

# **SOLIDARITY**

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Movement of Azania

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## *SPECIAL ISSUE:*

- Our Urgent Tasks
- Schools Boycott,  
1980
- Walter Rodney,  
1942-1980

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## SOLIDARITY

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

### CONTENTS

October 1980, No. 4

#### OUR URGENT TASKS

page 2

Interim Committee's statement on the most important resolutions of the BCM(A) Conference held in Brixton, London, from 7th to 12th April 1980. Delegates from nine regions decided to create a unitary centralised structure for the external representation of the Black Consciousness organisations within the country, to procure military training and bases for our cadres. The document's repeated reference to the vast array of people's and grass root organisations is indicative of the high premium the BCM(A) places on the self-activity of the masses and its conviction that true liberation is the act of the people themselves. The BCM(A) Conference takes it place in history as the first gathering of Azanian blacks declaring their commitment to scientific socialism.

#### WE DON'T WANT NO EDUCATION

page 9

No other period in the history of our struggle has revealed so high a degree of political consciousness and direction nor witnessed so intense a struggle at all levels and by all sections of the blacks as during the 1980 pupils' boycott of schools. A heroic struggle unsilenced by tear gas, baton, bullet or arrest, and still continuing.

#### CAMPAIGN BRIEFINGS

page 36

The Soweto Teachers' Choir; the South African Institute of International Affairs; Black Municipal Workers' Union; and SASO-10. The first three show how the BCM(A) related organically to the struggle inside the home base.

#### NEW DAWN IN ZIMBABWE

page 43

#### IN SOLIDARITY WITH CARIBBEAN STRUGGLES

page 45

Walter Rodney, 1942-1980: the practitioner of *groundation* with the working people is assassinated by agents of CIA installed dictatorship of Forbes Burnham. Grenada: a year after the revolution. Martinique.

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# Our Urgent Tasks

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the period immediately preceding the epic events of June 16th, 1976, the movement for national liberation in our country witnessed a massive and spectacular groundswell. Politically that development signified an important advance in the national awakening and political consciousness as well as in the militancy of the black majority. It was a tremendous development marking the enormous strides that all the major sectors of our population had taken in the direction towards emancipating themselves from oppression under white domination. This period, which covered less than 10 years before 1976, revealed unmistakably the evidence of the maturity of our whole population and their determination to liquidate white privilege and domination, their firm resolve to launch a new society based upon the will and the power of the people.

This tremendous growth in political consciousness translated itself into definite organisational forms. It expressed itself in the formation on a scale unprecedented, of a vast network of people's organisations both political and cultural all around the country. This array of people's organisations together constituted what has collectively been popularly and proudly referred to as the Black Consciousness Organisations. They constitute the popular instruments for carrying forward the combined efforts of all sectors in our population towards national emancipation, and are the expression of our people's awakening to the political tasks of the Nation.

Among the more notable of these organisations were the Black People's Convention (BPC), the South African Students' Organisation (SASO), the South African Students' Movement

(SASM), the National Youth Organisation (NAYO), Union of Black Journalists, the Black Allied Workers' Union (BAWU), Music Drama Art and Literature Institute (MDALI), Medupe and many other cultural and welfare organisations at the level of the grass roots.

In both their political and organisational aspects, these developments were of singular historic importance. The Black Consciousness Movement emerged and established itself very rapidly within a relatively short period of time, beginning in the sixties. It arose almost a decade after the country had witnessed the banning of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC). In that decade our country saw an almost total eradication of political organisations among blacks with massive political persecution and repression. A total reign of terror was launched by the state.

In the teeth of a colossal reign of terror and repression the black people of AZANIA forged ahead to mobilise themselves and to establish, firmly and permanently, the organisational instruments for mass mobilisation. That, in essence is the significance of the Black Consciousness Organisations.

By the mid-seventies the Black Consciousness Organisations were presenting the white power structure in South Africa with its single most powerful challenge and threat. In outlawing the ANC and the PAC and through extensive repression the racist regime had hoped to snuff out the political activity and initiative of the blacks within the country. The Black Consciousness Organisations are the living refutation of all their hopes.

Faced with this new force of resistance, the oppressors were obliged, sooner or later, to respond with renewed and intensified measures of oppression. Not unexpectedly, in 1976 their provocation

had to take the shape of an arrogant measure in the area of black education. With typical insolence, they decreed that henceforth black students at high school would receive instruction through the medium of Afrikaans, a language symbolising the chauvinism of the South African white master-race.

This determined that the students would be at the forefront of the resistance to the new onslaught of the oppressor. For reasons of factional interests, some have sought to belittle the Soweto upsurge by representing it as if it were no more than a mere student demonstration, a youthful escapade. They shut their eyes to the dynamics of the whole upsurge.

The truth is that, although this uprising began as a student demonstration, it soon expanded and came to embrace not only students in Soweto and beyond but also significant non-student sectors as well; notably, the black workers in their sympathy strike demonstrations, the urban residents in rent increase strikes. The increased turbulence in the rural areas was also an echo of Soweto. There were ever so many sectors in the black community countryside who promptly came forward to funnel their solidarity through various sympathy actions thus attesting irrefutably to the essential mass character of the entire upsurge in its escalation.

The June 16th Soweto upsurge and its immediate aftermath are pivotal. They contain within them, in condensed and concentrated form, the peculiar features which stamp the present stage of our struggle, with its essential and distinctive characteristics. In these events you will find written not only the strengths of the movement but also the chief ingredients of the principal problems that confront our movements at the present time. Taken as a whole, the series of events which occupied the Soweto upsurge amounted to a new trial of strength between those who are holding state power in our country today and the revolutionary masses. In entering these events, the people demonstrated to them-

selves and to the world the strength and solidarity that they had built for themselves and by themselves. This marks the advance that has been made by the entire people towards the forging of the political and organisational instruments for pitting their combined efforts against the might of the police state.

Since the police state is entirely without legitimacy and lacks influence among the people it promptly unleashed a reign of terror and went to the ultimate in the use of the violence of the state and thus the people witnessed an astonishing spectacle of brutal persecutions and torture, of mass imprisonment and banishments, and of outright killings of untold numbers of the supporters and leaders of our movement, culminating in the atrocious police murder of Steve Biko, the Honorary President of the Black People's Convention. Steve Biko had devoted his entire life to teaching all black people, young and old, to stand tall and never submit to degradation of any shape or form. For that he laid down his life.

The beastly murders of Steve Biko and other militants of the Black Consciousness Movement was swiftly followed by wholesale bannings of the people's organisations. No less than 18 organisations within the Black Consciousness stream were banned overnight.

As a result of this outlawing, the more visible elements in the leadership of our movement have been and continue to be hounded out of the country and hurled into exile. The beheading of our movement is continuing on a massive scale. The active elements of our movement who are thus being driven out of the country find themselves abroad, marooned, and under the most inhospitable moral and material circumstances. They are isolated not only from the body of the people at home and thus deprived of the invigorating pulse of the people's struggles; they are isolated even from one another.

These facts are critical in the appraisal of our movement, its achievements, its current problems and its potentialities.

the pooling together as well as the coordination of the self-activity of the black masses towards self-emancipation. In this and other ways possible, the BCM(A) seeks powerfully to aid the process by which the struggles of the masses are generalised and the political consciousness of the masses maximised.

In the view of the BCM(A) the mainstay of the struggle for national liberation in our country rests on the struggling masses within the country, and not on specialised entities abroad. Therefore, the cardinal function of the BCM(A) abroad consists in the forging and strengthening of live and organic links with the struggling masses and their organisations within the country. Thus the external wing shall be enabled to transmit to the ongoing struggles within the country such moral and material reinforcement as is procurable abroad.

## 2. The Armed Struggle

The political regime in the country has never in its history ever enjoyed any legitimisation whatsoever in the eyes of the people. The structures which it perpetually recreates and renames such as Bantustans, Community Councils, Presidential Councils and so on are all rejected by the people. Only by the most brutal methods of repression and coercion is the state able to hold the status quo together. In this situation, it is transparently clear to our people that their struggle, which is always confronted with the military might of the state needs itself to be backed by an armed struggle through the creation of a people's army.

At some point those actively engaged in semi-legal political organisations as well as those who emerge as the visible leadership in the course of the self-activity of the masses are compelled to leave the country. They leave in order not to be rendered ineffective by the state's method of detentions in police custody and bannings to proscribe movement, and also in order to avoid brutally violent methods of harassment leading to death in numerous cases. Thus they leave at a

point when for them and those closely working with them it becomes practically impossible to continue playing a political role within the country by either semi-legal or underground means of organisation, or both. Most of these cadres so forced to leave the country leave convinced that they can maintain their contribution to the struggle by military means. Indeed, there are many who, particularly since the 1976 Uprising, have left with the express purpose of seeking military training abroad in order to return after the shortest possible time to the firm political basis which they created or to which they belonged within the country. This further indicates that our people feel that their many ongoing struggles must be supported by means of an armed struggle.

The BCM(A) abroad regards itself as obligated to create a people's army and, to that end, will do everything in its power to secure facilities and bases for the military training of its cadres.

While the white racist regime denies the blacks even the barest elements of democratic rights it proscribes and penalises heavily all responses to the oppression which imply confrontation. It would like the blacks to confine themselves simply to imploring their white tormentors to relax the rigours of oppression. The actual development of the people's struggles, however, has not followed the wishes and prescriptions of the oppressor. These struggles have tended to go beyond what is legal under oppression, and thus progressively reducing the laws of repression into a dead letter. From 1972 onwards we have witnessed ever growing numbers of black workers in several cities who have repeatedly come out in massive strike actions. These strike actions went directly against existing laws which deemed striking by blacks a crime. The strikes, therefore, were confrontational, right from their beginning, irrespective of the nature of the demands put forward and backed up by strike action. Given the totalitarian setting in our country even the most elementary forms of resistance

inevitably and immediately move beyond the terrain of legality. This is an important factor in the situation, which has served to attune our population to the relation between law and resistance. Resistance here implies putting oneself and one's whole being against the law, and ultimately, against the order which systematically produces oppressive laws.

Hence, even at its inception, it was unthinkable that the BCM would halter its development and the development of the national struggle by tying itself exclusively to forms of struggle of a particular mould. The BCM always realised that the blacks did not possess a limitless choice of means in their struggle against oppression and that therefore, of those means possible and available none was dispensable, not even the ultimate.

An oppressed people bent upon self-emancipation possess neither the leisure nor the deceitfulness to pass ostensibly moral judgements upon the ultimate methods that an oppressed nation has to resort to in order to obtain its liberation. In our country the victory of the peoples of Guinea, Angola, Mozambique and more recently Zimbabwe, were greeted with tremendous acclaim. Those victories continue to be a source of inspiration to our people. It was left only to our oppressors and their allies in the West to sneer at the methods that the people of those countries had embarked upon to recover their land and liberty.

We recall the mass Viva Frelimo rallies at Curries Fountain in Durban in September 1974, which the BCM organised to celebrate the victory of Frelimo. The event evoked enormous enthusiasm throughout our country. The regime was impelled to disperse the crowds, using its police, batons, vicious dogs. As if to say the blacks should have attached doubts and reservations to their enthusiasm for the victory of the People's Army in Mozambique.

At its Annual General Conference in the following year, held in King Williams-town, the BPC passed a resolution declaring full support for the MPLA and this notwithstanding the fact that nine

leaders of the SASO/BPC were at that very time facing trial for their part in organising the Viva Frelimo Rally the previous year.

Upon surveying these circumstances the BCM(A) abroad affirmed that the ongoing struggles of the people within the country had to be supplemented and backed up by military support. Accordingly the BCM(A) abroad committed itself to the task of establishing units of cadres who shall be provided with political training and preparation in the use of arms. The cadres shall be administered and developed as a means towards the realisation of a People's Army, and not as specialised or self-contained entities.

Conference enjoined that the armed wing of this Movement shall be fully integrated with the BCM and that it shall be wholly subject to the political direction and command of the BCM. This directive rests on the belief that arrangements which surrendered the stewardship of the BCM of its cadres in military training would inevitably lead to the eventual abandonment of the ideology and political line of the BCM. The door would be left open for elements emanating from the oppressor camp to impose themselves upon the struggling masses. The struggle of black people, instead of evolving a leadership of black working people, would be diverted into adventurism and compromise.

Conference, it must be said, was deeply and painfully aware that adventurism and opportunism are prevalent. They are glaring menacingly over the liberation struggles of the people of Azania and at the emergence of a leadership of the black working people. This onslaught against the people's struggles will be conducted under the banners of multi-racialism and other liberal and neo-liberal formulas.

In order to enter the field of black liberatory politics the BCM within the country had to free itself from the trammels of multi-racialism which the white liberal student body (NUSAS) sought to weave around this Movement.

The outlook is that even at the ultimate stage of armed insurrection the BCM will yet be confronted with the hostile current of multi-racialism under slightly disguised colours. This is yet another important reason why the BCM cannot afford a depoliticised cadre in its military wing.

## DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

The Conference drawing from intensive discussion of the political line of this movement enunciated, inter alia, the following:

(1) The National Democratic Revolution is based upon the *minimum demands* of the oppressed masses of Azania, namely, the reconquest of *all our land and its resources* and the attainment of full democratic rights.

(2) The *Black Consciousness Movement* recognises that the national oppression of our people is a direct result of *capitalism and imperialism* and thus our struggle is both anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist.

(3) The *Black Consciousness Movement* consequently adopts the theory and practice of *scientific socialism* to guide it in the struggle.

(4) However, because of the structural and institutionalised nature of racism in the South African social system, the class struggle continues and will continue to manifest itself in colour terms, and for this reason, we continue to believe in the mobilising role of Black Consciousness in the struggle in which the black people rally against their common

oppression.

(5) In response to the popular struggles of the masses for political, social and economic emancipation the current strategy of imperialism as represented by the South African regime is shifting emphasis from expressing itself in purely race terms to a sharper class content, as witnessed by its overtures to the black middle class. This underscores the class essence of the struggle against national oppression.

(6) The *Black Consciousness Movement of Azania* recognises that the black workers are the most oppressed and exploited section of our society, and, therefore, constitute the major force in our struggle. Thus the strategy for the revolution should be based on the historical, political and organisational *experience of the black working class*.

(7) Organisationally, the *Black Consciousness Movement* will be guided in its functions and conduct of the struggle, by a form of *discipline*, which develops out of a consciousness which itself is a product of internalised revolutionary principles: *criticism and self-criticism; democratic centralism; collective leadership; the principles of recall and active participation*.

(8) In order to advance the Azanian struggle against imperialism on a global scale, the *Black Consciousness Movement* will seek to establish and maintain fraternal links internationally with progressive and revolutionary forces, governments, liberation movements and solidarity groups.

# We Don't Want No Education

ROSE INNES PHAHLE

On the weekend of the 12th April 1980, about 100 pupil delegates from schools in the Cape Flats district of Cape Town met to discuss their grievances and make demands to the government. The pupils issued an ultimatum to the government to meet their demands before the end of the month. But by Tuesday of the following week more than 60,000 pupils in and around Cape Town began a boycott of the schools. The pupils, aged between 13 and 18, were led by a Committee of 81 (originally 61) which they had elected to represent all the Cape Town schools participating in the boycott action.

By the end of the first week the boycott had spread to Johannesburg. In the next eight weeks it was to involve at least 100,000 pupils at any one time, and was to remain in force without final resolution in many parts of the country some three or more months after it started in Cape Town. The boycott action spread to all the other major urban centres such as Pretoria, Durban, Bloemfontein and Port Elizabeth; and to the mining towns Boksburg, Kimberley and Randfontein; and to numerous small towns such as Middleburg, Cradock and Grahamstown in the rural areas. Not even the "independent" Bantustans escaped the action of the pupils. Two thousand pupils in Qwaqwa, a rural Bantustan town, joined the boycott in its fifth week. Black university students at all the bush colleges boycotted their lectures and organised protest marches to lend considerable support to the pupils' action.

The pupils, after a number of meetings, some on their own and others jointly with their parents, listed a number of grievances among which were:

- \* free access to school grounds by the Special Branch police;
- \* police detentions of pupils, students and teachers;
- \* dismissals of teachers on political grounds;
- \* ministerial permission to study at racially and "tribally" segregated educational institutions;
- \* failure to repair damaged schools;
- \* lack of textbooks and/or inferior textbooks;
- \* unequal pay for teachers;
- \* disparity in education spending on the different colour groups;
- \* racist education and the organisation of education into racially separate departments of education;
- \* an inferior education preparing them for what the pupils themselves saw as a "cheap labour force for capitalism";
- \* denial of the right to free assembly and the consequent lack of autonomous student councils.

## AN ACTIVE BOYCOTT

The boycott was an *active* one in which the pupils did not simply issue a call to boycott nor simply stay away from school. Unlike groups who in the past

preached a boycott of undemocratic and powerless statutory bodies like Advisory Boards but maintained a passive boycott because of a reluctance to mobilise people towards action, the pupils' boycott of schools—as its predecessor in 1976—involved an *active* organisation by means of public meetings and protest marches. The pupils marched to and gathered at their schools—a tactic used by the 1973 Durban strikers who marched to and gathered outside the factories at which they were employed. The pupils refused to attend classes; used the occasion to conduct an awareness programme, or a political rally either outside or inside the school grounds with their placards hung on the fences; or they marched through the streets of the ghettos at the same time as they drew attention and support from the adults on their way to join in with pupils gathered at other schools. Their marching song which so strongly pointed to the centre of their grievances with the line “we don’t want no education” in Pink Floyd’s *Another Brick in the Wall* was immediately banned by the government who declared it to be “prejudicial to the safety of the state”. The pupils, not to be outwitted, then sang to its tune:

“We want equal facilities  
We don’t need any forced control  
Hey, cops leave us kids alone  
All in all, it’s just another peaceful protest.”

### THE INDIVISIBILITY OF OPPRESSION

The black student movement in South Africa, unlike its white counterpart which in any case exists at university level only, has never conceived of itself as a mere “trade union” representing the sectional interests of students but *always* as part of the movement for national liberation. It could not be otherwise when the black students and their worker parents are alike denied even the most elementary democratic rights such as the vote, free assembly and trade unionism. The black

student has *always* been aware, again unlike his white counterpart, that his grievances and demands are political and that their resolution depends upon the attainment of national emancipation. The present generation of school pupils and university students is not an exception to this awareness. But more than any other generation they show a determination to intervene *actively* in the national struggle for liberation.

It was thus natural for black pupils in their action to look for support from the oppressed and exploited as a whole. They sought to conscientise themselves and the whole black community by inviting their parents and other adults to attend their meetings. As one pupil was reported to say:

“We let our parents come to the meetings and ask questions about why we are boycotting classes. Usually we persuade them we are right. But we don’t ask them to help us. We don’t know if they would.”

Subsequent events showed that the pupils were not lacking in support from the community. To the collaborationist element in the community, the pupils adopted a different stance. In Boksburg, for example, 1,000 pupils broke out into shouts of “Sell Out, Sell Out” as they marched past outside a shop belonging to a member of the Coloured Management Committee which, along with the Urban Bantu Councils and the Bantustans, is regarded by the pupils and the majority of the oppressed as sham to be equally boycotted.

In their street marches and public meetings, the pupils carried placards inscribed with slogans whose political appeal went far beyond the immediate issue of schools, and demonstrated quite clearly that their grievances and demands cannot be divorced from the conditions induced by oppression. Thus:

\* Equal Education for All



- \* One Department of Education—One Education System
- \* Away With Race Classification
- \* To Hell With “Coloured” Affairs
- \* The Black Middle Class is a Tool of the White Baas.

This last slogan was inscribed on a poster which was widely used by the pupils in Johannesburg. Depicted on the poster is a smartly dressed black man whose mouth waters at the carrot dangling just above his nose—so he could never reach it. The carrot hangs from the end of a whip held by the Prime Minister Botha who is seated in a ricksha cart drawn by

the black man—obviously middle class by his appearance.

## THE OPPRESSED ARE BLACK

The origin and centre of the 1980 schools boycott action was Cape Town. Except for the ghettos of Langa, Nyanga, Guguletu and now the Crossroads slum area, the black population of Cape Town is "Coloured" by statutory classification and they constitute the majority in this region of the Cape. Most of the pupils in Cape Town are thus "coloured" and, the massive response to the boycott by pupils outside of Cape Town and its periphery came from the "Coloured" and "Indian" ghettos of Johannesburg and Durban. In Johannesburg where support was strongest for a long time at the beginning, the response came from Coronationville, Eldorado Park, Westview, Bosmont and Lenasia. However, the pupils in 1980, as throughout the seventies under the influence of Black Consciousness, itself of student origin, did not allow the differences in pigmentation among the blacks to deny the indivisibility of oppression and exploitation of all the blacks. Speaking to a British journalist, a group of pupils referred to conscientisation in terms of making people aware of being black. One pupil said:

"We're not Coloured or even so-called Coloured. We resent the term. We are black."

During the 1976 Uprising students at all black university campuses sang the people's national anthem *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* and chanted the cry of "Amandla Ngawethu" at their meetings. But they could easily be written off as elitist students who can clearly perceive on which side of the colour divide they lie. Yet on the 22nd April in Bosmont, at a mass meeting held in a public square and attended by 5,000 pupils whose home language is either English or Afrikaans, the same chant punctuated the delivery of speeches and the national anthem

brought the meeting to a close. In between the speeches they sang the traditional freedom songs in the vernacular of the majority of the blacks. This was their custom, too, at the daily gatherings on or off school premises. To their parents and teachers these scenes not only spelt the strength and extent of the underground politicisation of the pupils but also showed that the pupils by both deed and word are black.

## THE INTERVENTION OF THE STATE

As is always the case in all black struggles, the state reacted to the boycott of schools by denying the pupils' grievances, and seeking mythical agents to hold responsible for the boycott action. Speaking in the white Parliament, Botha warned that those "behind the uniforms of school children are going to get hurt." Thus the government blamed the boycott on "agitators" and even the imperialist press was said by Botha to be "promoting revolutionary aims" by reporting on the boycott. An ironical statement as nearly all newspaper reporting of ghetto protest in South Africa is dependent on press releases by none other than the police. The few journalists who deem it a social responsibility to report the facts are held in police custody and the ghettos are sealed off by the police as soon as there is a spark of protest.

By the end of the second week of the boycott, at least six members of the Executive Committee of the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) were taken into indefinite police detention. Some of them including the acting President Mrs Nombulela Melane and Dr Yusuf Joe Variava were to remain in detention for the duration of the boycott, and more were detained during the course of the boycott. Amongst others detained were Curtis Nkondo, later banned and former President of AZAPO, Achmat Cassie, member of the banned South African Students' Organisation (SASO), Vuyisili Mdeleleni,

executive member of the banned Black People's Convention (BPC), and Trevor Wentzel, a member of AZAPO. The number of school children who were arrested and detained must have run into thousands. In Johannesburg alone, a total of 854 pupils were brought before a hastily convened court which sat from 4 pm and all through the night. In batches of 30 the pupils were charged under the Riotous Assemblies Act. Several times during the course of the schools boycott the police arrested and detained hundreds of blacks whom they considered to be popular or potential leaders of the people.

On the 22nd April, the police fired tear gas and what they cynically called a "sneeze cannon" to disperse more than 20,000 school children marching in Cape Town. The street demonstrations and marches were in flagrant defiance of the ban on political gatherings under the Riotous Assemblies Act. On the outskirts of Johannesburg, at Eldorado Park, pupils attending a rally were baton-charged by the police. A week later, another baton-charge was made on 4,000 pupils demonstrating in the grounds of Westbury High School. The fleeing children were chased and followed by the police into their homes. Many of them, seriously wounded by the police, were dragged out of the houses and flats, and "tried" in the kangaroo court which sat all night. Everywhere and every time the state was to react in the same way to break up peaceful demonstrations—by ruthlessly using gas, batons and bullets.

During the weekend of the 25th May, in what they euphemistically code-named a "crime prevention exercise" in Soweto and elsewhere in Johannesburg, the police seized and detained about 2,000 people. This was obviously an action to pre-empt the commemoration of the Soweto Uprising on the 16th June. On the Monday, they detained overnight and charged the next day the 50 clergymen led by Bishop Desmond Tutu in a march to John Vorster Square to protest the detention of a fellow priest.

## A CALL TO SUSPEND THE BOYCOTT

The pupils in the Cape Peninsula met on the 19th April to decide whether to continue with the boycott. The meeting, at which 62 schools were represented, decided to go on. The reaction of the state in the form of detentions, violence, seeking scape-goats for the boycott and denying the students' grievances could only confirm the pupils in their resolve to press their demands by intensifying the boycott. Only the day previous to the pupils' meeting in the Cape, the boycott had spread to Coronationville and Bosmont in Johannesburg.

At the end of five weeks, on the 17th May, the pupils in Cape Town again met and this time decided to suspend the boycott action. The pupils made it clear that the suspension was only to give the government time to respond positively to their demands. In support of those pupils detained as a result of participating in the boycott, they called for the suspension of the June examinations. A statement issued by the pupils after a seven hour meeting declared:

"We have decided to return to classes for three weeks and to submit an ultimatum to the authorities. If the ultimatum is not met, we will review our decision and call upon the community to come out in active support. The ultimatum must not be met with promises, it must not be ignored, nor should it meet with police violence and detentions."

The boycott as printed out earlier was an active one. Its suspension was equally an active suspension. On the Saturday following the suspension (which never took effect), a protest rally of more than 4,000 pupils in Cape Town was brutally and mercilessly charged and dispersed by police with batons. At least 70 of the pupils were taken into police detention. The pupils, perfecting a technique they had used during the 1976 Uprising to

successfully break through police cordons usually thrown around the ghettos, arrived in their hundreds in the Cape Town city area to protest by way of disrupting the Saturday morning shopping. They entered supermarkets in large numbers, removed goods from the shelves and loaded trolleys with which they jammed check-out points or joined check-out queues carrying small items for which they refused to pay. At Belville on the outskirts of Cape Town, other groups of pupils used similar tactics to which the police reacted with a baton-charge and made 29 arrests. The method of disrupting shopping was used the previous year during the community boycott of Fattis and Monis products.

The suspension of the boycott action was not implemented. The pupils were not going to drop their action, even if only temporarily, in circumstances of police provocation and intimidation. But a more compelling reason was that the pupils in Cape Town were not going to suspend their action just at the time when the boycott was gaining greater momentum and spreading to other towns where pupils were then coming out for the first time to boycott their own schools. On the 20th May, three days after the call in Cape Town to suspend the action, pupils in Bloemfontein set up barricades and joined the boycott.

## EXTENSION AND INTENSIFICATION OF THE BOYCOTT

In Bloemfontein—a fortress of white chauvinism and fascism—the pupils and the working population brought the bus service to a total standstill on the 21st May. As in every action by the people, the police were quick to move in order to seal off the ghettos, the mortuaries, and the hospital so that news of their brutality does not reach the outside world. From this point onwards, the practice of the already-hostile media and the overseas despatches is invariably to rely solely on police press releases for “information” of what is taking place inside the

ghettos, on how many people were wounded or shot dead at the hands of the police who reacted only in self-defence! Hence the newspapers’ unquestioning reference to “riots”, “tsotsis”, “students on the rampage”, and so on. The numbers of the dead or injured as a result of police fire are always made out to be far less than the actual numbers. In Bloemfontein, on the 22nd May, the police reported wounding *only* two black women and an attack by stones on *only* one white man, a national service rifleman. After three days of continuous protest, at least 31 people were taken into police detention, a cinema burnt down, and a petrol-bomb thrown at a black policeman’s house. At the beginning of June, 26 schools in and around Bloemfontein, Witzieshoek and Welkom were being boycotted. On the 9th June police set up roadblocks to prevent the pupils from demonstrating in the centre of Bloemfontein. Buses and taxis from the ghettos were stopped, and the pupils forced to turn back.

At a meeting of 2,000 pupils in Grahamstown, on the 14th May, a man was reported through the medium of the police to have been stoned to death by the school children. The man was one of nine “mediators”, all armed with sticks and, still according to the police report, “appointed by the parents to persuade the pupils to end the boycott of classes”. This tactic by the police had been employed in Soweto 1976 but there, too, to no avail.

On the 6th May, university students at Fort Hare decided to boycott lectures. Their march to neighbouring schools was dispersed by teargas. On the second day of the boycott of lectures, more than 2,500 out of a total of 2,700 students at Fort Hare held a mass meeting on the campus. They called for the abolition of bush colleges, the release of Mandela, and called upon the government to negotiate with:

“leaders recognised by the people and working for the people and not people who in the opinion of the government are the true leaders.”

The boycott action at Fort Hare meant last for two days—an act of solidarity with the pupils in action throughout the country. Indeed, on the second day the student leaders called off the boycott. But the call went unheeded. A week later, with the boycott still on, the students took a decision to continue with their action which they maintained for at least the next nine weeks. On the 20th May, the rector closed Fort Hare indefinitely. The students left for their homes in various parts of the country. In their home areas, particularly in Soweto and the Vereeniging districts, they joined students who had also returned home from other bush colleges and together set about organising meetings in order to coordinate activity in support of the pupils’ action.

On 26th May, the pupils of Hwiti High School in Pietersburg decided on a boycott of their classes. In anticipation of ruthless police action against them, the pupils left the boarding school for their homes two days later. They were joined by the students of the bush college of Turfloop and the Stofberg College of Technology.

In Port Elizabeth on the 28th May, boycotting pupils marched to the police station to demand the release of four comrades arrested during the weekend. About 200 children aged between 10 and 15 demonstrated outside their lower secondary school, and at least 275 were arrested in the march. In the nearby town of Uitenhage, the police prevented 400 children from staging a protest march. The Divisional Commissioner of Police for the eastern Cape admitted the growth of active support for the boycott when he disclosed the number of schools affected. He mentioned a total of 35 schools in Port Elizabeth, five in Uitenhage, two in Fort Beaufort, one in Grahamstown and one in Humansdorp. To this list *Post* added two schools in East London, one in Queenstown and one in King William’s Town.

In Lenasia, a strong centre for the boycott action in Johannesburg, the pupils marched to protest at the arrest in

only one week of at least 600 children from their area. On the 6th May, they decided they would continue with their boycott until all detained pupils and members of the parents’ action committee had been released from police custody. A demand was made for the dismissal from office of the Minister of “Coloured” and “Indian” Affairs, Mr Marais Steyn whose name the pupils aptly used in the slogan “Steyn on the Brain”.

At the bush college of Zululand support for the pupils’ action expressed itself in the form of opposition to Chief Buthelezi who had been loud in his orders to the children to go back to school. The students requested that he should not turn the college’s graduation ceremony into an Inkatha rally. On previous occasions he, as college chancellor, had come accompanied by a large retinue of followers in Inkatha uniform. Buthelezi announced that he would ignore the students’ plea and that Inkatha supporters would attend the ceremony in full regalia. At the ceremony police fired shots to disperse the demonstrating students. At Westville-Durban, with the police standing by, the university students were asked to vacate their dormitories within an hour after the rector had suspended lectures until further notice.

The students at the black dental school in Cape Town tore up their examination papers to show solidarity with the pupils. At nearby Elsie’s River, the “first shootings” were reported at the end of the sixth week of the pupils’ action. An 11 year old was shot dead. The media’s report, again basing itself on the police version of the event, stated that a white civilian shot *at* the youth after stone throwing incidents by pupils. Another shooting occurred two days later because—so it was reported—between 50 and 100 youths stoned a police car. The police justify their shootings by claiming that they were being stoned. The truth of the matter is that the pupils act in self-defence by stoning the police. No longer as in the days of Sharville can the police



*David Johnson, Chairperson of Black Students' Society addressing pupils from Eldorado Park High*

fire at a peaceful demonstration or a dispersing and fleeing crowd and expect not to be hit back.

On the 30th May, the pupils' action spread to include schools in areas hitherto unaffected—Pietermaritzburg and, adding to the mockery of the independence of the Bantustans with their "own" schools, to Umtata the "capital city" of the Transkei. In Pietermaritzburg the pupils applied the tactic used in Cape Town. They disrupted shopping and mingled with whites to prevent the police from shooting at them. Inanda and Ohlange, two well known schools in Natal, were forced to close indefinitely when their pupils decided to boycott classes. In Umtata the pupils set fire to a building that would not pass as a school for whites nor in any country claiming a developed economy. On the same day, pupils in Cape Town erected barricades of burning tyres. In Johannesburg, too, there were demonstrations. All these demonstrations, the Transkei's not excepted, were violently charged and broken up by the police.

On the 2nd June, all the full-time

students at the "university" of the Transkei in Umtata boycotted their lectures. As the part-time students are mostly state employees, teachers and civil servants, only the full-time students took to action. The collaborator Chiefs George and Kaiser Matanzima threatened boycotting students that they would be refused readmission to the bush college.

The black teachers in the western Cape gave their full support to the pupils. They strongly rejected claims by the government that the pupils were incited by "agitators". One thousand of these teachers decided on a sympathy strike to back the pupils. A motion passed unanimously at a teachers' meeting in Athlone, Cape Town, declared their identification with those who were "striving for a single, non-discriminatory education". Asked by the Minister of Police to use their influence to end the boycott, 72 headmasters refused to act as agents of the government.

In Johannesburg the education authorities summoned headteachers to a meeting at which they were addressed by both the Inspector of Education and the chief of the regional Special Branch

police. The headteachers were bluntly told that if they did not return the schools to normal then the police would intervene with violence. On the 26th April, 300 teachers from 30 lower primary schools decided to join the boycott by going on strike.

And, 900 members of the Black Students' Society, joined by other students, of the white University of the Witwatersrand, boycotted lectures "in solidarity with those detained fighting an inferior education". On that day, the 26th April, the Society's Chairperson, David Johnson, and other executive members were taken into police detention.

## THE CAMPAIGN AT TURFLOOP

In a long struggle dating back to February, the students at Turfloop campaigned for the boycott of the 21st anniversary of the founding of the bush college. They campaigned also for the disaffiliation of the college football team from the South African Football Association, a body which is a front for apartheid in sports.

The celebrations held on the 3rd May were cancelled after the students disrupted them. Two days later members of the Azanian Students' Organisation (AZASO) were assailed with knives and pangas by pro-celebration elements said by the media to be members of the football team. On the next day more than 300 students were arrested by the police in a pre-dawn raid on the campus. The police intervened officially only after the students had hit back at their attackers—who included plain clothes police.

The graduation ceremony on the 10th May had an audience which was wearing helmets and carrying shields in place of academic gowns and caps. Almost the entire police force of the Lebowa Bantustan was in attendance to ensure that the event was not disrupted, and to bestow it with an appearance of success. The programme of the day was kept secret until the very moment of the ceremony which the students boycotted.

On the 28th May only 20 students attended lectures at Turfloop. All 20 were extremely vulnerable to government reprisals because of their position as student nurses in state employment. The rest of the student body had decided to pack their bags and leave the campus in pursuance of their demands. They were joined by all the students from the nearby Stofberg College of Theology. Stranded in Pietersburg for lack of money to travel back to their homes were 300 students. The police used the presence of these students in Pietersburg together with the 20 student nurses to announce on radio and TV that all was normal at Turfloop. The students issued a statement in which they rebutted what they called:

"propaganda from the SABC that the situation is normal and that we are back in class. We want our brothers and sisters who are already home to know that there is nothing like that. The sit-in continues from home until our demands are met."

The student sit-in at Turfloop originated in their decision to boycott the celebrations. With the bush college teeming with police, it was not easy for the students to sustain a peaceful sit-in from the campus. Accommodated in hostels, as is the case with the "guest" working class in compounds, they are an easy target for the police and their actions are quickly broken up by the police. When the students decided to leave the campus for their homes, their campaign had extended to a solidarity action with the pupils' boycott of schools which had engulfed Pietersburg and many areas of the northern Transvaal. At a special meeting convened in Soweto they resolved to continue their boycott of Turfloop until the government abolishes the system of inferior education.

The students returned to the Turfloop campus on Monday the 9th June after a two-week stay-at-home. They returned at a time when examinations were due to start. But, except for four students, the

entire student body continued the boycott and refused to take examinations. On the Wednesday they were baton-charged by the police who had resumed standing guard at many points on the campus since the beginning of the week. On Thursday the boycott of the examinations was total with not a single student turning up. Rumours persisted though that the four students scabbing the boycott continued to write their examinations under heavy police invigilation. By the following week all the students were once again preparing to leave the campus for their homes.

## 1980—A YEAR OF TOTAL STRUGGLE

In later sections we shall refer to the manner in which the pupils linked the issue of inferior education with the general conditions of rightlessness of the blacks and the exploitation of their parents as a working class. Their boycott action must therefore not be seen in isolation from the numerous working class and community based struggles which took place before, during and after their own action against the schools.

In the four months preceding the pupils' action, at least 30 industrial strikes by black workers took place in various parts of the country. In the course of the schools boycott there was even more intense industrial action: the meat workers in the western Cape and the active support they received from the black consumers, the bus-boycott and June 16th stay-at-home in Cape Town, the strikes in the motor industry in the Port Elizabeth-Uitenhage area, by textile workers in Durban, sugar workers in Johannesburg and mineworkers in Stifontein.

The commemoration of June 16th, itself a political event which met with strong action by the state, intensified the boycott action in the eastern Cape and the Orange Free State. At the level of local communities in many parts of the country there were protest meetings against rent and bus fare rises, and

action against collaborators with the state.

In spite of roadblocks and other forms of intimidation by the police, thousands of people came to Mamelodi on the 25th April for the third attempt—again frustrated by police intrigue—at the unveiling of Solomon Mahlangu's tombstone, and numerous vigils in Alexandra and other places were held in his memory. Mangoyi and the Silverton dead all received heroes' funerals attended by thousands who held their clenched fists high.

All these struggles alongside the pupils' boycott action when taken together add up to reveal that the black oppressed and exploited are waging a total struggle which is both open and active in contrast to a silent class struggle. It is to some of these that we now turn.

## SOME COMMUNITY-BASED STRUGGLES

Prior to and throughout the period of the schools boycott action the people of the ghettos in many areas organised meetings to protest at announced increases in their rents, and passed resolutions refusing to pay the increases. Spearheading the protests was the Soweto-based Committee of Ten. In Soweto and elsewhere, the Committee fostered the formation of local civic associations to take up issues such as rents. Those in Soweto, without loss of local autonomy, came together to form the Soweto Civic Association. In addition to the rent protests, they called upon the people to boycott the celebrations of the founding of the Soweto ghetto, to prevent the celebrations from taking place, and to drive the Urban Bantu Councilors out of Soweto to the white suburbs whence "they were chosen and whose interests they serve."

In this latter regard, it is pertinent to recall that the Soweto Urban Bantu Council—its latest name makes not the slightest difference to its nature—was elected on a 6% poll all of which was most probably drawn from those who like the black police are coerced by the

state into voting. The so-called Mayor of Soweto—official population 1,000,000, unofficial 2,000,000—received 98 votes in all. By reason of this low poll, the participationists in government-imposed institutions have come to be contemptuously known by the people as the "six-percenters" and the Urban Bantu Councils as Urban Bantu Circuses. So thoroughly discredited are the UBs that the government, in a self-gratifying act, renamed them Community Councils.

In Cradock in the eastern Cape, on the 12th May, collaborators in the local Bantu Community Council were unable to continue with their meeting because of the intervention of Masakane, a civic association opposed to participation in apartheid institutions. The collaborators locked themselves inside the meeting hall until they were freed by the police. Four black security policemen were trapped inside their homes which were surrounded by anti-participationist crowds. The police opened fire and reported that one person was seriously wounded. A municipal beer hall was later set on fire. These events were the climax of a week-long boycott of public transport, and a call for the Bantu Community Council to be abolished and house rentals reduced.

In evaluating the popular rejection of inferior institutions specifically created by the state to deny black majority determination in the running of the country, account must be taken of the role played by the Black Consciousness organisations, AZAPO, the students' movements, the Committee of Ten and the Black Civic Associations. These organisations have stood out prominently and, for most of the time, alone in their fight against the participationists and Chief Buthelezi.

## COMMEMORATION OF JUNE 16TH

With June the 16th approaching, preparations were made by AZAPO, AZASO and COSAS for the commemoration of the 1976 Soweto Uprising. To allow for maximum mass participation, Sunday the 15th rather than Monday the 16th was

the day for which the major services were arranged. The service organised by AZAPO for Sunday at the Regina Mundi Church in Soweto was to be the focal one. In Cape Town, the Athlone Business and Professional Association decided that their shops would remain closed on June 16th and 17th. The Soweto Chamber of Commerce, as in previous years, announced that its members' shops would close between 11am and 5pm on the Monday. Since 1976 people have come to accept that social arrangements like concerts do not take place on the 16th June. Thus socials which had been scheduled in advance for the Sunday were cancelled in response to calls to mark that day for honouring and remembering those who died in the Uprising. There were those, of course, amongst the middle class shopkeepers and cinema owners who prevaricated true to their historical role; they'd only close if approached by one or other of the popular movements.

Since 1977 the government has taken annual measures to try to prevent the public demonstrations which have commemorated the Uprising. Thus, for example, the mid-year school vacation was gerrymandered so that June 16th did not fall within the school term when pupils would have honoured the Soweto dead by boycotting classes. In 1980 the government prepared itself by taking additional and even stronger measures. There was the arrest of 2,000 people in Soweto at a time when the pupils there showed no signs of actively joining in the schools boycott. A week before the anniversary the Minister of Police was making hysterical noises to justify the harsh measures that were shortly to come. He dubbed any talk of the commemoration as "instigation" and "intimidation", and declared that "we've had enough". In an extraordinary government gazette issued late on the Friday evening preceding the 16th, the Riotous Assemblies Act was invoked further to ban all commemoration services and meetings of more than 10 people until the end of the month. Police roadblocks were mounted on most major roads



throughout the country and on all roads leading into Soweto and other ghettos.

The people were not deterred by the prohibition on meetings and services, nor by the warnings of the Prime Minister and the Police Minister that "their fingers would get burnt". On Sunday the 15th, hundreds gathered outside Regina Mundi Church in open defiance of the ban on meetings. The crowds started forming at 12.30, and were to continue swelling for the rest of the day. The use of teargas, "sneeze" cannons, dogs and batons by the police to disperse the crowds led to a continuous battle of regroupment waged spontaneously by the people. Time after time the crowds scattered following police violence only to form themselves into another group, always keeping as near as possible to the Church, so determined they were to honour their dead at the place of their choice. There they knelt in prayer and, with clenched fists, sang the songs of freedom and the national anthem. When threats to shoot failed to disperse the people, the police declared the area around Regina Mundi Church an operational zone. Every area in the country where people defied the ban on meetings was likewise declared an operational zone to keep out those journalists whose reporting is not favoured by the state and thereby to allow the police absolute freedom to use any means to suppress the demonstrations. It was in such circumstances that the order came from the cabinet to "shoot to kill".

The events of Sunday were repeated the next day, the 16th June. Groups of people continued to gather near Regina Mundi in Soweto and at other places in other parts of the country. All business in the ghettos came to a standstill as shopkeepers and shebeens responded to the call to close their shops. In Noord-egsig and elsewhere in Soweto barricades were erected by the pupils. The police opened fire, wounding, amongst others, two boys aged nine and 11. In Port Elizabeth a march by pupils and 800 parents to a commemoration service at St Stephen's Hall was fired upon and dispersed by the police. In Bloemfontein

and Durban street marches were also dispersed by the police. Only the five services held in and around Pietersburg passed without violent interruption by the police.

## **BUS BOYCOTT AND JUNE 16TH IN CAPE TOWN**

In Cape Town, following a two-week bus boycott, the people commemorated June 16th by staying away from work for two days. This only added to the exasperation of the state which, in spite of all its violence, the media had up to now been commending for its relative "calmness". On the second night of the stay-at-home, the police killed at least 39 people and wounded another 200 in Cape Town. The usual story of stone throwing incidents was fed to the press. But according to the people the police vans simply "pulled up and police just poured out shooting like mad". It was the night of the declaration of an operational zone in Cape Town.

The youth of Cape Town retaliated in the only way possible under the circumstances. They stoned, overturned and burned police vehicles, and they set fire to supermarkets. A white policeman was stabbed to death. The highway to the airport which runs through ghettos, and the Crossroads slum which lies adjacent to the airport, became fronts for pitched battles between the people on the one side and the police and white motorists on the other.

The boycott of buses in Cape Town started on the 2nd June—the day on which fares were increased. The rise in fares immediately caused 400 construction workers at a water treatment site to strike in support of a demand for higher wages. The cost of fares to work accounted for 25% of the wages of most of the workers from Crossroads, Nyanga, Guguletu and Langa.

From the first day the bus company set out to break the solidarity of the boycotting commuters by deliberately maintaining a service of empty buses

under heavy police and army protection. The service was said to be made available for the "law-abiding" worker, the police for his "protection". The masses had an answer to such provocation. On the first day of the boycott 80 buses were stoned and their windows broken, and on the second day 67 buses were damaged.

The bus boycott was no nearer ending ten weeks after it had started. The boycotters enjoyed considerable support from taxi-drivers, many of them pirating, who took them to work for the old bus fare. Police action against the taxis led some employers to say that it was leading to greater politicisation of their employees. In addition to covert go-slows which reduced production, the anger of the workers caused, in the words of one industrialist, an "increasing number of inexplicable plant and machinery 'break-downs'."

## **BLACK WORKING CLASS STRUGGLES**

The black meat workers at the Table Bay Cold Storage Company in Cape Town staged a one day strike on the 7th May against management's refusal to recognise their democratically elected workers' committee. Management reacted to the strike by dismissing the workers from their jobs, calling upon them to collect wages due to them and, those treated by law as "guest" workers, to return to the Transkei.

The workers' committee represented all the black workers. It was for this reason that management would not recognise nor negotiate with it. Management demanded workers' committees to "represent" the workers racially in terms of the statutorily defined colour groups. In refusing to recognise the workers' committee, the managing director of Table Bay Cold Storage disclosed to the press that he had the "unanimous support" of the employers in the Cape Town meat industry. At this stage management was deliberately misrepresenting the workers' demand for negotiations with their elected committee

as a demand for recognition to the Western Province General Workers' Union to which most of them belonged.

The reaction of Table Bay Cold Storage Company was of course an expression of support for and the actual implementation of the policy of the state and capital as a whole. This, coupled with its refusal to negotiate with the workers' committee and wholesale sackings of workers, led the Western Province General Workers' Union to declare a general strike of meat workers in the western Cape, and to raise demands which included union recognition. The black students at the bush college came out on the 21st May in support of the workers by staging a two day boycott of lectures. In the ghetto of Langa the people initiated a community boycott of red meat. This first led to the closure of two butcheries, and then within a few days, Langa was joined by black consumers in the rest of the western Cape and other parts of the country. Meat sales in Cape Town dropped by 60%.

On the 12th June, 42 of the striking meat workers from Guguletu were brought to court under charges of being illegally in the western Province. The arrests were all made at the company compound in which Table Bay Cold Storage keeps its black workers. All of them were refused bail on the grounds that they would "intimidate" those who had been drawn from the "Homelands" to replace them.

In the fifth week of the pupils' boycott action, 1,200 workers at a Frame Group textile factory in Durban came out on strike for higher wages. The earnings of many of the workers were less than half the subsistence level. About 500 workers who gathered outside the factory gates were dispersed by the police using teargas.

Support for the strike grew to involve 60,000 workers in the Frame Group. Towards the end of May, management sacked all 60,000 workers and called on the police to arrest the strike leaders. The firm with the help of the state then drew replacement workers from the KwaZulu

Bantustan.

The workers refused to regard themselves as dismissed and ignored management's call upon them to collect their outstanding wages. On the 28th May they organised a mass meeting in Clermont, Durban. Over 5,000 workers attended the meeting, packing the hall and overflowing into the surrounding streets. On the previous day three of the workers' leaders were arrested on the factory premises, revealing clearly the collusion between the employers and the state. The leaders were arrested during or immediately after "negotiations" with management representatives led by Mr A Frame. They were charged with participating in and abetting an illegal strike. When on the 4th June it was reported that the strike had come to an end, between 70 and 100 workers had been refused reinstatement. The majority of these were union leaders and activists. To sow confusion, the state had intervened by banning meetings between 7am on Friday 30th May and Sunday 1st June so that the workers could not meet to discuss the conditions under which they would be prepared to return to work.

In the week the strike at Frame started, another involving 120 sugar

workers broke out at Ullman Cartage Contractors in Johannesburg. Reasons for the strike were in working hours, non-registration of workers, unpaid overtime and no payment. One worker said to a newspaper:

"This company makes a lot of money and still rejoices in exploiting us."

The spectacular bombing of the oil-fuelled Sasol installations on the 2nd June was followed by a prolonged period of resistance amongst the black workers, the Sasol Two and Three plants in Transvaal. The workers' resistance was a response to security measures introduced after the bombings, and the killing of a fellow worker by the security police. On Monday the 14th July, a white man, Sasol Three in Secunda was killed when his car was stoned and overturned by workers. In addition to the humiliation and racially discriminatory measures such as body searches and enforced confinement to the compounds after 7pm, of 2,000 workers at the two plants was confined to the compounds for a whole day on the 15th July. A day later, construction work at Secunda was halted.



Striking workers outside their firm

factory. Over 18,000 workers at Ullman Cartage Contractors in Johannesburg. Reasons for the strike were in working hours, non-registration of workers, unpaid overtime and no payment. One worker said to a newspaper:

"This company makes a lot of money and still rejoices in exploiting us."

On the 3rd June, 4,500 mineworkers at the Stilfontein gold mine near Johannesburg went on strike and brought work on three shafts to a standstill. Police assisted by the Chamber of Mines' own security forces stepped in with the use of batons and teargas to "contain" the strike. They shut out newspaper reporters and later stated that the reasons for the strike were unknown!

In Uitenhage, 3,500 workers at the Volkswagen car plant went on strike, coupling their demand for higher wages with a protest against the ban on meetings and services to commemorate the Soweto Uprising. Leading the workers was the Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organisation (PEBCO) which had in the last year also intervened in the strike at the Ford Motor Company. With PEBCO coordinating black community support for the strike action in the car factories of the eastern Cape, it becomes difficult for management to use their usual strike-breaking tactics. Few people, if any, come forward to replace the workers in the strike-hit factories in spite of a level of black unemployment greater than 20%.

Industrial action at Volkswagen quickly spread to include workers in other car plants and car accessory factories in the area of the eastern Cape. The ban on meetings did not deter workers holding meetings, which were dispersed in the customary way. By 19th June, 1,300 workers at Goodyear tyre factory were on strike over a pay dispute, and the Ford plant in Port Elizabeth was forced to close because of a shortage of components. On 20th June, 1,000 workers from Goodyear staged a protest march which was dispersed by teargas and bird-shot. Goodyear and National Standard issued an ultimatum to the workers: return to work on Monday or face dismissal. The workers at Goodyear chose to collect their pay. In order to break the organisation of the workers, Goodyear made the by now traditional

declaration that they would not negotiate with the strikers as they had refused to elect representatives. Goodyear maintained this attitude even after all the other factories affected had reached agreement with unions representing 10,000 workers.

## WHEN TEARGAS AND BATON CHARGES FAILED

At the beginning of June the schools boycott action still did not show any sign of coming to an end. On the 5th June, it was reported that the Committee of 81 had decided to call off the boycott in the western Cape and to recommend a return to classes on Monday 9th June. The decision, according to the report, was said to be conditional to the continuation of awareness programmes during school hours. The report was subsequently denied by the Committee which stated that it had only asked the pupils to decide on whether to continue with the boycott action or not. On the Monday, the boycott continued unabated following the arrest of nearly 1,300 people including 300 pupils and students, and the setting up of police roadblocks throughout the country. To make some of the arrests the police in civilian clothing joined student gatherings. In addition to dispersals by teargas and other violent methods, the state was now to resort to mass arrests and mass expulsions from the schools.

In late May, the Department of "Indian" Education instructed schools in Natal, particularly Durban, to suspend pupils and seek the help of the police in clearing boycotting pupils from school premises. At the beginning of June 3,000 pupils were consensually expelled from Durban schools. On the 5th June 2,000 were suspended, and on the 9th June 200 were arrested on charges of trespass.

The 700 black medical students in Durban were told they would not be allowed to sit their examinations unless they stopped their boycott and returned to lectures by the 9th June. None of the students resumed lectures. At the bush

college of Ngoye (Zululand), students who were boycotting and did not sit their examinations starting on the 13th June did not receive a warning that they would not be allowed to remain on the campus. On the 11th June it was reported that the government had suspended 15,000 pupils and students, and had withdrawn their "scholarships" and "loans" at 15 teacher training colleges.

Chief Buthelezi appealed to a meeting on the weekend of the 7th June to "fan out agitators" from their midst. During that same weekend, after the police detained leading members of the Natal Indian Congress, the pupils and students resolved to continue the boycott action.

The resolve to continue the boycott was endorsed at pupils' meetings in Johannesburg and in the Port Elizabeth-Uitenhage area where a Committee of 41 was elected. Students at the Soweto Teacher Training College decided on a sit-in and refused to take their mid-year examinations in protest against the authorities' refusal to recognise a students' representative council. On the 3rd June, 120 student teachers were expelled from the Transvaal Indian College of Education. The students refused to accept the notices of expulsion and resolved not to apply for readmission.

In an act of the utmost desperation to break the schools boycott, the "independent government" of the Transkei declared a state of emergency on the 5th June. The terms of the promulgation were specifically aimed at all the pupils, students and teachers in the Transkei who were now to be confined by a 24 hour curfew either to their homes or schools. On Sundays, movement was permitted only for purposes of attending a church service. Teachers and pupils were prohibited from absenting themselves from classes, organising meetings other than "bona fide" school gatherings, and from organising any person to support the schools boycott. Expulsion and dismissal from school or employment were among the various penalties for contravening the emergency regulations.

The boycott was three months old when the empty schools officially closed for the mid-year vacation. Government hopes that the three week recess would dampen the spirit of the pupils were not realised. Most schools in the western Cape reopened on the 14th July with threats by the government that schools would be closed altogether if the boycott continued. A week earlier, when other schools reopened in the rest of the country, the Minister of Police warned that he would not tolerate further unrest and the gathering of pupils on school premises. The warnings not only went unnoticed, especially in Guguletu, Nyanga, Langa and Crossroads, all in Cape Town, and in the eastern Cape, but the boycott was joined by schools hitherto unaffected.

A two week boycott of schools in Kwa Thema, Springs, starting on the 7th July, the day the schools reopened, was initiated when five members including a pupil of the local AZAPO branch were detained by the police. In Soweto, there was a 100% boycott of Thomas Mofolo High and Orlando High, and where attendance at other schools was poor the gates were locked to prevent the pupils from staging a walk-out. In Bloemfontein, pupils at all schools undertook to continue the boycott until the 1st August. In Pretoria, too, the situation remained unchanged, and the Principal at Hofmyer High was asked by the authorities to temporarily stay away from school after his office was stoned.

In Grahamstown, on the 9th July, 2,000 pupils staged a demonstration march which was dispersed by the police. The pupils responded by stoning 117 windows in one school. On the following day the police opened fire. One woman was reported dead and 27 people wounded. In Zwelitsha, Ciskei, 127 pupils appeared before a magistrate on charges of "public violence". By the end of the week the boycott escalated in Port Alfred and Queenstown. In Port Elizabeth alone, 21 schools were being boycotted. Students at Fort Hare received another

ultimatum to return to lectures or leave the campus by the 16th July. Over 90% of the 2,700 students continued to boycott lectures when the college reopened on the 15th July, and at the end of the week hundreds decided to return to their homes.

On the 8th July, 66 people under indefinite detention at Victor Verster prison near Paarl in the western Cape started a hunger strike to protest at their continued detention. A week or so later they were joined by detainees at Modderbee prison in the Transvaal and women detainees at Poolsmoor prison in the Cape. A news blackout on the condition of the hunger-strikers was immediately imposed by the Department of Prisons. Amongst those on strike were the Black Consciousness leaders Peter Jones, detained with Steve Biko in 1977, Nomubulela Melane, and Yusuf Variava.

The Committee of 81 decided on the 11th July to continue the boycott until all the short-term demands had been met. The demands, the Committee declared, must be met at all black schools. These included the unconditional readmission of all pupils and students expelled or suspended, the right to independent and democratically elected student councils, the supply of text books and the repair of damaged schools. On the 15th July came the news that the Committee had decided to suspend the boycott. But in the eastern Cape, the boycott showed little sign of slackening. On the 22nd July, 160 pupils in King William's Town were injured in a police baton-charge. A week later the newspapers were reporting an "almost total" boycott still continuing in the eastern Cape.

## PUPPETS ON A STRING

During its third week, the boycott of schools was extended to KwaMashu in Durban, the self-declared constituency of Chief "Patriotic Participation" Gatsha Buthelezi. Here, as in the Transkei, the state had no need to appoint ad hoc mediators. Buthelezi, a salaried appointee of the state, correctly perceives any boy-

cott as a threat to his position. He stands implacably opposed to the armed struggle, the overseas boycott and disinvestment campaigns. An active collaborator in Bantustan schemes, he now contemplates extending his participation to the Soweto Urban Bantu Council. In 1976, with the connivance of the police, in order to save a bloodbath, they claimed, he provoked a group of compound dwellers in Soweto to unleash violence on the pupils and their parents. In 1980, he and his so-called Minister of Education, Mr Oscar Dhlomo, were threatening "strong action against school children who continued to boycott classes." The threat was issued before a meeting called for Sunday the 18th May by Buthelezi to "mediate" with the pupils.

In language that strongly echoed that used by the state, Buthelezi and his Inkatha also sought phantoms on whom to assign responsibility for the pupils' boycott action. In thousands of leaflets distributed in Durban's black ghettos, they alleged that the pupils were being used as "instruments by adults who were enemies of the liberation struggle". The enemies of liberation *a la* Buthelezi were presumably the black medical students who, without the kind of police protection enjoyed by Buthelezi, had distributed leaflets expressing solidarity with the pupils and were themselves boycotting lectures at university. Buthelezi arrived at his meeting, protected by the police and accompanied by Inkatha supporters adorned in the colours of the African National Congress (ANC) and dressed in a style reminiscent of the volunteers in the 1952 Defiance Campaign against Unjust Laws. He seized the opportunity afforded by the meeting to once again express his well-worn opposition to the armed struggle. The pupils and students—with whom he was to "mediate"—boycotted the meeting. Instead, they held a counter-rally which the police also protected by dispersing it with the help of teargas, and shooting to death one man.

The boycott action in Natal, of all

places, proved an acute embarrassment to Buthelezi. With the pupils, students and large sections of the people making it clear that they did not acknowledge his leadership, Buthelezi attached responsibility for the pupils' action to persons whose names are not of Zulu origin and thus outside what Inkatha regards as its sphere of influence. Taking advantage of the legal immunity bestowed on Bantustan "parliaments", Mr Stephen Sithabe accused three black Durban lawyers of "orchestration" of the schools' boycott. The lawyers Griffiths Mxenga, Justice Poswa, and Louis Skweyiya threatened to sue if the accusation were repeated outside the KwaZulu Assembly. Sithabe, using the same words Botha had used barely two weeks before, had said that Inkatha could tell who were:

"standing behind the school uniform of our children. . . . It smells like Poswa, like Mxenga and Skweyiya standing behind the uniform of our children."

Speaking on behalf of the three, Mxenga said they were disgusted by the tribalism of Inkatha and regretted that the statements were made under the protection of what he described as "their" parliament. A journalist, Murimuthu Subramoney, was also blamed for the schools boycott. Mr R R Mdongwe, also a member of Inkatha, resorted to an unmistakably racist metaphor when he warned Subramoney that he "must be very careful as he is close to the Indian Ocean and the Inkatha current is very strong." Not surprisingly, on the 28th May, Subramoney was taken into police detention.

We have noted the consistent opposition of the students' movements and the Black Consciousness organisations to Buthelezi throughout the seventies. To this opposition, Buthelezi maintained, in his speech in Jabulani on the 21st October 1979 and on numerous other occasions, that in all his actions he acted with the knowledge and blessing of the African National Congress (ANC). In the absence of a rebuttal by the ANC

of his claims, Buthelezi made some of the most virulent attacks on the Black Consciousness organisations. But not for long could the ANC remain silent in the face of Buthelezi's role with respect to the schools boycott and the condemnation he made of the Sasol bombing. The restraint was explained by Alfred Nzo, Secretary General of the ANC, in a speech he delivered on the 30th July:

"... we have avoided public condemnation of those whom we felt were proceeding in wrong directions from genuinely mistaken positions.

"But the conduct of one such as Chief Buthelezi of the KwaZulu Bantustan, especially over the recent past, can no longer be seen as proceeding in wrong directions from genuinely mistaken positions. Rather, it has become clear that Buthelezi has placed himself in the position of an interlocutor between the oppressed and the oppressor in favour of the oppressor."

## THE PEOPLE'S SUPPORT FOR THE BOYCOTT

The ideological apparatus of the state in the form of the government, the police and the Bantustan functionaries were loud in their claims that the pupils lacked the support of the black oppressed. It is unthinkable for children whose ages averaged 15 to sustain a schools boycott for more than three months without at least the tacit support of their parents and other adult members of the community. In many areas where the boycott was strong, committees of parents, parents and pupils, or university students were formed to express support for the pupils. The reference by both Buthelezi's Inkatha and Prime Minister Botha to "those behind the uniform of school children" was in fact an admission of the support the people were giving to the boycott.

Perhaps the most illuminating example



Parents protest arrest of their children

of the degree of cooperation between pupils and the adult population is in the involvement of Dr Yusuf Joe Variava. A prominent spokesman for Black Consciousness, a member of the national executive committee of AZAPO, a chair-

man of the Solidarity Front, he was also an executive member of the Lenasia Parents and Pupils' Action Committee formed to lend support to the pupils. His detention by the police on the 4th May provoked an unprecedented protest

by teachers and other staff at the Coronationville Hospital where a march and a meeting were held on the hospital grounds.

Many of the children attending boarding schools in towns many miles away from their homes were stranded for travel fares after they were expelled from the schools they boycotted. The local communities gave assistance by accommodating them until arrangements were made and money available for the pupils to go back to their homes.

In Eldorado Park and Riverlea, parents accompanied their children to attend the rallies held on school grounds. The parents' support for the pupils was often expressed in the words "ons kinders is reg" (our children are right). These were parents who witnessed the police baton-charges into the pupils' rallies without any provocation or warnings to disperse only to hear the news on TV later the same day that their children were baton-charged after they had failed to comply with police warnings to disperse or had been throwing stones.

The boycott of schools on a nationwide basis dates from the 14th April. But the genesis of the action goes back to 6th February, 1980, when pupils at Fezeka High School in Guguletu, Cape Town, presented the headmaster with a list of grievances. These included the shortage of textbooks, compulsory fees and uniforms, the enforced homework period of two hours a day, the bad conduct of a teacher and the lack of pupil representation on issues affecting pupils. The announcement on the 15th February that their grievances would not be conceded was followed by a short boycott. The pupils returned to classes after a meeting they had held jointly with parents and teachers. The pupils thus enjoyed the support and involvement of their parents from the outset.

In February, too, the pupils at the Mountainview High School in Hanover Park, Cape Town, began to boycott their classes. The boycott was preceded by a series of meetings to which their parents

were invited to participate in the discussion of their grievances. On the 13th March, an ad hoc committee with joint parent and pupil representation was formed. A meeting they organised for the 20th March was joined by parents and pupils from another school, Crystal Senior Secondary. The meeting was called to discuss the "system of gutter education" and to formulate a list of grievances.

A meeting of the 7th April drew even wider support. The number of schools involved had grown from two to 19, and representatives from the bush college of the Western Cape and from Hewatt Training College also attended. The ad hoc committee formed earlier was now transformed into the United Education Front which resolved to fight the education system "at all levels". The meeting formulated a list of short-term demands to the government. If the demands were not met within a week the pupils, students and parents warned that they would convene a meeting to consider a boycott of schools.

The initial grievances and demands listed by the pupils, taken at their face value, did not appear to be political. In addition to those already mentioned, the apparently non-political grievances included the compulsion to purchase expensive school uniforms, the failure to repair schools damaged in Cape Town during the Soweto Uprising, and the abuse of corporal punishment especially in regard to girls—a catalogue of grievances which would draw the support of all parents. These grievances appeared to be so reformist that the government conceded some of them on the 9th April. The conciliatory reaction of the government must, of course, be seen to be a result of parent involvement and thus a fear of mass support for the pupils. However, that the boycott action in the Cape Flats and the country as a whole was started after and in spite of government concessions shows unmistakably that the grievances were *anything but* reformist.

There is also the fact that the pupils, as their Cape Town ultimatum to

the government testified, have learnt through bitter experience not to take the state and its functionaries at their word. The pupils' action would not be stopped by mere promises from the government. They have learnt from the Soweto Uprising and many other experiences that concessions by the state are not real and that they carry a sting in the tail. The concessions are seen for what they are—no more than an exercise in semantics.

The pattern of joint meetings and consultations between pupils and parents was established very early in the boycott and long before the boycott assumed a national scale. It was a pattern that was to become an essential and characteristic feature of the boycott action throughout the period of its duration. In this respect the pupils were helped by articulating their grievances as a working class issue. On the 7th April, for example, they placed placards on the fence of the Wynberg offices of the Administration of "Coloured" Affairs which proclaimed that:

"Our parents are forced to work because the bread price has increased. School books are not free. Rents and rates are increased. They have no say. Solidarity Workers Students Parents."

On the 11th April, the schools from the ghettos of Langa, Nyanga and Guguletu joined the United Education Front. A further mass meeting was held on the 13th April. Attendance at this meeting had increased to include representatives of pupils, students, and parents from all the black ghettos of the western Cape. At this time the government had conceded some of the demands: the removal of certain headmasters and a promise to repair damaged schools. In view of these concessions the meeting decided to extend the one-week's notice previously given to the government to meet their demands. The government was now given time until the end of the month to meet the rest of the short-term demands, and until then the decision to boycott schools

was to be held in abeyance. But the pupils did not wait for the end of the month. The very next day, hundreds of them began to boycott the schools in Cape Town. By the end of the week they were joined by thousands, and the boycott had reached Johannesburg.

## EVERY ISSUE A POLITICAL ISSUE

In the Alexandra Bus Boycott of 1957, to take one example from many, it became clear that every issue on which the people act, no matter how remote from politics it may appear at first, soon assumes political proportions. A spontaneous mass action by the people of the Alexandra ghetto to boycott buses in order to resist an increase of a penny on the fares immediately revealed that on the other side of the struggle the bus company, PUTCO, was not standing alone. The state and its crucial supports—industry, commerce and agriculture, the military and the police, all manner of racist ideologues inside and outside Parliament—came out to turn the issue of a penny increment on the fares into a political confrontation. Reaction such as this is in the nature of a totally repressive system. Every issue is politically overdetermined by the lack of the most elementary democratic rights.

We have observed that the nationwide boycott was itself preceded by the voicing of grievances which on the surface appeared to be non-political and even reformist, and that some of these the government had no difficulty in conceding if only by way of promises. But very soon these grievances were transcended by an awareness that their resolution could not be effected within the present socio-economic structure. The demands that the state should supply adequate textbooks and make repairs to damaged schools grew to become only short-term demands as against a resolution to fight the "system of gutter education" and to fight it "at all levels". The compulsion to wear expensive school uniforms and to buy stationery began to

be seen and articulated as working class grievances. Thus in one of their pamphlets, the pupils and students stated:

"We are aware as students coming from working class backgrounds that our parents cannot afford to provide shelter, food and education for us. The policy of the state is to make it financially difficult for us to stay at school. We are then forced to leave school and join the cheap labour force."

And, in explaining the concessions they had won in active struggle and how to mediate the short-term demands with the long-term demands:

"These short-term victories, however, are incomplete until they are linked up with long-term goals. We must see how these short-term demands are linked up with the political and economic system of this country. We must see how the fail/pass rate in schools are linked up with the labour supply for the capitalist system, how low quality school buildings are linked to the unequal allocation of funds to education for children of the oppressed and children of the oppressor, how inadequate library facilities are linked with the need to confine and limit the thoughts of the oppressed, how distorted history textbooks are linked with the need to obscure and propagandise against the proud history of resistance of the indigenous people against economic slavery, how, in fact, the whole educational system against which we are rebelling, stems from the fact that we are denied basic political rights and thus political power."

## WHERE TO BEGIN

There are those who already wishfully read into the statements of the students a move away from a black/white struggle

to a struggle in which colour plays no part at all. Invariably none of these people are involved in struggle at the level of the ghetto or grassroots. They appeal to a vulgar marxism to claim that the struggle is simply between the working class and the capitalist, and thereby deny to the struggle the specificity which derives from the black/white divide. Unfortunately, this is a division which cannot be wished away by one's advanced understanding—"the most wonderful rubbish has been produced from this quarter too," Engels said of the fervent 'marxists' of his day, who were also in the habit of making unmediated reductions from superstructure to base.

Whatever the economic laws underlying the South African social formation, the fact is that the boycott of schools was an action by black pupils, and the militant struggles in both factory and ghetto are the actions of the black working class *alone*. It was black children who rebelled against a system of education which affected them in a way different to white children; children of a black working class affected by the entire socio-economic system in a way different to the white working class. Doting, for it is nothing more than that, upon the fact that it was three white teachers dismissed from Crystal Senior Secondary School whose reinstatement the pupils demanded does not prove that the question of colour was absent from the pupils' boycott action. If the pupils demanded the reinstatement of *any* teacher, it was only because the teacher stood on their side. That is as it should be—there can be no other side for *anyone* who is progressive or revolutionary in outlook.

None of the issues which presently motivate the black working class or their children in struggle are issues that can unite them in struggle with what remains of the white working class—at least not for a long time this side of the socialist revolution. It cannot be otherwise when the racism which fragments the class of workers in South Africa is an economically structured one with effects permeating *every* level of the society.

Who are the workers who cannot afford shelter, food and education for their children? Which children? Which working class children are forced into cheap labour? Who are the cheap labour force? Low quality school buildings and inadequate teaching and library facilities for whom? Who are politically rightless and politically powerless? The answer to these questions does not include the word "white". At either end of the linkages the students so brilliantly made between the short and long term demands are issues which at this present juncture pertain only to the black working class and other blacks in South Africa. The "we" in their statements refers to none other than the black working class, and will be readily understood to mean just that by those to whom the statements are addressed—the black working class.

The emmiseration of *this* working class cannot and must not be explained boldly in terms of the workings of something called "capitalism" which determines the conditions and consciousness of something called "the working class". Our "advanced understanding" of material processes must enable us to see that beyond this explanation is a capitalism which affects the black working class in a particular way, in a way different from the rest of the working class. It is this fragmentation of the class that will help us understand the consequent fragmentation of consciousness as well—into black and white consciousness, the persistence of *black* struggles—in South Africa and, for that matter, in the countries of advanced capitalism themselves.

Thus, for a considerably long time into the future, the struggles of the working class and of the masses as a whole, especially those struggles emanating from their self-activity—bus boycotts, schools boycotts, resistance to rent increases or forced removals, strikes against below subsistence wages, and so on—will emerge and manifest themselves in terms of colour, or as black struggles. We in the Black Consciousness Movement, as our name implies, do not shun struggles

which will of necessity continue to exhibit the manifestation of colour. The manifestation is only an appearance, but an appearance with a material base. At root the struggle is a class struggle, and so are all struggles. The manifestation of colour constitutes a terrain of struggle which is not of our own making. But it is a terrain upon which the self-activity and consciousness of the masses, the working class included, is predicated. Under capitalism, there can be no level other than that of appearances at which a mass consciousness forms itself. For us there is no other starting point for consciousness raising. As a bonus, the starting point is not a false one because the consciousness of our people is in response to their oppression and exploitation.

To refuse to interpellate this consciousness so we can harness it into militant struggle and help it along in the direction of socialism; to ignore this terrain, these appearances and the consciousness to which they give rise, is to surrender ourselves to the wilderness and to abdicate the leadership of both the mass movement and the working class to the likes of Buthelezi. To believe that this consciousness is merely a psychic phenomenon is to indulge in self-delusion and, in fact, is to deny that very "advanced understanding" which should inform us that while consciousness is materially based it is a material force in its own right.

## DEVELOPMENT OF A REVOLUTIONARY CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

What is class consciousness, how it is developed and transformed into a revolutionary class consciousness, is one of the most vexed questions in scientific socialism. We do not wish to pretend that we can give the answer. All we do now is to sketchily indicate some of the problems, and indicate some elements in our present situation that facilitate the growth of a revolutionary class consciousness.

The fragmentation of the working class takes place not only along the black/white lines. It takes place within the black working class itself, taking the form of tribal or colour/caste divisions which lead quite often to obstacles in the way of the unity of struggles. The differential treatment of the various colour groups, primarily at the economic level but with effects at other levels, gives rise to an uneven development of consciousness. Hence even in the schools boycott action the various groups and areas did not all spring into action at once. Even the response of the state to the pupils' action, when it spread to embrace every black group throughout the country, was to try hard to fracture the solidarity of the blacks: promising reform of "Coloured" education, equal pay for "Coloured" headteachers, talk of "brown Afrikaners", and so on. Reflecting and extending further the strategy of the ruling class, Buthelesi's announcement of a common examination "with whites" for pupils in Natal was an attempt to fragment blacks along tribal lines. The "total strategy" of the ruling class now includes an orchestrated effort by all its supports to entrench a black middle class and dress up its cosmetic changes so it will look as though the urban black worker is privileged as compared to the rural workers and those marginalised to the so-called resettlement areas.

These are some of the impediments which, added to a repressive labour and political system, hamper the development of a revolutionary class consciousness. But even without these impediments, a revolutionary working class consciousness is not given like manna from the heavens. It does not miraculously develop from an objective working class position. It does not even necessarily emanate from class struggle. If it were so, then class struggles—all written history "is the history of class struggles"—in the countries of advanced capitalism would long ago have been consummated into a socialist revolution. *Revolutionary* class consciousness is something we have to fight for

through our active intervention in on going struggles which take place under very definite conditions—conditions which in our special case affect the black working class in a particular way and give rise to a particular consciousness. The black working class in South Africa will turn to us for leadership only if we intervene to play an active role in their struggles and only if we can correctly articulate their consciousness with a socialist one.

The development of a revolutionary class consciousness is not only helped by the *active* intervention in struggles of those of us who proclaim a socialist understanding. The racist nature of South Africa and the way that affects our people, embedded as it is within a primitive accumulation of capital that does not allow for the enjoyment of nominal freedom, is a powerful catalytic agent in the formation of a radical political awareness, especially when South Africa is placed side by side with many "nationally independent" countries of the Third World. Our people, probably the most politically conscious anywhere, are all the time comparing their own position in South Africa with that of working people and others in the independent states. This they do because their own freedom is late in arriving. Their present position makes them follow with the keenest interest the progress of independent states and other liberation movements, their programmes, triumphs and setbacks. As a result our people know by now that the "political kingdom", the "African personality", "negritude", and what have you, do not bring in any meaningful social change. It has become a commonplace saying among ordinary people that "we do not wish to exchange white rulers for ones wearing black masks". With this experience, the "Viva Frelimo" rallies organised by the Black Consciousness organisations in 1974 were not simply celebrating another event of independence. They were celebrating the victory of a movement which like us has learnt from the experience of others that political or national independence is not

enough without social control of the commanding heights of the economy.

As a result of experience, our people do not now make purely formal demands. But even where the demands are couched in formal terms, they now bear a content which makes them different from yesterday's. Parity in education spending is a demand which has always been made in the past. However, we have seen that in the hands of the pupils and students the content of the demand superseded its formal aspect. By means of articulating short-term demands with long-term demands, they added a dimension to struggle spelling a radical transformation of society by the working class itself.

We must emphasise, however, that the growth of a revolutionary class consciousness cannot be taken for granted. "Working class consciousness," Walter Rodney explained, "is a very important factor. . . The discussion of socialism is a part of a response to a popular outbreak, a demand for change." With particular regard to the ethnic polarisation of the workers and peasants in Guyana, Rodney traced the uneasy path along which consciousness develops:

"But even as the demand is made for change, the content of the demand is sharpened. People move from one erroneous perception, perhaps to another erroneous perception, but always towards a clearer perception in the long run. Take the idea of national independence. Twenty-five years ago people in the islands and in Guyana imagined that national independence would bring about some betterment in their social condition. When their independence came around and there was no change in their lifestyles, it was inevitable that they would make new demands. These would be couched in—let us say—racial terms in a few societies—another false start. Then they began to make their demands in more specific class terms. So, even if the first demands led to

the emergence of the "hero" in Caribbean politics, or to specifically anti-communist national movements, or even to the rise of mini-dictatorships. . . ; indeed, even if these demands led to the entrenchment of racism, as they did for a period in Guyana and allowed for CIA penetration, this was all still part of the emergence of the marxist presence."

Fortunately for us in South Africa, no liberation movement is making the false start of racial demands nor has the fragmentation of the black working class had any serious effects on the political struggle. The liberation movement as a whole has a long tradition of proclaiming the unity in struggle of all the blacks. In the recent past we have even, and without fanfare, moved away from multi-racialism and the racial alliances. In the seventies the students from all the bush colleges joined the South African Students' Organisation (SASO), the leading exponent of black consciousness at the time. In 1980, too, the pupils and students proclaimed and achieved the unity in struggle of all the blacks. They asserted that "we are all black" to counteract the ruling ideology of assigning caste according to colour. The action of the meat workers in the Cape, to name one example, testifies to the progress made in breaking down divisions based upon colour. What was significant about this strike is that at issue were differential "rights" to severely restricted forms of worker representation accorded the "African" and the "Coloured". The solidarity of the workers in insisting that management recognise a single workers' committee representing all the black workers received considerable support from the whole black community. All this because the South African social formation as a whole, in spite of cosmetic changes, continues to operate in such a way that fragmentation of the blacks at the material level is over-ridden and rendered largely superfluous at the political.

Lastly, we must not overlook the fact that the pupils' action was centred on the most important conurbations—Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban, Pretoria, Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage, Bloemfontein and Pietermaritzburg. The children involved were largely children of the working class—a fact that the children never lost sight of. All this augurs well for the development of a *revolutionary* class consciousness among the workers. Equally important and encouraging was that the rural areas moved along together with the towns in boycotting schools so that consciousness has not been balkanised by the imposition of Bantustans.

## CONCLUDING NOTE ON OPEN AND ACTIVE STRUGGLES

1 The decade of the seventies has shown that open and active mass political struggle, however difficult and fraught with risks, is still possible under South Africa's totally repressive regime. The students and workers pay heavily for their actions: shootings, loss of life, sackings from school or work, endorsements out of the urban areas, police detentions, exile, etc. The same price is paid by those who articulate the aspirations of the people openly in political and student movements like AZAPO, AZASO and COSAS. In no other country is so high a sacrifice made for standing up to fight oppression and exploitation.

But it cannot be gainsaid that these active and open, ideological and political struggles are the highest form of struggle: the class struggle *par excellence*. Without these struggles, consciousness cannot be preordained to rise beyond the solution of the most immediately pressing issues. In and through these struggles, in and through our active intervention in these struggles, the realisation comes that every issue is political and must be contested politically, that the struggle is not merely for a political kingdom in which the oppressor and exploiter will wear a black mask. The raising of political consciousness means nothing less than the

realisation of ever widening sections of the people that the key to their problem lies in the solution of both the national and social questions; that struggles which do not involve the working class are either doomed to failure or open to cooptation by imperialism; that to enlist the support of the working class and to enhance class consciousness amongst them we must centre our political and economic demands on the black working class, and show the greatest determination in the struggle for these demands.

2 Without these open and active struggles, the armed struggle would not gain new recruits in large numbers. Indeed it was only as a result of the open activities of the Black Consciousness organisations leading up to the Soweto Uprising that the largest number of young people to date joined those constituents of the National Liberation Movement with military wings and the international support to train and provide logistics for a guerrilla army. In two separate articles for the Johannesburg *Post*, Zwelakhe Sisulu wrote of that "class of 1976" which now forms the "core of the guerrilla force and recruiters". For only in these open and active struggles is it realised that, within South Africa's totally repressive system, the political/ideological struggles and the gains that accrue as a result of these struggles need to be defended by a people's army.

3 To demonstrate openly and actively around any issue, however limited or short-term in appearance, is to unequivocally assert a right which the system denies—the right to action. Struggle, when the struggle itself is outlawed, is struggle for the right to struggle. In this sense, the present ongoing struggles inside the country by students, workers or those marginalised and forcibly resettled out of sight in remote corners, all these struggles are prefigurative in the highest degree. Out of these struggles are forged those instruments of worker, student, community and mass organisations which alone will guarantee

our freedom in the future. How easily the working class in a country like Britain, for example, forgets that the rights to trade unionism, to free and universal education, to universal suffrage, to a national health service, to "free" speech, that all these rights were not handed down to them by a benevolent ruling class but are rights fought for and won by their forbears in active struggles over the course of a century and more; and that these rights can only be secured and extended in active and continuous struggle.

The present struggles of our students and workers, emanating from their self-activity, are prefigurative in that they mirror those rights of assembly, protest and strike which they must enjoy in the society for which they are fighting, and in every stage towards that society. The ongoing struggles are not limited by their explicit objectives: against no education, for higher wages and trade union rights and so forth. They are, albeit implicitly, also struggles about the right to struggle, struggles to end all struggles, struggles for a classless society. Only when rights are won in actual struggles, only then will these rights have the greatest chance of being guaranteed and enshrined in the future society.

4 The importance of an open and active struggle once it breaks out at one level within a totally repressive system, in which struggles are unlawful and consequently suppressed over long periods of time, is that it makes possible or opens up spaces for struggles at other levels. That is: within such a regime, open and active struggle has a multi-effect: struggle over one issue leads to struggle over a whole range of issues which question the system in its very foundations. The decade of the seventies was one in which the reactive effect of one struggle made possible other struggles. The militant assertion of Black Consciousness in the late sixties cracked the granite wall of repression after a decade's hiatus in political activity. The cracks provided a space for the militant struggles that were

to characterise the seventies. These spaces for further action on political and economic fronts, it must be emphasised, have been created only as a result of open and active struggles and defiance of prohibitive laws, by the students and workers. The pupils and students, in exercising autonomous control over the schools boycott action and simultaneously waging relentless war against the collaborators, have shown that these spaces must neither be occupied nor surrendered to those poised for cooptation.

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It was said of the Soweto Uprising that after it South Africa would never be the same. In that Uprising, the workers and a generation of future workers were schooled and conscientised in political action. The pupils' action of 1980 and the youthful sections of today's working class were born out of that Uprising. It is a generation which has learnt to struggle actively and continuously to win its demands. The promises and detentions and shootings will not stop its active struggle, open or otherwise. We have a lot more to learn from the youth than we can impart to them.

31st July 1980

## Acknowledgements:

Errors of both fact and interpretation are bound to be present in an article written away from the scene of the action and largely dependent for its sources on an incomplete set of press cuttings. The statements from the students' pamphlets are taken from *Work in Progress* No 12, Walter Rodney's statement from an interview with Colin Prescod, *Race and Class* Vol XVIII No 2, Engels' remark from his letter to Bloch in *Selected Correspondence 1846-1895*. I hope the other influences in the article are obvious. Many thanks to NH and DA for valuable comment and suggestions; to JK and other comrades for unreported details; to AL and KJ for encouragement.



# Campaign Briefings

## BOYCOTT THE SOWETO TEACHERS' CHOIR

The Soweto Teachers' Choir was already competing at the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod in Wales when persistent calls from various groups inside South Africa were received that the BCMA abroad should picket the choir. In accordance with its commitment to respond wherever possible to the needs of our people inside the country, the UK regional branch of the BCMA decided to picket the remaining concerts in London of the Soweto Teachers' Choir. The following leaflet was prepared for issue on the picket line and was based on information received from people inside the country:

### BOYCOTT THE SOWETO TEACHERS' CHOIR

- \* A leading member of the Soweto Teachers' Choir gave evidence for the state in a South African political trial of Soweto students.
- \* Various members of the choir refused to identify with the Soweto Uprisings of 1976 and, as teachers, played a role counter to the pupils' boycott action against the schools.
- \* In 1980, the pupils have again launched a boycott of the gutter education schools. As teachers, where does the Soweto Teachers' Choir stand in this latest action?
- \* The choir gave a special performance to members of the South African parliament.
- \* The choir is supported by large donations from South African firms which pay low wages to black workers and refuse to recognise black trade unions.
- \* In 1980, one of the choir's concerts was sponsored by Kontak, the Afrikaans' women's organisation and by Mimi Coertse.
- \* In 1978, the choir participated in an apartheid competition sponsored by the Ford Motor Company of South Africa.
- \* The Soweto Teachers' Choir and its sponsors thus have no relationship whatsoever to the liberation struggle of the black people.

Boycott and Picket their Concerts on

15th July 1980, Lambeth Festival, 12.30pm

16th July 1980, St Paul's, 5pm

The decision to picket the choir was taken by the BCMA UK regional executive committee at its meeting late on Saturday night the 12th July 1980. The region thus had one clear working day in which to organise and inform its membership and support groups of the picket.

As a matter of courtesy, the executive committee conveyed by telephone the decision to picket the choir to the Deanery at St Paul's Cathedral and to Ms Christine Eccles, the organiser of the Lambeth Town Festival. We felt that both St Paul's and the Festival Committee would not have allowed the choir to perform under their auspices if they had been properly briefed on the discreet sponsorship the choir enjoys from the South African government. St Paul's

Cathedral has associations with Canon John Collins who is one of the most distinguished supporters of the liberation struggles in Southern Africa and a founder of International Defence and Aid. And, Lambeth Town Council, under the leadership of Ted Knight, is probably the most progressive council in the United Kingdom.

The Anti-Apartheid Movement in the UK was also informed of our decision, by telephone as well as by leaflet which we posted to them. Mike Terry, executive director of Anti-Apartheid gave his personal support to the picket, and undertook to pass the word around to supporters of Anti-Apartheid Movement. However, no one from AAM joined us during the two days of picketing.

Our decision to picket enjoyed strong support from the black community groups of Lambeth. As a result of pressure exerted by these groups, a meeting of town councillors in Lambeth decided to cancel at short notice the concert on the 15th. This did not stop the BCMA members and supporters from standing outside the Town Hall, with placards and leaflets in hand, in order to explain to people the reason for the cancellation and picket. Of the 50 or so people who turned up for the concert, only two could not understand why on earth we must picket anyone "singing for fun".

Mr George Greaves, of the Lambeth Council of Community Relations, said: "We were asked last week if we knew anything about the choir or could check their credentials. But we could not get any information and it was not until we saw the BCM statement on Tuesday that we were in a position to advise."

The Consortium of Ethnic Minorities in Lambeth, in a letter to Mr Ted Knight, leader of the Town Council, said of the Soweto Teachers' Choir that: "their projection under that name is propagating their part in the liberation struggle in South Africa, whilst they are sponsored by elements in South Africa based on unjust racial policies." It is of course well known that the choir altered its name from Johannesburg Teachers' Choir

for reasons that are not hard to discern.

The arrangements for the choir's itinerary in the UK were handled by the British Council. That may explain why the cover on the choir was not blown earlier in their tour and how they came to have bookings at St Paul's and Lambeth Town Hall. The much publicity given the choir by BBC-TV was adorned with heartbreaking tales of how the choir struggled to raise money for the trip to come abroad. ITN gave the picket coverage in its news broadcast. But BBC-TV, whose cameras were outside on the steps of St Paul's all day long, made no mention of the picket. The anxiety with which BBC-TV recorded the choir and the care they took to shut out the chants of the picket made us wonder for whom their film was destined.

Our pickets, their numbers swelled by supporting passers-by and a group of young French tourists, stood on the steps of St Paul's carrying placards with inscriptions of "Uncle Tom's Choir", "Boycott Apartheid Agents", "Apartheid Kills", etc. Three thousand leaflets were distributed only to persons who asked for one. At the end of four hours of picketing, not one leaflet littered the precincts of St Paul's. That is the measure of the interest with which people received our leaflet and acknowledged our principled stand to isolate those who collaborate, black or white, with the apartheid regime.

Our conviction in the correctness of our action was further strengthened by many interested by-standers who, after reading our leaflet, volunteered knowledge of the kind of patronage the choir enjoys from the South African government. We learnt on the picket line that the choir entertained Botha when he paid the much publicised "first ever" visit by a South African Prime Minister to Soweto. Botha, we were told, said to the choir that he knew they would be good ambassadors for South Africa abroad.

We learnt, too, that the South African embassy in London, obviously at a stage when it felt it was appropriate to expose its hidden hand of sponsorship and bring maximum embarrassment to Lambeth



Picket of Soweto Teachers' Choir

Town Council (and St Paul's), phoned the festival organiser and asked her if she could arrange for South Africa's cultural attache to be received officially at the concert to have been held in Lambeth. A member of the Festival Committee, the Rev Graham Kent, refused to meet the attache and later said to the press that he had "warned the council months ago that this choir needed careful checking. My suspicions were reinforced when I saw they had an Afrikaans conductor and I decided to have nothing more to do with the event."

The connections with apartheid seem to include the officials of the Llangollen Eisteddfod. Acting in total disregard of the cultural boycott of the apartheid

regime, these officials visited South Africa during September, only a few weeks after the Soweto Teachers' Choir had sung under their auspices in Wales. According to an official of the Johannesburg Welsh Choir, an "international" musical eisteddfod is now planned to be held at Roodepoort, South Africa, in September 1981. The Llangollen Eisteddfod officials visited South Africa to advise and help with the planning. The visit has been condemned by the Wrexham Labour Party and organisations in Wales are being urged not to donate money to the Llangollen Eisteddfod in view of the connections which its officials maintain with racist South Africa.

The Johannesburg Welsh Choir, it must be noted, was also a participant in the Llangollen Eisteddfod. That alone, if it had been known at the time, would certainly have prompted the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania, to picket the Eisteddfod itself.

The last word on the financial sponsorship of the choir must go to its conductor, Mr Jabulani Mazibuko. He said to the press that "it is true we could not have come here without the support of the good philanthropic white firms". The people of Azania have yet to see such firms in the world, let alone in South Africa.

## SOME KEY EPISODES IN THE DECISION OF LEBAMANG SEBIDI TO QUIT THE SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS DELEGATION

We would like to place on record the fact that Mr John Lebamang Sebidi has pulled out of the South African Institute of International Affairs delegation.

Mr Sebidi—a prominent member of the Black Consciousness Move-

ment in South Africa—touched base on arrival in Boston with the local members of the BCM for briefing before undertaking any activities connected with the South African Institute of International Affairs delegation and the World Peace Foundation.

After careful and considered deliberation the Boston Branch in consultation with the US Regional Office of the BCM decided that it would be inimical to the political interests of the movement for Mr Sebidi to be involved with the said delegation.

Mr Sebidi with the full support and backing of the BCM wants to have it known that he has completely disassociated himself from any further dealings with the delegation.

Press Statement released by  
*The Black Consciousness  
Movement of Azania  
(US Chapter)*

Mr Sebidi, on arrival in Boston, decided to meet with the members of the Black Consciousness Movement. This was done in keeping with the Black Consciousness Movement philosophy that there needs to be an organic relationship between the inside groups, like the Committee of Ten, and the external movement. Mr Sebidi's visit was discussed in depth, and the following observations were made:

### 1. Composition of the Delegation

It was felt that the delegation was comprised almost exclusively of individuals who, in varying degrees, could be characterised as supporters of the status quo. These included, inter alia, the Secretary General of Inkatha, Mr Oscar Dhlomo, Mr Obed Kunene, a past Nieman Fellow and Editor of *Ilanga*, another staunch

supporters of Inkatha, Mr Mouton, the Chairman of the SABC, Mr Vosloo, editor of the Nationalist Party mouth organ, *Die Beeld*, two black corporate representatives and sundry elements drawn from other spheres of South African white society. With the exception of Mr Sebidi, the only other member who was to join the delegation in Boston whose views were in consonance with those of the BCM was Mr Aggrey Klaaste, a current Nieman Fellow.

It quickly became obvious that Mr Sebidi was in the company of strange bedfellows. Why, then, had he agreed to join the delegation in the first place? Mr Sebidi had never been fully appraised of the members of the delegation. There had, in other words, been a studied intention to cover up the composition of this delegation.

It needs to be pointed out, too, that other participants in this effort included United States organisations, like the World Peace Foundation, which coordinated the visit from the US end of it, the United States-South African Leadership Exchange Programme, which, though it denies direct involvement, has been implicated in its attempts to put pressure on Mr Klaaste to rescind his decision to quit. At the individual level there are individuals like Professor Robert Rotberg, a frequent visitor to South Africa who is in the business of preaching the virtues of the South African regime, as well as a host of other 'scholars' who were retained to write papers on various aspects of the South African situation.

It was the role of the BCM chapter in Boston to brief Mr Sebidi about this aspect of the case. The overall picture that emerged, on the question of composition of participants was, indeed, a very bleak one.

### 2 Purpose of the Delegation

The publicly announced purpose of this delegation was to present the American public with a broad-based representative sample of South African opinion on a variety of issues. The American 'public'

are to be selected groups, among which were businessmen, religious leaders, the media, politicians, black leaders etc.

A deeper analysis of the intent of this delegation unearths the fact that the real purpose was to focus on opinion makers in the United States and present them with a decidedly pro-South African regime position. How else would this not be when 14 out of the 16 members were ranged on a political spectrum from mild critics of the government to die-hard supporters of the status quo? In other words, what can one expect from the Chairman of the government sanctioned and monopolised SABC, from the Secretary General of Inkatha, from the Editor of *Die Beeld* or from a Personnel Consultant of Barlow?

### 3 The BCM Policy of Non Participation in Government Related Structures and Institutions

A cardinal principle upon which the decision of Mr Sebidi to quit the delegation was made was the unequivocal stance the BCM has always taken on the question of non-collaboration with government-sponsored structures like Bantustans. Thus the presence of Inkatha spokesmen on the delegation, SABC and the like, was unacceptable to BCM. This should also be coupled with BCM's stance on the role of Liberals. It is obvious that most of those on the United States who participated in authoring 'studies' are of this ilk.

### Some Observations Relating to Events Surrounding this Principled Stand

Attached (see inset) is the statement issued by the BCM Regional Office regarding Mr Sebidi's decision to leave the delegation. Subsequent to his communication of this decision to Mr John Barratt, there have been various developments:

1 Mr Aggrey Klaaste whose participation was contingent upon the presence

of Committee of Ten member(s), quit. There were attempts, on the part of USSALEP, to 'lean' on Mr Klaaste, including also the threat to have Mr Percy Qoboza 'deal' with him.

2 Mr Sebidi's return airline ticket was taken back by Mr Barratt. Subsequently, through various emissaries, there has been an attempt to cover this blatantly malicious, vindictive and immoral act by declaring that Mr Sebidi's ticket is available should he wish to travel back with the delegation. The fact of the matter is that Mr Barratt in his discussions with Mr Sebidi over his decision to quit used this ticket as a 'club' to pummel Sebidi into submission. Furthermore Mr Sebidi was generously allowed to stay in his hotel for one more night after his declared intention to quit. He graciously declined the offer.

The BCM wants to say clearly it will never allow its members to be insulted in that fashion. They can 'stuff' it.

3 There have been various cancellations of invitations to the delegation by various bodies. No sooner did people know that Mr Sebidi had quit than they declared solidarity with the BCM for this courageous and principled stand. The most dramatic of these was the MacNeill-Lehrer television talk. The producers after lengthy talks with the BCM members decided to call off a long-standing commitment to do this show. Other individuals declined to attend dinners and luncheons organised by this delegation. Among these are Frank Ferreri, Director of AAI, Randall Robinson, Executive Director of Trans-Africa and the United States Congressional Black Caucus.

4 The greatest victory for the BCM is the reaffirmation and reinforcement of its principle that there shall be organic unity between the forces operating inside the country and those outside. Attempts have been made to isolate the struggles inside the country and the efforts of those abroad. This incident has drama-

tised the strength of this vital and dynamic symbiotic relationship.

Issued by  
The Black Consciousness Movement  
of Azania (US Region)

## THE BLACK MUNICIPAL WORKERS' UNION MUST NOT STAND ALONE

### Our Appeal for International Solidarity and Financial Support

On Thursday 24th July, 1980, about 2,000 black municipal workers in Johannesburg and the nearby town of Roodepoort stopped work to press a claim for higher pay. Some 650 of the workers employed at the Orlando power station (in Soweto) were given an ultimatum by the municipality of Johannesburg to return to work or face dismissal. The workers earning £16 a week had rejected an increment offer of £2.22 a week.

On the next day, Friday, the Johannesburg Municipality dismissed 1,350 black workers in its electricity department. By Monday at least 10,000 black municipal workers stopped work in solidarity with the dismissed workers. The strike affected almost every department of the Johannesburg Municipality. Workers from the transport, health and gas departments joined the strike.

In addition to the sacking of workers, the response of the municipality was:

- \* to make moves to bring in people from the "Homelands" (South Africa's reservoirs of labour) to replace the sacked workers and break the strike; and

- \* to refuse to negotiate with the independent Black Municipal Workers' Union which represents the workers—instead to "negotiate" with an unrepresentative and pliant "union" of its own creation.

In view of the municipality's reaction, urgent requests from organisations within the country were received by the external wing of the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania to launch an international appeal, for solidarity with the municipal workers, and to seek financial assistance for their union and for the defence of their leaders.

On the 1st August, the day after launching our appeal, further tough and concerted action by the Johannesburg Municipality and the police was taken to bring to an end the biggest strike action by black workers against a single employer in the history of South Africa.

- \* At gun-point the workers were ordered to return to work, and over a thousand were sacked and forcibly returned to the so-called Homelands.

- \* In the corridors of the Supreme Court the leader of the Black Municipal Workers' Union, Mr Joseph Mavi, was arrested by the police to face charges of sabotage because of the involvement of power workers in the strike. His arrest was followed by that of other union leaders who have since been similarly charged.

In recent months, black workers in almost every industrial area of South Africa have taken to strike action under conditions of the utmost illegality and endless harassment by both employers and police. In the absence of the most elementary rights of free assembly, the development of independent trade unionism is stifled in many ways. Employers and state refuse to recognise independent unions so that unions are not able to collect subscriptions or hold meetings at the work places. Without trade union recognition, employers and state treat strikes by black workers as a termination of contract so that striking workers are sacked *en masse* and endorsed out of the cities or face criminal charges for remaining in the cities.

The recent wave of strikes in the country are not only over pay demands

but in many cases also include disputes over conditions of work. The struggles of the black working class, though, cannot be divorced from their struggle to win trade union and democratic rights.

We, in the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania, are confident that the struggles of the black working class would be immeasurably helped by acts of solidarity and support from the international working class and their organisations, both trade union and political.

## SUPPORT THE SASO-10

The SASO-10, from Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, USA, were arrested as a result of their actions for South African liberation.

### Chronology of Events

*September 1978:* Committee appointed by Western Michigan University President to research and make recommendation regarding university divestment.

*April 1979:* Ad Hoc Committee on South Africa unanimously recommends divestment from corporations and banks continuing to do business in South Africa.

*July 1979:* Board of Trustees adopts policy of voting its stocks at the recommendations of University President. This policy maintains present investment practices and disregards decision reached by Ad Hoc Committee.

*September 1979:* Approximately 80 persons supporting divestment attended Board of Trustees meeting to ask that the Board openly discuss the rationale of their July decision. One Trustee suggested that "the trustees should discuss the issue," which they had not yet done.

*October 1979:* About 100 supporters

of divestment attended meeting of the Board to discuss the South African issue. Upon their arrival, the group learned they had been denied agenda time and spent over an hour debating this problem, at the end of which the Board adjourned for a short time. When the Board returned they adjourned to lunch in order to allow time for obtaining a restraining order against the group. They attempted to leave the room through the crowd of people standing by the doors. At that time the arrests were made.

*November 1979:* Court blocked university's attempt to restrain SASO-11 members from attending future Board meetings.

*December 1979 through April 1980:* Community groups addressed Board in support of divestiture. SASO-11 met with Board members to discuss a new banking policy.

*July 1980:* More discussion was given to the proposed banking policy. SASO-11 requested the Board to inquire about a South African graduate student of WMU who was recently arrested in Capetown. South African exile, Dumisani Kumalo, was present and addressed the Board.

### What You Can Do

Write letters of support to SASO-10 (South African Solidarity Organisation-11) and send to:

SASO-11  
c/o Brian Rosecrance, Chairperson  
1940 Howard Street, Apt. 284  
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008

and send a copy to:

Mrs Maury Parfet, Chairperson  
Board of Trustees  
Administration Building  
Western Michigan University  
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008.

# A New Dawn

When the Portuguese regime in Mozambique fell at the hands of Frelimo, the Black Consciousness organisations within Azania expressed their solidarity and celebrated the victory by organising *Vivo Frelimo* rallies. In their wake these rallies gave rise to a long drawn out trial of SASO/BPC militants before the South African courts. When the South African army invaded Angola and were repulsed by the combined might of the MPLA and its international allies, our people did not conceal their support for the MPLA. The

their inability to intervene directly in Angola, and instead to give diplomatic sanction to South Africa to intervene militarily on their behalf while giving financial aid and arms to those who they had hoped would destabilise the sovereignty of the MPLA.

The coming into power in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau of political movements not favoured by the West has in the last few years intensified the efforts by imperialist powers to ensure that the struggles in Zimbabwe, Namibia and Azania would be aborted, and result in changes and governments that would not upset their investments. To that end, leaderships in the persons of Muzorewa's ilk have been cultivated to pre-empt power ever falling into the hands of the people's movements. ZANU represents the latest but most resounding defeat of such manoeuvres.

With the overwhelming victory of ZANU our own struggle is given greater impetus than it has hitherto received from outside our borders. Our people must know now as never before that their struggles are not in vain and that victory is within their grasp. For no other oppressive society has borne such close resemblance to ours as "Rhodesia". In the hour of ZANU's triumph, our people's struggle stands in clearer perspective: freedom in our life time.

Even clearer than daylight now is the fact that attempts to subvert the people's movements by imposing puppets as "leaders" and to impose "internal settlement" schemes in which the people have no voice whatsoever, all these attempts are doomed to failure as so unmistakably demonstrated by ZANU's victory.

In the immediate aftermath of ZANU's popular victory, we more than anyone else outside Zimbabwe understand the immense problems that now face the



shamefaced retreat of the South African army confirmed us in our conviction that as against an iron will to fight for our freedom, the state with all its modern means of technological warfare is not invincible.

All this goes to show that at this juncture in the history of the world, no people's struggle is purely and simply a national affair. What happened in Vietnam has had reverberations far beyond the borders of Vietnam. Indeed, it was the utter defeat of the United States of America in Vietnam that contributed to

people of Zimbabwe. It is with empathy with our ZANU comrades that we recognise why at this moment they may not be in a position to offer us help in ways we may wish. Capitalism, by its racist nature, sabotages our revolutions well in advance of the point at which political independence and self-determination is attained. In Southern Africa, this it has done by denying us technical skills, assigning us to the most menial jobs on the labour market and thereby stunting the development of a working class with the organisational capacity to assume total control of the economy. It is the consequent imbalance of class forces, a strong capitalist class and its allied aristocrats of labour on the one hand, and a technically and organisationally under-developed black working class and its allied intelligentsia on the other hand, which make it impossible for ZANU to carry through in one giant stride both a political and economic revolution. In the face of a well entrenched capitalist class existing within Zimbabwe and linked across with South Africa's, ZANU has

courageously, if implicitly, declared that it is not able to transform overnight their society to the image of the one envisaged in their programme and in all the years of struggle. For the same reason, ZANU has declared a policy of peaceful co-existence with South Africa while giving us moral support in our struggle for freedom. We do not doubt that ZANU will do everything in its power to redress political and economic inequality in Zimbabwe, and that in the comity of nations Zimbabwe will be a strong force in our favour.

We for our part will draw inspiration from ZANU and, if we learn anything from the experience of Zimbabwe, it will be to conduct our struggle in such a way as to eliminate root, stalk and branch the system of capitalism from Azania. In this way we will make our contribution, pay back so to speak, to the people of Zimbabwe and all those people whose victories have given an impetus and an inspiration to our struggle.

**VIVA ZANU-PF  
VIVA PATRIOTIC FRONT  
VIVA ZIMBABWE**

# In Solidarity with Caribbean Struggles



Murdered by the Burnham Regime in Guyana on the 13th June, 1980

## WALTER RODNEY, 1942-1980

"Our talented, inspiring, committed and much-loved brother Walter Rodney, died last night 13th June at the hands of the People's National Congress rulers," announced the Working People's alliance of Guyana the day after the assassination. "He is the third Working People's alliance victim and the first of the highest

leadership of the party. He is the fifth political murder victim of the PNC state, including Teekah, Minister of Education and Father Darke, catholic priest.

"One of the most politically intelligent opponents of the regime has been removed. A prophet of the self-emancipation of the working people has been silenced. A partisan of the liberation of all people is no more."

After teaching in Jamaica and Dar es Salaam, Walter returned to Guyana in 1974 to take up an appointment as Professor of History at the University of Guyana. On his return to Guyana the appointment was cancelled by decree of the Prime Minister, Forbes Burnham. A highly qualified historian with an international reputation, Walter would have had no difficulty finding a professorial appointment in another country. But he chose to stay in Guyana so determined he was to establish a physical presence in the gathering movement of resistance to the Burnham regime. Apart from brief lecture trips to the United States, in order to earn his living as well as build international support for the Working People's Alliance, Walter remained in Guyana until his death.

In the period to 1974, Guyanese society proliferated with left-wing grass-root resistance movements such as ASCRIA, RATON, IPRA, MAO (Movement Against Oppression), and the Working People's Vanguard Party. Walter's links in the years he was absent from Guyana were with MAO and Ratoon which is the Hindi name for the root of sugar cane plant remaining in the ground after the stalk has been cut. The name tells the commitment Walter and his comrades showed to organisations at the level of the grass-roots. It was to the grass-roots that his return to Guyana signalled. He quickly established close relations with the bauxite mineworkers and became an activist in the independent organisation, the Organisation of the Working People. In July 1979, this organisation together with all the other grass-roots formations united to become the Working People's Alliance of which Walter Rodney was its most prominent spokesperson, activist and theoretician.

The years immediately following Walter's return to Guyana saw a mounting challenge by the bauxite and sugar workers to the regime of Burnham. Not for many years had the Guyanese workers of Indian and African descent come together in strikes, demonstrations and large public meetings to express abhor-

rence and opposition to a regime which the imperialist press now openly admits to have been installed in government by the CIA and British governments in 1964. Burnham has since then rigged each and every election.

The working people of Guyana clearly saw Walter Rodney and the WPA as an alternative to Burnham and his PNC. It was inevitable that the PNC regime would find a way of removing Walter from the scene. A first attempt was to arrest him and other members of the WPA on the 11th July, 1979, under trumped-up charges of arson. *Dayclean*, one of the many roneoed news sheets which came to flourish under the WPA, said of the charge:

"Walter Rodney, Rupert Roopnaraine, Omawale, Bonita Harris, Maurice Odle, Karen DeSouza, Kwama Apata and Narine Nandall were seized by the police in their attempt to find who bombed and burned the *Office of the General Secretary of the People's National Congress and the Ministry of National Development*. . . The news of the arrest was hidden from the Guyanese until it broke out in the Caribbean press and on pickets carried outside Stabroek market by WPA sisters and brothers. Vigils nightly outside the nasty prisons forced the police first to release Brother Odle, Borthor Nandall, and then Sister Harris.

"As Burnham kept the prisoners in some of the foulest conditions in the Caribbean and Latin America, police shuffled the bits of items they wish to turn to evidence for a crime carrying life imprisonment. One prize piece is allegations of paint in Rodney's hair. The sale of this type of ammunition may soon be banned in Guyana. Readers, please wash away any paint clinging to clothing or furniture. You may be arrested.

"The cause of the arrests was the destruction of what the *New Nation* (pro-Burnham paper) calls the Seat of Paramountcy—that is, dictatorship. Official news says that the House was bombed and burned by men (like Sister Harris?) in Guyana Defence Force uniform who first took the guards on

duty to a place of safety. There are two ways of looking at this event. Was it an inside job? This view is supported by a report that . . . a fraud (within the Ministry of National Development) seemed under investigation. Others want to see it as the first act of a growing resistance to Burnham's rule. The first view is more popular, but the panic in the dwindling PNC ranks is making people swing to the view that Guyanese inside or outside the system are hitting back."

On the instructions of Burnham, Walter and his comrades were refused trial by jury. After calling one state witness in early June 1980, the trial was adjourned to August. Walter was murdered before the trial could resume. The reason was clear. The charge was a frame-up, and only served to increase working class and international support for Walter and the WPA.

We, the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania, reiterate the statement of the WPA that in the killing of Walter Rodney the Guyanese people have been cheated and robbed of a man of immeasurable worth. The oppressed and exploited of the earth have known few intellectuals who could ground so closely with them as Walter, the author of *Groundings with my Brothers*. Cabral and Che are among the few. Walter's memory and teachings will remain forever with us.

## GRENADA

The New Jewel Movement of Grenada has celebrated its first anniversary in power. Not since the Cuban Revolution of 20 years ago has the Caribbean region experienced such a significant effort at social change. After only a year in power, Maurice Bishop's government can point to a number of achievements to its credit. Many of the emigre intelligentsia have voluntarily returned to Grenada to play their part in development projects, in all cases at salaries well below what they could earn in the West. Amongst those "reversing the brain drain" are to be counted technically skilled people whose national origin is not Grenada but one or

other of the islands in the Caribbean. Exports of agricultural products have increased by more than 25%. Literacy campaigns have been initiated, school meals introduced and school fees reduced as a first step to abolishing fees altogether. Unemployment has fallen from 50% to 35%. With help from Cuba, an airport is under construction and the number of medical doctors doubled. Diversification of the economy, a top priority with many single crop plantation states, is reflected in the development of fishing and tourist industries. So too is foreign "aid" being diversified, with help coming from Venezuela, Cuba and the Arab States. The huge debt inherited from the ousted regime of Sir Eric Gairy, a debt which boosted unemployment rather than development, has almost been paid off.

The accent all round is on self-help: as many as 4,000 volunteers recently helped to rehabilitate, renovate and refurbish old schools. The New Jewel Movement, like the Working People's Alliance in Guyana and opposition movements in other Caribbean islands which partly owe their origin to the Black Liberation struggles of the late sixties, is essentially a grass-root movement. It is with the perspective of grass-root democracy that its self-help projects are initiated. In this way the movement is working towards a real and participatory democracy to replace the vote-once-in-every-five-years variety.

Amidst all these serious attempts at reconstruction, the Western governments are aggressively working to reassert "their" position in the Caribbean region or, to use their jargon, to *destabilise* the peoples' gains in order to stem the tide sweeping the rest of the region. They can claim a large measure of success. Jamaica is likely to return a right-wing government at the next election. Burnham in Guyana has postponed yet another election he would in any case have rigged. Williams in Trinidad and Tobago spearheads with the help of the US the formation of a policing force for the region.

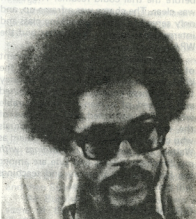
And not to forget the pip-squeak or the Grenadian pigmentocrats: only now they moan of the lack of human rights and everything which up to now has been their privilege as a minority to enjoy.

## MARTINIQUE

Martinique is a West Indian island which France claims to be part of its territory—a mere *fiat* to say its not a colony. The island has had a series of demonstrations involving strikes and factory sit-ins or what the French colonialists choose to describe as an “increase in racial tension”. The response of the colonialists is a predictable one which like that of their counterparts in Southern Africa is to raise the spectre of the “Red Ogre”. The French Secretary of State for Overseas Territories explains it all away by saying that the island’s black nationalist movement, the Progressive Martinique Party, has links with Cuba. The same old story—rather than concede the people’s right to self-determination, the people are insulted by being told that their demands are not really their own. In the case of Martinique, the demands are said to be Castro-inspired and that the people don’t want independence as “the island is an integrated part of the French Republic” (sic). That legend was heard before in Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and in Zimbabwe. The legend is still told by France and South Africa to justify military intervention in order to per-

petuate relations of exploitation and oppression. France, with troops stationed in Africa and 800 gendarmes equipped with armoured (anti-struggle) cars in Martinique plus the veiled threat that “it would take only 10 hours for French troops to arrive in Martinique”, now joins the United States in calling for a collective Western military presence in the Caribbean to check what is alleged to be Cuban activity but is in fact a people’s struggle for the right to self-determination in every respect, including the right to choose who they like for allies.

Walter Rodney



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