forces of national minority groups as well as the opposition groups amongst the Burmans who form two-thirds of the population. Generalised struggle along these lines could lead to the break-up of the country.

Meetings have been held between groups of students and some of the national minority armies in the border regions. They have been promised arms and training.

## Mass action

However, guerrilla struggle on this basis would mean throwing away the prospect of mass action now among the Burmans, isolating activists from the urban movement of workers and youth. They will need a socialist policy and programme directed at solving the problems of the Burman masses and of the country as a whole.

It is overwhelmingly the Burmans in the cities and the towns who have been demonstrating on the streets day in and day out for months. The prolonged general strike continues, but cannot last forever in a situation that cries out for a strong lead and an appeal to the army.

The former pro-capitalist leader U Nu has announced that he is going underground. Of the nationally known opposition figures, Aung San Suu Kyi has announced the formation of a political party with Aung Gyi and Tin Too, but declares that "unity must be maintained within the army".

She then asks: "How will they get the government moving? It's an absurd situation -- do they think they can shoot people back to work? The army talks about avoiding anarchy, but it is creating anarchy".

She says: "The soldiers don't want to be butchers". Of course they don't, but they also don't want to be butchered themselves. If they mutiny they will be. Consequently they have to be convinced the opposition is prepared to go all the way, overthrowing the old leaders and tackling the country's debilitating economic problems.

This is the key to the revolution in Burma. The economy is already overwhelmingly nationalised. The local committees which have sprung up, and initially took over the local administration in many areas, could provide the basis for a workers' democracy.

## The Fighting Fund

### Finance a revolution!

In June *Inqaba* received a legacy of R4 000 from Deirdre Remoundos, a Greek comrade who tragically died young from cancer. This example of internationalism is an inspiration for all our supporters.

Several other individual donations of approximately R4 000 have been received recently, showing comrades' readiness to put personal resources fully into financing the revolution.

These donations reinforce the regular contributions by supporters which are the foundations on which the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC depends.

A number of African industrial workers donate R30 a month. Unemployed workers and school youth find ways to raise money on a regular basis.

We appeal to all our supporters to follow the lead set by these comrades.

Botha and the bosses spend millions attacking the working class. Botha spent R4,7 million just to advertise his 'animal elections'. In 1988 the state spent R12 billion on 'defence'.

It is the rands and cents in the pockets of the working class that are needed to build the Congress organisations on a programme to overthrow the apartheid state and end capitalism.

The fighting youth in Natal; railway workers; garment workers; the Soweto rent boycott; strikes by farm workers -- show the unbroken determination of the black working class to fight.

Wherever they reach, the ideas of *Inqaba* are greeted with enthusiasm. We need the finance to spread these ideas the length and breadth of South Africa -- to help build a mass ANC on a socialist programme.

Organise regular contributions! Set money-raising targets to achieve! Be bold in explaining our ideas and asking for the money to spread them further! Look for new opportunities to raise fighting fund. And remember, every rand and cent counts!



# Capitalism makes Africa poor

Africa is a continent ravaged by poverty, famine, disease and civil war. The colonial powers have plundered the wealth of Africa leaving it the least developed part of the world.

The struggle against colonialism was not just for "flag" independence, but to open the road to social and economic advance. These hopes have not been realised. Instead we have corrupt dictatorships and economic stagnation.

The capitalists and their newspapers peddle the idea that Africa's problems are due to incompetence, laziness and not enough free market capitalism. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) impose austerity programmes on our already starving continent ostensibly to help economic recovery. Yet Africa's misery grows worse.

The facts revealed by the latest *United Nations Report on Africa* (12-23 September 1988) fully bear out the Marxist argument that *capitalism itself* is the problem.

Africa began relatively late on the road of modern economic development, in a world dominated by the giant monopolies of the imperialist powers. This domination has ensured that the economic disparity between Africa and the West has widened, not narrowed, with every partial advance.

After the Second World War, world capitalism developed to a degree never before witnessed in history. Trade expanded at an annual rate of 12 per cent during the 1950s and 1960s. More goods were produced in that period than all preceding epochs put together. All the countries of the world became more interdependent, linked together in one international division of labour, through finance, investment and trade.

Underdeveloped countries could not hope to overcome their backwardness by slow development of capitalism in isolation; their fate had become inseparably bound up with the world economy as a whole.

The monopolies in America, Western Europe and Japan benefited most from the post-war upswing. In this period it became possible for the bosses to make some concessions to the demands and struggles of the working class, so that between 1950 and 1974 there was a real improvement in the living standards of the majority of the

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**By Gavin S. Jantjies**

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working class in these advanced countries.

But that was not the lot of working people in Africa and most of the colonial world. Imperialist plunder of these countries continued. Compared to the progress made in the advanced countries, most of our continent experienced only meagre development during the world upswing. Moreover the late 1950s and 1960s were a period of suffering, strife, civil war and anti-colonialist struggle in Africa. Then, in the 1970s, world capitalism entered into a new period of crisis, in which the poorest countries were the hardest hit.

The weak recovery of world capitalism since the early 1980s -- a shaky boom threatening at any time to turn to slump -- has been accompanied by devastating setbacks for poor countries and for Africa most of all.

## Gains eroded

Today the gains made in health care, education, etc after independence have been eroded. Africa is presently the only continent where the rate of infant and child deaths is rising. UNICEF predicts that these deaths will total 50 million (9 000 each day) between 1985-2 000 (*Guardian* 17/9/88). Most will be from diseases which can be prevented.

Africa has already become the continent of famine. The onset of a new recession or slump in the world economy will be an absolute nightmare for millions of Africans faced with indescribable hardships.

In 1986 the UN adopted an emergency 'Programme of Action' to "help the continent recover from the most severe socio-economic crisis to grip any region of the world since the Second World War". According to the UN, "African Governments recognised the need to undertake policy reforms that are necessary for the recovery of their economies and the revitalisation of genuine develop-



ment". In other words they agreed to swallow the medicine of austerity and cuts prescribed by the international business and banking establishment, principally the IMF.

Now, two years later, in the 'Mid-Term Review' on the Programme of Action, the UN General Secretary, Perez de Cuellar, admits that the crisis is more severe than it was when the Programme was adopted! Despite all their boasted 'action', there is "a continuing deterioration in the overall economic situation in Africa". Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the African region (this term excludes South Africa) rose a mere 1,0 per cent in 1986 and 0,8 per cent in 1987. This was less than one-third the rate of growth of world production.

The whole of the 1980s has been characterised by a declining trend in GDP per head of population.

Africa's population is growing at about 3,0 per cent annually, the fastest in the world. Half the population is aged 15 or younger. On the basis of such economic stagnation it is impossible to provide employment for or to house, feed and educate a rapidly growing population.

The basic problem in underdeveloped economies, with a mainly rural population, has been to generate a sufficient surplus in agriculture and to use



this for the development of industry. In the modern epoch, with even the poorest countries integrated into and dependent on the world market, this cannot be tackled on the national plane alone.

Under colonial rule agricultural production was geared, in the first instance, not to feeding the population but to providing raw materials for the industries of foreign powers. Likewise the development of mining was geared not to supplying domestic industry but for export to industries overseas. Not only machinery and other capital goods, but also most manufactured goods for consumption have had to be imported by African countries. This remains the situation today.

The development of domestic manufacturing is therefore crucially dependent on the extent to which the foreign currency received for exports can finance the necessary imports and investment in local industries.

However, the domination of the world market by the trans-national monopolies, based in the West, has enabled them to drive down the prices of the colonial world's exports, while constantly pushing up the prices of the manufactured goods which these countries have to import. This is the main reason why African countries face a crippling shortage of foreign currency ('foreign exchange').

Crops and minerals which make up the exports of the underdeveloped countries are termed "commodities" by economists. Primary commodities provide sub-Saharan Africa with nearly 90 per cent of its foreign exchange income. The equivalent figure for all low-income countries is 44 per cent.

## Commodity prices

According to the *Financial Times* (28/8/88), "Average real commodity prices ... are now some 30 per cent below their level at the beginning of 1979. ...no important commodity has been exempt from the general trend. The depth of the decline, to prices which by the end of 1986 were the lowest in real terms for 50 years, has surprised many commentators and forecasters..." After a brief recovery in late 1987-88, commodity prices are once again falling.

The net effect is an endless transfusion of wealth from the poor to the rich. It is estimated that falling real prices in

exports have cost African countries nearly \$50 billion in the past three years alone.

On top of this the Western powers use their dominant position to restrict trade in the products of the underdeveloped world. They impose import duties ('tariffs'), quotas and other barriers to protect capitalists producing these goods in their own countries. The UN report states: "With a few exceptions, non-tariff measures against exports from African countries increased between 1981 and 1986. Cotton, sugar, chocolate, fish, textiles and tobacco are some of the exports that face non-tariff barriers. Iron and steel exports from Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria and Zimbabwe are also subject to such barriers."

The more that the underdeveloped countries manage to process their primary commodities, the more they encounter trade barriers imposed by the imperialist powers.

## Real terms

During the 1970's exports of African countries grew in real terms at only 1 per cent a year; during the 1980's there has been an average annual decline of 2 per cent in export volume.

A surge in world trade in 1986 allowed the volume of Africa's exports to rise by 17,9 per cent. Yet the value of total exports fell by 17,7 per cent. So the entire 17,9 per cent increase in goods exported, plus almost the same amount again, was a gift to the monopolies in the advanced countries! And these capitalist crooks complain that Africa is to blame for its own poverty!

As a result of the worsening terms of trade, the inflow of capital goods, durable consumer goods and spare parts needed for economic growth has steadily declined. In 1987 for example, in spite of an increase in world trade, the imports of the region as a whole fell by 4,3 per cent. According to the *Financial Times* (29/9/88) imports have declined to the levels of 20 years ago. Thus, with exports and imports in decline, the economic base of the region is contracting.

Agriculture is still the main source of livelihood of Africa's people. More than 75 per cent depend on the land.

Under the present system the rural population face insuperable problems in their struggle to expand production,

and even to subsist.

The continent is extremely vulnerable to drought, pests and floods. It is the lack of infrastructural development -- dams and irrigation, roads and railways, etc -- which makes every adversity a potential catastrophe.

Low world market prices for agricultural commodities, coupled with the ever-increasing prices for implements, fertilisers, etc., makes it impossible for peasant farming to flourish. Food production is constantly undermined.

According to the UN report Africa's agricultural production expanded by 3,8 per cent in 1986 but declined by 1,1 per cent in 1987. Due to the low price of cereals on the world market there was a drop in cereal production in 1987.

We have the absurdity that this vast continent with immense food-producing potential has had to beg for food aid from abroad. The 4,6 million tons received in 1987-88 was far from enough.

Fertile Zambia has a severe food crisis, with 200 deaths a day from hunger-related diseases. (*News from Zambia*, 20/7/88). Shortages of bread, wheat and mealie meal are common. Failure to gather in the maize harvests because of impassable roads and lack of transport is termed an "annual ritual". Often women, weakened by hunger, collapse while queuing up to buy food.

Hundreds of thousands of tons of maize and wheat have to be imported into Zambia. Corruption, black-marketeering and smuggling of food has become endemic. Bread is no longer officially regarded as an essential commodity, and loaves are even smuggled in from Zimbabwe.

## Planned utilisation

Yet there is no reason why Africa should go hungry. With planned utilisation of the natural and human resources the population could be adequately fed. But the system of capitalism, of private ownership and production for profit, does not allow this.

Private ownership means an economy subject to the market. The market today means the world market, which is in the grip of the monopolies, and which penetrates and dominates the domestic market remorselessly. Without the development of local agriculture and industry, the domestic market



stagnates.

For the peasantry there is no way out on the basis of capitalism -- any more than there is for the working class. The number of small farmers going bankrupt is increasing. They are unable to pay back their loans and therefore cannot obtain more loans, for example, to buy tractors. They cannot make a living producing crops for export. They lack a domestic market capable of absorbing their products or a local manufacturing industry capable of supplying their needs at reasonable costs.

More and more African peasants have been driven back to subsistence production. In the age of the Space Shuttle, this means literally going back to the ox and the hoe. Millions abandon the land and migrate to the bigger villages and towns in search of jobs and a better life.

But the mass of the urban population already face increasing hardship under the present system. Unemployment on a vast scale, starvation wages and ever-rising prices are their lot.

The UN report on Africa admits that "little has been achieved in the setting up of factories for the production of spare parts and for the overhaul, repair and maintenance of public vehicles, machinery and equipment".

Up to 1986 (the latest statistics) only about 40 per cent of the capacity in agriculture-related industries was in use. Everywhere plants were lying idle due to lack of spare parts or raw materials.

## Capacity

In Nigeria, the biggest economy after South Africa, industry is virtually at a standstill, especially hard-hit by the fall in the price of oil which is the country's main export. Taken as a whole the economy is utilising only 30 per cent of its capacity. According to *Business Concord* (24/5/88) 15 canned food and beverages factories have been operating at an average of 2 per cent of their capacity.

The capitalist class in Africa is not an independent 'national' bourgeoisie, but junior partners of the imperialist monopolies on whom they are completely dependent. Banking, mining and industry, to the extent that these have been developed, are more than ever dominated and controlled by for-

eign capital.

The monopolies have a stranglehold on investment and have more interest in simply plundering rather than developing the productive forces and the national economies of the underdeveloped world. This plunder takes place not only through unfair terms of trade but also through the system of international debt.

First the poor countries are forced to hand over the wealth they produce to the capitalists of the rich countries through unequal exchange. Then, to survive, they have to borrow money from the same capitalists who have robbed them. Then they have to pay these capitalists extortionate rates of interest on the loans. This is a trap from which there is no way out except through the complete overthrow of the capitalist system, on an international scale.

## External debt

The Economic Commission for Africa estimates that the total external debt of the region had risen to \$218 billion by February 1988 -- equivalent to 44 per cent of all the goods and services these countries produce annually.

Although the total debt is much lower than Latin America's, in relative terms it is higher. In 1985, Latin America's debt equalled 271 per cent of exports; by 1990, Africa's debt is expected to be 345 per cent of its exports. This is unsustainable.

In Africa's case, the monopolies and banks have been so reluctant to lend that nearly 80 per cent of the total debt of the 31 'low-income' countries is owed to official international capitalist agencies such as the IMF.

The weak boom in the advanced countries through most of the 1980s failed to drag the economies of Africa with it, merely further skewing world economic relations in favour of the rich and against the poor. The United Nations report states that "growth linkages between developed and developing countries appear to have weakened in the 1980s, in particular with regard to international trade".

For Africa as a whole the inflow of private capital (lending plus direct investment) declined continuously from \$7,8 billion in 1983 to \$2,0 billion in 1987. In 1986 -- the year the UN's emergency "Programme of Action"

was adopted -- the bloodsucking IMF actually became a net receiver of funds from Africa, to the tune of \$500 million! This could clearly not go on.

As a condition of new credits, African countries were required to submit to austerity measures. The UN document reports that "as at 1 July 1988, about 30 countries in the region had arrangements with the IMF and the World Bank that were associated with the implementation of structural adjustment programmes".

Instead of proposing a struggle to overthrow capitalism, the pious 'humanitarian' UN gives its support to the policies of the international *mashonisas* who are bleeding Africa white. Hoping to avoid massive defaults by debtors and dangers consequent for the banking system, the United Nations, the World Bank, the IMF are all working together to protect world capitalism.

African governments have had to implement measures such as devaluation of local currencies by up to 50 per cent. This has made imports and debt servicing even more expensive.

Furthermore governments have been required "to reduce ... public spending in order to increase domestic savings". What this has meant for workers and their families is severe cuts in wages.

In many cases the programme demanded the selling off of government enterprises to private capitalists. In most of Africa state owned enterprises are still the largest employer. The sell-off means an increase in the number of unemployed.

## Food subsidies

The IMF measure which is affecting the poor most is the "necessity to liberalise prices". This has meant removing price controls and food subsidies.

In December 1986 the Zambian government ended the subsidy on maize, with the result that the price of a 50 kg bag doubled to more than the monthly wage of many workers. There were riots and demonstrations, with at least 15 people killed in the *government's brutal response*. Kaunda was forced into a partial retreat. Now, again, in response to IMF pressure, he is moving towards scrapping price controls.

In April this year the attempt by the



Nigerian government to put up fuel prices also led to massive strikes and demonstrations.

In October the Algerian government, faced with falling oil revenues, slashed subsidies on staple foods, restricted university entrance and took steps to sell co-operative farms to private owners. These measures adopted to satisfy Algeria's creditors, combined with widespread shortages, triggered massive strikes and demonstrations by workers and youth -- which the government answered by shooting an estimated 200 dead.

There is no end in sight to Africa's debt crisis. Fearing the repercussions of major defaults, the World Bank and the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lawson, have proposed a new scheme to "relieve" some of the burden. Their plan gives sub-Saharan Africa's creditors three options, which involve extending repayment terms, partly cutting the total debt, or reducing the interest rate.

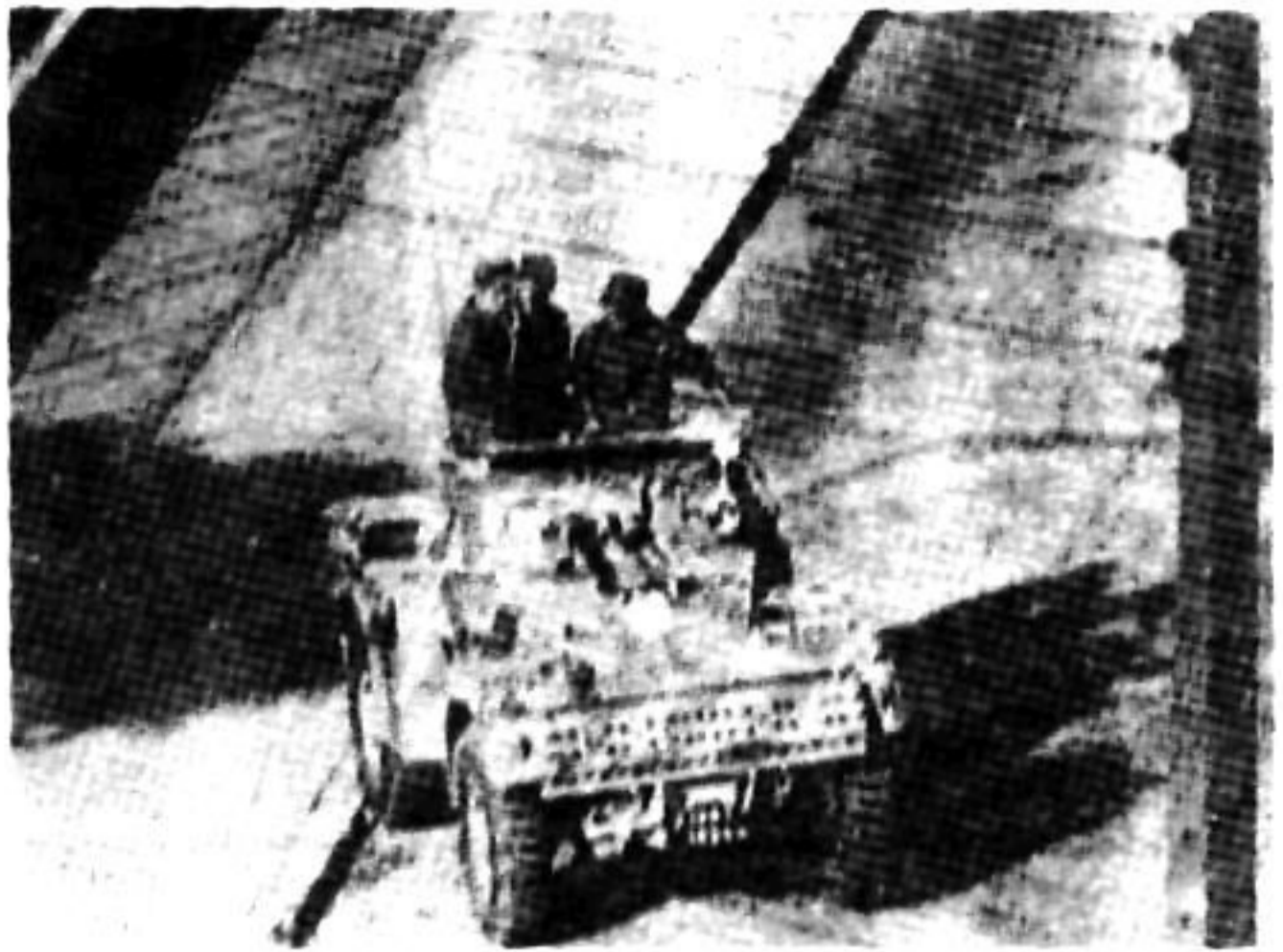
But the whole complicated concession is worth a mere \$500 million per annum, or three per cent of what the African countries have been compelled to hand over to the West through unfair terms of trade alone!

## Dismal failure

The UN report shows the dismal failure of all attempts to deal with Africa's economic problems within the framework of capitalism:

"The international community [?], which has been concerned about Africa for the last few years [!], has taken a variety of initiatives, in support of African efforts to turn the situation around, but these have not succeeded in restoring growth. The World Bank's Special Facility for Africa, the IMF's Structural Adjustment Facility for Africa, the Baker Plan [*all such impressive sounding names*], the repeated re-scheduling of debt repayment -- none of these have yielded the results that were hoped for." The capitalist 'medicine' has made Africa sicker than before.

As elsewhere in the underdeveloped world, the onset of severe recession or slump in the capitalist world economy could drive a number of African countries to overthrow capitalism by taking the main productive



*Crackdown: the Algerian government responded to demonstrations by shooting at least 200 dead.*

forces, banks, mines, agricultural estates and industries into state ownership -- and running the national economy on the basis of a central plan.

This indeed would represent a step forward, by providing an element in the necessary solution. But confined to the national plane, these measures alone would be of limited effect. We have seen how the collapse of capitalism in Ethiopia, Angola and Mozambique, and the institution of state ownership and planning within the confines of extreme underdevelopment, have not transformed the material life of the population.

The ruling elites in these countries, basing themselves on the national state, do not strive to spread revolution regionally or internationally but concentrate on the protection of their own narrow national self-interest. They do this through compromises with the imperialist governments and monopolies, combined with repression and corruption in their own countries. But on this basis there is no relief either from the pressure of the world market on their weak economies, or from direct sabotage by imperialism (as, eg. through South Africa's attacks).

These regimes in Africa are fundamentally the same as those in the deformed workers' states of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China, although on a far less developed basis. The ruling bureaucracies there are a conservative force. Far from wanting to spread revolution internationally,

they are seeking stable relations with imperialism and accepting the 'permanence' of capitalism in the West.

Although now industrialised, they refuse to integrate their own planned economies with those of the underdeveloped world. Ironically Mozambique, three times refused admission to COMECON, has now submitted to the IMF.

The way forward for Africa, as for the world as a whole, lies through working-class revolution. Only the working class, by leading the mass of the rural poor behind it, can carry the revolution to completion, both on the national and international plane.

Especially in the relatively more developed and powerful African countries of Nigeria, Egypt and South Africa, the working class has the capacity to place itself at the head of the nation and, given Marxist leadership, to show the way out of the crisis. Revolutions in any of these countries will reverberate throughout the continent.

It is on this road and no other that the hoped-for unity of Africa could at last become a reality -- through a Socialist Federation of Africa under workers' and peasants' rule. Such an advance in Africa would hurl back the power of the imperialist monopolies and governments. It would spur on and link up with the developing socialist revolution on a world scale.

That is where Africa's future lies.



## Free Palestinian socialist Mahmoud Masarwa!



**"I stand for a binational state of Jewish and Arab workers. I was arrested because I was going to say these things in England. I don't have confidence in the court because the security service is making the decisions, but I am willing to fight for my innocence and I'm sure workers throughout the world will help me."**

These words were shouted by Mahmoud Masarwa to his supporters at the start of his trial in Israel on October 18.

Three months earlier he had been taken from his bed by the Israeli security police, Shin Beth, and detained without access to a lawyer or visits from his family. He was severely beaten and went on a two-week hunger strike to protest against being kept in solitary confinement.

Mahmoud Masarwa is a socialist with a long record of trade union activity fighting for Arab and Jewish workers. He is a member of the Israeli trade union organisation, the Histadrut. Of the 10 000 Palestinians in Israeli jails a third are trade unionists and waged workers. In his case particularly, the Israeli state has shown its hostility to attempts to unite Jewish and Palestinian workers.

Mahmoud believes in building links between workers internationally and was due to travel to Britain to meet labour movement activists.

A leaflet he helped write in Hebrew explains the ideas he stands for:

**"Peace will never be achieved by the representatives of capitalism and imperialism. The rights of the Palestinian nation will never be achieved by the methods of terrorism or by diplomatic initiatives of the PLO leadership that are based on the Arab states and imperialism...Genuine peace can only be achieved by the struggle of the working class, and in Israel-Palestine that means the united struggle of Jewish and Arab workers for the socialist transformation of society."**

The labour movement campaign for the release of Mahmoud Masarwa began immediately after his detention.

In a few months resolutions of support have come from four continents, and 11 countries! Resolutions from British Labour MP's, and trade union leaders, the Australian Miner's Federation, the General Federation of Greek workers, a former Danish socialist Prime Minister, and the women's section of the Pakistani People's Party -- are proof of how wide this support has been. An emergency resolution calling for his immediate release was even passed by 60 per cent in the European parliament!

The Israeli authorities have felt the meaning of international working class solidarity in pickets of their embassies and airline offices and in a flood of letters of protest. Their attempt to frame Mahmoud, try him, and sentence him without publicity or protest has failed dismally.

Recently a campaign delegation made up of British Labour MP's, Dave Nellist and Terry Fields, and Danish docker's leader Karsten Andersen took the challenge into Israel itself.



They discussed action with representatives of the Israeli Labour Party, Histadrut, Mapam (a 'left' Zionist party), the Citizens Rights Movement (Ratz), the Communist Party and the Progressive List for Peace (PLP). They were welcomed to Arab towns within Israel and Palestinian refugee camps on the West Bank.

The state now claims Mahmoud is guilty of 'espionage'! But their evidence is 'secret'! Nonetheless they have been forced to make concessions. Part of the trial can now be held in public -- overturning an earlier court ruling. The greatest victory so far for the defence has been a partial lifting of press restrictions -- previously forbidden from even mentioning his name. Now the case has catapulted to the headlines.

Mahmoud has been strengthened by the support shown by workers and youth in many different countries. But he is still not free. His case has been adjourned until February 1989. The campaign must still be stepped up.

### **The labour movement campaign for the release of Mahmoud Masarwa is demanding:**

- \* The right of Mahmoud to choose his own legal representation.
- \* No to a secret trial, end all restrictions on press coverage.
- \* For the publication of all charges.
- \* Produce evidence or drop all charges.
- \* The immediate release of Mahmoud Masarwa.

### **How you can support the campaign:**

Get your trade union branch, COSATU local, Youth Congress to send letters of protest, resolutions to:  
The Israeli Embassy, and the Prime Minister's Office,  
3 Kaplan St, Jerusalem, Israel, 91919



# British Marxists' Rally



The *Militant* rally on June 19, was the biggest indoor political meeting in Britain since World War Two.

Speakers included striking P & O sailors; an NHS nurse; John Macreadie, deputy General Secretary of the CPSA and former member of the TUC General Council; expelled Liverpool Labour leader Tony Mulhearn; Ron Brown, M.P.; and *Militant* political editors Ted Grant and Peter Taaffe. This is how *Militant* reported it.

It was an historic event -- *Militant's* biggest rally yet -- a deafening counterblast to rumours that Labour's Marxists are in retreat. Here was an army on the march for socialism.

"We have confounded our enemies", said Clare Doyle as she opened the rally, "and we have no intention of going away until our job is completed".

For nearly two hours 7 500 people were pouring into the vast hall at London's Alexandra Palace. Stewards had to keep closing the doors to control the crush.

Most came by coach from every corner of the country. Others like two American women staying in Berkshire, came along after seeing posters for the rally.

As the speakers appeared, electronic music reverberated, fireworks exploded, red flags were waved and a huge portrait of Trotsky was unfurled behind the stage.

That was a reminder of one of the day's central themes -- the restoration

of the revolutionary leader to his rightful place in history. The other theme was complementary -- the struggle today to defend the socialist cause to which Trotsky devoted his life.

The rally paid tribute to Harry McShane, the veteran workers' leader who would have been speaking but sadly died in April. He would have been proud to see, on the platform and in the audience, participants in the labour movement's most significant struggles of today, including 30 P&O strikers from Dover.

*Militant* is now where workers in struggle look first for solidarity, help and political guidance. The breadth of support amongst families was reflected in the 506 children in the creche, symbols of the socialist future that *Militant* alone is committed to fight for.

The thousands at the rally will not be fooled by those Labour leaders who imagine that they can run society without changing the capitalist economic system. By their applause for all the speakers, they reaffirmed their conviction that Marxism offers the only hope for humanity.

The confidence in the validity of *Militant's* policies was proved by the gigantic collection of £51 725.

The rally reached its climax as from 6 000 miles away in Mexico came the voice of Trotsky's grandson, Esteban Volkov, the living link between the rally's two themes. (see page 59)

A message had already been given in person by his daughter Veronika. The knot of history was being retied, as Trotsky's political heirs united with his descendants to dedicate themselves to support his rehabilitation and the socialist goals for which he was murdered

## Message from the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC

From the South African revolution, greetings of solidarity to the comrades of *Militant* and this inspiring rally for socialism in Britain and worldwide.

Today, in the front ranks of the fighting against the apartheid state, we are proud to be holding high the red flag of Lenin and Trotsky, of workers' internationalism, and of *Militant's* guiding ideas.

Apartheid and capitalism are twins. Botha and the bosses stand together and are grinding us in poverty. Thatcher and Botha support each other in their attacks upon us and upon you.

We grasp your hand and stand with you in the fight to rid Britain, South Africa and the world of the misery of capitalism. Accept our small donation [£200] as a token of our support. Go forward and build the *Militant*!

by Stalin.

"We salute all those who have fought Stalinism" said Rob Sewell, closing the rally: "We pledge to rededicate ourselves to struggle for Marxism. A new age will dawn and we shall have a system of society of which we can be proud of".

The Red Flag and the International were sung, then more fireworks and Beethoven's Ode to Joy brought the day to an explosive end.



A cloud now hangs over the head of the working class in Scotland with the poll tax due to come into effect in 1989.

The poll tax is to be introduced throughout Britain by 1990. It is the most widespread attack the Tories have launched on the working class in its nine years of government. It replaces the domestic rate system -- a tax on the value of property -- by a fixed tax on all individuals over 18.

The tax is a wealth transfusion -- taking away from the poor and giving to the rich. It takes no account of the individual's income or ability to pay. A hospital worker earning £90 a week will pay the same as a government Minister earning £900.

A family with a child over 18 and living with their grandmother now has an average rate bill of £549. Under the poll tax this family will have to pay £1156. A typical Tory minister has a rate bill of £1787. With the poll tax it will be £498.

In Scotland the poll tax is driving both the working class and youth into struggle. It will hit the middle class

## Britain: Poll tax struggle

By Douglas Kunta  
(A Zimbabwean socialist)

also. In many areas people are joining Anti-Poll Tax unions which have been set up to organise a mass non-payment campaign.

Working people would expect the Labour Party to lead this struggle. The tax is the last straw for people who have suffered attack after attack from the Tories. They are no longer prepared to let the Tories get the better of them. An effective campaign to defeat the tax in Scotland and Britain could turn the tide against Thatcher and prepare the way for a new Labour government.

*Militant* supporters in the Labour Party have been in the forefront of the

campaign against the tax. Now the Labour Party leadership, instead of taking this campaign forward, are scandalously trying to expel *Militant* supporters from the Party. They are attacking all those advocating defiance of the poll tax law.

The Labour Party leaders wrongly think that by being 'law-abiding' they can more easily come to government. But that is not the way to win the confidence of working-class voters.

As a tenant said recently, "In 1915 Glasgow tenants said 'no to the rent increases'. They defied the law, went on strike and they won. They were right and the law was wrong. So it had to be broken. It is the same with the Poll Tax".

While she was saying this I thought of the strike against high rents now being fought by hundreds of thousands in the South African townships. Botha's repression has not been able to break this strike.

I thought that the people of Scotland and Britain facing the poll tax should be encouraged by this fight.

## Australian school students' strike

On 27 July 100 000 students demonstrated against proposed changes in education policies of the Liberal state government of New South Wales. It was the largest school strike in Australia's history.

It was one of a number of strikes and demonstrations against ever worsening conditions in schools -- increased class sizes and reduced subject choice -- and increasing unemployment among teachers and youth.

A rally of 4 000 to protest against the new cuts was organised in June. At the rally Alex Malatestas, from the School Students Union and supporter of the Australian Marxist paper *Socialist Echo*, proposed strike action on July 1 to continue the struggle. The idea was widely supported.

The media described the 10 000 strong demonstration on July 1, in which students marched through the streets of Sydney to the Department of Education, as follows: "slick organisation, articulate speakers" and "the biggest movement since Vietnam". On the same day a further 50 000 students boycotted school.

The SSU emphasised the importance of trade union support and the need for the students to support the Teachers' Federation in their struggle

against staff cuts. At the rally student leaders and representatives from the Teachers' Federation shared the platform.

The strikes forced the government to negotiate with student leaders, drop its plans to punish students caught swearing, and postpone proposals for a new exam system. It was the first time in Australia's history that a student union forced the government to make concessions.

The strike had tremendous support from parents and workers, who joined in the demonstrations. Building workers stopped work and applauded the students.

For many youth it was their first strike or demonstration. These government policies will force a new layer of working-class youth into struggle who will draw the conclusion that there is nothing to gain under this system of the bosses.

The present Labour government in Australia protects the bosses' interests. Supporters of *Socialist Echo* are fighting for a new Labour government which will protect the interests of workers and youth. To achieve this it will be necessary to transform the Australian Labour Party into a fighting socialist party.

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# Yugoslavia: a country in turmoil

## Origins

Yugoslavia came into existence after the First World War, amalgamating parts of the old Austrian empire with small Balkan states which had won their independence from Turkey.

It was ruled by an autocratic monarchy with a state administration dominated by the Serbs, the largest nationality. This created resentment, particularly in more advanced Slovenia and Croatia. This was one of the factors exploited by the Nazis who invaded the country in 1941 to set up puppet regimes.

The partisan resistance to the Nazis, led by Tito's League of Communists, won support from all nationalities and led a victorious struggle against the occupation forces.

Capitalism collapsed and a state-owned economy was created, but without the independent participation and leadership of the working class. Like Mao in China, Tito had created his apparatus within the resistance, devoid of democratic control by the mass of working people.

Because the Russian Red Army played no part in Yugoslavia's liberation, Tito was able to maintain his independence from Stalin. But his regime was a replica of the bureaucratically deformed workers' state which Stalin headed in Russia.

## Federal structure

To contain the national conflict, Tito (who died in 1980) created a federal structure of six republics and two autonomous provinces within Serbia, with separate bureaucracies ruling each (see map). The republics, unlike the autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina, had formal powers of self-rule including the right to secede.

Modest economic advance and Tito's personal authority enabled the state to survive. But the absence of democratic workers' control over the state and the economy led to inefficiency, corruption and economic stagnation. Inevitably, the bureaucratic elite in each republic has tried to boost their position at the expense of other republics.



Yugoslavia, a country often hit by earthquakes, is being shaken by political convulsions which could have far more fundamental consequences than any seismic tremors.

In September and October tensions between the different national groups erupted into the biggest demonstrations since World War II, raising a question mark over the country's future unity.

At the root of the problem, as in Russia and the rest of eastern Europe, is the inability of the ruling Stalinist bureaucracy to develop the economy and satisfy workers' demands, combined with their oppressive approach towards the national minorities.

**By Pat Craven**  
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Corruption scandals, economic crisis and, above all, national conflict have combined to undermine Yugoslavia's Stalinist regime.

This has led to waves of strikes. In 1987, 365 000 workers were involved in 1 570 strikes. In July this year 5 000 strikers from Croatia besieged Parliament in just one of a series of protests. "We want to be free people in a socialist country", they shouted. Placards read: "Down with the government"; "Thieves get out". They were joined by 5 000 Serbs demanding an all Yugoslav general strike.

Even more than in other Stalinist states, mass discontent expressed itself in an outbreak of national conflicts. Rooted in the area's history, it has been brought to the surface by the bureaucracy's political and economic bankruptcy.

National tensions feed on the huge economic inequalities among the different republics. Wages in Slovenia are now six times as high as in Kosovo. Unemployment in Slovenia is only two

per cent of the workforce; in Bosnia, Serbia and Macedonia it is 15-20 per cent; in Kosovo it is 40 per cent.

Bureaucrats in the more prosperous Slovenian and Croatian republics have exploited a resentment at having to subsidise the poorer areas. In the southern and eastern republics there is anger at their relative poverty.

In Slovenia there has been a move for greater 'liberalisation' in both the economic and political field. There were allegations that the army was planning a coup to reimpose a more orthodox Stalinist regime. Three journalists and an army sergeant were recently jailed for making this allegation, after a trial which aroused mass support for the defendants.

Demonstrations of tens of thousands were held, supported by the whole population.

A similar situation exists in Croatia, made relatively wealthy by tourism along its Adriatic coast. The bureaucracy there sees its prosperity drained away by Serbia, while deep-rooted historical tensions remain between Serbs and Croats.

The crisis is most acute in Serbia and in particular its autonomous province of Kosovo. Centuries ago, Kosovo was the centre of the Serbian nation. Today 80 per cent of the population are





## Yugoslavia's nationalities

**SLOVENIA:** republic. Population 1,8m. Mainly Slovene-speaking but with growing numbers of 'migrant workers' from the poorer south.

**CROATIA:** republic. Population 4,6m (3,5m Croats, 0,5m Serbs.)

**BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA:** republic. Population 4,1m (1,6m Serbo-Croat speaking Muslims, 1,3m Serbian Orthodox and 0,75m Croat Catholics)

**MONTENEGRO:** republic. Population 0,58m (0,4m Montenegrin Orthodox, 78 000 Muslims and 37 000 Albanians)

**SERBIA:** republic. Population 9,3m (6,2m Serb Orthodox).

**VOJVODINA:** autonomous province of Serbia. Population 2m (1,7m Serbs, 0,38m Hungarians and Romanians)

**KOSOVO:** autonomous province of Serbia. Population 2m (1,7m Albanians, 0,2m Serbs and Montenegrins).

**MACEDONIA:** republic. Population 1,9m (1,3m Macedonians, 0,38m Albanians and 87 000 Turks).

Albanians, one of the biggest non-Slav nationalities within the federation and the fastest growing.

National oppression of the Albanians by the Serbian bureaucracy is aggravated by the poverty of Kosovo. In 1981 there were riots by Albanians around the demand for complete autonomy from Serbia.

Marxists would have been sensitive to this demand, upholding the Albanians' right to self-determination including the right to secede if they so wish, subject to guarantees of the democratic and cultural rights of the non-Albanian minorities in Kosovo.

The Serbian bureaucracy reacted with repression. Since then the Serbian and Montenegrin minorities allege they have been intimidated by Albanians. 34 000 Serbs have left the province, leaving about 200 000 alongside the 1 700 000 Albanians.

This laid the basis for a furious backlash among Serbs whipped up by the Serbian bureaucracy. In September angry Serbian demonstrations of as many as 150 000, demanded the end of Kosovo's autonomy.

## Slobodan Milosevic

Slobodan Milosevic, manipulating the demonstrators' demands, has risen to the top of the Serbian Communist Party on this nationalist wave. 30 000 troops and 10 000 secret police have been sent into Kosovo. Up to 3 000 Albanians are in prison.

Milosevic's aim is to recentralise political power in Belgrade in the

## Corruption, chaos and bungling

In the last decade the economy has staggered from crisis to crisis. Unemployment now stands at 17 per cent. Production last year rose by only one per cent. Real wages fell by four per cent and government economists predict a further fall of 35-45 per cent.

Inflation is approaching 200 per cent a year and the foreign debt totals \$21bn. Debt repayments consume 50 per cent of foreign exchange earnings.

Corruption has reached massive

proportions. In the Agrokomerc farm produce company in Bosnia the directors issued \$1 billion worth of phoney promissory notes which the state banks were willing to cash even though they knew that the company was in no position to honour them.

Already 5 000 workers have lost their jobs and those of up to 100 000 who depend on Agrokomerc are in jeopardy.

hands of the Serbian bureaucracy. His revival of 'Greater Serbian' nationalism has alarmed the bureaucracies in the Slovene, Croatian and Bosnian republics, and even in the autonomous province of Vojvodina where there is still a Serbian majority.

Milosevic is likely to be supported by the bureaucracies in Montenegro, which also has a minority within Kosovo, and Macedonia which has a militant Albanian minority of its own.

But his 'solution' is fragile and explosive. The Albanians and the Serbian minority in Kosovo have weapons. Armed conflict, possibly in the form of anti-Serbian terrorism or guerrilla struggle, cannot be ruled out.

The federal army could begin to show splits between its different component nationalities, especially since a disproportionate number of soldiers are Albanians. Despite deep-rooted fears of civil war, the survival of the Yugoslav state could be placed in question. The very part of the world which gave the word 'Balkanisation' to the world could see a disastrous split into

separate states.

The only force capable of preventing this is the working class, which will be forced into renewed opposition by the regime's attacks on living standards. To keep the country united requires the overthrow of the ruling bureaucracy and the introduction of genuine workers' control and management of industry, the state and society.

In a society in which all officials were elected and no official received more than the average wage of a skilled worker; with no standing army but an armed people, and administrative tasks rotated to ensure there was no bureaucracy, the rights and living standards of every nationality could be safeguarded.

The right to autonomy, including the right to secede, would be extended to every nationality, including the Albanians. But with workers of the whole country sharing the benefits of an expanding economy, on the basis of workers' rule in Yugoslavia and Europe, the pressures to secede would become much less.



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For security reasons, fictitious names have been used by writers of articles in this issue of *Inqaba Ya Basebenzi*. In every case, however, care has been taken not to give a misleading impression of the background and experience of the comrade concerned. Details about writers are provided only when security considerations make this possible.

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