

South Africa

Class War not Race War

A Revolutionary Perspective on the Last Fifteen Years



Communist Workers Organisation Pamphlet No.4

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South Africa Today

Now for the Real

Struggle

The selection of articles we are republishing in this pamphlet were written over a period of 15 years starting in 1980. These years saw the growth of the political fight against apartheid regime. It also saw the continuation of structural changes in the South African economy. Taken together these produced a complex interaction of social forces within the country which, together with the external demands of Western imperialism, brought about the decline and collapse of the apartheid regime. Although the articles obviously do not predict the **details** of this process, their general predictions made as early as 1980 have proved extremely accurate and have been confirmed by the developments of the 90s.

Our argument that the black nationalists movement was entirely consistent with the needs of the South African capitalist regime stems from an analysis of the economy. The needs of the South African bourgeoisie could be clearly identified at the end of the 70s but it took a further 15 years to achieve them. During this period we have seen prevailing ideologies abandoned like worn-out shoes and new ones assumed because they seemed to fit. This process has continued since the ANC assumed power. What we have seen in South Africa illustrates the Marxist axiom that the real basis of society is its economic structure and it is here that its dynamic lies. Politics, ideology, morality and the rest are simply superstructures erected on this basis and reform of these superstructures is dictated by the needs of the economic foundation.

For the South African bourgeoisie it was necessary to reform the organisation of capitalist exploitation; it was necessary to introduce a new

political dispensation to do this and with this must come a new ideology. All these things are reforms within capitalism and illustrate the ability of capitalism, even in its present decadent phase, to introduce reforms when the demands of profit dictate this. When capitalism has pressing needs it finds organisations and actors to carry them through. In South Africa the only political organisation strong enough to bring about the abolition of apartheid was the Nationalist party and, despite the fact that it had made apartheid its platform since its foundation and had spent the years since 1949 building the system, this is what it did.

The only political force able to rescue South African capitalism from the crisis which it found itself was the African National Congress(ANC). The fact that the organisation was banned and its leadership in gaol simply meant that the process took time.

The subjective beliefs of the various actors in this process are not in the last analysis relevant as they are propelled into the roles which capitalism requires. Since the election the ANC's role for capitalism, which we identified in these articles, has become even clearer. Faced with budget constraints and the need to attract foreign capital, it has reacted like capitalist governments the world over. It has attacked the working class. The so-called "socialist" election promises have been forgotten. Strikes which broke out have been, as predicted, broken by the ANC. Whereas workers previously faced police violence, they now face more subtle ideological attacks. Overall workers are being told that now democracy has been achieved they should be prepared to

make sacrifices. Mandela called on steel workers to end their course of "resistance" which was a hangover from apartheid and embark on a course of "reconstruction," i.e. not to strike and to accept present conditions. ANC ministers have condemned strikes for scaring off foreign capitalist investment! A strike in the car plants was broken by making a concession to foreign capital and removing tariffs on imported parts. Skilled workers, such as the car workers, are now being told by the ANC that the relatively higher wages they receive are in some way responsible for the massive (50%) unemployment in the rest of the economy and pay demands are irresponsible.

The detested VAT on basic foodstuffs which the ANC promised to remove is still in force. The Reconstruction and Development Plan which was supposed to cater for the unemployed and homeless has produced virtually nothing. There are still 7 million homeless who when they occupy vacant property are evicted by the South African police who, of course, are now controlled by the ANC. Those in the townships who have been refusing to pay rents and other charges since the mid 80s have been informed that they must pay up after January 1995 or face eviction, i.e. the ANC is going to collect the rents which the apartheid regime, despite all its violence could not collect. None of this should surprise us at all. These are the actions of a capitalist government faced with the problems of capitalism.

The only reason the ANC government is installed is that it is better at solving these problems than the apartheid regime was. For the millions of workers who supported the ANC and the ANC-controlled unions all this is a rude awakening. The general political point made throughout all these articles is confirmed by these events but still needs restating. It is no longer a valid tactic for workers to support their national bourgeoisie in any way whatsoever. National liberation is today impossible and any support for the national bourgeoisie simply puts weapons in the hands of the bourgeoisie which they will not hesitate to use against the working class which supported them. Workers' blood has been shed to bring the ANC to power yet conditions remain fundamentally as before. Although

apartheid has gone capitalist exploitation remains. The cause of the wretched conditions of the working class was not apartheid, it was capitalism. The ANC are now the administrators of South African capitalism and they have been installed precisely to increase exploitation and restore profitability to the South African section of world capitalism.

This involves attacking the working class, and if workers have actually shed their blood to put the ANC in power it is even easier to attack them. If the working class had pursued its own struggle independent of the ANC, as advocated by the CWO, they would be in a much stronger position to resist the attacks of the new administrators of their exploitation. Future developments in SA can only further expose the ANC for what it is. However, as in Europe there is now a union structure in South Africa able to take a more radical position than that of the government. As in the metropolitan countries the unions are able to give credibility to the government though they pursue the same capitalist ideals. Thus a clear break with the ANC will not be easy to make for the majority of the working class. However, with the demise of apartheid the issues of class will become the dominant ones in South Africa. This means that the road for class unity between black and white is now more open than it has ever been before. **CP January 1995**

Workers link up across racial 'divide'

MASS STRIKES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Autumn 1981

For the past four months South Africa has been swept by a wave of class struggle and widespread revolt against the apartheid system. Over 50,000 workers have struck and whole townships have battled with the police. These battles have often involved street barricades, the burning of police vehicles, buses and cars, and the looting of foodshops. Over 60 people have been shot by the police.

THE STRIKES

The strikes represent the highest level of class struggle South Africa has experienced since the war. They have been far more organised and extensive than those of the last massive strike wave in 1973. They have seen, for the first time ever, Black and Coloured (mixed race) workers uniting in a major strike. This occurred in the Volkswagen strike and in the strikes at the other car factories, and indicates that the South African workers can overcome the divisions which the ruling class has imposed upon them through the apartheid system. Strikes which have occurred have generated sympathy strikes, particularly where workers have been victimised. Within a week the Volkswagen strike had spread to 11 other factories in the car producing town of Uitenhage. Similarly, in the Johannesburg municipal workers' strike, electricity workers struck in sympathy with power station workers who had been dismissed for striking. The strike then spread to dustmen and sewage workers and eventually 10,000 council workers were making it the biggest strike against a single employer in South Africa's history.

The strikes have also been actively supported by the communities in which workers live. For example, when 800 meat workers were dismissed for participating in a solidarity strike, an effective boycott of meat was organised throughout the townships of the Cape peninsula in support of their demand for their reinstatement. Similarly, a boycott of flour caused a flour company to re-employ 78 sacked workers.

All these strikes have, as is usual in South Africa, been illegal and subject to police harassment. However, in almost all cases workers have returned to work with pay

increases although these have been far below what they have demanded. The most notable exception was the Johannesburg municipal workers' strike which was broken by bussing out the strikers at gun point and importing scabs. Undoubtedly the single most significant advance of the strikes has been the unity of Black and Coloured workers which was achieved in the car plants.

However, despite the militancy and strength of the strike wave, class struggle in South Africa is vulnerable to two lines of attack from the ruling class. Firstly, that of directing the struggle into demands for unionisation and, secondly, directing it into the channels of African nationalism.

Unionisation:

Strategy of the Bosses

The progressive sectors of the South African ruling class are trying to help Black workers set up trade unions. These sectors, whose interests lie in mining and manufacturing, are supported in this aim by the European and American capitalists. The USA and the EEC have drawn up codes of conduct for firms operating in South Africa which, amongst other things, recommend recognition of Black trade unions. The three big motor companies, Volkswagen, Ford and General Motors, were amongst the first to recognise Black trade unions. They wish to see a stable, Black working class whose grievances are expressed by "responsible" unions. This is part of a wider aim, namely the ending of the apartheid system and the establishment of a Black capitalist class united to the White capitalists by their joint exploitation of the working class.

The government, which represents more reactionary interests, those of the farmers and the 55% of the economy controlled by the State, has resisted these aims because it understands that they must lead to the undermining of the whole apartheid system. The issue is not new. Black trade unions existed in the 1940's and by 1951 there were 1 million Black workers in trade unions. In 1953 a government

commission recommended that Black trade unions be recognised. Then, as now, the nationalist Government saw this as incompatible with White nationalism. Instead they decided to crush the Black unions and control the class struggle by naked force. In the 20 years between 1953 and 1973 the Black working class had more than doubled. The suddenness and violence of the 1973 strikes in Natal made even the Government realise that the existing system of open repression could not be continued. They have gradually been forced to concede on the unionisation issue. After the 1973 strike the Government introduced laws which enabled workers to be represented by "workers' liaison committees". These committees were to exist in each factory and be made up of representatives of workers and representatives of management. These committees were bosses agencies and nothing more than a clumsy attempt to prevent workers uniting across whole industries. Realising the hopelessness of this attempt to contain the class struggle the Government set up a commission to advise it. The commission recommended recognition of Black trade unions. At first the Government tried to exclude migrant workers, who make up 30% of the workforce, from the right to union recognition, but even on this they have conceded.

Earlier this year the racial colour bar on all jobs was lifted and Black unions permitted to apply for Government registration. This permits them to be represented on the industrial councils which determine wage levels and organise arbitration of disputes in each branch of industry.

There can be no doubt that the move to unionisation is being introduced by the capitalists to control and police the class struggle simply because the nineteenth century methods have failed.

The previous record of Black trade unions shows they have been just as anti-working class as the White unions. During the Second World War they agreed not to strike to help the war plans of the Government. The ruling class were thus able to fight the imperialist war with the help of the Black workers and then viciously crush the miners strike which erupted after the war was won. The present wave of strikes shows the new unions falling into the familiar role of bosses' policemen that we see in the rest of the world.

In those factories where the bosses have favoured unions the strikes have been far less violent than in those where they have stuck to the old system. In Durban where the bosses simply sacked 6,000 striking textile workers, the strikers rioted and attacked management buildings. Police had to use tear gas and baton charges to restore

order. Although the strike was eventually broken other employers were worried that the strike and the violence would spread to their factories. At the SASOL plant, which makes oil from coal, and in the Johannesburg council strike, the bosses tried to use the liaison committee system. At SASOL general intimidation of construction workers and the killing of one of them by the army sparked off riots, burning of vehicles and buildings and the death of a White man. The site became so tense that the whole workforce had to be sent home a day early with full pay. In the Johannesburg council strike the council tried to use a works committee and an "in-house" union, which the council itself created, instead of an independent union. Again the bosses' old methods failed and the strike had finally to be broken by force of police guns.

In contrast to this, where unions have been recognised, as in the car factories, there has been "order". Instead of trying to spread the strikes, the unions have called for responsibility, moderation and a return to work! When the Volkswagen workers came out the two unions involved urged their members "not to take part in an illegal dispute". When 11 other factories came out in sympathy the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) called for "all strikers to return to work except those employed by Volkswagen". The same organisations prevented Ford and General Motors workers from joining the strike when they were on the point of doing so. When Goodyear tyre workers bypassed the union to demand a 160% increase, which would have brought the rate to £1.60 per hour, the unions described this demand as "ridiculous"! When the Volkswagen strike was settled with a 27% increase, which brings the rate to 80p per hour, (workers were demanding £1.10) the International Metal Workers Federation in Geneva, which funds FOSATU, described this settlement as a "breakthrough for disciplined trade union action". Even in the Johannesburg municipal workers strike (which had as one of its demands trade union recognition), the union involved, instead of trying to spread the strike to other workers and politicise it, spent its time petitioning the law courts to restrain the police from beating its members and stealing their possessions. The leader of this union, for his pains, was finally arrested in the corridors of the supreme court and charged with sabotage - so much for the capitalists' respect for the law.

South African unions are trying to make a place for themselves in the capitalist system and this means proving themselves moderate and law abiding. It means proving themselves

to the bosses not to the workers. Nowhere is this clearer than in Port Elizabeth where Ford are paying Black workers to be shop stewards in order to contain the class struggle. Volkswagen and General Motors are so impressed with this idea that they will soon follow.

All the energy workers spend in struggling for unions is wasted. As these events prove, even before the unions are properly established they are working against the workers. When they are fully established they will be what the bosses want - shop floor police.

African Nationalism

Strategy of Tomorrow's Bosses

The guerrilla campaign of the African nationalists has been stepped up over the last year. Police stations have been attacked, Black policemen killed and oil installations at SASOL successfully bombed. Through these attacks on the State and their propaganda for Black rule the African nationalists have been able to infiltrate both the campaigns against apartheid and the class struggle.

In mid-April Coloured pupils started to boycott classes in protest at the appalling education they are given. The schools are so crowded that students are taught in shifts. The annual spending per Coloured student is £100 whereas for Whites the figure is £400. The amount spent per "African" student is £30. As happened in SOWETO in 1976 the boycott soon led to battles with the police and enormous bloodshed. The first response of the authorities was to arrest the African nationalists in the communities involved. This repression has only led to greater sympathy for the African nationalists and it is they who have gained most. The Government's plans for securing the Asian and Coloured peoples as allies against the Africans by means of a new constitution and a three tier parliament are in ruins. Even before the troubles in the Cape both groups had rejected the Government's plans because they made no provision for the Blacks. During the boycott both Black and Asian students supported the Coloureds, and the Coloured students took up the campaign for the release of the imprisoned African nationalist leader, Nelson Mandela.

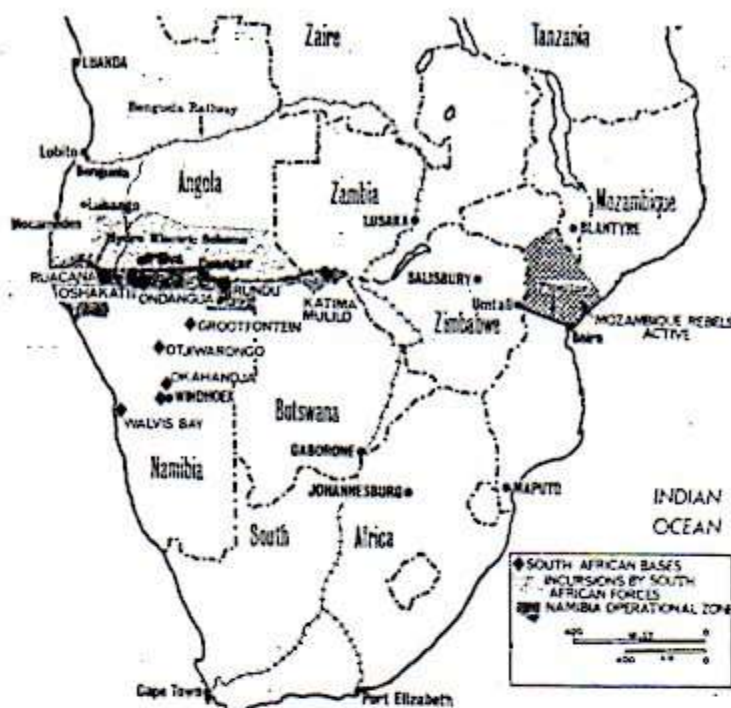
Without the intervention of communists to direct the class struggle against all forms of capitalism, the working class in South Africa will undoubtedly be misled into supporting the demands of one particular capitalist faction - the African nationalists.

On the anniversary of the SOWETO killings of 1976 the African nationalists called for a general strike just as they have done in previous years. Although this call was not taken up, in certain other strikes African nationalists have taken control. In a strike at the Ford car plant earlier this year, the trade unions were ignored and the strike run by the nationalists. In this way the nationalists are often able to succeed in preventing the class struggle of the Black workers. But as the events in Zimbabwe prove once again the only result of any successful nationalist struggle is a change in personnel of the ruling class. "National liberation" in Zimbabwe has meant that the repression of strikes, and the imposition of austerity, is organised by men with black faces instead of men with white faces. The Zimbabwean workers have gained nothing. There have been far more strikes since Mugabe's victory than in the three years before it and these strikes have only been met with calls for patience and harder work. The same occurred in Mozambique and Angola. Nationalist struggle is always the enemy of class struggle.

The Way Forward

The class struggle in South Africa needs both political independence and organisation apart from ruling class ideas of both left and right. As in Europe, the main barrier to effective organisation in South Africa is the trade unions. Effective organisation in struggles can only be achieved through elected strike committees in frequent communication with the workers they represent through mass meetings. Such strike committees are organisations with a real potential for linking up and spreading strikes because they do not have a permanent existence as reformist bodies like the unions. Each strike wave in South Africa is a potential surge forward for the South African working class. Their economic demands may not be won and their gains are eaten away rapidly by inflation - but each gain in confidence, each lesson learnt about the unions or the need for solidarity increases the possibility of advanced groups of workers organising around a communist perspective. And if the South African workers are not to suffer the same defeats at the hands of the trade unions as their European brothers and sisters have done in the past then their struggles must produce, directly or indirectly, a communist organisation. This communist organisation will give a political lead.

The South African working class struggle needs political direction in combatting the lies of African nationalism and uniting black, brown and white workers in a class struggle which understands its goal as world communism and the abolition of nation states. It needs organisation which will generalise struggle as widely as possible across racial divisions as well as across industrial and skill boundaries. This political direction can only be achieved, as elsewhere, when communists are in a position to lead the workers' struggles. This requires the formation of groups of communist workers, linked to a communist party, within the South African factories.



ANGOLA & NAMIBIA

The Butchers Prepare The Carve Up!

Autumn 1980

At the end of August South Africa invaded Southern Angola. Its troops advanced 100 miles into the country, systematically destroying both civilian and military installations. Ahead of the ground forces the S.A. Air Force bombed, rocketed and napalmed targets 250 miles inside the border. At the time of writing S.A. forces are still occupying 15,000 square miles of the country and appear to be carrying out a scorched earth policy, burning crops, killing herds, poisoning wells and shooting civilians as well as soldiers. All this is intended to destroy SWAPO (the South West African People's Organisation) which has been waging a guerrilla war against the S.A. administration in Namibia for the past 15 years. This section of the country has not seen such devastation since 3 years ago when the Angolan Army, together with their Cuban allies, carried out similar measures in the area to the east. Then the measures were to destroy UNITA, the "liberation" group backed by South Africa and opposed to the ruling MPLA.

South Africa has invaded Angola many times since the end of its civil war in 1975 but the present invasion is on a larger scale than any of them. In their attempt to cripple SWAPO, the South African forces are destroying everything which could support it. This includes towns, communications, the Angolan Army and particularly the radar and anti-aircraft stations which are being built in the towns of Cahama, Chibemba, Mocamedes and Lubango. A second objective is to re-establish the power of UNITA which has been practically wiped out by the

Angolan Army and the Cubans. They aim to use UNITA to police the southern strip of the country and thus prevent SWAPO infiltration to Namibia.

Namibia and South Africa

The territory of Namibia was seized by German imperialism in the 1880's. During the 1914-18 war South Africa conquered it on behalf of British imperialism and, as a reward, was given it on a mandate by the League of Nations. After World War Two she demanded the right to take over the country. After arguing about this for 26 years the United Nations declared, in 1971, that Namibia was independent and South Africa's occupation illegal.

The collapse of the Portuguese Empire in the early 70's led to the advance of Russian imperialist interests in this area - particularly in the ex-colonies of Mozambique and Angola. Western imperialism rapidly realised that if its interests were to be safeguarded a more stable political structure must be built in Southern Africa. A first step towards this meant the replacement of white minority governments with black majority ones which would be better able to guarantee capitalist exploitation. They forced South Africa to bring about the downfall of the Smith regime in Rhodesia and to start moves towards an internationally acceptable "independence" for Namibia.

Turnhalle

South Africa had previously been trying to cobble together a puppet administration based on an ethnic constitution. This constitution, cooked up at the Turnhalle conference, was to give each tribal group (including the whites) the chance to vote for ethnic, rather than political, representatives. The end result was to be an administration in which liberal whites and anti-SWAPO blacks held power. With an administration based on the Turnhalle constitution in power, South Africa would be able to control the country economically while the local army held the line against SWAPO. South Africa would be in a position to assist the army from the enclave of territory around Walvis Bay which South Africa claims as her own.

Western Pressure

In 1978, as a result of pressure from the 5 major powers of the Western bloc - the so-called contact group - South Africa shelved these plans and agreed to move towards U.N.-supervised "free elections". Pretoria still imagined that it could manipulate the elections to bring the stooges to power. The election of Mugabe in Zimbabwe shattered this illusion. When Pretoria realised that "free elections" would bring SWAPO to power it began to resist the pressures of the contact group, and in January this year it scuttled the Geneva conference aimed at preparing for independence elections. In the same month they introduced compulsory military call-up in order to get recruits for the new Namibian Army. This resulted in a further polarisation as 5,000 teenagers fled north to join SWAPO rather than be drafted. At the same time the administration began handing over more power to the Turnhalle assembly.

The Carrot and the Stick

The latest invasion is part of the South African government's policy of carrot and stick. Whilst offering trade links with Black Africa it also frequently violates these countries' 'sovereignty' to smash the bases of the guerrillas of the African National Council (ANC) and it supports anti-government guerrillas in both Lesotho and Mozambique. This carrot and stick policy is not the product of any overall masterplan of the South African ruling class but a result of the divisions within it. The South African ruling class is divided into a minority of hardliners and the so-called verligte (or "enlightened") leadership. The "enlightened" elements have seen that white domination in future depends on a few concessions where the hardliners want no concessions to either Black African youth in Soweto or Black African states north of the Limpopo. The problem for the South African ruling class is further complicated by the change in the U.S. government.

Whilst Carter tried to defeat the Russians by propaganda about human rights South Africa was a liability to his imperialist strategy. Reagan has made it clear that part of the new tough line against "Soviet expansionism" is support for the white minority in South Africa. The South African ruling class has never had a better chance to reach a solution in Namibia favourable to their interests if they can achieve it whilst Reagan is still around. That's where the present invasion of Angola comes in.

Angola

Angola, with a population of 7.1 million, is potentially the third richest country in Africa. It possesses oil, diamonds, iron ore and has a climate in which maize, sugar, coffee and cotton thrive. Yet, as we wrote in 1975, in *Workers' Voice* 17 (old series), "this natural paradise has been turned into an inferno by capitalism". The population, apart from the top party bosses, lives in desperate poverty, suffers continual food shortages, savage exploitation and war.

The MPLA, which won the civil war with Russian guns and Cuban troops, came to power with a pro-Russian outlook. It claimed to be "socialist" and "Marxist". It soon proved that by socialism it meant state capitalism and by Marxism it meant a new organisation and propaganda for exploiting the peasantry as well as the industrial and rural workers. In other words, its ideas of socialism and Marxism were just as perverted as Moscow's.

As soon as black bosses were organising exploitation the MPLA demanded that the workers work harder, make sacrifices and never strike. It met the wave of strikes at 'independence' by militarising striking dockers, and crushing strikes of railway, building and plantation workers. To create "socialism" it nationalised the banks and took a majority in most foreign industry. It now runs 80% of all industry. In agriculture it nationalised those estates abandoned by the Portuguese after 'independence'. Agricultural production is now organised through a system of committees. These are designed to pass on government instructions, quotas for the 5 year plan, etc., and to encourage agricultural workers and peasants to assist their rulers in organising their own exploitation. To aid this capitalist reconstruction the Eastern bloc has drafted in Cuban and East German advisers who have filled many of the technical and administrative jobs previously done by the 2 million Portuguese who fled.

Russia has been granted unlimited fishing and in compensation is required to give Angola 12% of the catch. It was recently reported that in the capital, Luanda, one fish costs £60, the equivalent of 1 month's wages for a worker. With production only one fifth of pre-'independence' the MPLA has soon discovered that although the Eastern bloc could provide guns, it

could provide little else and that Angola must turn to the West for reconstruction. Far from being liberated, the country faced the choice of being exploited by Eastern or Western imperialism. At the moment the Angolan working class is being milked by both!

In July 1979 President Neto, after condemning "those who seek to re-establish our subordination to capitalism", unveiled his plans for going over to the U.S. bloc by attracting Western capital into Angola. His plans included repatriation of profits, exemption from tax and customs' duties and guarantees of compensation in the event of nationalisation. The South African diamond company, De Beers, was called in to re-organise and revive the diamond industry. Oil exploration concessions have been given to Western oil companies, including Gulf, Total, Elf, Mobil and Agip. Western capital has also started to flow in. For example, tyre factories and a Land Rover assembly plant have been established and contracts for others have been given to Boeing, General Electric and Beditel. 80% of Angola's trade is now with the West. It's not surprising that the Western bloc, with the exception of the U.S., was quick to condemn the South African invasion.

But the main aim of the South African plan has already been achieved. The Angolan state can't afford either politically or economically another round of devastation and so is prepared to do a deal with South Africa in which it will ditch SWAPO, agree to South Africa's ethnic constitution for Namibia and allow South Africa to hold Namibia's only port at Walvis Bay. The only reason the South African government hasn't agreed to the deal already is that it thinks it can win still more concessions to show to the hardliners. One thing is certain. The real victor of any settlement in Namibia will be U.S. imperialism which will have managed to get its strongest ally in southern Africa out of a costly war over a bankrupt desert area and have consolidated the economic hold of Western imperialism over another so-called "liberated" state - Angola.

Workers' Answer:

Revolutionary Defeatism

The bloodshed and destruction in Angola is a proxy war between Eastern and Western imperialism. It is a battle between capitalist factions about who is to exploit the workers of the area.

The British Stalinists and Trotskyists cry "Defend the Angolan Revolution". Since they too think that socialism equals state capitalism in which they are the new bosses, they call on workers to die for the MPLA regime. By this call they prove they are anti-working class. Neither the state capitalist regime in Angola nor the monopoly capitalist regime in South Africa is worth one drop of workers' blood. The only independent course workers in South Africa and Angola can take is to oppose this war with revolutionary defeatism. This means carrying on the class struggle despite the war, spreading defeatist propaganda amongst the armies, telling the Cuban soldiers they have no interest in fighting for bosses in Angola or Moscow, starting mutinies and finally turning their guns against their officers.

The primary task for workers in both South Africa and Angola remains the building of a communist vanguard able to speak clearly and act decisively in the interests of the working class, interests which are the same in South Africa and Angola as elsewhere. The only solution to the problems of southern Africa is the world communist revolution to create a society where the natural resources of this rich area will be used to the full and where the horrors of the barbarism which capitalism has inflicted on it will be just a nightmare of the past. ●

Southern Africa's Truce Means More Imperialist War

Nov. 1984

In mid-March South Africa signed a non-aggression treaty with her eastern neighbour, so-called marxist Mozambique. This treaty binds each state to prevent guerrilla attacks being launched on the other from its territory. A month earlier South Africa negotiated a cease fire and troop withdrawal agreement with its north-western neighbour, Angola. This followed the latest South African invasion of the southern part of the country in January this year. As the same time the South African regime has offered to hold a conference on Namibia which would, for the first time, include direct negotiations with SWAPO (South West African People's Organisation) and it has released a number of prominent SWAPO prisoners from its gaols.

WESTERN IMPERIALISM

The events in southern Africa, like those elsewhere, can only be understood in the context of the struggle between Western and Soviet imperialism. Western imperialism wants Russian influence eliminated from the region for obvious economic and strategic reasons, and realises that in the short term this means settling the Namibian question. After the US sponsored settlement in Zimbabwe which has clearly been in US interests it seeks a similar deal in Namibia, and hopes that such a deal can be linked to the removal of Cuban troops from Angola. In the longer term it realises that the anachronism of apartheid must be abolished and replaced with normal capitalist relations of exploitation such as exist in the surrounding states. Failure to achieve this will entail a long and costly guerrilla war in South Africa with the main liberation movement, the ANC (African National Congress) which would endanger the West's enormous investments in South Africa. It would also endanger the West's strategic interests since the ANC is backed by Moscow and has close links with the SACP (the so-called Communist Party). At present a policy of "independence" for Namibia has been adopted while the longer term issue of reform within South Africa is being postponed and the surrounding areas are being forced to withhold support for the ANC.

After the Zimbabwe settlement which the South African government, acting as the agent of the US, forced on the Smith regime, the last buffer state to the north disappeared. South Africa's previous policy of 'non-interference' and isolation had to be reassessed. To replace this the regime devised a regional policy whereby it attempted to use its economic strength to force its neighbours to refuse bases to the ANC and to hold the line in Namibia

until SWAPO could be bludgeoned into accepting an ethnic constitution, i.e. one which would prevent it holding power. South Africa tried to get its neighbours to join a regional economic union, the proposed "Constellation of States" with reduced customs tariffs and a central development bank offering cheap loans - to be largely funded by South Africa. These plans were frustrated: the guerrilla war intensified and South Africa's neighbours formed an alternative economic organisation, the SADCC (Southern African Development Coordination Conference). With the collapse of these plans South Africa applied both military and economic pressure on its neighbours. The present treaties and truces are the direct result of this. Following the methods adopted by the US in Central America, local resistance movements were trained, armed and ferried into neighbouring countries. The Angolan UNITA movement, the Mozambique MRM, the Lesotho Liberation Army and the dissident movement in Zimbabwe are examples of the organisations used by South Africa. In addition the South African armed forces have continued to invade and occupy Angola and raid other neighbouring states, notably Lesotho and Mozambique.

This pressure has brought South Africa's neighbours to their knees. The economies of Angola and Mozambique have all but collapsed and states such as Lesotho have already capitulated and expelled ANC members as demanded by the South African regime. The cost for South Africa has, however, been high. Both the South African prime minister, described the Namibian war as an "economic millstone round our necks" and appealed for the Western bloc countries to assist in financing it. The cost is estimated at approximately £600m annually. This, of course, doesn't include the costs of subversion in Mozambique and elsewhere. A further burden on the economy is caused by the fact that South African troops are conscripts who have to be released from productive employment for three month periods of service every 18 months. Also the casualties are becoming much higher. More men were lost in the recent invasion of Angola than ever before; in addition South Africa also lost aircraft for the first time.

Politically South Africa feels more able to make concessions over Namibia than before. Its ability to control so-called marxist states on its borders has made it less fearful of a SWAPO victory in Namibia. In addition, the forces of the extreme right within South Africa have been proved much weaker than previously thought. This was

shown in the "Whites only" referendum in November 83 over a new constitution which envisages sharing power with Asian and Coloured (mixed race) people. These reform proposals received the backing of over $\frac{2}{3}$ of white voters. All these factors have led the South African government to think that the present is a good time for settling the Namibian question.

SOVIET IMPERIALISM

Russian imperialism has been faced with the choice of drastically stepping up intervention to counter South African subversion or reaching a compromise. The drift of its former clients, Mozambique and Angola, back to US imperialism and the enormous cost of supporting these regimes has persuaded it to compromise. Conditions in Mozambique and Angola are appalling. The activity of the South African sponsored guerrillas combined with a severe drought has caused complete breakdown of the economy in large areas and the threat of national bankruptcy. It is estimated that 100,000 Mozambiquans have died of starvation and another 100,000 have fled as refugees to Zimbabwe. Relief supplies cannot get through as railways and roads are cut. Conditions in Angola are just as bad, despite the country's vast resources. In addition to their other burdens the Angolans have to find hard currency to pay the 20,000 Cuban troops with. It is hardly surprising that during the last few years both countries have been making overtures to the West in the hope of attracting Western capital.

The present treaty and ceasefire means that these states will have to ditch the liberation movements they have been supporting. There is little doubt that this is precisely what they intend to do. Mozambique's foreign minister recently declared that the ANC must accept the "principle of peaceful negotiation with South Africa".

THE MYTH OF NATIONAL LIBERATION

Recent events in southern Africa illustrate that countries which have gained formal independence from the colonial powers are quite unable to become independent of imperialism. Their economic and military dependence on one or other imperialist bloc shows they are not independent at all. Despite the enormous bloodshed and destruction of the national wars in Mozambique and Angola conditions for the working class and indeed the majority of the population remain worse than in colonial times. This in turn illustrates the general political point that today, as far as the working class is concerned, a successful national struggle succeeds only in changing the imperialist power to which the nation is subject. Where - as in the last century national struggles

were able to develop indigenous capital, capitalise agriculture, unify the nation and make proletarians out of the peasantry, and were therefore progressive, today this is not possible. Such struggles today are essentially inter-imperialist ones in which the working class is inevitably massacred fighting for one or other capitalist faction. The side which wins is forced by economic circumstances to impose increased oppression and exploitation - as the Luanda dock workers found at the hands of the MPLA in 1976. Like everywhere else today, the only progressive force capable of developing in the area is that of proletarian internationalism. Once the working masses in southern Africa learn that their interests lie with their class brothers and sisters in the rest of the world - whatever their nationality or skin colour - then the reactionary forces of black nationalism and white racism, not to mention world imperialism will have a real fight on their hands●

THE OTHER MINERS STRIKE

SOUTH AFRICA IN TURMOIL

April 1984

Introduction

Throughout the world the capitalist economic crisis is wreaking havoc on the myths of the post-war period of reconstruction. The myth of the "consumer society" has already bitten the dust in the advanced capitalist metropolises. But the myth of economic development has also crumbled, and nowhere more so than in the partly industrialised peripheral areas of capitalism - in Brazil, in Iran and in South Africa. The class struggle in these areas faces particular problems: so-called "anti-imperialism", as well as ethnic and racial divisions, and the minority nature of the proletariat. Communists cannot shrug off these problems and argue that their solution is automatically found on the great day that the proletariat of the capitalist heartlands moves. The beginnings of the proletarian revolution are quite conceivable in the countries of the semi-developed periphery. Communists must therefore attack constantly the nationalist and leftist illusions which largely dominate political existence there, and show concretely what a communist minority would do in such areas.

The case of South Africa is particularly compelling. Lately huge social upheavals, with a large proletarian admixture, have occurred against a backdrop of severe economic crisis. The following article elaborates the revolutionary position on these events.



The last two months have seen a fresh explosion of violence in South Africa. This has occurred on three separate fronts. Firstly the election of coloured (mixed race) and Indian deputies for the new parliamentary chambers, secondly resistance to rises in rent and transport costs in the African townships, and thirdly a strike

by black mineworkers. The elections have led to over a thousand arrests and detentions. The riots in the townships, which continue as we go to press, have so far led to 85 deaths and hundreds of injured, and the strike in the gold mines led to the deaths of 9 striking miners and 500 seriously hurt. There are now an estimated 2 million unemployed and the steady fall in the price of gold is causing balance of payments problems. In addition the country is saddled with vast military expenditure financing its war in Namibia which costs £600 million annually, and supporting guerrilla movements in Angola, Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

All these events have a common cause whose root springs from the capitalist economic crisis and the pressures which capitalist development is itself exerting on the out-moded organisation of exploitation which exists in the country.

THE ELECTIONS

The government is imposing a new constitution on the country. Instead of the previous whites only parliament, a new 3 chamber parliament has been set up; one chamber for whites (178 seats), one for coloureds (85 seats) and one for Indians (45 seats). The coloured and Indian chambers have no real power, and the black majority, who number 19 million and constitute 75% of the population is totally excluded from the new set up. The new constitution is in reality a crude attempt by the Govt to recruit the coloured and Indian populations as allies against the black majority, and the majority of the coloured and Indian people realise this. During the elections a successful multi-racial boycott campaign was conducted, which, despite beatings and imprisonment of its leaders led to abysmally low polls: - 18% and 16% of those eligible to vote voted in the coloured and Indian elections respectively.

What was missing in this campaign was a communist presence. The task of revolutionaries would have been to have supported the campaign for a boycott of the elections, and to have combined this with an attack on parliamentary cretinism in general (see the article in this paper on Democracy and Communism) aimed at the Indian and coloured workers. Instead the campaign has been recuperated by the Indian and coloured bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie in their campaign for a "more democratic" system of exploitation.

THE TOWNSHIPS

The situation in the townships has again become critical for the Gvt. These townships are supposed, in apartheid theory, to provide temporary accommodation for black migrant workers who are temporarily selling their labour power in the industrial centres. In reality these are enormous cities with permanent populations. Soweto alone has a population of over 1½ million, and these cities cannot be run without the cooperation of the people who live in them. Over the last 10 years the Gvt has been attempting to set up elected bodies to help run these townships, but with little success. Often they have even failed to find candidates to stand for election and the poll has been under 1%. The blacks who enter the management structure of the townships are seen as traitors.

The costs of running these cities, however, continues to rise and the workers living there have to foot the bill. At the same time, in common with workers worldwide, their wages are being held down. The latest round of rent, tax and transport rises detonated a new explosion of resistance in the townships of the Witwatersrand industrial area. The immediate targets of resentment were members of the town councils and black policemen many of whom were killed by demonstrators. The government minister in charge of the townships, attempting to clean up S.A.'s public image, tried to visit the townships himself and calm things down but was forced to retreat by helicopter. For the first time ever the police have had to call in the army to maintain order in the townships. But the weakness of this spontaneous movement was seen in the separation of its aims from those of the miners. The indigenous black proletariat of South Africa has largely abandoned work in the mines for less dangerous work in the factories and service industries which are better paid. Miners, often from Mozambique, Lesotho etc, form a sub-proletariat. Again the lack of a communist force, capable of formulating demands and strategy to link the separate struggles, was cruelly exposed.

THE MINERS STRIKE

Black miners are mostly migrant workers recruited from the so called "homelands" and the neighbouring states. There are approximately 400 000 migrant workers in the gold mines

alone. They are recruited for fixed contracts usually annual, then sent home. They work 6 and often 7 days a week and live in appalling conditions in the mine compounds. Rates of pay are extremely low - approx £30 per week. Miners were demanding a 25% rise. Their union, the newly formed NUM, had taken the dispute through the elaborate official machinery of industrial councils and conciliation boards and the strike was official. After only one day the bosses increased their offer from 14 to 16% and the union called off the strike. The mine owners were delighted at the role of the union and Anglo-American, which led the way in fostering the black 'National Union of Mineworkers' urged other mining houses to follow their lead and recognise the union. Many workers, however, were not satisfied at this settlement and in addition demanded guaranteed rights to employment since on returning from visits to their families workers often find they have been replaced by fresh recruits. In response to the refusal of many thousands of miners to return to work the bosses called in the police who shot 9 miners dead and wounded 450 most of whom had to be admitted to hospital. In explaining this the bosses used exactly the same words as Thatcher & Co use here. The police were, "protecting miners right to work" and the trouble was "caused by intimidators!"

The role of the National Union of Miners in this strike should be a salutary lesson. Concerned with gaining negotiating and recruitment rights, it acted as a force controlling the explosion of class hatred, a role which the more far-sighted bosses see it performing more widely in the future. This clearly re-enforces our position that, irrespective of whether they are integrated into the state or not, unions today act everywhere in the interests of controlling the class struggle and deflecting it into channels safe for capitalism. Communists in this strike would have been calling for election of strike committees and mass picketing (only a minority of workers struck), as well as trying to generalise the fight into one over housing, mobility, etc.

These events are symptomatic of a more general crisis in the organisation of capitalist exploitation in S.A. and the battles being fought amongst the S.A. ruling class.

APARTHEID MYTHS

The industrial capitalists have opposed apartheid since the nationalist gvt introduced it in the 1950s, for the simple reason that it restricted their supply of labour and their use of this labour for skilled jobs. It never represented the interests of the industrial capitalists, though in the boom period following the war it was an evil they could live with. However, in the 40 years since the war the weight of the African proletariat has increased enormously. In 1955 there were 500 000 black workers, today there are approximately 6½ million, and the archaic organisation of this black proletariat is threatening capital accumulation itself.

Today the programme of the S.A. industrial capitalists is to create a permanent black proletariat with the normal union apparatus, such as exists in Europe, and they wish to bring in black workers to do jobs reserved for whites - at lower rates of course. The system of migrant labour must go. In addition they want to stabilise the townships and are prepared to pay to do this. They wish to allow workers to buy their own houses, to create a black middle class and help the African capitalists by means of cheap loans etc. In other words they wish to forge a class alliance with the rising African capitalists and scrap the official racial alliances which are no longer of any use. An example of their attempts to do this is their creation of the "Urban Foundation" which they set up after the Soweto riots of 1976. It was set up, as its president declared to "foster the emergence of a black middle class and greater stability in our urban societies." Since its creation it has provided loans for such things as the electrification of Soweto and the construction of schools and hospitals in the townships. It has also attempted, unsuccessfully to persuade the gvt to allow Africans to own land in the townships.

In the longer term this programme means sharing power with the black majority and this they are prepared to do. This is shown by the support of the mining houses, for example, for the liberal "Progressive" party. They wish to do these things which entail abolishing apartheid because in the longer term it is the only way their profits can be secured. This, of course, is also the opinion of the American & European capitalists who own approximately 1/3 of the capital invested there.

The overall interests of the western bloc require such a change. South Africa is vital to the strategic interests of US imperialism (astride one of the world's main shipping lanes and with a virtual monopoly of certain strategic minerals). The stabilisation of South Africa, and a modernisation of its system of exploitation is thus needed. But to achieve it will be extremely difficult, without untold social convulsions and the opening of the possibility of increasing Russian influence. The situation in South Africa is most likely to "mark time" until a world war, or proletarian revolution.



Goldminers - already having to strike against the unions to fight for their interests

The nationalist government is utterly unable to carry through such a programme, though it realises, since it controls 55% of the economy, that change is necessary. Recent years have seen it allying itself with the industrial capitalists more openly through such measures as its support for the creation of black trade unions, turning a blind eye to violations of its labour laws and siding with the mine bosses against the white miners when they struck to prevent black worker advancement. Its attempts to defuse the situation have finally crystallised in the ridiculous constitutional changes which came into effect in September and fool no one.

THE FUTURE

The S.African working class who number 8 million are the biggest industrial proletariat in Africa and will be crucial in the future struggles for communism. The present divisions in the working class are rooted in the way capitalism has developed in the country and are continually being exploited by the bosses to prevent workers understanding their position in class terms. Objectively white workers have far more in common with their black class brothers than with white capitalists. As elsewhere the real divisions in S.A. are class divisions not racial ones. The racial divisions which exist for historical and social reasons are used by the capitalist class when it suits them.

It is for this that the Afrikaner nationalists of the present gvt and the African nationalists are preparing. Such a war would involve tremendous bloodshed amongst workers and would not benefit them. Even if the African nationalists came to power and introduced a thoroughgoing system of state capitalism as they propose, benefits for the black workers would be minimal. Workers in Zimbabwe, Angola and Mozambique have already discovered this.

The class struggle in S.Africa needs to be given political direction in combatting the lies of the Afrikaner and African nationalists and uniting black, brown and white workers in a single struggle for communism. For this it is necessary for communists in S.A. to form a communist organisation to intervene in the future struggles of the workers, and to link up with communists in Europe.

NATIONALISM & IMPERIALISM ENEMIES OF THE WORKING CLASS

May 1985

The massacre by South African police of 43 blacks at Langa was only one of many similar events which have been occurring continuously throughout the last seven months. Within this period, according to the government's own figures, its police have shot dead over 200 people. The failure of the regime to stabilise the situation despite brutal repression on this scale, illustrates the extent to which the capitalist economic crisis is tearing the social structure to bits. Unemployment and short time working are throwing masses of people into widespread social struggle. The present turmoil is bringing far more sections into struggle than was the case in Soweto 1976, and the struggle is far more widespread. The general current of this struggle is nationalist and aims to elevate the black bourgeoisie to power, and to replace the outmoded "apartheid" organisation of capitalist exploitation by the liberal democratic method - as exists in Europe. Within this struggle, however, there is a strong working class current and it is vital that this current finds a communist voice and separates itself from the african nationalists - otherwise south african workers will be used as cannon fodder in a racial war serving the interests of the bourgeoisie and imperialism.

WORKERS AND THE STRUGGLE

The two main centres of recent unrest have been the Crossroads squatter camp outside Capetown, which contains 65000 people who are mostly workers from the cape peninsula and the Eastern cape region which is the centre of the motor industry. Both areas are affected by massive unemployment resulting from sharp cutbacks in government spending caused by the low gold price, the cost of the war in Angola and the funding of guerrilla organisations in neighbouring states. The slowdown in industries, such as building, has thrown tens of thousands of workers onto the streets. The more capitalised industries have also suffered, and the car industry is fairly typical. The main manufacturers in the Eastern Cape, General Motors, Ford & Volkswagen are all working 3 day weeks and have sacked thousands of workers.

Workers who are unemployed get no unemployment relief and their desperate condition fuels the unrest. It has been in areas where the crisis is hitting hardest that there has been the most unrest. Those workers with jobs have also shown they were prepared to strike in support of wider political aims - despite the consideration that striking often leads to strikers being sacked. Strikes of this nature occurred in the car plants at Uitenhage where the trade unions called a one day strike, which took place on the day of the Langa massacre and which was in protest at the banning of a funeral for those gunned down the week before. A similar strike was the successful 2 day general strike in the Transvaal against rent increases. The danger facing these class actions is that they will be channelled into the general stream of African nationalism.

The fundamental conflicts within South African society are class conflicts: these will remain even if power passes to the aspiring black bourgeoisie. The lot of the working class will not be fundamentally improved as is illustrated by events in Zimbabwe, where strikes are crushed and their leaders and trade unionists imprisoned under the infamous 'Emergency Powers' laws of the Smith regime, laws which the black bourgeoisie finds most useful in dealing with the class struggle. Pay and conditions are as bad as under Smith. Victory for african nationalism in Zimbabwe has benefitted only the black bourgeoisie who have given themselves the spoils of power - high salaries, the best housing, private schools for their children and various other privileges. The gains for the workers, and the peasantry are negligible.

THE IMPERIALIST DIMENSION

S. Africa is strategically vital to western imperialism and acts as its policeman in southern africa. Its primary role is to prevent Russian gains in this area of the continent. It is to this end that U. S. policy is ultimately directed. The treaties which S. Africa has signed with

Mozambique (Nkomati accords) and with Angola (Lusaka agreement) were directed at driving out Russian influence and dictated to S. Africa by the US. Since the Nkomati accords the US has granted Mozambique \$1M of military aid and restored diplomatic relations while in Angola it has achieved an undertaking to withdraw some of the Cuban troops.

S. Africa's flagrant violations of both treaties and endless procrastination over Namibian independence has once again raised the possibility of renewed Russian gains in the area. This has led to a fresh intervention by the US resulting in the withdrawal of S. A. troops from Angola, and ambiguous moves towards independence in Namibia, also officers in the S. A. defence forces have been officially 'disciplined' for continuing to supply the Mozambique resistance movement.

It is, however, vital for the West to stabilise the internal situation in S. A. and modernise its system of exploitation, otherwise western imperialism could be faced with another situation like Iran 1979. The options facing western imperialism are basically these; firstly for the S. A. bourgeoisie to institute a process of reform leading to majority rule; secondly to see majority rule come about by military victory of the african nationalists; thirdly to introduce limited reforms and keep the situation as it is by coupling this with savage repression. The first option is not at present possible and US imperialism will not tolerate military victory of the nationalists. This is because the African National Congress (ANC) the main guerrilla organisation is backed by Russian imperialism and a military victory would be coupled with an enormous increase in Russian influence in the area. The third option therefore appears the only alternative and it is this that we are seeing at present.

Thus, whatever happens the national struggle will develop along the lines dictated by world imperialism and will be fought for the interests of imperialism, just as in the neighbouring countries or S. E. Asia. This is an inevitable result of the division of the world between two imperialist blocks. Such a struggle can never benefit the working class and is not worth a drop of workers blood.

CLASS RESPONSE

As the turmoil in S. A. increases and the bourgeoisie have less room to manoeuvre, workers should exploit the regime's weakness for improvement of their conditions and abolition of the oppressive apartheid laws.

However, they should separate themselves politically from the nationalists and should condemn them for their capitalist programme including the so called 'socialist' aims which are simply state capitalist aims. Workers should put forward their own programme - the communist programme - calling for unity of workers of all races against the bosses and against capitalism in all its forms, for united action with their international class brothers for the communist revolution.

CLASS STRUGGLE NOT NATIONAL STRUGGLE

July 1985

Over the last two months mass resistance to the South African regime, accompanied by police carnage, has continued without interruption. According to the minister of law and order 140 people have been killed, since the Langa massacre, in the Eastern Cape alone.

Within the townships popular ferment is steadily destroying the administration structures imposed by the government. Members of the town councils and africans recruited to the police have been forced to resign or killed. In a recent election for the town council of Lekoa, which controls Sharpville and Sebokeng, not a single candidate could be found. Throughout S. A. 375 vacancies now exist on town and community councils. At the same time there have been fresh outbreaks of class struggle which pose a more serious threat to the regime.

Strikes in the Mines

A wildcat strike erupted at two gold mines in April after shop stewards were forced to leave the mines at gunpoint. This strike, like most in S. A. was illegal and met with the usual violent repression. It was defeated by the sacking of 1600 strikers, flushing them out of the mine hostels, which they refused to

leave, with tear gas and rubber bullets and bussing them back to their so-called "homelands." The bitterness amongst miners is shown by the fact that this strike erupted despite the massive repression which the bosses have always used, (last September 9 striking miners were shot dead) and despite the fact that with today's 25% unemployment it is fairly easy for them to recruit fresh workers.

Throughout the goldfields miners are demanding a 40% rise and there is a mood of seething discontent, however, despite this the miners union, the NUM, didn't lift a finger to protect its members against this outrage. This is a further illustration of how the new unions are already acting against the workers.

A successful strike on the mines could, however, bring the regime to its knees in a matter of weeks. In what follows we wish to look in more detail at the relationship between the class struggle and the nationalist forces at work in S.A. and the way forward for the working class.

The Real Conflicts

In Workers Voice Nos 19 & 22 we pointed out that the fundamental conflicts in S.A. are class ones and showed that today's intensification of struggle stemmed primarily from the deepening of the world capitalist crisis. The key forces at work within this struggle are:-

- 1) The local needs of capitalism in the country
- 2) The global interests of imperialism and
- 3) The resistance of the working class to deteriorating conditions.

Firstly, the S.A. bourgeoisie and western imperialism need urgently to scrap the outdated and costly organisation of capitalist exploitation (apartheid and the migrant labour system), in order to increase profit rates and stabilise the situation. However, to do this without transferring power to the african nationalists will be extremely difficult.

Secondly because the area is of vital strategic importance to western imperialism the global interests of imperialism play a major part in determining events. Since the african nationalists are backed by Moscow their coming to power would mean increased gains for Russian imperialism in the region. This is something the west will not tolerate & consequently it backs the regime.

Thirdly the working class struggle against the effects of capitalism is politically unformed and is at present subordinated to the broad nationalist movement. It is, however, the movement's real source of strength and an important factor determining the actions of both the nationalists and the S.A. bourgeoisie.

The African Nationalist Movement

The african nationalist movement has, from its foundation, been petty bourgeois. The African National Congress, the oldest and largest nationalist organisation, was founded in 1912 in response to the exclusion of blacks from the post Boer war settlement which resulted in the Union of S.A. in 1910. This settlement was designed to enable capitalism to expand freely and in particular to provide a supply of cheap labour. This meant destroying the remnants of the tribal economies and driving africans off their land and into the cities where they would become wage labourers. This was done by taxing them and taking their lands from them. The "native land bill" of 1913, for example, took all the land in S.A. from the blacks apart from the reserved lands (7.3% of the country). To accomplish this the capitalist class required the exclusion of africans from political power. Resistance to this process led to the formation of the ANC, and its original support came from the tribal chiefs. It aimed to reverse these attacks by securing a voice in parliament and attempted to accomplish this by exerting moral pressure on the government. In the early years it sent deputations to the British king and to Westminster begging British imperialism, which was making enormous profits in S.A., to honour its promises and take up the african cause.

As more africans were integrated into the capitalist economy as workers the basis of the ANC support changed, and in the early 20s trade unions became linked to it. Also attracted to its standard were liberals and the S.A. Communist Party. Both have remained uneasy bedfellows ever since. The ANC's aims, however, remained those of liberal reform, and the tactic of moral pressure was, during the 20s and 30s supplemented by collaboration in government created structures such as the "Native Representative Councils."

The second world war clearly revealed the anti working class consequences of the ANC's petty bourgeois politics. The organisation supported British imperialism and urged workers not to strike and to support the war effort. A tragic result of this was the demoralising defeat of the African mineworkers strike in 1946. Instead of striking during the war, when the bosses were weakest, as the miners wanted, the African Mineworkers Union, which was created by the ANC, postponed the strike until the war was over and the bosses were prepared.

In the reconstruction period following the war the organisation's influence began to increase

once more. Impressed by Ghandi's success in India, the ANC organised a series of passive resistance campaigns over apartheid and the pass system - the system of identity documents which all Africans were forced to carry. These campaigns, which lasted until 1961, met with progressively harsher repression, and proved utterly ineffectual.

In 1955 the ANC crystalised its aims in the "Freedom Charter". Liberal aims such as equality, freedom, democracy etc. were spiced with a few state capitalist ones, such as, nationalisation of the mines, monopoly industry and the banks. However, impatience with the liberal pacifist leadership of the ANC had been building up and this led in 1958 to a split which saw the creation of a new nationalist grouping, the Pan African Congress (PAC). This group saw the failures of the past as having been caused by the organisation's association with whites. This organisation was openly racist, being not only anti white but also anti Asian and aimed to achieve liberation by relying on the African race alone. The black consciousness organisation and the Azanian Peoples Organisation are derived from this split. The PAC pursued similar defiance campaigns to those of the ANC but with more vigour. The PAC promised to achieve liberation by 1963! These campaigns resulted in the Sharpsville massacre of 1960 and the subsequent banning of both the ANC and the PAC. Following the banning both organisations launched military sections, however, the only organisation which has had any success is that of the ANC "Umkhonto we Sizwe" and this is because of the support it has received from Russian imperialism.

The ANC's relationship with the SACP, the local tool of Moscow, has always been an uneasy one. The SACP started its life by supporting the white miners strike of 1922, and coining the infamous slogan, "Workers of the world unite for a white South Africa." However, despite the various purges of the SACP from the ANC, the SACP has always retained a foothold in the organisation. By the early 60s Russian imperialism saw this organisation as a vehicle for destabilising western influence and interests in the region. Consequently it has supported and armed the ANC. Despite this its influence on events was small until after the Soweto uprising of 1976, which brought hundreds of fresh recruits to the organisation. After the independence of Mozambique and Zimbabwe the ANC was able to open up supply lines to S.A. and enjoyed a brief period of military successes. This has been checked following the closure of these supply routes and the accommodation

of both regimes with Pretoria. Today the ANC strategy is to pressurise the regime by all means at its disposal to achieve a negotiated settlement which will bring it to power.

The history of African nationalism shows that it never had a class understanding of society or supported the interests of the working class. The class who will gain from its victory is the rising african bourgeoisie who will administer the state and the state capitalist economy. The nationalists' support for the workers is simply a tactic to use their strength as the force to propel them to power. On the other hand the organisation is for sale to the highest imperialist bidder. If they succeed militarily it will be because such success is in the interests of Russian imperialism. If they succeed by negotiation it will be because western imperialism has decided to ditch the apartheid regime and back them. The interests of imperialism will determine the outcome of the struggle unless the working class intervenes independently.

The Way Forward

The S.A. working class, despite its enormous potential power, is divided and unconscious of its real interests. The present subordination of the class struggle to the nationalist one, together with the racial divisions in the class, could well be used by the capitalist class to precipitate the most horrific bloodbath. It is vital that the working class separates itself politically from the nationalists and struggles independently for its own interests. This means a rejection of all fronts with the bourgeoisie, including the african nationalist bourgeoisie, a total condemnation of nationalism and a struggle for the UNITY OF THE WHOLE WORKING CLASS regardless of race.

A first step in this direction would be the formation of a communist political organisation within S.A., linked to International Communists. This organisation would set itself the immediate aims of:-

- * struggle for the abolition of apartheid, migrant labour, job reservation and all the bosses laws which divide workers on the ground of race,
- * formation of groups of communist workers in the mines and factories to take the lead in the class struggle and give it a communist direction,
- * giving a communist lead to the mass movement against the present regime.

Today the only change which can bring real benefits to the working class is the communist revolution and the establishment of a world-

wide system of production for need. The struggle for this must follow the same programme worldwide - the communist programme.

ENDING APARTHEID TO SAVE CAPITALISM

Sept. 1985

The Crisis

A spectre is haunting capitalism in South Africa. It is the spectre of communism. Every political force, inside and outside the country is united in trying to exorcise this spectre. Priest and bishop, Anglo-Saxon bankers and Boer industrialists, US Senators and black trades unionists are all united in a holy alliance to save capitalism. To do this they recognise they have to end that odious form of repression and exploitation - apartheid - that they have suffered or supported for decades.

The present crisis of apartheid, unlike those of the late 1950's and early 1970's, has lasted for 5 years and has become even more intense over the last year as hundreds of black protestors have been killed. The reason for this deepening intensity lies in the crisis of the world capitalist economy which at last has visited itself upon South Africa. Until very recently the white Afrikaner's National Party thought itself impregnable on the basis of South Africa's virtual monopoly of Western gold production and of the strategic needs of Western imperialism. When the crisis was in its worst inflationary spiral South African gold prices rose and that future seemed rosier, but with monetarist policies being adopted throughout the West gold prices have slumped and with it the South African economy. This has led to plant closures. General Motors, Ford and Volkswagen, the main employers in the Eastern Cape, are all working a three day week and thousands of workers have been sacked. This is typical of the situation all over South Africa and the huge black townships like Soweto, outside Johannesburg and Crossroads, outside Uitenhage, are teeming with the unemployed. This is the reason for the wave of militant strikes, the mass protests particularly at funerals of the victims of state brutality and the attacks on black councillors and other collaborators with the apartheid regime. As long as the South African economy appeared immune to the effects of the crisis foreign capital, which understands material rather than moral laws, flowed into the country, almost all of it from Britain and the US. Despite cries for "disinvestment" which anti-apartheid organisations in both countries have made for years, capitalists continued to find South Africa with its slow-paid black workforce a safe investment. Safe,

that is, until 1984 when the same economic crisis that showed that apartheid could no longer survive merely on shootings and sjambok whips also hit the profits of the multinationals. Barclays Bank, for example, saw its profits in South Africa nose-dive by 75%, from £38million to £10million in one year. Barclays' response was to abandon majority control of their local subsidiary as a first step in moves to extricate themselves from South Africa IF no political solution can be found to safeguard the country as a safe place for capital export. In selling out its controlling interest it is following other Western multinationals like Metal Box, Associated British Foods, British Electric Traction and the US Standard Chartered Bank.

However, this still leaves 1,200 UK companies with investments in South Africa. UK companies employ 350,000 workers in South Africa (7% of the total labour force) and in addition "UK indirect investments like shares in South African companies are estimated to be worth £6billions" [*Financial Times* 5.9.85]. The scale of this investment is equalled only by US capital. It is not surprising therefore that the biggest noises for a total boycott of South Africa come from the likes of Mitterand's France where the "Socialist" government badly needs something over which to strike a radical posture in view of its attacks on the working class. It would have no economic effect on France. Equally unsurprising is the fact that it is in Britain and the US that governments have opposed these moves.

At a diplomatic level the British and US policy of what Reagan called "constructive engagement" is in tatters since the US and South Africa don't even have normal diplomatic links at present. However, inside South Africa British and US multinationals like Ford and the Anglo-American Mining Company have taken the lead in breaking down apartheid by creating black foremen and allowing unions. As we wrote 5 years ago:

"They wish to see a stable Black working class whose grievances are expressed by 'responsible' unions. This is part of a wider aim, namely the ending of the apartheid system and the establishment of a Black capitalist class united to the White capitalists by their joint exploitation of the working class." [*Workers Voice* 1 page 9]

In this task they have found willing allies in the black community, not only amongst turbulent priests like Desmond Tutu and Alan Boesak, leader of the United Democratic Front [UDF] but also among the black trades union leaders and Nelson Mandela himself. In a recent interview Mandela announced that he wanted a democratic, capitalist South Africa which would welcome foreign investment. As far as the West is concerned South Africa's attempts to portray him as a communist bogeyman have failed. They recognise him for what he is - an authentic representative of the black bourgeoisie that runs both the UDF and the African National Congress [ANC]. Despite Russian aid to foment the armed struggle the ANC, like Mugabe in Zimbabwe will turn to the West once in power for it alone can provide the capital that the black bourgeoisie will want to run South African capitalism.

Bankruptcy of Nationalism

Western imperialists have also discovered elsewhere in Southern Africa that they have nothing to fear from national liberation movements. In Angola, Zimbabwe and Mozambique self-proclaimed "Marxist" regimes have invited back foreign firms like the US Gulf Oil whilst workers in these countries have found that little has changed. Whilst the Luanda dock workers found their strike brutally crushed by MPLA troops of their newly "liberated" country in 1976, in Harare workers have found that Mugabe uses Smith's Emergency Powers to prevent them struggling against low wages. "National liberation" today means liberation for the bourgeoisie only and doesn't create new conditions for the struggle of the proletariat. Instead it chains them to a nationalist ideology which is used to condemn strikes or other workers' struggles as being "against the good of the nation". Exploitation, if anything gets worse for workers.

Western imperialism's other allies in attempting to establish a post-apartheid South Africa are the trades unions. The imperialists know that without unions it will be impossible to contain the class anger of South African workers, particularly in the mines where pay is only £30 a month. The recent failed miners' strike is a perfect illustration of how the unions act as a mediator between capital and labour but constantly on behalf of capital. In July wildcat strikes broke out in the South African gold mines where 600,000 black workers, two-thirds of them immigrants from neighbouring black states, work. The National Union of Mineworkers [NUM] stepped up calls for a 20% wage demand and announced that if it was not met then a strike would take place ... in a month's time! Just as in Britain this gave the bosses time to prepare. "Troublemakers" were weeded out individually, private armies were strengthened with government troops and some mines (where the workers had been most militant and where there were few immigrants)

were offered an 18% wage rise. The result was a fiasco. The union called out 200,000 miners but only 15,000 went on strike whilst many other mines such as:

"GFS's Deelkraal and Gencor's Beatrix, were not even on the list of targeted mines and the strikes there appeared to take management and even the union by surprise." [Financial Times 5.9.85]

The effect of all this is to give the capitalists an air of invincibility but this has not dismayed the NUM which is preparing for its future integration into the state by getting the courts to prevent dismissals of strikers. Once capitalism can provide the right legal framework for them to operate trades unions everywhere repay this trust by being of enormous service to capitalism in containing the class struggle.

But if Western imperialism wants to get rid of apartheid to save capitalism why hasn't Botha made more significant steps towards it? The answer is that he is scared. Before the failure of his elections for Indian and coloured assemblies Botha was beginning to recognise that apartheid no longer coincides with the interests of South African capitalism. He had begun dismantling so-called "petty apartheid" (by withdrawing the Morality Act etc.), had dropped the threat to exclude blacks from citizenship and had ignored the de facto collapse of some apartheid laws in industry. This was, of course, only to buy more time for white domination but had the economic crisis not worsened it was feasible for this to have become an evolution of apartheid into the more normal "democratic" form of exploitation which provides the most stable conditions for capitalist accumulation. Now the Afrikaners are paralysed. They cannot go forward to give "one man one vote" since this would be to invite their own loss of control. As one of their spokesmen said:

"If an unqualified one man one vote election was held today ... a non-white leader with a communistic programme would probably attain an overall majority on a pledge to confiscate and redistribute the property of the privileged classes."

And, short of an economic miracle, they cannot go backwards to return to total suppression against an increasingly desperate and therefore an increasingly militant black proletariat.

With Western imperialism demanding action; with the failure of the Governor of the South African Reserve Bank's mission to London and New York to try to get financial help; with the moratorium on debt repayments continuing and with the rand still sinking on international currency markets, the Afrikaner ruling class' room for manoeuvre is restricted. Their best hope lies in accepting the plan of Gavin Relly, Chairman of the largest company in South Africa, the Anglo-American Corporation. He has been calling continually for a deal

between Botha and the "moderate" leaders of the ANC. As we go to press he has managed to get talks in Zambia "between the businessmen and the ANC which President Botha has approved tacitly" [The Times 6.9.85]. The spectre of "communism" in Southern Africa could yet be exorcised if the ANC and the multinationals can find a way to dismantle apartheid and thus save South African capitalism.

THE PROLETARIAN SOLUTION

Needless to say the white supremacists' vision of "communism" is not ours. The "communism" they talk about is Russian imperialism and for years they have played on Western imperialism's fears of a victory for its rival in Southern Africa. But with Russia's failure to make solid allies of "Marxist" regimes in Angola, Zimbabwe and Mozambique this threat has become increasingly hollow. This is another factor in the West's distancing itself from the Pretoria regime.

Paradoxically, as the threat of the spectre of "communism" in the form of Russian imperialism recedes the present situation of revolt amongst the black working class has created the condition for the appearance of the real thing. The struggles of the past five years have done more for the political education of black workers than any number of acts of propaganda but their heroism is still saturated with nationalist and capitalist ideology which sees the end of apartheid as the final goal of the struggle. The struggle against the indignity of apartheid has to be widened to a struggle against class society, otherwise it will do no more than create the conditions for stable exploitation which Western imperialism and the black bourgeoisie are working so hard together to create. To destroy their cosy plans the South African proletariat, black and white, will have to create the nucleus of its own political vanguard. We do not expect this process to be rapid but through the work which we are conducting in the International Bureau towards the formation of an international communist nucleus we hope to be in a position to shorten the birthpangs when a new communist organisation emerges in South Africa. We look forward to the day when we will be able to announce that the spectre of communism has been replaced by a manifesto of the proletarian party itself.

ANC WAITS IN THE WINGS

Nov. 1985

As the death toll continues to mount in the black townships South Africa is moving daily closer to outright civil war. The sjamboks and the bullets have failed to quell the desperate heroism of a people driven to revolt by conditions of exploitation and oppression which have seen three and a half millions of people forcibly removed from their homes in the last fifteen years and has left three million children permanently undernourished. Unlike earlier crises like Sharpeville in 1960 the apartheid regime has found that a few deaths have not been enough to restore order this time. The white laager has begun to break up with the bosses of the multi-nationals, the leaders of South African industry, and even the Dutch Reform Church (which used to provide the religious justification for apartheid) having all crossed the border to discuss a new order of things with Oliver Tambo, leader of the African National Congress (ANC). Whilst Botha has been denouncing his former allies as traitors there are other signs that the old order is changing more rapidly than he can control. Whilst on his liberal wing there are calls for a more rapid "reform" of apartheid the right wing splinters from the ruling National Party have been making election gains from the failure of Botha's efforts to restore order. Equally disturbing for the South African government has been the signs that whites in some areas already recognise that the game is up. Whilst the only growth area of the South African economy is in the sector of the security firms who hire out armed guards to protect white homes there has been a dramatic rise in the numbers of whites failing to report for military service (from 1500 for the whole of last year to nearly 8000 for the first nine months of this year). Those who fled the collapse of the Smith regime in Rhodesia a few years ago are now selling up (if they can get anyone to buy their property) to return to Mugabe's Zimbabwe on the grounds that he has managed to make it safer for whites to live there.

BOTHA'S FRIENDS

Botha is however not yet completely alone. Despite the campaigns of recent converts to anti-apartheid ideas in the USA and despite the shift in investment away from South Africa this still is the key to international support. In fact it is not surprising that the louder any government is in

its condemnation of apartheid the smaller its investment in South Africa. This explains why Reagan tried to pretend that conditions in South Africa were not really all that bad for black workers or why Mrs Thatcher should "bat for Botha" at the farce in Barbados known as the Commonwealth Conference. Both countries have something like £6 billions of investments in South Africa and the job of extricating them is a delicate one. Both Reagan and Thatcher want Botha to reform apartheid in order to create a more stable environment to protect their capital but they recognise that this will be very difficult for Botha to achieve given the determination of the South African masses to fight and die in the growing civil war on the one hand, and the widespread belief among the whites that he is some kind of clown who created the present revolt by his attempt at reforming the more petty aspects of the apartheid system. All this seems to point to more and more violent confrontations since the struggle of the black population is no longer confined to this or that township or area, despite Botha's restrictions on the reporting of the struggle by the world press.

IMPERIALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

However it is not the world's press which has put the South African state in the position of pariah but the fact that apartheid has now outlived its usefulness for global capitalism. In many ways apartheid is the last form of old-style colonialism which was itself a form of imperialism in which physical domination of an area to control its workforce and raw materials was thought to be essential. Since the end of the Second World War imperialism has discovered that it is not only cheaper not to occupy an area (since you don't have to pay police costs) but that it is easier to allow the local bourgeoisie to take political control since the imperialists can continue to dominate the area's economy. The multi-nationals of the West have now seen enough of nationalist movements in Africa and elsewhere to know that they will not take their countries into the Russian bloc but will continue to keep those areas safe for the Western capital that they require. Thus Mugabe's Zimbabwe is now paradoxically seen as a haven for ex-Rhodesians in strife-torn South Africa.

This is why the leaders of the South African multinationals are seeking a deal with the ANC. After the recent meeting between Oliver Tambo of the ANC and Gavin Relly of the Anglo American Corporation there was clearly an attempt by both sides to reach agreement. Whilst Relly's aides made concessions to the ANC's state capitalist, nationalist ideology Tambo is reputed to have agreed that large sections of the economy would be "left open to private enterprise". The nationalists thus represent the best hope for capitalism. In our last issue we pointed to

the fact that the capitalist leaders were "ending apartheid to save capitalism". Even the bourgeois press have recognised since that

"Capitalism in South Africa has now entered its fight for survival. It faces the risk that, unless it can distance itself from apartheid, it will go down the drain with it."

[Guardian 25.9.85]

This is why the struggle against apartheid is not in itself enough. It has to be widened into a struggle against all aspects of capitalist exploitation; against multinational firms as well as Afrikaner nationalists and also against the nationalist black bourgeoisie that is waiting in the wings. Although the workers of South Africa have not yet created their own independent weapon of emancipation - i.e. a communist party, the present struggle is furnishing the conditions which can lead to the creation of communist nuclei within the working class. It is our task as communists to provide the political critique of all the capitalist factions in South Africa and not to succumb to the prevailing current of anti-apartheid activism. Only in this way will we forge the essential basis for the liberation of all the world's workers - the communist programme.

ANTI-APARTHEID OR ANTI CAPITALIST ?

INTRODUCTION

In a spiral of social conflict that threatens to get out of hand, with the death toll rising daily in wave after wave of black revolt against the hated apartheid system, the South African capitalist class, caught in an acute economic crisis, is becoming aware of the need to dismantle and eventually abolish the outmoded system of exploitation. Radical changes in the structure of its state would however be necessary before this could go ahead, and in the event of an escalation in the class struggle which this might precipitate, groups and parties of the Left would be necessary on the ground to ensure that struggles were contained within acceptable limits.

CRISIS OF APARTHEID.

The key to understanding the present turmoil lies in the fact that South Africa is now in the throes of its worse economic crisis since 1929. Between 1978-84 the economy grew by 3% compared to 7% in the '60s; there was an actual decline in GDP in 82-83 and it is likely to fall this year; inflation is 17% and interest rates 25%; corporate bankruptcies are running at 70 per month.

At the level of external economic linkages there are two major causes of the slowdown. The first involves the country's export position. Exports account for 25% of GDP and gold for almost one half, by value, of South Africa's exports. Able to ride out the storms of the mid '70's global crisis by taking advantage of rocketing gold prices, over the past four years the price of gold, as of other export minerals, has plummeted. South Africa depends heavily on the rest of Africa as a market: over $\frac{1}{2}$ its chemical exports and about $\frac{1}{2}$ of its machinery and equipment manufacture were sold in Africa during the '70s. The crisis gripping the African continent has dried up many of these markets.

Secondly, investments in South Africa now bear much greater risk premium, and since 1982, foreign capital's share of new fixed capital formation has declined sharply. Net foreign investments in South Africa's private companies fell by 360 million dollars between 1976 and 1984 (i.e. after the Soweto uprising). Nevertheless, South Africa has managed to preserve a long-term net surplus of capital inflows. This is mainly because the government and nationalised industries have dramatically increased their international borrowings. According to Federal Reserve Bank data, the value of loans by US banks to private and public South African borrowers rose from 1 billion dollars to 4.3 billion dollars between 1980 and 1984. However, the strings attached

have been given a sharp pull in February this year by South Africa's imperialist masters, when, as a measure of their increasing anxiety, they announced the unprecedented step of freezing all further loans till current interest was repaid.

An additional burden on South African capital is state spending which accounts for 25% of GDP. In order to maintain its social base the Afrikaner state has to subsidise its white farmers and civil servants - $\frac{1}{2}$ of all white workers are employed in the public sector. The defence budget for its huge military force has doubled over the past 4 years and at the same time a vast repressive apparatus of police, prison camps, spies etc has to be maintained.

In a desperate effort to maintain its competitiveness on the world market (the rate of return on capital is now 5% compared with 20% a decade ago) the South African ruling class is forced to raise rates of exploitation to unbearable levels. The antiquated system of Apartheid is now a major obstacle to capitalist accumulation. Other than the immense social conflict and human suffering which it incurs, it is incapable of providing the necessary amounts of skilled labour and prevents labour mobility. With the traditionally profitable automobile industry of the Eastern Cape now in chronic recession and many US manufacturing corporations now showing book losses, the situation is deteriorating with unemployment escalating, and reports of malnutrition in the townships common. Figures for unemployment were 68% up in 1985 compared with 1984, and it is now running at 30% among black workers (an official under-estimation).

A particular fallacy of some leftist organisations (such as the Revolutionary Communist Party) is to propagate the view that Apartheid is not an irrational historical hangover but an indispensable feature of South African capitalism for not only maintaining the boundaries of exploitation but for extending them. (See the RCP pamphlet "Black Blood On British Hands".)

On the contrary the more advanced elements in the South African ruling class are those grouped around the Anglo-American Corporation and the Progressive Federal Party - and increasingly their views are being echoed among the die-hards - have recognised the need for the modernisation and eventual abolition of Apartheid. And this has been the consensus of South Africa's imperialist backers for at least a decade. American Secretary of State George Shultz emphasised this recently by stating that there was no longer any dispute among Americans about Apartheid: "The present system is doomed....The only alternative to a

radical violent outcome is a political accommodation now, before it is too late. We look to the government of South Africa to work with blacks, black leaders and others in their country to bring it to an end." (New York Times Nov. '85)

Why has the Botha regime, installed in 1978 on the platform of a reform strategy, been unable to carry out the bidding of their masters? The answer lies in South Africa's special position on the global imperialist chess-board and in the fact that the African National Council (ANC), the main bourgeois democratic opposition force, is still linked with Russian Imperialism.

THE STAKES OF IMPERIALISM

The West's financial involvement in South Africa is staggering by any yardstick; loan capital alone exceeds 25 billion dollars; 7-10% of the UK's entire overseas investments are tied up in South Africa. Fabulous profits have been reaped off the backs of South African workers; during the boom years, rates of return were 20-43% on capital invested, super-exploitation by any standards. Investments, however, had from the outset an important strategic dimension, linked to the expansion and defence of the Western alliance. The region's mineral resources are an indispensable element in the West's preparations for war against the Soviet bloc, which cannot allow their continued control by their adversary. Losing them would be an irreparable disaster for the West.

South Africa is a veritable storehouse of strategic metals, a leading producer of manganese, platinum, antimony and chromium. The latter is essential for the hardening of steel used in the armour plate of ships and tanks. Europe and Japan have no domestic sources and the US requires to import 80% of its domestic consumption.

South Africa is a trusted guardian of the huge quantities of Persian Gulf oil that travels round the Cape of Good Hope on their way to Europe and the Americas. The South Atlantic sea lanes are of immense economic and military importance. The Soviets have been building up their presence there since the West began to use the Falklands War as a testing ground for their naval capability.

South Africa is not only a regional gendarme - as was made clear by their use in the neutralisation and integration of Angola and Mozambique within the Western bloc - but a vital quarter-master as well. While it is vital for the West's geo-political aims that South Africa stabilises its internal regime, for fear that it may face another Iran '79, for the time being, in the face of mass resistance and mounting economic difficulties, it continues to bolster the present regime until such a time that a transition to a democratic liberal rule can be effected without a danger of either an escalation of the class struggle towards revolutionary dimensions or the losing of South Africa to the enemy camp. Neither

option would be in any way tolerable.

Today the objective of both wings of imperialism, conservative and liberal, is the same: an orderly reform of apartheid to dapple the South African government and power structure with enough black faces through some form of political compromise between the white supremacists and the aspirant black bourgeoisie, so that the seething black working class can be held at bay and exploitation can proceed as normal. The fact that the West is playing the anti-apartheid card is shown by the meeting between Rely of the Anglo-American and the ANC in Zambia. The Reaganites fear that Botha's fall might permit an already dangerous situation to get out of hand while the liberals, while seeing that Botha has outlived his usefulness, fail to perceive that the Botha strategy of the creation of a buffer of politically docile middle class blacks has been a patent failure, not through any lack of will to compromise - this has been the strategy since 1978 - but because the very ferocity of the class struggle itself permits no inter-racial settlement. The trail of burnt-out houses of collaborationists and the cadavers of all those engaged in implementing Botha's dirty work is testimony to this.

It is significant that the struggles of Soweto and Sharpeville of today have not become the cause-celebre they were for the liberals of Anti-Apartheid in the '60s and '70s because they have an increased proletarian content. The anger directed against the black cops and councillors are a direct refutation of black nationalist myths and a snub at the black consciousness which came in the wake of Soweto 1976. The liberals of the US anti-apartheid paint the conflict between moderate democrats and Reaganites as a moral crusade for black self-determination in South Africa. The political aims of the liberal factions of the bourgeoisie have the same end result as those of the Right: the saving of capitalism. The safest route, according to them, would be the ending, not the maintenance of apartheid.

LEFTISM

Having been largely successful in integrating the white working class politically and economically and in quelling the struggles of the black workers, while maintaining a rigid racist division between them, the South African ruling class during the post-war period has never had any need for a faction espousing a radical 'socialist' i.e. state-capitalist doctrine. Containment of the class struggle has meant that its politics have always been within the framework of white supremacy. A formal legal recognition of this was the passing of the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950. But with the emergence of a manufacturing and mining proletariat, concentrated in the urban areas, increasingly conscious of its strategic position in the economy after a decade of bitter, virtually unrelenting class struggles, the South African ruling class are more than

ever aware of the need for a new alignment of forces of the left in order to nullify any revolutionary threat, if need be to channel it in a state capitalist direction.

The banned ANC is emerging as capitalism's best hope. As Jesse Jackson, American civil rights politician said recently, "Those business leaders (Relly and co) defied Botha to meet with the ANC. They went because they knew where their economic future is, and it's not with Botha's apartheid government." (New York Times 3.11.85.) Relly was, of course, aware of the 'common ground' he shared with the ANC in the maintenance of a profitable South Africa in the face of violent revolt. As Mandela noted in his speech at the Rivonia trial in 1964 "The ANC has never at any period in its history advocated a revolutionary change in the economic structure of the country, nor has it to the best of my recollection, even condemned capitalist society." In September, while Botha's finance minister was visiting the US to round up funds to save South Africa's desperate financial situation, the ANC addressed "The People" of America as follows, "We appeal to all you to demand that American banks should insist that apartheid be made to pay up for the 11.5 billion dollars that it owes". This call, of course, is really addressed to the banks. If apartheid were actually to pay up, the billions would have to be squeezed out of the hides of South Africa's workers, and the ANC would be called upon to administer that part of an extended state machine designed to dragoon, in a 'democratic' fashion of course, the black masses under their control. The ANC statement serves to announce that it will undertake to pay off South Africa's debt religiously once it has taken up the reins of government. Such co-operation with imperialism - the opposite of the Bolshevik repudiation of the Czarist debt - is not unprecedented in the current period. Paying off Somoza's bills was one of the first acts of the 'socialist' Sandinista regime of Nicaragua. Events like these illustrate that the only 'liberation' from imperialism is the communist revolution not the installation into power of a fraction of the nationalist bourgeoisie.

The 'power sharing' the ANC is manoeuvring towards resembles the Zimbabwean capitalist solution of guaranteeing whites a fixed share in the government, including decisive ministries; or it might amount to dividing South Africa among its races and tribes in such a way that whites and co-operatives blacks like the thugmaster Buthelezi wielded a workable veto. In spite of the fact that the ANC can easily expose the more superficial aspects of the so-called 'liberalisation' measures, in the context of the historic decline of capitalism and the continued deepening of South Africa's economic malaise, it is impossible for it to play any progressive role. Any political compromise would reveal the opportunist nature of the ANC in the eyes of its black masses as they would have nothing to 'sell' but a programme of increased austerity accompanied by savage repression. The material social base in the form of a large black middle class, unlike in the US, does not exist in

South Africa and the prospects of its development in the present situation look remote. In the absence of a buffer of privileged black strata, an 'in between' solution looks unlikely. The direction of South African society increasingly depends on the development of a class consciousness in the core concentrations of the urban black proletariat, and it is here that the ANC performs a most essential function for capital by latching on to workers' struggles in an opportunistic manner and diverting these on to a nationalist terrain.

The ANC contains several tendencies. Predominant are the liberal wing represented by Tambo and the Stalinist wing of the South African Communist Party, which is influential in the ANC's exiled labour arm - South Africa Congress of Trade Unions. Both agree on the ANC's programme of a non-racist capitalism for the present, leaving talk of socialism to the indefinite future. In line with its tactic of forming a 'bloc' of 'progressive forces' against Apartheid, the South African Communist Party (SACP) argue that the struggle is simply one for democratic rights for all, and not a class struggle. The SACP encouraged Mandela, Tambo and the other ANC leaders to see mass action as a means of putting pressures on the regime, and of helping to mobilise 'enlightened' opinion among whites in the West. As a result they help to spread the illusion that apartheid can be removed peacefully. For example in 1958 one CP member wrote, "Revolution need not involve violence. There have been plenty examples in history where a combination of factors have been compelling enough to make a ruling class give way for urgent and overdue changes, without dragging the people through the agony of civil war".

A lesser known wing of the ANC is the Trotskyist "Marxist Workers Tendency" which has ties with the Militant Tendency of the British Labour Party. Expelled from the ANC last summer, the MWT argues that if the ANC should gain power, even with its pro-bourgeois ideology, it would be forced to create a 'workers state' i.e. the classical orthodox Trotskyist reasoning which led the Trotskyist groups after World War 2 into the camp of capital. Although they were never to grow into a sizeable force in South Africa, the Trotskyists were to have a political impact out of proportion to their numbers, especially in the 30s and 40s. Although they recognised the political centrality of the working class, this was to be the force for 'national liberation', social revolution being part of a process of 'permanent revolution'. The politics and tactics of this conception were never grounded on an understanding of capitalism's entry into decadence, the implications of which meant that the proletariat had nothing to gain from a tactical alliance with any section of the bourgeoisie as all had become reactionary. Leftism of the Trotskyist brand stands in that line of tradition which accepts Lenin's theory of national self-determination. In 1935 Trotsky was to write:

"In so far as a victorious revolution will change the relation not only between the

classes but also between the races and will assure to the blacks that place in the state that corresponds to their numbers, thus far will the social revolution in South Africa also have a national character." (On the South African Theses)

Statements of this sort are typical of the propaganda found among these leftist tendencies who have opportunistically turned themselves into appendages of the major bourgeois opposition force in South Africa.

The main political rivals of the ANC are the black nationalist organisations which rule out white participation in the South African 'revolution'. One of these, the Azanian Peoples Organisation (Azapo) labels itself a working class organisation, although it finds its base mainly among intellectuals and the petty bourgeoisie. It bases its politics on the completely false assumption that all blacks under South African conditions are working class. While recognising the ANC's capitulation to white liberals and capitalists - it condemned Kennedy's visit, which the ANC supported - AZAPO assumes that black nationalism is the answer. It has a 'marxist' radical wing to help insinuate itself among more advanced workers.

BLACK WORKERS.

While Leftist organisations differ in their political attitude to the various radical bourgeois opposition forces in South Africa, they have all applauded unanimously the emergence of black trade unionism, which now groups in its ranks around a million members, as high a proportion as in the US. Take, for example, the SWP:

"The only independent working class organisations in South Africa are the black trade unions. Their success... is an enormous political step forward." (S.A. The Road to Revolution, A.Callinicos p.33)

While during capitalism's progressive ascendancy the unions were proletarian organisations, their function under the new conditions of permanent decline mean that they are no longer appropriate defensive instruments for the class which created them and only succeed in keeping the terms of reference and the tactics of workers struggles on a terrain which is favourable to capital - i.e. the unions divide the class into trade and sector and in the end deliver them bound and gagged to the employer.

Unlike those leftists whose policies can only serve to shore up capitalism, the South African ruling class were not under any illusions about the nature of trades unionism. The purpose of the legalisation of trades unions was made quite clear, "We are registering black unions in order to control their activities". (Fanie Botha, Minister of Manpower). Rosholt, chairman of the countries leading industrial corporation commented, "They must be seen as bodies which can possibly defuse labour unrest"

On the emergence of the NUM, the Anglo-American Corporation actually gave it offices as well as negotiating rights.

However, in the early 1980's a more militant brand of trades unionism began to develop, in the wake of a series of wildcat strikes. While it accused FOSATU of being too moderate and non political, the S.A.Allied Workers' Union adopted an aggressive, populist style. But despite their radical image, these new trades unions will play the same role as their predecessors; to control and derail the class struggle. This was clear in the gold workers strike of September 1985, when the NUM separated the struggle of the gold workers from the rest of the mining proletariat, and then negotiated separate deals with the gold companies, leaving the most militant mines isolated, and leading to its defeat.

OUR POSITION.

Our criticism of the bourgeois forces active in the struggle of the South African proletariat, does not mean that we stand aloof from the real social movement that is unfolding. The absence of a party, or even a communist organisation in the country, along with the divisions of the class on racial lines (and here we mean not simply black and white, but between black and Asian, and even among black workers themselves), means that we do not face a revolutionary situation in South Africa. But communists still have to work, initially among the diaspora, black and white, to form a communist nucleus, which can relate to the movement in that country.

This means that we must call for working class unity, across racial divides, and denounce the programmes of the various leftist and nationalist groupings, exposing their capitalist nature. But we cannot do this from the sidelines, we must make clear that we support all demands for the ending of specific indignities and super-exploitation of any section of the class. But while we call for the overthrow of the apartheid regime, by mass working class struggle, we make it quite clear at all times, that this in no way amounts to political support for any of the reformist or nationalist groupings who seek to replace it. Opportunism consists not in making specific demands, which occasionally may formally overlap with what is demanded by the political forces of capitalism, but in the failure to pose these demands in a different framework from those of the enemies of working class liberation.

CLASS STRUGGLE NOT SANCTIONS

August 1986

Neither the intensity of the social conflict in South Africa, nor the ferocity of the repression meted out by the apartheid regime show any signs of abatement. Black workers in South Africa are striking and taking to the streets in an unexampled display of heroism against armoured cars, guns and sjamboks under the state of emergency, just as they did before its declaration. In its present form the South African state can only function as a naked military dictatorship, throwing aside all its "democratic" pretenses, which anyway never had any meaning for its black majority. The continuation of the present social conflict indefinitely is unthinkable. Either there will be a greatly increased attack on the black population which anyway could only provide a temporary relief or the apartheid regime will be overthrown by the black social movement. These however, are options that put the huge military, economic and political interests of western imperialism in South Africa at risk, and every day the urgency of enforcing a solution that protects these interests grows.

WESTERN IMPERIALISM DIVIDED.

Let us be quite clear; none of the various statesmen who pontificate about finding a solution to the crisis have anything but the interests of western imperialism at heart. All "eminent persons", "EEC emissaries" or shuttle diplomat clergymen want to see the establishment of a stable, "democratic" and pro-western South Africa, where the black (and other) workers are exploited under conditions which do not bring about a state of permanent crisis. That much unites them; what is less clear, is how this situation is to be brought about.

One wing of the international bourgeoisie, though it is increasingly isolated, wants to give Botha and his cronies another chance, to maintain "dialogue" and "contact". This group, best represented by Thatcher and the British bourgeois interests, argue that the process of reform in South Africa will be best continued by not leaning on Pretoria too hard. Similarly they feel that should Botha fall, there is no telling what would replace him; possibly a pro-Soviet ANC in the worst scenario. Thus they argue against sanctions, which they believe could topple Botha and lead to "anarchy", while crying crocodile tears about the suffering sanctions would cause black workers. But undoubtedly the material basis for such a perspective lies in the fact that it is the British bourgeoisie which has the largest economic stake in South Africa, which it fears would be hard hit in any generalised campaign of sanctions.

But the development of events is leaving this section of the bourgeoisie increasingly isolated. It was with great difficulty that Thatcher held the line against EEC sanctions and came up with her "mission impossible" for her poodle Howe, to the black "front line" states. Similarly at the meeting of the Commonwealth leaders in London, Thatcher was shown to be out on a limb, and had to make concessions to partial economic sanctions.

More and more international imperialism is realising that the cosmetic reforms passed by Botha are in no way a step towards the abolition of minority rule, but are an attempt to make minority rule more acceptable to the black masses. And it is glaringly obvious that it is not the abolition of petty apartheid which will allow the emerging black bourgeoisie to sell social peace to the masses, but only the installation of a political structure which pretends to represent the black majority, that is bourgeois democracy in the form of one man, one vote.

It is the intransigence of the Afrikaaner ruling class that leads increasing circles of western imperialism to argue that only the imposition of generalised economic sanctions on the South African economy, which is already reeling from the effects of the world economic crisis, will force the Pretoria regime to enter into "dialogue" with the black opposition groups such as the ANC, and the eventual emergence of a "multi-racial" and pro-western South Africa. This faction of the bourgeoisie believes that the Tutus, Tambos and Mandelas, who have long proclaimed their loyalty to western interests, will be able to hold the black masses in check, in a way that Botha and his ilk no longer can.

Thus the whole debate about sanctions is one between two wings of western imperialism, about how to bring a change to a situation less threatening to its interests. Communists do not take sides in such a debate, whose framework is alien to class politics. These axe around the question of how best the working class can defend their immediate and historical interests against capitalism in all its forms. Perhaps unsurprisingly sundry varieties of leftists, from the Morning Star to Socialist Worker have all joined in the mystificatory chorus about sanctions, as if any form of economic warfare between capitalist states could advance the interests of the working class one iota.

While the furore over sanctions reigns on the international front, events are not staying still in South Africa itself. Botha seems to have contained-for the moment-the fury of the right wing neanderthal elements who oppose even the cosmetic changes in the apartheid system, by the imposition of the state of emergency and crackdown on black political groups. At the same time, he has been attempting to break the back of the social movement in the townships, by arming black thugs to terrorise political activists and also making attempts to seek a social basis in the more backward, rural elements like the tribal chiefs who would accept some kind of client status in a white regime. But it is difficult to see these desperate scramblings as being a real attempt at a political solution, only a hedge against possible civil war.

Meanwhile, there is the more muted, but in the end, more powerful pressure of big business in South Africa on the Botha regime, to engage in dialogue with the black opposition. These people have seen, in their dealings with the black unions, and talks with the ANC, that here is the only social force which can restore peace in the factories, mines and townships. Any prospect of sanctions would increase the pressure from South African capitalists on the regime.

But in the final analysis, what happens in South Africa will not be decided by bishops or businessmen, but by the South African working class. Whether the rulers of South Africa manage to maintain their hold, whether imperialism will manage to bring about a smooth transition to majority rule, or whether apartheid will be swept away by the social movement is a question that will be settled in the heat of class confrontation.

REAL SOLIDARITY WITH SOUTH AFRICAN WORKERS.

The way forward for South African workers is to extend and unify their struggles, for a decisive overthrow of the apartheid regime, not to await the manoeuvres of international imperialism's circus of philanthropists, clerics and clowns. And real solidarity with their struggle does not consist in boycotting South African goods, or clamouring for sanctions, as if there were morally good and morally bad commodities, or good and bad forms of exploitation of labour power. We do not stand for democratic or non racial exploitation, but for the abolition of relations of exploitation.

Real solidarity with the workers of South Africa, as with workers everywhere, consists in extending and unifying our own struggles in the capitalist heartlands, especially against those who pose as the "friends" of South Africa's workers. This does not mean that we can "do nothing" now. Communists work in the South African diaspora, black and white, to win a kernel to our cause and help to implant the politics of the working class in South Africa via. such a means. Workers can certainly take up workplace collections in solidarity with those suffering class repression in South Africa, and to support their strikes. Employees of multi-nationals hit by strikes in South Africa should not be slow to lend active solidarity and sympathy action to their class brothers abroad, since the workers' struggle knows no frontiers. Upon suspicion that military equipment is being sent to aid the repression of the South African proletariat, workers involved in its production and transport should take all steps to prevent its reaching its goal.

But this is CLASS action, and has nothing to do with a campaign of pin pricks designed to goad the Boer ox out of its laager. Communists hate every form of exploitation. That of the countries of the Pacific Basin is brutal in the extreme, but we don't propose economic sanctions as the solution to the woes of the Korean or Hong Kong workers, but class struggle.

-DOWN WITH THE APARTHEID STATE! FOR ITS OVERTHROW BY CLASS STRUGGLE!

-AGAINST IMPERIALIST PEACE MOVES IN SOUTH AFRICA! NO TO "DEMOCRATIC" EXPLOITATION!

-AGAINST THE CHARADE OF SANCTIONS! FOR CLASS SOLIDARITY WITH SOUTH AFRICAN WORKERS!



SOUTH AFRICA: BUSINESS AS USUAL

Oct. 1986

In Workers Voice No 30, we exposed the campaign for sanctions against the apartheid regime of South Africa, as a move by sections of imperialism to try and achieve a peaceful change to a "democratic" exploitation of the black masses of that country. We also argued that real solidarity with the South African workers lay in class action, not in supporting the campaign for sanctions. (See "South Africa; Class Struggle not Sanctions.") Since we last wrote, a compromise has been patched up between the competing factions of the international bourgeoisie which allows both for a posturing moral indignation to be shown towards the Botha regime, and no harm to be done to the financial and political interests of western imperialism.

The measures introduced by the EEC countries, and followed by Japan, roughly correspond to those already introduced by Reagan. These are designed to put further pressure on Botha, without leading to the kind of economic impact which might endanger his stability, and the global interests of western capitalism. They include a ban on iron and steel imports (of which there is a glut in the western bloc, so this will benefit domestic producers), on gold coins, a tiny part of the total gold sales, which account for 60% of South Africa's export earnings, and are excluded. There is a ban on further investment in the country-ironical, since the last few years have seen massive disinvestment by western companies, who were in fear for their profits through social unrest. Naturally those items on which the military and economic security of the western bloc depends, like tungsten, molybdenum, vanadium, are excluded. So too is coal, since this would cause international coal prices to rise, and allow a corresponding rise in oil prices. Japan has also banned air links-it doesn't have any!

INSIDE THE LAAGER

Botha's response to developments is becoming increasingly frantic. On the one hand he is lashing out wildly to appease the right-wing of the ruling class. Statements that there will never be racial integration are matched by increased military involvement in the civil wars in Angola and Mozambique. On the other further cosmetic reforms are passed, such as appointing a coloured Ambassador, the Bantustan policy has been wound up, and there is vague talk of a slow move to giving the blacks some kind of undefined political representation in the distant future.

Meanwhile in the townships things have simmered down somewhat, and an uneasy peace returned. The black masses have been presented with the spectacle of the coronation of Tutu to occupy them. Tutu showed

his credentials as the communist agent the regime had accused him of being by...not inviting Botha to his enthronement! Marx's statement that "Religion is the opium of the people" has seldom been so clearly confirmed.

But any peace in the townships and on the industrial front can only be short lived, and each new upsurge of unrest further destabilise the fragile equilibrium on which the South African state rests. The main news from the class front, has been the appalling accident at Kinross gold mine in September where 178 miners died. The basis of the super profits earned by the gold companies lies not only in the low wages received by the miners, but in the terrible safety conditions in the mines; the tunnel linings were only flame retardant, not flameproof, and when ignited emitted poisonous gases. Just before the disaster the mineowners had refused any wage demand greater than...1%. The response of the black National Union of Mineworkers, led by Cyril Ramaphosa to these outrages indicates that here is a force that the "progressive" sections of the white ruling class can deal with. Ramaphosa called on the MINEOWNERS to close the mines for a day of mourning, and if they didn't threatened a one day general strike. Meanwhile, back in London, the British Foreign Secretary, Howe, had an "amicable" meeting with ANC (African National Congress) leader Oliver Tambo. Previously the Thatcher government had refused to meet an ANC representative, unless the ANC renounced "violence". The meeting with Tambo is another method of putting pressure of Pretoria to move along the road wanted by western imperialism, and to this Tambo lent his authority. And it is to the Tutus, Ramaphosas and Tambos that liberals and leftists urge the black masses to look for liberation. But we can only repeat what we said in WV30,

"But in the final analysis, what happens in South Africa will not be decided by bishops or businessmen, but by the working class. Whether the rulers of South Africa manage to maintain their hold, whether imperialism will manage to bring about a smooth transition to majority rule, or whether apartheid will be swept away by the social movement is a question that will be decided in the heat of class confrontation."

RAILWORKERS WIN VICTORY

August 1987

16000 railworkers who were sacked at the end of April after a solidarity strike have all been reinstated and most of their demands have been met. The courage and determination of these workers has won a significant battle, despite savage repression which included shooting 6 workers dead, and despite manoeuvres by the unions. Despite the fact that this strike was as usual racially divided with only the black workers striking the development of the struggle has showed in reality the unity of the interests of black and white workers.

The railworkers struggle started as a solidarity strike amongst black workers for a victimised colleague. Once the black workers had struck the bosses promptly used the white workers as scabs forcing them to do extra duties. The objection of white railworkers to this forced the bosses hand and they issued an ultimatum return to work or get the sack. There was no return to work and when the sacked workers held a demonstration the police shot them down. An explosion of anger then broke out with sabotage of trains and the burning of stations and attacks on scabs, 5 of whom were killed. Despite the fact that three workers were actually shot in the union offices and the offices bombed, the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), to which the workers union SARWU belongs did not respond to these atrocities on the battleground of class interests. Instead they called a 2 day strike to protest against the whites only election. This was

an attempt to divert the class struggle into the swamp of the nationalist struggle and although a strike against the election did take place this was in fact useful to the regime. The workers won reinstatement by their own refusal to return on the bosses terms. After the election was safely over the workers were reinstated with the right to permanent status - something previously only for whites - and without loss of benefits.

The regime used these events to boost their standing and win votes in the election. In fact their subsequent capitulation shows that their previous policy of setting up trade unions to police the class struggle is still being followed. One of the agreements at the reinstatement was that workers had the right to "elect their own union representatives" to put their grievances to the management.

The unions have used the events to strengthen their position in the S.A. labour hierarchy and as controllers of class struggle. Although both the regime and the unions used the events to align white and black workers behind the banners of Afrikaner and African nationalism the fact that white workers objected to being given extra work as scabs points to the fundamental unity of white and black workers against the bosses. The gaining of permanent status by the black workers is a significant step towards equalising the conditions of black and white workers and in the longer term is also a step towards unity of the working class.

NUM AGAINST THE MINERS

Oct. 1987

UNIONS SABOTAGE MINER'S STRIKE

The strike by black goldminers was defeated after three weeks of bitter struggle. Despite 50 000 sackings and mass recruitment of scabs, despite repression which left 6 dead and 250 wounded the miners were determined to continue their struggle and voted to continue at pit head ballots only the day before the union called off the strike.

The workers were demanding a 30% across the board increase together with increased holiday and death payments - last year 681 miners were killed in accidents. The bosses offered a 15 to 23% wage rise incorporating differentials designed to split the more skilled miners from the unskilled, and minor concessions on holidays and death benefits. When this offer was rejected by a decisive pithead ballot the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) ordered the miners to surrender. The general role played by the union and this capitulation in particular clearly illustrate the function which trade unions serve for the capitalist system today, even when, as in South Africa

they are only just being legalised, lack a stake in the capitalist order and talk the language of class struggle.

In many ways this strike was a crucial one for the S.A. bosses. It was the longest strike in S.A. history and was the first real test of the new tactics the bosses have adopted for dealing with the class struggle. The central element in these tactics was the creation of black trade unions to control and discipline the class struggle.

UNIONISATION - THE BOSSES' STRATEGY

By the mid 70's the South African bosses realised the the methods of controlling the class struggle, which had been used for the last 20 years, were no longer effective. Between the banning of black trade unions in 1953 and their legalisation in 1979 the class struggle was met with naked violence. While repression was effective during the reconstruction period following world war

2 it was primarily designed for migrant labour which was unskilled and cheap.

The dramatic fall in the rate of profit in S.A. in the early 70's (from around 17% at the end of the 60's to 8%) caused the bosses to introduce more capital equipment, shed labour and increase productivity by better training. This led to the requirement of a stable skilled black working class and control of the class struggle. This is the primary reason that the S.A. bosses, with Anglo American Mining Corporation at their head, set about creating black trade unions. Obviously, they also hoped for other benefits, such as reducing the cost of labour by replacing well paid white workers with low paid black workers. The bosses have, since the mid 70's, campaigned for an end to statutory reservation of jobs for whites, and it is significant that during this strike the last law reserving mining jobs for white workers was repealed by parliament.

So far these new unions have served the bosses well. Although union members have won pay increases, these have barely kept up with inflation and taken no account of increased productivity. Meanwhile the class struggle has been kept under control. The last miners strike, which took place in 1984 and achieved a 15% pay increase, while inflation was 13%, was called off by the NUM after only one day! The recent strike, though longer and expensive for the bosses, has shown the union is an effective tool for controlling and defeating the miners.

TACTICS TO WIN

From the start it was clear that this strike could only be won if it was won quickly. This meant generalisation and extension. Only 300 000 miners out of 500 000 struck which meant approximately a third of the mines continued to work. Instead of advocating a campaign of picketting and persuasion of other miners, the union started the strike by urging all miners to return to their "homelands" - places often thousands of miles from the mines! This was an immediate cause of demoralisation and loss of momentum. The union also only aimed to bring out certain "targetted" mines. Other mines were allowed to continue operations, and supposedly the strike would be won through attrition.

The obvious parallel with the British miners strike is even more cruel when one considers the desperate hand to mouth existence of the miners their distant families and dependants and also the massive 2 million pool of even more desperate unemployed.

From the start the union's emphasis was on legality. Announcing the famous "go home" call the NUM general secretary Ramaphosa said, "this is the only way we can have a peaceful strike in the mining industry." The only way to win the strike was to spread it and clearly this involves breaking the bosses laws and confrontations with the

police just as it does in Britain. Instead the NUM proposed passivity while its leaders negotiated with the chamber of mines.

Even if the attempt to spread the strike on the mines had failed there was potential for spreading it elsewhere. In fact, throughout the country there was a mass of strikes going on at the same time. COSATU, the congress of trade unions to which the NUM is affiliated, estimates that at the time of the strike there were 60 000 steel and engineering workers on strike, 15 000 chemical workers, 20 000 hotel workers, 20 000 postal workers and 10 000 food industry workers all on strike. Any serious attempt to win the strike would have tried to link these struggles whose pay demands were virtually identical. If a linkage had been established with any of these strikes the way would have been opened for spreading the struggle much more widely and calling out non-mining sectors. Instead the NUM and COSATU isolated the struggle, emphasised legality and promoted peace and negotiations, even when the bosses began to fire miners by the thousand.

The anger and will to fight of the miners is shown by their vote to continue the strike even after 50 000 of their fellows had been sacked and mass recruitment of replacement miners was underway. Instead of harnessing this energy to a program which could win the strike, the union isolated it, weakened it and finally directly opposed it by ordering a return to work.

This defeat represents a significant victory for the bosses and a proof that their policy of forming unions has paid off. Not only have they achieved their aim of keeping wages below inflation, the strike was also, as the union intended, much less violent than previous strikes with far less damage to mine property.

COMMUNIST VOICE

What was missing through these events was a voice speaking for the tactics which could have won the strike, and denouncing the unions as tools of the bosses. In the longer term workers struggles in South Africa can only succeed when the political divisions propagated by black and white nationalism are directly challenged and unity on a class basis forged between black and white workers. If white miners had joined the strike the outcome would have been very different. It is necessary for the communist forces which exist inside South Africa and in the diaspora of exiles to unite to form a communist organisation capable of propagandising for this perspective today.

Mandela: The Saviour of South African Capitalism

April 1990

The release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of the ANC and other black nationalist organisations on 11th February 1990 was the official signing of apartheid's death warrant. The particular type of capitalist exploitation organised under the apartheid system will, in the coming period, be swept away to make way for the so-called "democratic" system which is the norm throughout the West. Apartheid is of no further use to capitalism. The chief problem which capitalism faces is achieving this transition without allowing the country to descend into chaos and civil war, which after 40 years of barbaric oppression remains a real possibility. The white liberals are clearly unable to achieve this transition without the support of the African nationalists and it is for this reason that the ANC has been legalised and Mandela released from prison. After serving 28 years for treason, Mandela has been catapulted to the centre of South African politics as the man of the hour, the man to save South African capitalism. How has this come about?

80s PROVE APARTHEID'S BANKRUPTCY

Since the uprising in Soweto in 1976 the South African capitalist class has been divided into two main factions, those who favoured continuing with apartheid at all costs, and those who argued for the establishment of non-racial "democratic" capitalist exploitation. The advent of de Klerk to the presidency indicates the second faction has now achieved power, but this has not been an easy process. Since 1976 a decade and a half of persisting with apartheid have exposed its complete bankruptcy and led the ruling class into its present cul-de-sac. Military adventures have ended in defeat, internal repression has failed to prevent massive social unrest and the economy is in ruins.

After the settlement in Zimbabwe the South African regime tried to resist change by using its economic strength, and when this failed, by using its military power. The military adventures in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho and Angola have been well publicised. Although the regime liked to present them as great victories, they were in fact part of a slow defeat. The inglorious hauling down of the South African flag in Windhoek, capital of Namibia, on 21st March, 1990 was a dramatic acceptance of this fact. The wars just became too expensive and by 1989 the Angola/Namibia war alone was costing the regime over \$1 billion annually.

Within the country repression had failed to quell the unrest, though the dead were now counted in thousands. After five years of troops in the townships and the imposition of a state of emergency, rebellion is still

boiling over. As we go to press a further 13 people have been killed by the police in the township of Sebokeng. A further example of the regime's failure is the carnage in Natal province where the police have for 5 years staked a feud between black factions by arming and assisting the thugs of chief Buthelezi's Inkatha movement. The violence began when the bosses used scabs of the Inkatha union to break a bitter strike at the Sarmcol rubber factory in Howick in 1985. The scabs were protected and armed by the police and the feud between them and the strikers union federation, COSATU, and the UDF followed. This violence has now reached the point where 2500 people have been killed in the last 12 months alone and is now spilling over into the centres of the cities with shootouts occurring in broad daylight. The regime's attempts to divide and rule have led to lawlessness and anarchy on a scale sufficient to scare off capital and reduce profits.

The regime has also failed to tame the class struggle. The rail strike which ended in January this year left at least 27 workers dead and over 10 million pounds of rolling stock destroyed. This is a typical example of the violence of the class struggle.

It is, however, in the economy that the apartheid regime has failed most miserably. The early 80's saw a sharp fall in the price of gold from \$613 to \$350 per ounce and South Africa had to borrow heavily. \$1.1bn was borrowed from the IMF and loans from US banks rose to \$4.6bn by 1983. The GNP actually decreased in both 1982 and 1983 and in late 1985 the international banks led by Chase Manhattan refused to roll over short term loans of approximately \$13bn out of the foreign debt which was \$20bn. The regime declared a moratorium on its debts and the value of the Rand fell. Since then there has been a flight of capital from the country and at least \$13bn has been withdrawn. South Africa today has a growth rate of only 2% an inflation rate of 15%. The regime now needs an impossibly high balance of surplus surplus to repay its debts and a constant flow of oil, high tech imports and skilled labour. The international bourgeoisie has finally lost confidence, forcing the government to retreat into a financial siege economy. This can only be a temporary measure for the loss of longer term capital is debilitating the economy as a whole and there is massive unemployment.

U.S. IMPERIALISM FORCES CHANGES

With the Russian disengagement from southern Africa, Western imperialism saw little point in further support for the apartheid regime. The military adventures were actually

endangering Western interests in the frontline states, e.g. South African commandos were caught sabotaging Gulf Oil installations in Angola and the destruction of the rail network in Mozambique was disrupting British interests in Zimbabwe. Britain has even sent troops to help Zimbabwean troops protect the rail links. Within South Africa apartheid was restricting profits and endangering the enormous capital investments of the West. Under these circumstances US imperialism took the lead in forcing the regime to accept a Namibian settlement and to ditch apartheid.

ENDING APARTHEID TO SAVE CAPITALISM

The liberal faction of the South African bourgeoisie have since the mid 80's recognised that the only social force able to restore social peace and profits is the ANC. It is for this reason that a stream of eminent persons from the chairman of Anglo-American to academics of Afrikaans universities have been beating a trail to the ANC's door to sound them out about post-apartheid society. They see in the ANC, and in Mandela, the force which can save capitalism. It is for this reason that Mandela has been brought from prison.

Many black workers look to Mandela as the man who will free them from exploitation and hardship. They are greatly deceived.

Since his release Mandela has been at pains to stress his loyalty to the ANC and its objectives as stated in the 1955 Freedom Charter. This charter is a liberal programme spiced with a number of state capitalist proposals. At no stage does this programme express any opposition to capitalism and the exploitation of the working class, rather it aims to make this exploitation democratic and share the spoils amongst a black capitalist class. We cannot do better than let Mandela speak for himself on this,

"The ANC has never at any period of its history advocated a revolutionary change in the economic structure of the country, nor has itever condemned capitalist society." (From Mandela's trial speech 1964)

One thing which Mandela has stated since his release is his continued commitment to the nationalisation of the mines, banks and large industries. Nationalisation, as Engels pointed out over a century ago, does not alter the capitalist nature of production or the laws of capitalism as is now clear from the crisis in the Russian empire. It is simply the introduction of state capitalism and is not a gain for the working class. In fact the ANC's objectives have nothing to do with the working class's interests, they are to use the power of the state to foster a black capitalist class. This is precisely what the Afrikaner nationalist party attempted to do in the 1930's and succeeded in doing after its victory in 1948. The Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie used the state as a vehicle to enable it to accumulate capital

and thus to become a fully fledged section of the South African capitalist class. It is precisely this which the ANC proposes. Again we let Mandela speak for himself,

"The break-up and democratisation of these monopolies will open up fresh fields for the development of a prosperous, non-European bourgeois class. For the first time in the history of this country, the non-Europeans bourgeoisie will have the opportunity to own, in their own name and right, mills and factories, and trade and private enterprise will boom and flourish as never before."

(Mandela "In our lifetime" 1956 reprinted in "No easy walk to freedom" R. First (Ed.) 1965)

Thus the nationalisations proposed in the Freedom Charter, even if they were carried out, and doubt has been cast on this by Mandela's millionaire friend Richard Maponya, would not benefit the working class. Mandela's task is to save South African capitalism and as workers worldwide know this means sacrifices and worse conditions for them.

SOUTH AFRICAN WORKERS

South African workers have no interest in placing themselves in the infantry of the African nationalists. Today's nationalists are tomorrow's bosses. The way forward is for workers to continue their own class struggles for the ending of apartheid and for better pay and conditions; to unify and extend these struggles independently of any negotiations the regime may have with the African nationalists. This struggle should give itself the longer term aim of overthrowing capitalism and building a communist society. The first step on this road is the creation of a political organisation of the most conscious workers fighting only for the interests of the working class. The emancipation of the South African working class is the task of the workers themselves. As elsewhere in the world the talk of democracy and national independence is no more than a diversion to create a new form of slavery for the working class. The release of Mandela and his courting by Western imperialism should already have made that message abundantly clear.

MORE CARNAGE FOR CAPITALISM

Nov. 1990

In the months of July to September over 800 people were killed in the Johannesburg area of South Africa, the Reef, in so called "black on black" fighting. This fighting was an extension of the battles in Natal province which in the last 5 years have claimed 4000 lives. Such butchery is on a scale comparable with that in the Lebanon, yet it is occurring in a country with a strong central government and a ruthlessly efficient police and military. Why is this?

A Settlement to save South African Capitalism

As we showed in WV 51 the 80's had proved the economic and political bankruptcy of apartheid. Apartheid was of no further use to capitalism, rather it was an obstacle in the path of profits and accumulation and so it had to go. It is for this reason that the ANC has been legitimised and its leaders, who professed undying loyalty to capitalism, released from gaol. We also pointed out, however, that the path towards a "democratic" capitalism in SA was a highly dangerous one containing the possibility of descent into chaos and civil war. The barbaric slaughter on the reef in battles between the ANC and Inkatha is a confirmation of this danger.

Inkatha

Like the ANC Inkatha is a capitalist organisation but a more reactionary one. It was founded in the 70's as a cultural organisation to preserve Zulu customs, ie it was exclusively Zulu and nationalist. It was unashamedly pro-free enterprise supporting the free market and aimed to build up a Zulu capitalist class. Its leader, Chief Buthelezi, who is the government appointed chief minister of the Zulu homeland of Kwa Zulu has attempted to make the movement THE national movement of SA's 7 million Zulus. Approximately 5 million Zulus live in Kwa Zulu, an area about three

times the size of Lebanon, which is poverty-stricken and where illiteracy is the norm. Buthelezi controls the budget, almost entirely funded by Pretoria, and the administration of this territory. Of particular importance in ensuring Inkatha's dominance are the dreaded Kwa Zulu Police (KZP) who, of course, are trained armed and supported by their comrades in arms, the South African Police (SAP). In rural areas local chiefs, loyal to Inkatha are appointed who in turn appoint pro-Inkatha "Indunas" or headmen under them. These people are able to levy local taxes and, in cooperation with the KZP, arm their followers and become virtual war lords in their own areas. They operate a reign of terror and carry out murder after murder with impunity. Much of Inkatha's membership has been recruited by such people at gunpoint.

White Nationalists

The South African regime used Inkatha as a bulwark against the ANC/UDF unionisation of workers in Natal. Inkatha attempted to start its own union, UWUSA, whose job was to supply scabs during strikes and attempt to keep Zulu workers under Inkatha control. It was in the picket line battles in Natal in 1985 that the first flames of the violence were kindled. Unlike the latest fighting these battles were not tribal, they were Zulu against Zulu. In the late 80's the regime saw the ANC as the principal enemy so Inkatha was given police arms and protection.

De Klerk's moves towards a settlement mean that attempts to annihilate the ANC have been abandoned; however attempts to weaken it have not. If Inkatha can be brought into the negotiations as a Zulu voice on an equal footing to the ANC then a constitution more favourable to group rights, group democracy and all the other famous ideas of avoiding universal suffrage on a common roll, are more likely to be agreed. De

Klerk therefore supports the violence to a degree and this is why he will not sack his law and order minister Vlok, as Nelson Mandela advises. In doing this, however, De Klerk is treading a dangerous path as there are also sections of the white population who have an interest in simply encouraging further chaos and bloodshed in order to discredit the reforms and return to old-style apartheid. There can be little doubt that sections of the police are actually doing this. Not only is Inkatha being armed and supported but some whites are also taking part in their raids. It has recently been reported that whites with blackened faces have been killed during Inkatha raids and the bodies spirited away by the South African Police. Such a descent into chaos threatens De Klerk's attempts to stabilise the situation and attract international capital to the country. When 140 people are killed in a single night or when 26 are butchered on a train in Johannesburg in broad daylight and when no attempt is made to arrest those responsible, international capital is scared off.

Inkatha Gains

The recent fighting on the reef appears to have started with a week of action called by the ANC against Inkatha. A stayaway from work was organised on the 2nd July and the demands for the dismantling of the KZP and the arrest of Inkatha warlords were raised. The Zulu workers on the reef are mostly migrant workers living in hostels. They endure appalling conditions because this is the only way they can support their families in Kwa Zulu. There was immediate picket line violence as Zulu workers ignored the stayaway. Inkatha with the help of the police had little difficulty in presenting the ANC's campaign as an attack on Zulus and the Zulu nation, and after the first 50 people had been killed this is what it became. Zulus were stoned and burned because being Zulu made them suspected Inkatha sympathisers, and conversely Xhosas, who dominate the ANC leadership, were killed by Zulus for being Xhosa.

The Zulus proved the stronger force and the ANC had the humiliation of calling on the South

African army to protect the townships. This was precisely the opposite of their previous demands for the removal of the army and the ending of the state of emergency. The army has returned unleashing operation "Iron Fist" which consists of curfews, road blocks, house searches and further repression. The ANC has also had to backtrack on its refusal to meet the Inkatha leadership and at the end of October the ANC proposed a meeting between Mandela and Buthelezi. All this has been a setback for the ANC and could lose it support among the township youth. It has not however, been a betrayal, as some claim, since both organisations support the same fundamental interests, those of capitalism and these interests have never been in question.

Workers' Interests

As we said in Workers Voice No 51:-

South African workers have no interest in placing themselves in the infantry of the African Nationalists.

Unfortunately this is what has occurred. The 800 dead were almost exclusively workers and the fighting was between two capitalist factions both of whom have no interest whatsoever in the welfare of the working class. Workers in South Africa should continue the struggle for their own interests of pay, conditions and the ending of apartheid and refuse to be drawn into the bloody feuds of the future bosses of South African capitalism. It is vital that communists in South Africa form a political organisation capable of denouncing both the ANC and Inkatha and voicing the interests of the South African working class.

Apartheid to Go: Capitalism to Stay

March 1991

The announcement by the South African President, F.W. de Klerk on 1st February that three more of the central pillars of apartheid are to be scrapped is a continuation of the South African capitalists' strategy of ending apartheid to save capitalism. As we have shown in previous editions of the paper (see *Workers' Voice* 51 and 54) apartheid has become a threat to the very existence of South African capitalism itself. Just as democracy was "conceded" in the nineteenth century to European workers to ideologically undermine their struggle against Europe's capitalists now the South African capitalists, spearheaded by the multinational bosses want to do the same thing. Conceding political "freedom" masks the economic and social prison which workers face under capitalism. Apartheid thus has to go and a more democratic system of capitalist exploitation has to be introduced in its place.

Whilst the multinationals hope to benefit from a more pliant workforce, the removal of the laws in question will principally benefit black capitalists, and after their repeal the barriers to the development of black capitalists and their businesses will be removed. They will now have the same rights and privileges as white capitalists. This is the real meaning of the abolition of the Group Areas Act and the Race Classification Act. Both acts were passed in 1950 when the Afrikaner nationalist government was consolidating the system of exploitation based on cheap migrant labour. In those days the idea of a black capitalist class was anathema to the Nationalists. Afrikaner capitalism was then in its infancy and saw its interests as being in the continued use of a system of cheap, colonial-style, unskilled labour. When the "classical" imperialist powers like Britain and France, under pressure from the USA, were abandoning colonialism for more subtle imperialist methods the Afrikaner bourgeoisie were developing their own form of it. The rise of a black bourgeoisie was seen by them as a competitive threat which would undermine the whole system. The political forces which supported the rise of the black capitalist class such as the ANC, the South African Communist Party and the Liberals were banned and silenced. These laws were aimed at keeping the African peoples

solely as a proletariat, and their stupidity, even in capitalist terms, which the liberals clearly pointed out at the time, has been amply demonstrated in the intervening years.

The Land Act, which is the third act to be abolished, forbids Africans - who make up 80% of the population - to own land in all but about 10% of the country. This act actually dates from a much earlier period and was passed in 1913. Its purpose was similar to that of the enclosure of the common lands in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was to drive subsistence farmers off the land and force them to become wage labourers. Capital was unable to establish itself without this wage labour and the Land Act was aimed at creating the landless proletariat which South African capitalism required. The three decades following the enacting of this law saw the almost total elimination of African farmers owning their own land and cattle. It also eliminated those farming land owned by whites on the sharecropping basis known as the "on-the-half" system in which half the harvest went as rent to the white landowner. These people too were transformed into wage labourers and the 7.3% of the land then "reserved" for Africans became the reservoirs of labour for factories, farms and mines. This act has long since achieved its purpose. It has created the proletariat. To abolish it now will introduce a minor safety valve for some blacks to become farmers or for the existing black bourgeoisie (i.e. ANC leaders and backers) to buy houses in hitherto restricted "white" areas.

As far as the working class is concerned the rescinding of these laws will not make a great deal of difference (police harassment under them has been almost stopped). The new freedoms are essentially only for those who already own capital.

Class Struggle not National Struggle

Now that the South African capitalist class has started to reform South African capitalism it cannot turn back. They clearly hope that their acceptance of the black capitalists as class brothers and sisters will also buy off the black working class, stabilise the situation

and encourage foreign capital to return to the country. There is some justification for this optimism. Up to now the ANC has been largely successful in channelling the struggle against capitalism into black nationalism. Mandela has not been praised and feted by the international capitalist press for nothing. But it will not be so easy for the ANC to preserve this myth once it becomes clear that little will change for the workers. Of course there will be radical splinters from the ANC which will continue to represent black nationalism as black class interests. South African workers will have to resist this and recognise that their only hope of a better future lies as one of the battalions in the international class army which confronts capitalism everywhere.

Who Will Exploit the Workers?

Autumn 1991

The so-called "Inkathagate scandal which came to light in July and August reveals the brutality of the struggle between the South African capitalist factions over who will exploit the South African workers in future.

"Workers' Voice" has consistently maintained that the violence in Natal from 1986 on and the more recent butchery on the reef have been sustained by the regime. It is now freely admitted that the regime has organised carnage on a massive scale by training, arming and organising death squads and gangs of Inkatha warriors. As some of those hired to do the butchery begin to spill the beans it is becoming clear that a campaign on such a scale must have the blessing of the government and it is not the work of a handful of die-hard white racists. It is now also clear that government funds have been going to Inkatha and particularly to its trade union, UWUSA, on such a scale that this must have been authorised at cabinet level. What are the real issues behind this violence?

Capitalist Factions

The driving force behind the changes in South Africa, as we have frequently pointed out, is South African capitalism's need for higher profits which requires foreign capital investment. This in turn demands social stability and a political settlement. Since apartheid can no longer guarantee these

conditions and therefore those profits the factions that supported apartheid were of no further use for South African capitalism. Their historical role was played out and those factions opposing apartheid were now essential. Hence the rapid liberalisation of the Afrikaner National Party and the unbanning of the African nationalists and their fellow-travellers. However, although all of these factions are now in favour of a "non-racial bourgeois democratic" South Africa, there remain deadly rivalries between them.

The Afrikaner nationalists wish to entrench their privileges. This demands that the new constitution is drawn up by them and voted on by the present white minority electorate of approximately 4 millions. After a "yes" vote in a referendum this constitution could be imposed by the present regime. The recent constitutional proposals of De Klerk put to the National Party congress in Bloemfontein indicate the type of constitution the regime has in mind. It is one sufficiently weighted in favour of the minorities and property-owners to give them a power of veto thus ensuring that the privileges of the present ruling faction persist. Clearly these constitutional proposals would have to be given some sort of assent by the 30 million African majority. The Afrikaner nationalists hope that this could be done by a constitutional conference in which homeland leaders, who are appointed and paid by the regime, Asian and mixed race leaders and whites could outvote the African nationalists.

The African nationalists for their part wish to use the state as a vehicle to build up the class of black capitalists. Such a process will erode the privileges of the white petty bourgeoisie and brings them into direct conflict with the Afrikaner nationalists. However since the blacks are in the overwhelming majority this does not require cooking up any complicated and ridiculous constitutions. Consequently the ANC favour an elected constitutional assembly to draft the constitution, and an interim government to govern the country until the constitution is implemented.

The weakness in the Afrikaner nationalists scheme is getting some support of African support. The campaign of terror is designed to achieve this support. It is hoped that relentless violence will fragment the support for the ANC and, more concretely, divide the blacks along tribal lines so that a settlement, any settlement, even one dictated by the Afrikaner nationalists, would be preferable than the continuing mayhem and massacres. Government agents such as Buthelezi, the

Kwa Zulu homeland leader and his Inkatha organisation are vital to this scheme, hence the massive support which he has been given.

The campaign of violence however is also preventing capital investment from abroad despite the lifting of U.S. sanctions by Bush. It has been estimated that an investment of £20 billions is required annually to revive the economy ravaged by sanctions and the world capitalist crisis of accumulation. It was to get this investment that the white capitalists of South Africa pushed to get rid of apartheid in the first place. Consequently these important sections of South African capitalism do not support the De Klerk strategy.

The ANC by contrast, is making itself more attractive to these sections of the "white business community". First, at its July Congress it made its previous commitment to the nationalisation of the banks and miners even more vague and distant. The collapse of the Soviet Empire has undermined those in the ANC who wanted a command-style economy thus making it easy for Mandela to shift the emphasis of the ANC programme. Secondly, and not unconnectedly, the ANC is attempting to attract international capital. An example of this was the setting up of the Development Bank of Southern Africa in New York in June following a visit by Nelson Mandela in which he talked to some of those involved. The bank which is spearheaded by the Rockefeller Foundation is to channel U.S. capital into a post-apartheid South Africa. Its programme, which was sent to the ANC for approval, says support will be given to development projects committed to "economic liberalism and the growth of the private sector". It is no wonder the ANC's East European command-style policies of the 1955 Freedom Charter are being quietly forgotten. South African state capitalism will not greatly change with the ending of apartheid and the establishment of so-called "majority government". It will in fact be the rule of a minority of white and black capitalists over the working class of every colour or group.

No Change for the South African Workers

Clearly the battles being fought between all the warring groups are ones between different factions of the capitalist class. There is no proletarian or working class content in any of them. A victory for the ANC would not benefit the black working class just as the ZANU victory in what used to be called

Rhodesia did not benefit the Zimbabwean workers. This is because the ANC is committed to capitalism (and always has been) and the continued exploitation of the working class. It is on the backs of the South African workers that the leaders of the ANC and the rising African capitalist class will enrich themselves. Already the ANC leadership is sharing the privileges of the South African bosses (e.g. ex-ANC President Oliver Tambo recently moved into a 3.5 million Rand house next door to the financial director of Anglo-American). The tragedy is that whilst these parasites wallow in luxury workers are on the streets killing each other because of the manoeuvring for power of the capitalist factions. The fact that it keeps the working class divided by racial and national allegiances perfectly suits their game. It will make it all the easier to extort more surplus value from them in the new capitalist disorder that is called South Africa.

South Africa after the Referendum BLACK BOSSES CLOSER TO POWER NO CHANGE FOR THE WORKERS

Summer 1992

The massive vote for reform in the March referendum should not have surprised anyone. The real issue to be decided was whether the black African bourgeoisie should be given a share of political power. South African capitalism together with Western imperialism required a decisive "Yes" vote, and when capitalism has decisive needs it finds means of securing the right votes from the working class. The South African bosses all contributed massive funds to the "Yes" campaign as the only answer which might revive South African capitalism. The "No" camp was portrayed as an absurd anachronism in the media. Capitalism needs to bring the black bosses into the circle of the ruling elite because it knows that without them the explosive social situation could not be brought under control. Without them South African industry cannot

be restructured and without these things foreign capital could not be secured for the investment that is so desperately needed. For South African capital the Mandelas, Tambos and Mbekes have a vital role to play and the sooner they are brought to the centre of the stage the better.

In winning this referendum De Klerk has jumped several hurdles at one leap. The most important of these is that the referendum can be presented as the mandate for a binding constitutional deal with the African nationalists. This means that there is no need for a future whites-only referendum on the new constitution. Secondly, he has marginalised his right wing opponents, and thirdly he has now achieved a free hand to end the policy of internal destabilisation carried out by the police and military. This allows closer cooperation with the ANC and the dumping of Inkatha. Moves along these lines have been evident since the referendum and even tentative moves to purge the police and military have been started. For example, a white commander who ordered the massacre of ANC mourners at a funeral as part of the policy of support for Inkatha has been sentenced to death. More details of the operation of military training camps for Inkatha killers run by the army and the notorious death squads are slowly coming to light. These are, of course, implicating senior government and army figures, but clearly De Klerk feels that these people can be sacrificed. Meanwhile 5 white MPs have joined the ANC giving it a voice in the white parliament.

As the move to bring the African nationalists to power proceeds they too are marginalising their radical elements. This is the real meaning of Mandela's break with his wife Winnie, who still has a following amongst the more radical rank and file ANC members. It is also the reason behind Mandela's downgrading of the ANC's commitment to nationalisation of the key sectors of the South African economy.

Condition of the Working Class

The condition of the black African working class is appalling and is constantly deteriorating. *Le Monde Diplomatique* reports that overall 47% of the active population is unemployed, and that income per head has fallen 1.5% each year since 1981. Coupled with inflation of around 20%, no social security and the massive disruption of families and social patterns created by apartheid the social situation is explosive. More vulnerable sections of the population are on the brink of

starvation, particularly the elderly and children are often simply abandoned by destitute mothers. Levels of crime have long exceeded those of the worst US cities and the police have given up trying to enforce the law in many areas. These things are a consequence of both the global crisis of capitalism and the particular idiocies of apartheid.

The global aspect of the crisis is reflected in the general decline in the whole of the southern African region. Countries which have appeared stable for years, such as Malawi and Zaire have been torn apart by strikes, riots and mutinies. In Malawi the first strikes for thirty years have just taken place (see p. 2 of this issue). These two countries also suffer from the fact that they are no longer of strategic importance to Western imperialism since the ex-USSR's African ambitions in Angola and Mozambique have long since collapsed. Now loans and sources of economic support are drying up and the West has just realised that these countries are not democracies! Within Mozambique and Angola the situation has been made worse by the guerilla wars for which the West and particularly South Africa are directly responsible. Throughout the region there is also a severe drought and the combination of these factors is resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths in Mozambique and floods of refugees to the surrounding countries including South Africa. The misery inflicted upon them by South Africa does not end there. Many Mozambican women are sold as concubines for less than £40 to the black bourgeoisie whilst the white farmers take those that can work as slaves. If they complain of the lack of wages they are immediately handed over to the police for deportation back to Mozambique.

Democracy to the Rescue

The bosses aim to save the day by introducing bourgeois democracy and getting the black bosses up front to defuse the situation whilst little in fact will socially change. Already the press is full of talk about the need to dampen down the expectations Africans hold out for the future. In plain language that means that nothing will change with the introduction of democracy. All that will change is that the workers will have voted for their oppressors, who will be in a position to then impose restructuring, which for the working class means increased productivity, redundancies and further hardship, with a "mandate" from the people. The workers' position will in fact be worse.

Unfortunately the working class in South Africa and elsewhere, e.g. Malawi, appears to be taken in, at least for the present, by the democratic charade. Democracy has given nothing to the European and American working classes but it will give the bosses time and political space. South African workers should not be deflected from their own programme as apartheid's collapse dominates the agenda. Workers should continue to fight on the economic front for better wages and conditions and against redundancies. Here they will immediately come into conflict with the ANC-dominated unions. These will call more and more openly for workers to give the ANC a chance, be patient and even make sacrifices for the "good of the country". All this shit has been heard before. South African workers will have to break with the millionaire businessmen who fund the nationalists and with their henchmen in the trades unions. With the collapse of apartheid the real class struggle can begin.

Workers Strike for Bosses Demands

Autumn 1992

In early August South African workers staged the largest strikes in the country's history. Between three and four million workers struck in a general strike for two days despite massive intimidation and threats of violence from Government and police gangs of killers. The fact that this occurred indicates the high level of militancy on the part of the workers and their determination to better their conditions and win concessions from their bosses. The strike was called at a time when there were already bitter and prolonged strikes in various sectors of the economy, particularly the motor and health sectors where mass sackings had been the order of the day.

Despite the strike was turned from being a vehicle for the defence of class interests into being a defence of the interests of the black bosses of the African Nationalist Congress. Instead of a struggle for the defence of wages and working conditions the strike became a demonstration of support for the negotiating position of the ANC and an attempt to win concessions from the white bosses in the current negotiations to cook up a new non-racial capitalist order.

From the start the ANC tried to limit and control the strike and in this they were largely

successful. At first a week long strike was planned but the main union COSATU offered to limit it to two days if certain concessions were made by the white bosses, such as closing their factories. Despite the fact that many of the white bosses support the African nationalists they were not prepared to lose two days profit. When the concessions were refused COSATU limited the strike to two days anyway and gave the bosses plenty of warning. They further ensured that no class demands were raised, such as the obvious one for re-instatement of workers sacked in the car factories. When the strike passed off peacefully and caused limited disruption the African nationalists were delighted at their success in controlling it and congratulating themselves all round.

The reality behind what has happened is that the workers have been tricked into becoming the infantry of the rising African capitalist class as they struggle for political power. The workers struggle has been used as a force to intimidate the Government into making further concessions which could re-open negotiations to install this class in power. Once they are in power they will be forced to hold down wages and the living conditions of the workers just as viciously as their white colleagues do at present. Already they openly talk of disillusioning the workers of their rising expectations and the need for sacrifices. The African capitalists cannot help the workers since their aim is to live off the surplus value created by them. The workers only road to a better future is to struggle against both black and white capitalists for their own class interests. In the context of this strike this means that the workers would have taken control of the strike themselves instead of awaiting the leadership of the ANC union federation COSATU. In which case they would have been able to impose their own demands for better wages and conditions. Such demands are not compatible with a South African capitalism in crisis (whoever runs it) and would have launched the workers on course to establishing their own programme.

A Step Towards Nonracial Exploitation

March 1993

In mid-February the South African government and the ANC agreed to draft proposals for a transitional government, a timetable for its implementation and the resumption of the constitutional conference (Codesa). *Workers' Voice* has consistently argued that the interests of capitalism demanded the death of apartheid and the institution of nonracial bourgeois democracy. Although the process has been a drawn out and messy one, the recent events are a further confirmation that it is the needs of capitalism which are the motor force behind developments, and that the major players in this development are capitalist factions.

The Codesa talks were deadlocked from May '92 because the capitalist faction represented by the Nationalist Party and the SA government demanded a veto for whites in the future constitution. This was irreconcilable with the position of the other major capitalist faction, the ANC. The breakdown of the talks was followed by 9 months in which both factions have tried to strengthen their position outside the talks. The government stepped up its campaign of murder and mayhem designed to demoralise the ANC supporters into accepting any deal which would end the carnage. This culminated in the Boipatong massacre of June '92. After this the ANC formally broke off the talks and launched a series of protests, the most significant being a 2-day general strike in early August in which 3.5 million workers took part. This strike was too short to seriously embarrass SA capital. It was not designed as a class response to class issues. It was a controlled warning by the ANC to the government of its ability to mobilise black workers for its capitalist ends and as such it was successful. Other protests were fairly ineffectual. It was, however, the continuing economic crisis and social breakdown which forced compromise and resumption of the talks.

From the reports which we have it appears that it is, as we predicted, the ANC which has gained most from the 9 months breakdown of the talks. There appear now to be no demands for a white veto, only an agreement for a transitional government to remain in power for five years while an elected assembly drafts a new constitution. As predicted in WV 61, De Klerk has had to abandon his support for the programme of massacres which the regime was pursuing with such enthusiasm. A start has been made to clearing out the top ranking butchers from the military and police and the rug is being pulled from under Buthelezi and the Inkatha

thugs, who are now clearly visible as creatures of the regime. At the same time Mandela has qualified the ANC's programme of nationalisation of the mines and other capital, a programme clearly unacceptable to Western capitalism as a whole, to the point where these things are simply not on the agenda. Also workers have been warned of the need to limit their expectations of better conditions after the institution of bourgeois democracy, i.e., capitalist exploitation will continue just as savagely.

Western Imperialism

South Africa is still a country with vital interests for Western capitalism which needs to continue exploiting its minerals and its labour. Now that Russian imperialism has been eliminated from the area, Western imperialism is free to dictate a settlement and it is Western imperialism which is the determining force behind the moves towards settlement in this part of Africa. The principal events of the last few years such as the Namibian settlement, the moves towards settlement in Mozambique, the Angolan elections and the recent denunciation by the US of its creation, UNITA, and the impending changes in Zaïre all show the hand of Western imperialism moulding the area to its needs. These needs are nonracial capitalism with efficient and cheap client governments administering the area to the dictates of the IMF for the benefit of Western imperialism as a whole. The intervention in Somalia stands as a warning that direct intervention elsewhere in Africa to protect Western capital is a distinct possibility. In South Africa it is clear what is required and the major players are learning to dance to this tune, despite the ideological somersaults they are having to perform.

Working Class Opposition

As we have documented in previous articles conditions for the working class are atrocious. Neither international capitalism nor the local factions such as the ANC have any interest in or intention of changing this. South African workers need to unite, both black and white, and oppose all factions of capitalism. They need to struggle for better wages and conditions against the common enemy. It is particularly important for black workers to break with the ANC and take the road to class politics.

The ANC - The Shield of South African Capitalism

May 1993

The murder of Chris Hani, a leading member of the South African Communist Party and one-time head of the ANC guerrilla organisation, has once again created a major crisis for the apartheid regime in South Africa. It seems likely that this was the intention of the murderers. Those accused are connected to the fascist AWB of Eugene Terre Blanche and the extreme right wing of the ultra-racist Conservative Party, although the role of the South African security forces has yet to be explained. For years the ultra-right have been systematically outmanoeuvred by the National Party led by President De Klerk for years and this is an act intended to disrupt the slow process towards a power-sharing system between the ex-colonial white minority and the black majority. Plunging that process into chaos is their best bet of avoiding black majority rule.

Conditions of the Majority

Amazingly the black supporters of the ANC have shown considerable restraint. It is true that Mandela was booed by the youth element in the ANC when demanding calm, and it is true that there have been some riots. However the scale of these has been relatively small. The death-toll (some 28 people) in the week of Hani's funeral has largely been down to the indescribable brutality of the South African police against black demonstrators. It is also lower than the normal weekly average.

This restraint is all the more amazing when we remember that, for all the talk, the situation of the blacks in South Africa is worse than ten years ago. Black workers still earn only an eighth of white workers and unemployment in the townships has risen to almost 50%. Income per head has fallen 1.5% every year since 1981. As inflation is around 20% and there is no system of social security the situation is explosive. However the South African state has not been slow to channel anger into conflicts it can cope with. State funds and state agents have created a mini-civil war between the poorest workers, pitting Xhosa against Zulu, ANC members against the followers of Inkatha. If the blacks fight each other they won't fight the system.

ANC to the Rescue

But the best defence of South African capitalism is the ANC. For years the US and British-based multinationals, in their aim of maintaining stability for their investments have been pushing for an end to apartheid. Their preferred

candidate has been Mandela. After the murder of Hani it was Mandela, not De Klerk, who called for calm. Whilst De Klerk didn't bother to come back from his holidays, Mandela insisted on making two broadcasts for peace on South African TV on the day of Hani's death.

Now is the time for all South Africans to stand together against those who, from any quarter, wish to destroy what Chris Hani gave his life for - the freedom of all of us.

Financial Times 19.4.93

ANC marshals on the streets have largely kept the angriest of the youth in check. This has been the role of the ANC since long before Mandela's release three years ago. The African National Congress is in reality the movement of the South African black bourgeoisie. Its leaders no longer live in the townships but in previously white suburbs like Boksburg where Hani was gunned down outside his home. There are now black millionaires who finance the ANC and supply Mandela with a wealthy life-style. As the CWO has argued for almost twenty years the ending of apartheid will only marginally improve the civic status of blacks. It will not end their exploitation and poverty. In fact the ANC's democratic programme for blacks is essential to maintain the capitalist state in South Africa. As the Financial Times concluded

The expectation that talks, due to resume soon, will set a date for elections, was a vital safety valve.

In a editorial on 19th April, 1993.

It will change nothing for the working class in South Africa which must develop its own programme. As we wrote only last year,

South African workers should not be diverted from their own programme as apartheid's collapse dominates the agenda. Workers should continue to fight on the economic front for better wages and conditions and against redundancies. Here they will immediately come into conflict with the ANC-dominated unions. These will call more and more openly for workers to give the ANC a chance, be patient and even make sacrifices for the "good of the country". All this shit has been heard before. South African workers will have to break with the millionaire businessmen who fund the nationalists and their henchmen in the trades unions. With the collapse of apartheid the real class struggle can begin.

Black Bosses Closer to Power — No Change for the Workers (Workers' Voice 61, p.3)

DEMOCRACY AND PROLETARIAN MASSACRES

May 1994

While the moves towards a settlement in South Africa continue the violence aimed at preventing such a settlement escalates. On the one hand the progress towards an election continues with almost indecent haste, and the reason is clearly that the situation of both the Government and the ANC is becoming extremely difficult. For the ANC the scale of violence has made its calls for peace, restraint, moderation, patience and so forth almost incredible. In the week after the peace demonstration of 2 September, 100 people were killed, in August 550 were killed and in the last 3 years 10500 have died. Escalating bloodshed is strengthening the hand of the more radical elements who openly call for ending the constitutional talks and carrying the war into the white heartlands. Their cry of "No peace, no peace" and even the Pan African Congress slogan of "One settler one bullet" has been heard on ANC demonstrations since the military leader Chris Hani was gunned down. The ANC leadership bluntly informed the government that unless an election date was fixed they could "lose control" of their supporters in the townships. Similarly the comparatively minor massacres of whites coupled with an unprecedented breakdown of law and order have produced a steady haemorrhage of support for the Nationalist Government. The formation of the right wing umbrella organisation the Volksfront is a further threat.

For both the ANC and the Nationalists the sooner the election the better, for the sooner it is the less support they will lose. The agreement of a date for the elections of 27 April 1994 and the agreement on the constitution of the Transitional Executive Committee (TEC) are both achievements which indicate that the momentum to the election continues. These achievements are at the expense of great concessions on the part of the ANC. It appears that some sort of power sharing with the Nationalists is envisaged until the end of the century and binding conditions providing a framework for the future constitution will be laid down before the election. The TEC which was supposed to guarantee the fairness of the election by limiting the atrocities of the police and army requires such large majorities to override a government decision as to be virtually powerless. For the Nationalists, their entire programme since 1990 amounts to a complete repudiation of all they have stood for since 1912 and the adoption of the platform of the opposition. It is not surprising they feel vulnerable, rather it is a measure of the desperate situation of SA capitalism that they have been able to do this at all. However, as the CWO has continually pointed out it is the ANC and the

Nationalists who represent the mainstream interests of capitalism.

The right wing parties and Inkatha withdrew from the constitutional talks once an election date was fixed. They are conscious that an election will reveal the marginal nature of their support and they demand that their aims are guaranteed in advance of the drafting of any future constitution. These aims amount to a separate Afrikaner republic, in the case of the Afrikaner right, and a loose federation in which Inkatha and Chief Buthelezi retain power over Kwa Zulu, in the case of Inkatha. Such demands which are essentially a continuation of apartheid and the further Balkanisation of the country come from elements of the petit bourgeoisie and certainly are not in the interests of industrial capitalism. Industrial capital requires reincorporation of the existing homelands and a unitary state guaranteeing stable conditions of capitalist exploitation - precisely the policies of the ANC.

Violence

While it is clear that the aims of the right wing are not achievable, the capacity of these groupings to cause bloodshed and carnage is not in question. The links between Inkatha and the police and the military have been partly exposed as have the police and military's sordid involvement in various massacres. The Kwa Zulu homeland, Buthelezi and Inkatha are creations of apartheid and that the regime has armed them and used them for its own ends should not surprise anyone. The regime previously followed a policy of fomenting bloodshed in this way, however, the fact that the government has failed to reign in this violence at this stage indicates deep divisions in the regime. Indeed De Klerk still retains some of the people responsible for this butchery in key cabinet posts. Even the attempt to stem the violence by sending the army into the townships in August has not been successful. If the violence continues at the present level the timetable for the election will be thrown out.

Exploitation and massacres for the working class

Both the aims of "democracy" and the further division of the country serve the interests of the bourgeoisie and not those of the working class. The fact that it is workers who are being mobilised for the killing and who are the victims shows that the bosses have succeeded in persuading them to be cannon fodder in these battles. While many workers can see through the

lies of Inkatha those of the ANC still retain some credibility. The fundamental issue for the SA bosses is restoring profitability and this means stabilising the social situation and so regularising the exploitation of the working class. The finance minister, Derek Keys, stated quite clearly what was required. The economy must be restructured and government spending must fall, jobs must be cut in the civil service, there must be a wage freeze and interest rates must remain high. In addition massive capital investment was required. Mr Keys went on to add that there was agreement on these matters between himself and the ANC economic policy chief and that he often invited the general

secretary of COSATU (the union federation) to correct his economic plans one of the more important of which has been to raise VAT by 40%. He thinks the behaviour of organised labour in the tripartite National Economic Forum (the bosses, government and unions) has been "outstanding". (*Financial Times* 19/4/93) There is similar agreement on the issue of foreign capital investment and Nelson Mandela's trips abroad to persuade groups of businessmen to invest in SA are now regular events. All this clearly demonstrates that the aims of the ANC are those of industrial capitalism and exclude those of the working class.

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