

**A MILITANT LABOUR PAMPHLET**

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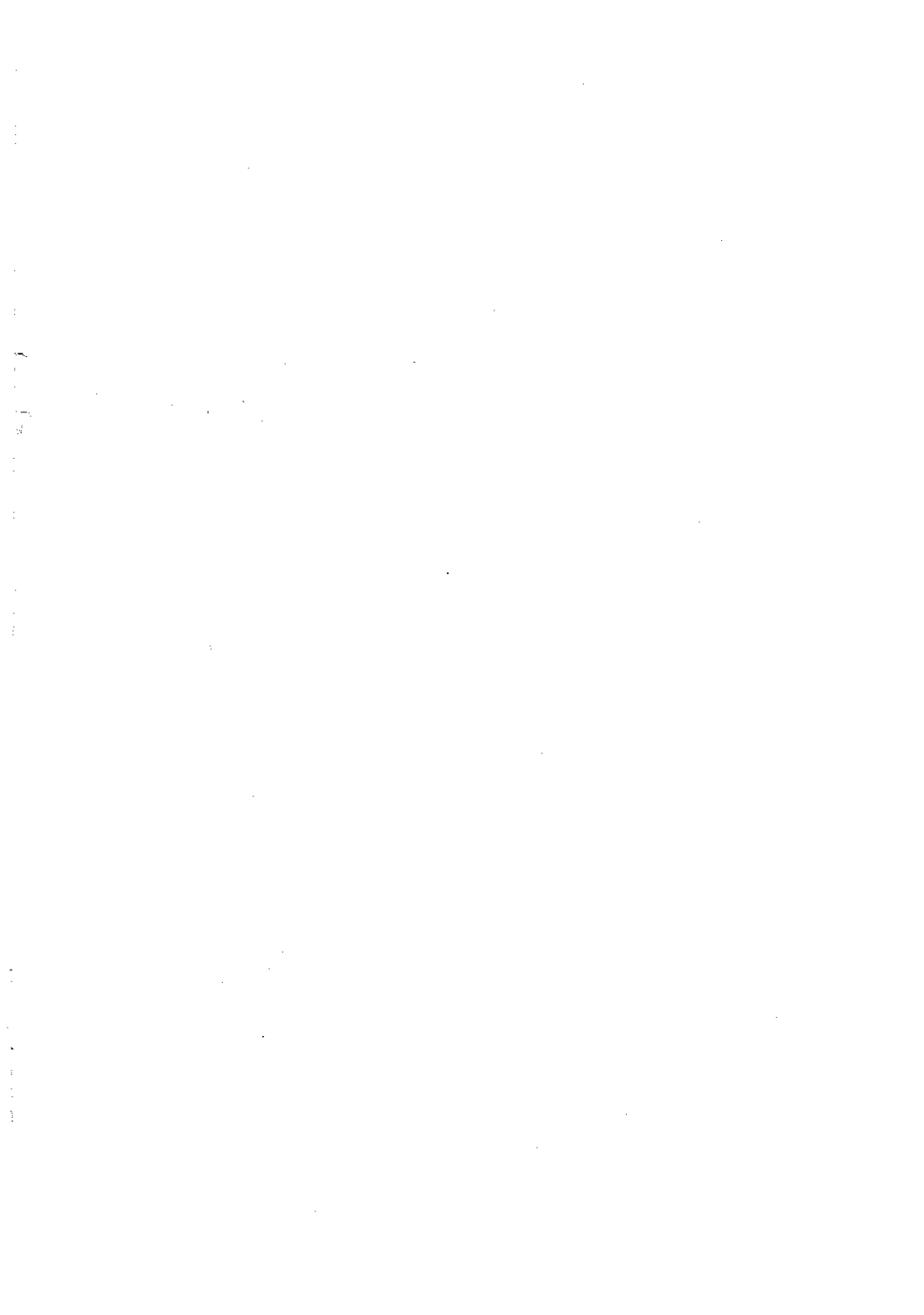
# SOUTH AFRICA

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*From slavery to the  
smashing of apartheid*

*by  
Peter Taaffe*

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**South Africa:**  
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## Introduction

This pamphlet has been produced by **Militant Labour**, an independent socialist organisation in the forefront of the struggle against the Tories. We are fighting for an end to this system where profit dominates in the interests of big business and for the creation of a society run in the interests of the working class—that is, for the socialist transformation of society. Our paper, *Militant*, has a 30 year history of campaigning on behalf of the working class and all those sections of society affected by the present crisis of capitalism.

**Militant Labour** fights for socialism internationally and has links with other Marxist organisations throughout the world.

In South Africa, our sister organisation is the **Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC (MWT)**. In their ranks is a new generation of youth steeled in the township battles against Inkatha alongside many veterans of the struggle against apartheid, such as Nimrod Sejake, co-defendant with Nelson Mandela at the Rivonia Treason Trial. Comrade Philemon Mauku was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for illegal possession of arms for the defence of his community. He was released earlier this year.

The historical material in this pamphlet draws on **South Africa's Impending Socialist Revolution**, produced by our comrades in 1982, at that time producing a journal called *Inqaba ya Basebenzi* (Workers' Fortress). The MWT today produces the newspaper **Congress Militant**.

Peter Taaffe is the General Secretary of Militant Labour. The interviews used in this pamphlet were carried out by Peter during a visit to South Africa in September and October 1993, organised by the MWT, during which he met many workers and union and ANC activists.

For further information about *Militant*, the MWT or *Congress Militant*, or to join **Militant Labour**, write to 3/13, Hepscott Rd, London E9 5HB, or phone 081 533 3311.



## **South Africa: from slavery to the smashing of apartheid**

Nothing has inspired working people worldwide more than the magnificent movement of the South African working class in the 1980s and 1990s. To the present generation it is the equivalent of what the Spanish Revolution was to workers in the 1930s. It particularly occupies a special place in the minds and hearts of the black population of Britain, of the United States and, of course, of Africa. In a sense, it has evoked even greater sympathy from the working class than the heroic resistance of the Vietnamese to US imperialism in the '60s and '70s.

That movement, based as it was largely on a rural and national revolt, evoked sympathy and support throughout the world. But the South African revolt is rooted in the mighty struggle of the South African working class and has therefore evoked class solidarity. It is the working class and its methods of struggle, above all the mass strike, which has proved crucial in the overthrow of the hated apartheid regime. In the very heat of battle, the working class was compelled to organise the mighty Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the greatest conquest of the South African working class.

It was this lever, above all, which was used to reduce to dust the racist system, ranking alongside the Nazi's racial horrors as one of the worst crimes against humanity.

Now, apartheid has been officially ended through the first all-race elections in April 1994. The authors of that system, the

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National Party (NP) received 20.4 per cent of the vote while the ANC scored a huge 62.6 per cent. Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) got 10.5 per cent of the vote while Viljoen's Afrikaner right-wing "Freedom Front", the upholder of apartheid who competed in the elections, got a miserable 2.2 per cent of the vote and the Pan-African Congress received 1.2 per cent.

The NP did better than was expected for a number of reasons. Firstly, it performed one of the greatest ever feats of historical amnesia. It was responsible for setting up the monstrous apartheid regime, yet its leader "modern" De Klerk paraded himself during the elections as the man who "ended apartheid". At the same time, the NP successfully played on the fears of the Coloured population, particularly in the Western Cape, where they are in a majority. The Coloureds feared that they would be discriminated against by a government dominated by black Africans. The Coloureds therefore voted in the majority for the NP in the Western Cape.

### Workers united in COSATU

*Militant* and *Congress Militant* warned of this danger well in advance of the elections. The way to counter the split between the Africans and Coloureds, we warned, was to unite them through the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the only organisation which brings Africans and Coloureds together in the factories and the workplaces. This could have been extended to the political plane, but only on condition that a class appeal was made. Then it would have been possible to cement an alliance between Coloured and African workers behind the ANC. A nationalist approach would merely drive them into the arms of the NP, their persecutors of yesterday and their oppressors today.

Such an approach, which was advocated and carried out to a limited degree by supporters of *Congress Militant* in the Western Cape, was rejected by the ANC leadership. COSATU was sidelined in the Western Cape and elsewhere. The result has been to aggravate relations between Africans and Coloureds



and bring to power as premier of the Western Cape Hernus Kriel, infamous in the past as a hardline, unreconstructed Afrikaner and upholder of capitalist "law and order". Moreover, he has boasted that the Western Cape will now become a magnet for capital and therefore of jobs in competition with other areas of South Africa.

In Natal also, the huge national victory of the ANC has been somewhat marred by the unexpected success of Inkatha in the region. It received just over 50 per cent of the vote in Natal. Yet Inkatha could have been shattered, even in the rural areas of Natal, if the ANC leadership had shown the same determination as the majority of the Zulu workers and youth in confronting Inkatha. Instead of basing themselves upon the class opposition to Buthelezi and Inkatha, the ANC leadership temporised, sought to negotiate and adopted the strategy of attempting to divide the Zulu king, Zwelithini, from Buthelezi. Unfortunately, Mandela went so far as to declare that the King was "his king, his leader". Nothing could have been more calculated to dishearten ANC Zulu activists faced with the danger of assassination by the very forces of the king lauded and praised by Mandela. This was bound to lead to the danger that Zulus, particularly those outside of the urban areas, could conclude that if Mandela says the king was his "leader", then perhaps it was legitimate to vote for the king's party, Inkatha.

Contrast Mandela's attempt to mollify the king with the implacable opposition of shown by Jabu, a Zulu woman, in Lamontville in an interview with the author in 1993:

### ***Jabu's story:***

We fought with Inkatha people here, at Lamontville. I remember one Saturday, Inkatha people organised a meeting at Glebelands. They came through Lamontville and when the police said they must go back, they didn't.

So the people of Lamontville gathered and came to fight with them at ten in the morning and drove them away.

When they went back and told their chief their people have died at

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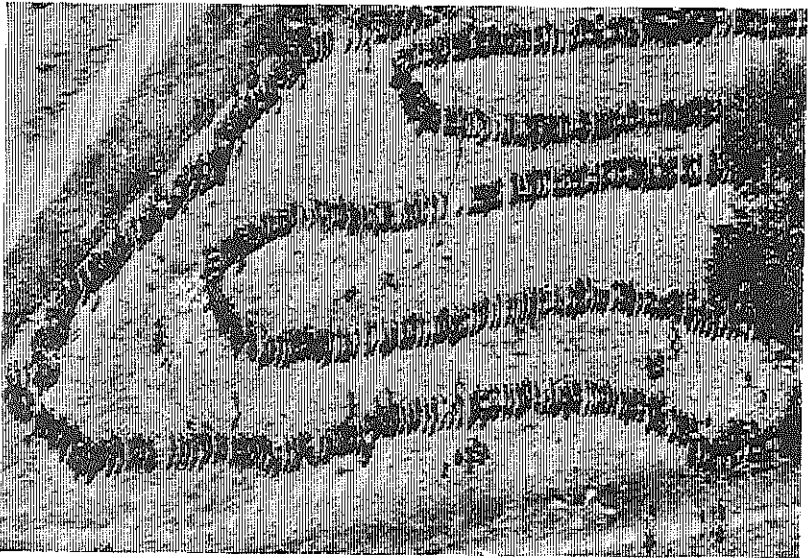
Lamontville, the chief told them to go back and make Lamontville pay a heavy price.

They came at two in the afternoon. We fought and threw them out again. So now there is no Inkatha at Lamontville and we don't allow Inkatha people to have meetings. If we let them do so, they will kill people as they do in other areas.

I don't like him (Buthelezi) because all these deaths are caused by him. He says he doesn't kill - but his talk makes his followers kill. When he makes a speech somewhere, he makes it so that his people must kill.

These Inkatha people are so ignorant. If you ask them what are you really fighting for, they say we're struggling for our king, we're struggling for our land.

What is "our king"? The king will not put food on our table nor educate our children. He doesn't come to us and he doesn't help the people at the grass roots.



*The joyous scenes of mass voting*

Yet despite the setback in Natal, the election overall signifies a great victory not just for the South African workers but for the workers and farmers of the African continent and indeed of the whole world. Forever etched into the consciousness is the unforgettable scenes of the massive, joyous queues of Africans waiting to vote. The story of an 84-year-old woman waiting patiently in the queue for hours, voting with enthusiasm, only then to collapse seems to sum up the hopes, the tragedy and the yearning for liberation from the monstrous apartheid regime. In another case, a 100-year-old woman walked by herself to vote against the system that had kept her in degradation throughout her life.

## **World impact**

After so many setbacks and defeats, here is a victory which has set alight the workers of the world. True, it is not a complete victory because the ANC will share power with the NP and others. Nevertheless, it is a victory and is perceived as such by the mass of the working class. Moreover, taken alongside the revolutionary upheavals in Mexico, the strike waves in Europe, the possibility of victory of Lula, the candidate of the Workers' Party in the Brazilian elections later this year, it opens up a new chapter for the working class and the labour movement on a world scale.

## **History rewritten**

And yet no sooner is the victory achieved when a rewriting of history, albeit by slight of hand, is underway. This victory is variously ascribed to the pressure of "the international community" (read "capitalists") or to sanctions, and the sports and fruit boycotts organised in the past. While in no way diminishing the importance of solidarity action, especially from workers throughout the world, it is an incontestable fact that it was the marvellous and powerful South African working class, moving

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in their millions and using the traditional weapons of boycotts and strikes, which toppled this hated regime.

The real history of South Africa, especially in the struggle against the apartheid regime, shows how this class emerged out of the dust and dirt to which the bosses had condemned them to become the dominant power in the country.

Apartheid was set up in 1948. However, this merely codified and widened the racial segregation which was a corner stone of capitalism in South Africa for 300 years.

### **The emergence of the working class**

Historically, capitalism developed as a system through the robbing of the land from the peasant and their forcible removal into towns. There they became wage workers in the centres of industrial production. In South Africa this took the form in the first instance of colonial conquest, with the outright dispossession of the tribes from their grazing and agricultural land by the combined forces of the colonial settlers and invading armies.

Using the system of "reserves", which had been developed during the period of conquest, the South African ruling class set aside for white ownership no less than 87 per cent of the land. This was combined, particularly in the first part of this century, with the capitalist state propping up and subsidising on this stolen land white farmers who systematically and brutally exploited black labour.

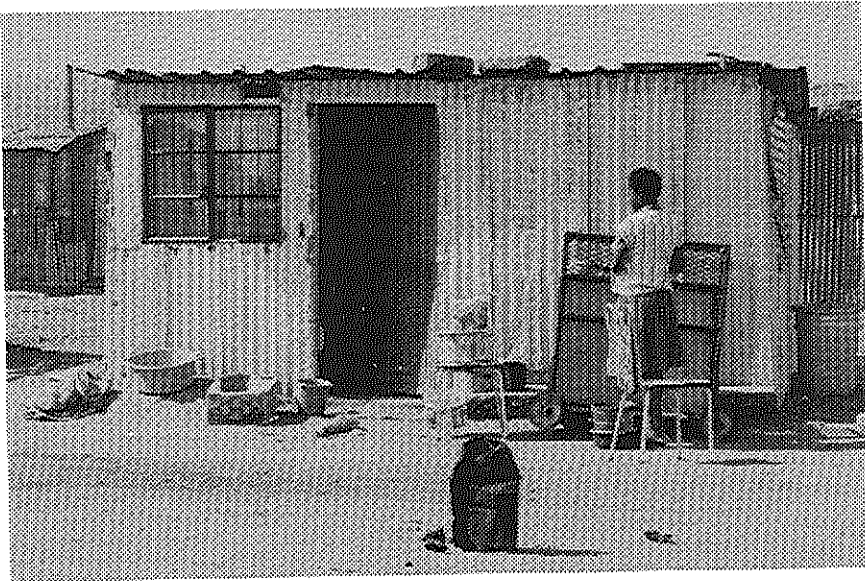
The original African possessors of the land, now prohibited from owning it, were reduced to a serf and slave-like condition under the heel of the white farmers.

### **The Pass Laws**

A whole array of measures were deployed to exploit Africans, and a particularly savage form of repression used to prevent any revolt. There were the infamous pass laws, an internal passport system, restricting the movement of the African popu-

lations. There was also the vicious Group Areas Act allowing the forcible displacement of whole populations. Between 1960 and 1980 the regime carried out the forced removal of over a million black people from so-called "white" land.

In the early 1980s, at least another 750,000 faced removal to the reserves and the "bantustan" consolidation schemes. These bantustans or "homelands" were dumping grounds for those removed from other parts of South Africa. They were a by-word for poverty. In these regions there was a lack of water or implements, no social facilities, mass unemployment and hopelessness and despair. They were, as the South African Marxists commented, "vast rural slums which served as concentration camps for the unemployed." (**South Africa's Impending Socialist Revolution**, Inqaba, Journal of the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC, 1982)



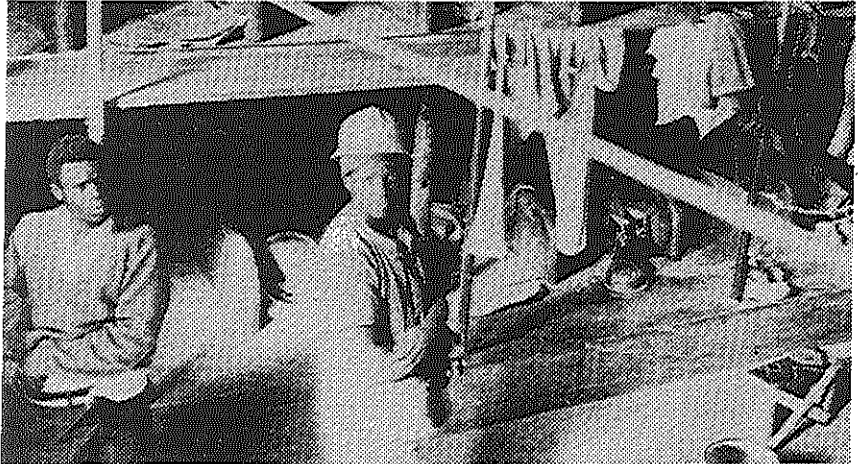
*"vast, rural slums"*

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Coloured workers suffered as well as Africans through this policy. For example, in central Cape Town there is an area called District Six. This is a wasteland today from which the Coloured population who had inhabited the area for decades were forcibly removed under the apartheid regime to an isolated area in the Cape peninsula.

### **The migrant labour system**

The wealth of the South African ruling class, the most powerful in Africa, was based on the super-exploitation of the working class. It was fortunate to have huge reserves of gold and other minerals which allowed it to accumulate capital and provide it with a basis for the rise of manufacturing industry. This in turn was only possible on the basis of cheap labour. The South Africa capitalists constructed a system ruthless in its oppressive efficiency. The migrant labour system was the bedrock of wage labour. It was only made possible by the systematic displacement of the Africans from the land, with the remnants of the dispossessed tribes driven and confined to "native reserves".



*The horrific conditions of the migrant workers*

The colonial rulers had shattered the foundations of the tribal economy, but discovered they still needed the institutions of the tribe in order to perpetuate their social control. The capitalists, however, did not want large scale immigration to the new towns created in South Africa. Instead, they wanted a system of drawing black labour to the urban centres, primarily to the mines, under the strictest regulation.

This was the origin of the migrant labour system. However, the development of industry led to large scale production in the towns, which in turn resulted in a greater and greater concentration of the working class in the urban areas. The number of Africans living in the towns doubled from 17 per cent in 1936 to 33 per cent in 1974. Despite 12.5 million pass arrests in the 30 years up to the early 1980s and all the other measures to halt urbanisation, it was estimated that 50 per cent were by then living in the urban areas.

### **Capitalism creates its grave digger**

So, despite all its best efforts, the very development of South African capitalism conjured up its grave digger in the form of the working class, concentrated more and more in the towns. Nevertheless, the migrant labour system was a vital weapon in the oppression of the African working class. The mass of the black workers in the cities had to remain "temporary sojourners", present only so long as they were needed to supply their labour power to the capitalists.

A working class established in the cities would have been more able to create stable organisations, especially trade unions and political parties. The South African working class had to build their organisations in the teeth of colossal obstacles, such as the pass laws and the migrant labour system. Workers' leaders were regularly banned, banished to remote country districts; workers on strike were "endorsed out" of the towns and forcibly deported to the reserves in their thousands. Moreover, the separation of the workers from their families and confinement of the latter to the reserves reduced the pressure

on the capitalist class to concede housing, amenities and welfare for the aged, the sick and the unemployed.

Barrack accommodation and compounds, long hours of overtime work, hazardous conditions of health and safety and perpetual insecurity of employment - these were the consequences of the system for migrant workers. The South African Marxists declared: "The migrant labour system was the central pillar in the oppression of black people, enormously strengthening the hand of the ruling class against the struggles of the masses for industrial and political rights."

## **Double oppression**

The South African masses suffered a double oppression - national oppression at the hands of a white minority state and ruthless exploitation at the hands of the South African capitalists.

The struggle for democratic rights, for freedom from national oppression, involved opposition not just to "white minority rule" but to the dictatorship of the South African capitalists. It was these facts which determined the character of the South African revolution. It had a social content - liberation from capitalist exploitation. It also aimed at "national liberation" - the overthrow of the white minority regime.

This struggle has long roots. The African National Congress, set up 82 years ago, is Africa's oldest liberation movement. Further back than this, the African masses, the Xhosa people, as explained in Noel Mostert's magnificent account of the Xhosa wars *Frontiers* recounts, put up an heroic resistance to colonial conquest. So also did the Zulu and the other peoples of what now constitutes South Africa.

## **Role of the working class**

However, it is the movement of the South African working class which has proved decisive in throwing off the chains of



apartheid. The first impetus came from the working class in the Durban dock strike of 1969. This encouraged the national movement of strike action which reached its peak in the Natal strikes of 1973, in which Marxists, around which developed *Congress Militant* at a later stage, played a key role. This in turn spread amongst the migrant mine workers in 1974-75. Black trade union membership doubled and trebled.

## Soweto

And then, in June 1976, it was the high school youth, the first generation of workers' children at high school, unburdened by the defeats and setbacks of the past, who seized the initiative and hurled themselves against the forces of the state, "with a burning anger unsurpassed in the history of mass struggle anywhere." Steve Biko, subsequently murdered by the apartheid regime, summed up their feelings: "The young believe they can influence history and send it in the direction they wish it to go, and they are determined to do so."

In 1976, around half of South Africa's black population was aged 15 and under. The children of apartheid rose against the system "whose aim was to reduce us mentally and physically to intellectual cripples... slaves in the society of our birth." Students, as Leon Trotsky often commented, are the "light cavalry of the revolution". Movements amongst students and youth are often a harbinger of a coming revolt of the working class. The Soweto youth uprising was the spark that set off political general strikes involving up to a million workers, until then the greatest mobilisation ever achieved in the struggle for liberation in South Africa. The response of the apartheid regime was the massacre of at least 1000 workers and youth in 1976 alone.

A relative lull followed as workers digested the experiences of 1976. However, the trade unions were taken up and expanded and new methods of struggle were improvised. In 1979 and 1980 there was a temporary upturn in the economy and a revival of workers' struggle. In 1979 there were 101 strikes,

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costing the employers 67,000 worker days lost in production. In 1980, the figure rose to 207 strikes and 175,000 days lost. In 1981, there was an average of about one strike a day, with nearly 100,000 workers involved in strike action. In October alone, 20,000 workers were on strike in 40 firms. The independent unions swelled dramatically in numbers, more than trebling again to over 200,000 members.

### **The formation of the unions**

The 1980s were marked out by the emergence of the working class and its organisations; above all the unions. They were non-racial in character as Coloured, Indian, as well as African workers joined together in common action. Moreover, for the first time since the 1930s and 1940s, a small number of white members joined the trade unions. Union organisations began to combine which resulted in the formation of COSATU in 1985.



*The launch of the western Cape division of COSATU, 1986*

While the South African Marxists consistently pointed to the emergence of the working class as a decisive force in the struggle against apartheid, the leaders of the ANC, largely in exile or imprisoned, adopted a critical if not hostile attitude towards the emergence of this mighty force. They perceived it as a potential rival in the national liberation struggle and only gradually accommodated themselves to this newly emerging power. The South African working class showed its huge potential in a series of epic general strikes in the course of the 1980s. Each attempt at repression only widened the circle of discontent and opposition of the working class. The movement compelled the ruling class to retreat, to sanction the release of the ANC leader Nelson Mandela from 27 years of imprisonment, to unban the ANC and enter into negotiations for elections.

This in turn resulted in the setting of 27 April 1994 as the date of South Africa's first "non-racial" elections. On that day, 350 years of enslavement and repression of the African majority and Coloured populations was buried. Despite the dire threats of "civil war" from the unreconstructed Afrikaner right - who were gathered together with the creatures of apartheid in the misnamed "Freedom Alliance" - these elections represented the ending of exclusive white political rule.

The ANC, subjected to vicious persecution, with countless victims and martyrs, entered the government for the first time. This represents a turning point not just for South Africa and for the African continent but is an event which will resound throughout the world. It signifies the completion of the decolonisation of the African continent. In South Africa's case, it was a process of internal decolonisation, the substitution of white minority political domination for a government within which the representatives of the African people were the majority.

## **Reforms or revolution**

The ANC leadership has voluntarily agreed to share power with the National Party of De Klerk, yesterday's jailers and executioners. It is therefore not a complete victory. Yet it is a

victory nevertheless and is perceived as such by the South African masses and the toilers throughout the world. Prior to 27 April many African workers referred to 27 April as their "liberation" day. The granting of elections was not achieved through any benevolence of the South African ruling class, or the capitalist parties such as the National Party. Although De Klerk, the National Party leader, presided over negotiations for elections, this was only out of fear of the revolutionary struggles of the South African working class. Their movement battered away at the foundations of the apartheid regime in a series of near insurrectionary general strikes in the course of the 1980s. It was this which compelled the South African working class to switch tactics. In time honoured fashion, they resorted to reforms from above in order to prevent revolution from below.

The development of a number of new factors in the situation allowed them to carry through this manoeuvre successfully. On the one side, the collapse of the Stalinist regimes of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union opened up a new situation. This development, together with the 1980s boom in the advanced industrial countries, furnished a basis for the huge ideological campaign in favour of capitalism, the market, and against the ideas of socialism. This had a big effect on the political representatives of the capitalists in the colonial and ex-colonial world and was one of the factors which pushed the leadership of the ANC towards the right. It was clear that they were prepared to accommodate themselves to "democracy" within the framework of South African capitalism. Mandela, widely revered for his heroic sacrifices and imprisonment, nevertheless probably came to a broad agreement with De Klerk while he was imprisoned. De Klerk agreed that universal suffrage, the right to vote of the African, Coloured and Asian populations, would have to be granted.

### **Majority rule?**

However, this would not be the same as majority rule. A series of blocking mechanisms with entrenched rights for so-

called “minorities” and a five-year “multi-racial powersharing” government were to be installed. The other, and perhaps more crucial factor, in the switch in tactics on the part of the South African ruling class was the revolutionary temper and explosive movements of the working class. This compelled the capitalists to recognise that repression alone would not work in the changed situation facing South Africa in the 1980s.

Not the least of the factors in the calculations of South African capitalism was the demographic timebomb which was ticking away and in practice was shattering the base of apartheid. By the end of the century, or shortly after, it is estimated that there will be 50 million Africans compared to five million whites in the country. Despite the Group Areas Act and the forcible removal of whole populations of African and Coloured people and all the paraphernalia of repression in the hands of the apartheid state, the inexorable Africanisation of cities like Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town could not be stopped. In the years which elapsed between the release of Mandela in 1990 and the granting of elections in April 1994, a carefully laid plan was formulated. Its purpose was to demonstrate in practice to the population that there was “no alternative” to the path mapped out by Mandela and De Klerk.

## **Concessions ....**

Negotiations and elections were portrayed by the right wing of the ANC as a “easier road to liberation”. De Klerk and the National Party, on the other hand, in the sunny optimism which radiated from South Africa in the immediate aftermath of Mandela’s release, convinced the majority of the whites that the partial ceding of political power to the African majority was the only alternative to a bloody racial civil war with countless victims on both sides.

### .... and terror

At the same time a "strategy of terror" was unleashed throughout this period as a means of dividing the Africans and extracting greater and greater concessions from the ANC leadership. This terror emanated both from the forces of the apartheid state and from Buthelezi's Inkatha. The basis of Inkatha lay in the so-called "homeland" of Kwazulu in Natal. Faced with the growing revolt of the African and Coloured masses, the South African ruling class was forced increasingly to lean on middle class blacks who allegedly stood for "peaceful reform".

### Collaborators with apartheid

To begin with, some of these elements stood in opposition to apartheid but at the same time feared even more the independent movement of the working class. Under the impact of a growing struggle these "leaders" inevitably exposed themselves as agents of the ruling class, betraying the real interests of the working class and also of the middle class. The middle class, as well as the working class, cannot be fully liberated within the framework of capitalism.

Some of the most conservative figures of this type were found heading the bantustans and leaning on the machinery of the apartheid state. Alongside of collaborationist Coloured and Indian figureheads, they more and more exposed themselves as outright lackeys of white supremacy. In this category was "Gatcha" Buthelezi, alongside the Coloured "labour" party leaders. To begin with, Buthelezi mouthed heroic phrases about freedom, pretending to stand for national liberation and waving the colours of the ANC.

Indeed, in the first instance, Buthelezi received the benediction of Mandela himself from prison. It was the South African Marxists, at that stage around their journal *Inqaba*, who first pointed to the counter-revolutionary role of Buthelezi, of Inkatha and their armed wing, the Impis. *Inqaba*, well in

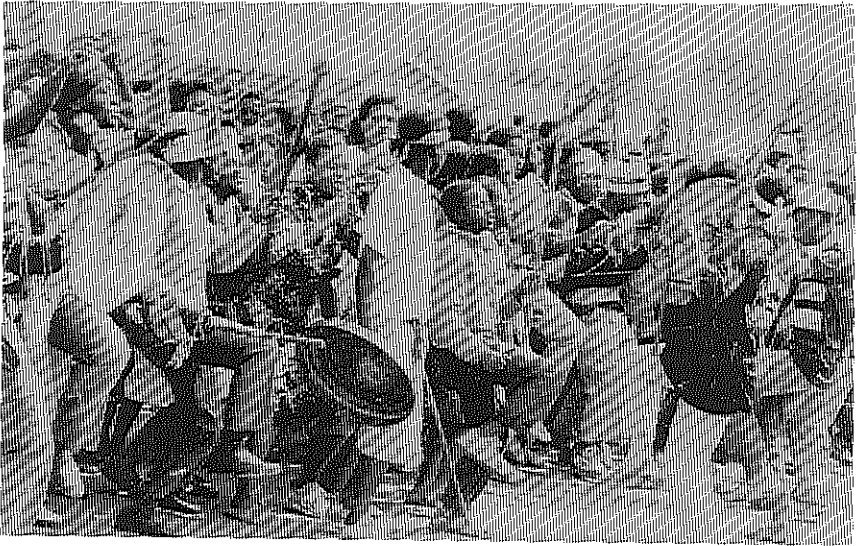
advance of any other political trend or tendency in South Africa or in exile, pointed out in 1982: "Using the bantustan apparatus in Kwazulu, he (Buthelezi) has been able, with big business aid, to construct the Inkatha organisation with several hundred thousand members. This is intended to impress the population with his 'authority', to give him a bargaining lever with Pretoria (the seat of the South African government), and to convince the ruling class that he can be relied upon to control the masses." At the head of Inkatha was a "loathsome middle-class mafia" which used its control of employment and housing under bantustan machinery, to blackmail people into membership and to intimidate them into obedience.

### An unholy alliance

*Inqaba* predicted at that stage that "there would be a mass gravitation of the Inkatha membership to link up with a national revolutionary movement. This will inevitably gather behind the banner of the ANC... (Buthelezi) will be cast aside and trampled to dust by his own former supporters." But this did not happen before Buthelezi and Inkatha were able to unleash a wave of terror both in Natal and elsewhere, backed up by the South African state, as was indicated by the Goldstone Commission, a judicial investigation which revealed links between senior police officers and the security forces and Inkatha in organising political murders and supplying weapons used in the civil war waged by Inkatha against ANC supporters.

The purpose of this was to divide the Africans and force the ANC leadership into greater and greater concessions. The result has been that 15,000 were killed between 1990 and 1994, a greater number even than in the decades of struggle against apartheid. But this was of little avail. The whip of counter-revolution merely provoked a massive reaction from below by African workers and a greater determination to prosecute the struggle to the end.

Nowhere was this more evident than in Natal, the allegedly strong base of Inkatha. Between 1990 and 1994, 10,000 were killed in this area.



*The battle against Inkatha*

## **Workers struggle against Inkatha**

Remorseless mass pressure and the spontaneous arming of a section of the workers and the youth compelled Inkatha to retreat. In its home base of Natal it was evicted from one African township after another. A picture of how this was accomplished by the new generation of African/Zulu workers is shown by extracts from an interview by the author of two young ANC members from Inanda near Natal.

### ***Thomas' and Caleb's story:***

Unlike other townships, Inanda is a long-standing settlement: here one of the founders of the ANC, John Dube, owned land. There are just 12 private telephones in the township and as we drove through it was clear that many houses were without basic amenities such as running water. There seemed to be a tap every 200 metres where women and children were collecting the daily supply of water.

Unemployment, it is estimated by Thomas and Caleb, is about 70



per cent amongst the youth and the school system has completely broken down.

The area is now solidly controlled by the ANC. Inkatha are reduced to one small part. However, this was not always the case. Before what Thomas and Caleb called the 'youth rebellion' it was under the ruthless control of Inkatha warlords.

Thomas describes his own experiences: "After the first resistance of the youth to Inkatha, thugs descended on my area, burnt down my house and many other houses. We were forced to leave the area. This resulted in the retaliation and the burning of Inkatha supporters' houses. This was a common occurrence during the war in Inanda."

Such was the power of Inkatha that the youth, in bands of 50 or 60, were compelled to leave Inanda completely and become refugees. They stayed in neighbouring Durban (which is about 25km away). Young as they were, they showed a sure instinct by seeking out white liberals who provided them with the necessary shelter, clothing and food.

### ***A disciplined force***

Thomas described in graphic detail how they organised: "We were very disciplined. We made sure that all the youth remained within the 'refugee' centre."

They decided to return to Inanda. This resulted in a very brutal confrontation but once more the youth were defeated and were compelled to become refugees again. Thomas says: "We debated why in the area that we had returned to we had not managed to consolidate the initial support we had from the local people.

"Short of food and in desperation some of the youth extorted supplies and stole bread from shopkeepers. This then allowed Inkatha and the local councillors to picture them as 'hooligans'.

"Our indiscipline allowed Inkatha to attack us. Consequently we completely changed our attitude. We disciplined all of those who resorted to petty crime. This meant that the community once more supported us and we went about eliminating the influence of Inkatha."

### **The “liberated” areas**

When each area was ‘liberated’ it was given a new name, for example, Cuba, Angola, Lusaka, Zimbabwe. This civil war evolved over the period of 1989-90 and resulted in the triumph of the youth and their Inanda Youth Organisation.

The real power in the area was in the hands of the youth and the UDF (the United Democratic Front). The ANC was not able to operate openly under the apartheid regime.

But this gave way to the development of 14 branches of the ANC after its unbanning: “The youth who carried through the elimination of Inkatha in Inanda became part of the ANC.

### **Conflict with ANC leaders**

“But the ANC leadership, many who had not participated at all in the struggle against Inkatha, some of them returning from exile, were more concerned to impose their own leadership and discipline rather than harness the energy and the drive of the youth. Naturally this brought the youth into confrontation with the ANC leadership.”

Thomas and Caleb are prominent supporters of *Congress Militant*. They are well known as leaders but this has not stopped the conservative, pro-capitalist wing of the ANC from attempting to elbow them aside and push them out of the ANC.

This has not been entirely successful because of the enduring support that these fighters still have amongst the youth and many older workers.

Caleb complements Thomas’s account: “After we had defeated Inkatha, by February 1990, there was about a two-month peaceful period. Many of the youth who had participated in the struggle against Inkatha were now homeless. Many of them, desperate, without food, took to the road of crime. Some of the youth, who had been seen as protectors against Inkatha, were now seen as persecutors of the community. They used the weapons that they had acquired to extort whatever they required; to steal cars, etc.”

This would not have taken place or would have been cut across if the ANC leadership would have organised a disciplined, mass-based

defence organisation under the democratic control of the community. This is an experience not uncommon in many of the South African townships and has been one of the complications in getting support for mass defence committees.

Thomas, Caleb and others came into collision with these youth. "We began to confront the criminals," Caleb told me. "Where they stole cars and where we could identify the owners, we took the cars back and handed them back."

He described the personal suffering, threats and near loss of life which he experienced on a number of occasions in this battle to defend the community against the criminals.

### ***Threat from criminals and police***

"The criminals were collaborating with the police. We had to face threats from both sides. The usual procedure was for the police to organise raids and under the camouflage of eliminating violence take the arms away from the youth.

"Then a signal was given to the criminals who would attack what they believed would be defenceless youth. This resulted in quite horrific incidents. On one occasion criminals raided my house in my absence, which resulted in terrible suffering and misery for the rest of my family." Twelve comrades were arrested on one occasion.

Caleb describes many occasions when he and others were put in police vans and the police would urge them to run. If they did they would be shot. The police account would read: "Shot while resisting arrest."

Thomas: "The first spark of opposition to Gatcha Buthelezi came with the Kwamashu student revolt. Seven students were killed because they protested at the methods of Buthelezi and Inkatha. Arms and legs were cut off by Gatcha's Impis (thugs). But the revolt against Buthelezi spread to the schools. It was concentrated at first against Inanda councillors, all of whom were Inkatha. They had organised amabuthos (armed groups) to protect themselves and to enforce their rule. Opposition by the youth resulted in the councillors being killed (ten were assassinated) and the rest fled. This provoked counter attacks from Inkatha on those parts of Inanda where the youth were

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strong. The first raid resulted in six children being killed."

*Militant* no. 1155, 29 October 1993

When they were checked in Natal, the Inkatha warlords then shifted their attention to Johannesburg and the Transvaal in 1993 and 1994. In the summer of 1993 the rate of killings in the East Rand was five times that of Natal. This was supplemented by a bombing campaign in 1994 in the run up to the elections.

All of this was designed to extract greater and greater concessions both for the white far right and for Inkatha. But, as *Congress Militant* and *Militant* predicted, this merely served to harden the mood of the African masses and provoke even more determined action from below. If the ANC would have provided a proper lead from the beginning, the blood letting which scarred South Africa from 1990-94 could have been completely avoided. The state and Inkatha terror could have been nipped in the bud.

An indication of the potential for this is shown by the comments of a worker from the Mandela area of Alexandra when commenting about the defence units in his area:

### ***A worker's story***

"Inkatha is nothing if we are organised and disciplined. We have had several fights with the Inkatha warlords and I have learned over these years of violence that Inkatha does not have much discipline, is scattered everywhere. They do not have clear political aims, but are manipulated by others to perpetrate violence against the masses.

"You have to fight your enemy in a very disciplined manner, at the same time bringing forward to the people an understanding of why this fight is taking place. You're not there to kill but you're there to bring unity to the people. We just want to fight against the criminals and their methods, which is a product of the apartheid regime.

"I'll give one indication of what a disciplined defence force can achieve. It took place on what we in Alexandra call Black Tuesday. We fought Inkatha for 12 hours at night on this date. The police did

absolutely nothing but all along were identifying themselves with the Inkatha warlords. In the previous period we had been burying comrades time and again because the police backed up and defended Inkatha. We were slaughtered time and again but on Black Tuesday we said we had had enough of this.

### ***We were prepared to fight***

“When the Inkatha warlords came on that day we were ready for them in a much more disciplined way than any other formation I have ever seen. We had not been out in exile to train. We were prepared to fight because we had lost so many comrades. Anyway, on this day, Inkatha warlords came with the police and a crowd of 200-300 which surrounded our area. We had no chance to escape or to flee anywhere. We had about 500 living in that section, including many women and children, which was surrounded by the Inkatha forces. They attacked at 7.30pm. We made sure that, number one, people should not run away for that is the best way to expose themselves and be shot easily. We demanded that everybody should lie down; don’t stand up because there is a hail of bullets and anybody could be shot.

“We fought the enemy almost the whole night and the police retreated, leaving the warlords to fight alone. Because we were organised and disciplined we defeated them and Inkatha retreated. We maintained the defence force which acts against criminals in our area.”

Such incidents were repeated in practically every township, particularly in the Transvaal/Johannesburg area, as well as in Natal. The consequence of this was that the strategy of terror of the state, secretly egged on by De Klerk, despite his denials, completely failed. This in turn had very important consequences in the negotiations over a new constitution.

### **New constitution**

It is clear that the constitution, which will be agreed upon

by the new parliament following the 27 April elections, has been so framed as to leave a substantial number of councils in the hands of whites. The ANC local government head, Tusan Beely Botha, in the journal *Business Day*, stated that "whites would have representation even where they formed a substantial minority." (17 November 1993). But on the national plane, the National Party were forced to abandon the blocking mechanisms for a future cabinet.

### The effect of mass pressure

In the months leading up to 27 April, De Klerk had been boasting that it would need 66 or even 75 per cent agreement within a new cabinet for decisions to go through. Twelve months before this, such an arrangement would probably have been acceded to by the ANC leadership. But under mass pressure, they were compelled to harden up their demands. An agreement was reached which in theory conceded "majority rule", at least within the cabinet. It is clear that decisions will now be adopted on the basis of a clear majority. But the only reason that there will not be untrammelled majority rule is that the ANC leadership, in advance of the elections, and irrespective of any majority they would receive, agreed to enter a five-year power-sharing government.

Every party which received as little as five per cent of the vote, it was agreed, could have a cabinet minister. In order to mollify the army and civil service tops, an amnesty for all security force members who committed crimes before October 1990 had already been agreed before the elections.

The demand for the release of all political prisoners has always received powerful support from the African workers. But it is entirely false to put on the same plane those who were imprisoned for fighting against apartheid and, for instance, the murderers of ANC leader Chris Hani, the infamous Darby Lewis and the murder gangs of the apartheid regime.

Who is and who is not a prisoner must be determined by a commission through the trade union movement, COSATU, with

representation from all layers of the population.

## **Freedom Charter**

By agreeing to enter into a coalition, and remaining within the framework of capitalism, the leadership of the ANC has been increasingly seen as the capitalist wing of the movement. In drawing closer to De Klerk, they have in turn distanced themselves from all the most radical features of the ANC's aims and programme. Above all, the Freedom Charter, which summed up the aspirations of the South African masses for a new society, has been jettisoned.

The Freedom Charter was first approved by the ANC National Executive Committee and adopted at the Congress of the People in Kliptown, Johannesburg, on 25-26 June 1955. Each section of the Charter was adopted by the 3000 delegation by acclamation with a show of hands and shouts of "Africa! Mayeboyi!". The key section is that which is headed "The people shall share in the country's wealth". It states:

*"The national wealth of our country, the heritage of all South Africans, shall be restored to the people; the mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole; all other industries and trade shall be controlled to assist the wellbeing of the people; all people shall have equal rights to trade where they chose, to manufacture and to enter all trades, crafts and professions."*

This shows clearly that enshrined in the Freedom Charter is the idea of nationalisation, the taking of the wealth out of the hands of the privileged minority of monopolists who control the wealth of South Africa and placing it under common ownership.

## **ANC leadership moves right**

Even before the elections the capitalist press in South Africa

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could hardly restrain its delight at the rapid evolution to the right of the ANC leadership.

"You can't help noticing that when the ANC has an intense encounter with the international market place, it seems to register a significant jump in its policy graph. It happened at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, last year, for instance, when, in the presence of hundreds of the world's top businessmen and statesmen... Nelson Mandela changed his speech at the last moment to offer major assurances about the safety of foreign investments."

Peter Fabricius, *The Star*, 14 October 1993

So far did the ANC spokespersons shift towards the right even before the elections that they even clashed with the largely conservative "black caucus" in the US Congress. The latter objected to the dropping of the demand for "codes of conduct" for foreign investment in South Africa. Pointing to future clashes, Peter Fabricius warned that this indicated a future split within the ANC: "Was this an early warning of that long-predicted cleft between the 'embourgeoisified' ANC and its lowly supporters?"

## **Bosses embrace Mandela**

The South African ruling class has been compelled to perform an astonishing historical turnabout. From vilifying the ANC, murdering and persecuting its leaders, imprisoning Mandela for 27 years, it has now moved to the position where it is compelled to lean on this leadership as a bulwark against the huge aroused expectations of the South African masses. A survey conducted by *Business Day* showed that business leaders were positively relying on the ANC leadership. 68 per cent wanted Mandela to be the country's next president. 32 per cent backed the president at the time, De Klerk, and no one supported Buthelezi.

Summing up the attitude of the South African capitalists, based on this survey, *Business Day* concludes: "This does not



mean that business has been converted to the ANC-SACP (South African Communist Party) Alliance - far from it. They favour him (Mandela) because his election will be their own best interests... There were times when it was expedient to kowtow to John Vorster and PW Botha because they seemed to offer the best chance of a stable business environment." In other words, big business can switch support from one party or one regime to another with as little difficulty as a man passing from a smoking to a non-smoking compartment on a train, when they consider it is in their interests.

Explaining why they have switched horses, *Business Day* goes on: "While business and the workers' party, like the ANC, may seem natural adversaries, they have wisely sought an understanding with each other... The ANC no longer preaches nationalisation and redistribution, and accepts the basic tenets of free market economics... Business accepts that black majority rule is inevitable and that a new government will have the best chance of producing a stable country if the most popular black leader, Nelson Mandela, in charge. Businessmen may not like his policies and they may not vote for him, but they realise he is the leader capable of establishing an environment in which they can get on with what they do best: producing the wealth on which the country depends."

And yet, despite the huge authority of Mandela and all the best efforts of the capitalist wing of the ANC, they may not be able to apply the brake for very long on the mass movements following elections. Apartheid has bequeathed an absolute disaster to the new coalition government. This is visible to even the most superficial commentator or visitor to the country.

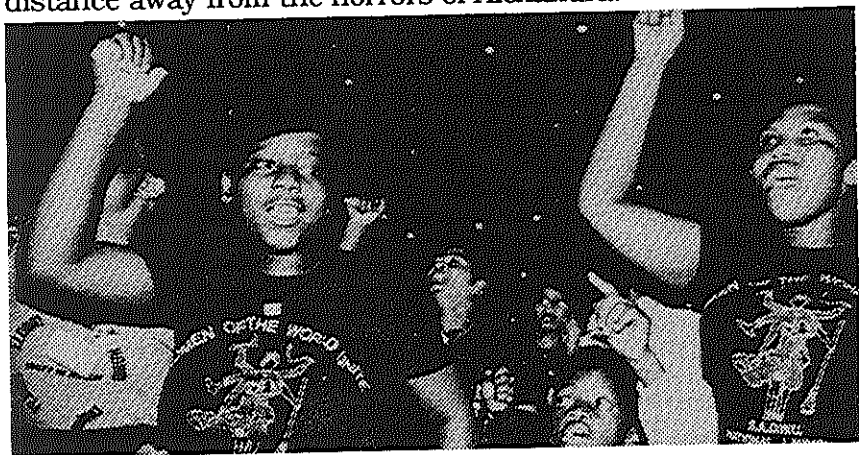
## Poverty amidst plenty

In the ex-colonial world what the Marxists call the law of combined and uneven development operates. Alongside the latest word in technique, the most modern equipment and modern factories and culture exists the most primitive social forms and extreme poverty. But South Africa is probably the

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most glaring example of the greatest contradiction on the planet. It is possible, sometimes in the space of a few minutes, to move from a modern first world city, such as Cape Town, the centre of Johannesburg, or central Durban, into Third World African townships like Inanda in Natal, or face the unspeakable social conditions in Alexandra in Johannesburg.

Anna lives in Alexandra township. She is a domestic worker who works for twelve hours a day looking after elderly whites in the white suburb of Howton, ten minutes away. However, this area might as well be on a different planet, with mile upon mile of the most splendid housing, mansions literally walking distance away from the horrors of Alexandra.



*The South African Domestic Workers' Union protest*

### ***Anna's story***

I work from 7am to 7.30pm - roughly twelve hours a day for 600 Rand a month. I do the cooking, washing and cleaning in a six-roomed house.

I don't get a weekend off. Even on Sundays I must come and make their lunch and do everything. Thursday I am off, but I still have to be there to make breakfast. After 10.30 I am out, its my day off!

*Militant* no. 1171 4 March 1994

There are two million domestic workers in South Africa. There is 50 per cent unemployment and seven million workers live in shacks. Three million in total do not have houses. Three million (nearly two-thirds) of households, 86 per cent of schools and 17,000 clinics have no electricity. More than 12 million do not have access to clean drinking water. 21 million people do not have adequate sanitation (toilets and refuse removal). Between nine and 15 million are illiterate. Education is not compulsory. 60,000 children die every year from malnutrition and starvation and tens of thousands die from preventable diseases like tuberculosis.

### **Conditions breed revolutionaries**

Alongside the 6-8 million unemployed are hundreds of thousands of others who merely eke out an existence from hawking or doing whatever they can. It is these conditions which have fuelled the revolutionary fervour of the South African workers. They have displayed many of the features shown by the Chinese working class in the revolution of 1925-27. They lived in the slums of Shanghai, Canton and the other cities of China, but worked in modern factories which fused and organised them together as a class. The Chinese workers, ragged and dispossessed, stepped on to the scene of history between 1925-27. They attempted to carry through a revolution in the Shanghai and Canton insurrections. These were only blocked because of the false policies of Stalin whose political line was followed by the leaders of the relatively young and inexperienced Communist Party. On a higher plane, and as equally brutalised by capitalism, the South African workers have shown in the course of the 1980s a revolutionary determination every bit as powerful as their Chinese counterparts of 70 years ago.

A little glimpse of the social conditions which forged and tempered the best fighters in the South African working class is given by the following account from Karl and Roseman, two young African workers and ANC activists in Khayalitsha in the

Western Cape, South Africa's third biggest township.

### ***Karl's and Roseman's story***

There are about half a million people in the township, although that's only an estimate. The government census a few years ago just took an aerial photograph and estimated the number of people!

Most people here come from the 'homelands' of Transkei and Ciskei. 80 per cent are squatters living in shacks. Khayalitsha has the strongest ANC support of any African area in the Western Cape.

There are many problems. People here come from rural areas and some gangsters tried to re-establish the tradition of the 'chief' which exists in tribal areas. They tried to force people to pay rent on their shacks. This was resisted by us, the area's ANC organisers.

We carried out some very successful campaigns unifying the people on rent boycotts, housing, local 'taxi war' (two different factions fighting over routes, fares, etc).

The community intervened and set up a commission to decide who should have which routes. One faction didn't accept the decision and continued their harassment of the other side by burning shacks.

The areas resisted. The ANC in particular fought this successfully and became very powerful. We even set up defence units because these thugs were supported by the police who used to try and enforce their rule in the area.

However, the people fought back and chased them away. They came back with police and in a pitched battle, with arms used on either side, 200 people were injured. About 20 were killed.

The gangsters then came back again, not just with the police but with the army. Some people were armed and resisted with guns.

### ***Youth build the ANC***

After this battle many of the ANC were forced into hiding. About 80 people remained, many of them youth, who began to rebuild the organisation.

We conducted campaigns on housing and electrification. Some areas have no drainage system. Sewage was gathered in buckets -

these were supposed to be emptied each week but sometimes weren't emptied for a month. People sometimes took action by dumping it in the council offices!

We campaigned for basic facilities such as a communal toilet and electrification and fought to get our area moved to a new site where they could be installed.

We approached other areas for an alliance to set up 'site and service' facilities - toilet blocks, street lighting, etc.

The council said every household must pay R29.50 a month rent for these toilets. The people weren't prepared to pay this money.

With other areas, we marched on the council offices and dumped all the papers that said we had to pay rent. A week later, the civic leader who led the demonstration was assassinated.

So we organised another march, accusing the corrupt councillors of murdering this leader. We demanded they pay the funeral costs. Because of our mass pressure they agreed we should not pay any rent.

### ***Fighting the gangsters***

In another area, a member of a rival organisation tried to sign up people, forcing them to join the ANC.

This gangster, Cheratutu, led an organisation called Western Cape Squatters Association (WECUSA). He was what we call a 'shack lord' who sold space in the area for a price.

We called a mass meeting and organised an 'interim ANC'. We went to ANC regional conference, attended by 800 delegates and approached the Western Cape ANC leader Alan Boesak. We tried to give him a letter complaining about these gangsters masquerading under the ANC banner.

They wouldn't let me distribute the letter to delegates so we gave the letter to ANC members from our area on a bus going to the conference.

We also produced a special issue of *Congress Militant* (written in Xhosa as well as English). We sold it at railway stations and door-to-door. We had people queuing up to buy it.

As a result of our campaign, the people chased this gangster out.

He'd been forcing people to pay R2.50 each. In total, it added up to R4000 a month (roughly £800), a kind of tax which he put in his own pockets. The youth in the ANC decided to fight back against this.

This year (1993) we relaunched the ANC branch which the WECUSA leaders had claimed. We chased them out of the area. We told the people there was no need to use force of arms.

We wrote to the ANC describing what kind of person this gangster was. We told them he was unacceptable as an ANC leader. At the launching of our branch, 400 local people turned up.

We were the first ANC branch to organise an 'ID campaign'. Most people have come from rural areas into our township and don't have identity (ID) cards.

It was estimated before the elections that two to four million people, predominantly African, had no ID card. This was essential for voting in the April 1994 elections. The ANC made the Home Affairs ministry organise mobile units to register people with cards.

We also organised a very successful campaign to provide basic electricity to our area. We negotiated with the electricity suppliers. Our pressure made them agree to provide basic needs.

Our campaigns have built ANC membership dramatically in Khayalitsha to 35,000 members. We're proud to be one of the best ANC branches: we have 20 branches which send delegates to a meeting every week. Mandela spoke at a meeting here recently when 65,000 attended.

### ***Police harassment***

We face constant harassment. An ANC Youth League dance was shot at by the police. We then organised a march of 3000 people on the police station.

We were ambushed when firing was exchanged between demonstrators and police and two people were injured. We demanded the removal of the white commander of the police station.

As a result of our pressure and an indication of the change in this country, the police went to ANC officers in the township and asked us to nominate someone for the post of police commander!

Khayalitsha workers are deprived of even basic facilities. There is

no nursery or creche. We decided we needed a creche and discussed a campaign on this, first of all at Marxist Workers' Tendency meetings, then taking it to the ANC.

We campaigned for the council to give us resources but they said "You're not paying rent so we cannot build the creche." So we organised a mass meeting where we were elected to conduct the campaign. We raised enough resources to organise a Saturday play-group outside one of our members' small shacks with 60-80 children attending.

We managed to get some equipment; some of our women comrades collected donations. We've been in touch with architects to try plans for a proper structure for a creche, a clinic, etc. We even hope to get money from some firms in the area.

*Militant* no. 1161, 10 December 1993

It was these conditions which formed the background to the elections and explains the fervent mood for change in the 1980s.

## **The revolution continues**

The 1980s were distinguished by the general strikes and the near insurrectionary mood of the townships. At the same time a process of self-arming of at least a section of the workers and the youth began. Above all, we saw the creation of the mighty Congress of South African Trade Unions.

When negotiations began it was suggested that this revolution had been "aborted" or had been diverted into "safe channels". However, the South African revolution is going through a "democratic phase". Such periods, during which there is a lull when the movement of the working class appears to have receded for a while, are inevitable.

Such was the period which followed the February revolution in Russia in 1917. Having made the revolution, the overthrow of the Czarist regime in February, the masses then paused to digest the results of their efforts. The mass of the working class learns in the main through experience. In the first instance,

they usually take the line of least resistance. Having overthrown the despotism of the Czar, the Russian workers and peasants transferred their hopes to what appeared to be the biggest and richest party, the one with the biggest influence, the Mensheviks. The Mensheviks, in turn, agreed to share power with the so-called liberal capitalists. This was tolerated for a period by the mass of the working class and the peasantry because their understanding had not yet developed to the level where they were able to see through the Mensheviks, who intended to remain within the framework of rotted Russian landlordism and capitalism.

At this stage the Bolsheviks, who were to lead the revolution nine months later in October 1917, had no more than six per cent of the vote in the Soviets (workers' and peasants' councils). It was to take big events, revolution and counter-revolution, for the mass of the working class to pass over to support the Bolsheviks.

## **General strikes**

We saw a similar process evolve over a longer period during the Spanish revolution of 1931-37. The beginning of a revolution is always marked by the masses stepping onto the scene of history. They attempt to take their fate into their own hands. This was strikingly revealed by the convulsive general strikes of the 1980s and the near civil war between the ANC and Inkatha which was a feature of the late 1980s and the early 1990s. Even the phase of negotiations which preceded the elections was punctuated by huge general strikes, showing the colossal potential power of the African working class. This was shown at the time of the Boipatong massacre and particularly following the assassination of Chris Hani, when South African capitalism hung by a thread, with a general strike and mass demonstration paralysing the country.

Despite the slaughter of thousands, the result of state and Inkatha terror and the resistance of workers in the townships, the underlying revolutionary drive of the African workers



continues. It has temporarily shifted from the insurrectionary/general strike phase to negotiations and elections. However, the underlying objective difficulties of South African capitalism mean that at a certain stage the movement of the working class will once more resume on a mass scale.

Internal "decolonisation" is undoubtedly taking place, but there is a crucial difference between what is taking place in South Africa and how decolonisation developed in the rest of Africa in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Then, the process developed in the main against the background of a world economic upswing, which benefited to some extent the underdeveloped world of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Some of the crumbs at least from the very rich table of the advanced industrial countries fell into the laps of the underdeveloped world.

At the same time, the existence of strong Stalinist states in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and China, allowed the newly "independent" countries of Africa and the ex-colonial world to attain a relative independence by balancing between the two major world powers of Stalinism and United States imperialism.

## **World economy in crisis**

The situation which now faces South Africa is, however, entirely different. It is developing in the teeth of the worst economic recession for 60 years. Capitalism is in the grip of a world depression. There will be no return to the growth rates of the 1980s let alone those of the capitalist world economic upswing of 1950-75. There could be a certain growth in some economies, and even in the world economy as a whole, but not enough to eat significantly into the mass unemployment which is now a permanent feature of world capitalism.

The 20 million unemployed in Europe and the 36 million in the advanced industrial countries as a whole is testimony to the changed situation facing world capitalism. The picture is even worse in the colonial and semi-colonial world. Africa as a whole

is devastated by the effects of rotting capitalism. According to the World Bank, whole countries, such as Zaire, have "ceased to exist". An endless spiral of poverty, mass unemployment, the re-emergence of tribalism, of chaos and disintegration, seems to have gripped the continent. One thing is clear - on a world scale, large scale concessions to the working class are ruled out.

On the contrary, the capitalists are attempting to snatch back the reforms, which were granted to workers in the form of the 'welfare state' in the advanced industrial countries at least, in the period of 1950 to 1975. Keynesian ideas, that is, increased state expenditure in order to boost the economy, were in fashion during the world economic upswing. Faced with crisis, however, the capitalists swung to the opposite extreme, to so-called monetarism. In effect this means savage deflation, taking the form of cutting the share going to the working class in wages and expenditure on the welfare state. In the recent period, there has been a certain flirtation with Keynesian or neo-Keynesian ideas by capitalist economists. But, in the present world situation, the adoption of large-scale Keynesian measures, of big reforms to the working class, of a boost in public expenditure, is ruled out.

This does not mean that in certain specific instances, for vital strategic and political reasons, the ruling class internationally will not attempt to give concessions in order to try to solve formerly "intractable" problems. These concessions could be quite considerable. For instance, in the Middle East, one of the vital ingredients in the attempt to make the deal between the PLO and Israel "stick" was the promise of substantial investment, particularly from the oil-rich Gulf states, in the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank of the Jordan.

### **The masses' expectations aroused**

Similarly, in South Africa, some reforms will have to be introduced in an attempt to mollify the mass of the working class. There are huge expectations which have been aroused by

the election and the coming to power of a government in which the ANC is dominant. The new government will have to take action in the field of housing, in education, and above all as far as jobs are concerned. Even journals such as *Business Day* have advocated a "retraining programme" for the unemployed township youth. Nevertheless, when the ANC announced its election programme, a frisson of anxiety, if not hostility, went through the South African "business community".

### The ANC programme

The ANC's election proposals are way to the left of the labour, 'socialist', or even 'communist' leaders of the mass parties of Western Europe. The ANC promised to provide jobs and training for 2.5 million unemployed youth over ten years. A promise has been made to build one million homes with running water and toilets within five years. Electricity is to be supplied to 2.5 million homes within the same period, and the number of free school text books will double. VAT on basic foods will be abolished and income tax for those earning less than £745 a month will be cut. In health, the private sector is to be "discouraged" in favour of a "substantial expansion of the public sector". The ANC originally promised an increased public sector involvement in the mining industry. Thirty per cent of agricultural land will be transferred to blacks within five years.

The ANC also advocated the short-term redistribution of land, mainly for the benefit of female members of landless households in rural areas. It proposed the acquisition of white farmland, saddled by unsustainable levels of debt, and even the nationalisation of some commercial banks and the buying of key stakes in companies on the Johannesburg stock exchange "in order to transfer the ownership of wealth to the majority".

These proposals naturally provoked charges from the capitalist spokesmen of "confiscation" and that the programme was "utopian" and "impractical". Even normally 'balanced' observers, such as David Beresford, writing in the British *Guardian* characterised the proposals of the ANC as "fantasy".

And it must be conceded that the critics are right, so long as the framework of rotten South African capitalism is accepted.

### **Some reforms possible**

Undoubtedly some concessions can, with the help of international capital, be given to the working class. An authoritative report estimates that a basic health care and nutrition programme could be introduced at the cost of one billion Rand a year (£160 million) which would lead to the construction of 2000 clinics. A housing programme could also be introduced aiming at the completion of 350,000 homes a year by the end of the decade, a jobs programme for "2.5 million jobs in 12 years". It is unlikely that an ANC government, remaining within the framework of capitalism, would be able to implement all of this. Nevertheless, some reforms will be granted.

But such are the problems besetting South Africa that they will remain intractable on a capitalist basis. Even substantial reforms by an ANC government, given the nature of the problems, is like an egg cup being used to empty an ocean. Referring to the programme of the ANC *Business Day* commented on 18 January 1994: "The figures are based on the assumption that the economy will grow robustly, generating revenue and enhancing the government's ability to borrow... If anything should happen to inhibit economic growth the programme will have to be aborted." There we have it, straight from the horse's mouth.

### **Capitalism cannot deliver**

The journal spells out what will happen to the ANC's programme of reforms on the basis of continued economic difficulties for South African capitalism. Tied as it is to the world market, South African capitalism's economic prospects will be severely curtailed by world economic developments, even with a certain investment in the economy by international capital.

Fearful of the aroused expectations of the masses in the run up to the election, leading figures in the ANC/SACP alliance were at pains to dampen these expectations. Joe Slovo, one of the leaders of the SACP and former "communist" bogeyman of the apartheid regime, has assumed the role of a firehose in relation to the working class. Seeking to calm businessmen's fears of an ANC-dominated government, Slovo wrote in *Business Day*, "We need a mixed economy with a balanced role for both the private and public sectors." He went on, "We reject old style statism and commandist control. Our draft constitution commits us to respect and protect private property as may be necessary for effective economic development and growth... The programme (of the SACP) deliberately omitted the word 'nationalisation' as a general panacea for our economic ills. That was the first thrust in the direction of a more balanced approach."

As far as the reformists are concerned, the term "mixed economy" has always been synonymous with an acceptance of working within the limits of capitalism. Where the majority of industry is in the hands of the capitalists, in reality a handful of monopolies, they will dictate to the state and not vice-versa.

## Monopolies dominate

Capitalism in South Africa is extremely monopolised. The Anglo-American corporation now owns 32.2 per cent of the Johannesburg stock exchange. The four biggest monopolies together (Anglo-American, Rembrandt, SA Mutual and Sanlan) own over 70 per cent. It is these monopolies which will call the tune and dictate to an ANC-dominated government and not the other way around. Joe Slovo in *Business Day* appealed to the better nature of the capitalists. "The obligation to bring about a just transformation and meet peoples' expectations is not only on our shoulders. It is also on yours." This is like trying to evoke tears from a marble statue. Whatever their intentions, no matter how "sympathetic" the capitalists are to the poor and the dispossessed, based as they are on the profit

system, they will be compelled to attack living standards, to lower wages, lengthen working hours and preside over mass unemployment.

In effect, the ANC/SACP alliance is trying to square the circle in seeking to satisfy both big business and the working class. King Canute, in trying to make the waves go back, had an easier job. A businessman writing in *Business Day* expressed the same dilemma from a differing angle:

A careful reading of the sixth draft of the ANC/SACP/COSATU Reconstruction And Development Project (RDP) reveals both danger and opportunity for business. The threat is in the document's ever-present faith in central planners and state capacity to deliver. The opportunity lies in the recognition that private sector development and support are necessary for success and in the stated willingness of the document's authors to engage with business in the debate about the future.

The dilemma is summed up by the situation which the ANC faces over the vital mining industry. The gold and coal mining industries cut 210,000 jobs - more than a third of the workforce - in the six years to 1993, depriving up to 15 per cent of the South African population of their basic income. The coal industry workforce has also fallen by more than half a million to just 28,000 by the end of 1993. The gold industry workforce dropped by more than 30 per cent to 360,000 in the same period. An estimated 3-6 million people, who are dependent on the workers in these industries, were affected by the "retrenchment" of jobs that had taken place. In this situation, there is naturally a clamour within the working class for action to bring the mining industry under state and democratic control.

### **Nationalisation "not considered"**

The ANC responded to this by proposing in a vague fashion the nationalisation of mineral rights. Jai Naydoo, a former prominent leader of COSATU, and now minister without port-

folio, responsible for overseeing the RDP in the new government, stated in February 1994: "We are seeking to return mineral rights to the hands of the democratic government, in line with the rest of the world." Mineral rights will be taken over by the state without affecting the ownership of the mining industry. Nevertheless, the mining employers have set up a noisy opposition to this proposal. This in turn evoked the response from Paul Jordon, co-ordinator of ANC mineral and energy policy who stated that nationalisation of mining companies or mineral rights "is not under consideration".

## **The Freedom Charter abandoned**

And yet the key to implementing the ANC's reforms lies in the idea of nationalisation enshrined in the Freedom Charter which is now being abandoned by the ANC leadership. Nationalisation of the key monopolies with compensation on the basis of proven need is the only way to elaborate a full socialist plan of production and in this way implement the programme of the ANC.

Even before it came to power, the ANC leadership was subjected to contradictory class pressures. It is possible that, in the first period of a new government, illusions that the problems can be solved can delay a movement of the working class for a short time. After waiting 350 years, a certain fund of credit will granted by the African workers to what they will perceive as their government.

But once it dawns on them that only the slightest dents will be made in the massive social problems of the African townships an inevitable outburst of anger and indignation will take place. Even before an ANC dominated government had come to power, there were rumblings of discontent amongst the youth and a critical attitude towards the ANC leadership amongst significant layers of the working class. They are already suspicious of the increasingly capitalist wing of the ANC which more and more distanced itself from the working class basis of the organisation.

## **The Workers' Party**

The idea of a workers' party was energetically debated amongst the more politically advanced South African workers in the period running up to the election. The leadership of the metal workers' union (NUMSA) in particular pressed for COSATU to adopt the idea of establishing a workers' party. Such a proposal was bound to surface given the character of the ANC as an "all-embracing" liberation movement which includes in its ranks nationalists, incipient capitalist elements who are increasingly coming to the fore, as well as those who consider themselves socialists and "communists".

The ANC in fact formed the bedrock of an alliance including the South African Communist Party and COSATU. In truth, COSATU was and remains the most important part of this alliance, reflecting the working class's aspiration for social liberation as well as for the overthrow of the white minority regime. And yet, in terms of candidates and influence on the election campaign, COSATU was largely sidelined. This experience, together with the inevitable disappointment which will be felt by the working class when the ANC fails to deliver the goods fully, will increase support for the ideas of a workers' party.

## **The British experience**

History demonstrates that the working class can for quite a period of time remain as a tail of one or other capitalist party. In Britain, despite the glorious traditions of Chartism in the early part of the Nineteenth Century, for most of the latter part of that century the working class clung to the coat-tails of the Liberal Party. This was made possible because British imperialism, using the super profits extracted from its colonies, was able to buy off the "labour aristocracy", some skilled and other sections of the working class. Only with the undermining of the position of British capitalism, because of intense competition with the emerging power of German imperialism, was British capitalism no longer able to afford big concessions to the



working class. Over a lengthy period this prepared the ground for the trade unions to separate themselves from the Liberal Party and lay the basis, by organising the Labour Representation Committee, for the formation of a Labour Party.

In America today a similar process is beginning to take place with the idea of the unions separating themselves from the capitalist Democratic Party and organising a powerful Labour Party gaining support. Clinton's support for NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Association), which favoured big business over the unions, has given a push for some of the unions to consider taking such a step. Class polarisation and big battles in the USA will inevitably lead to the creation of a mass Labour Party. In South Africa, given the explosive character of the situation and the inability of weakened South African capitalism to satisfy fully the demands of the working class, the idea of a workers' party can develop very rapidly.

In the phase of "national liberation", particularly when the workers' leaders in the unions and in the political parties, the "Communist" Party and Socialist Party, consciously tie the workers to middle-class nationalists, the idea of the workers separating can find little echo. Without their own mass political party workers can turn to radical middle-class nationalist parties as their vehicle for a struggle to carry through national and social liberation.

## **Politics abhors a vacuum**

Such a situation has been a feature of the colonial and ex-colonial world in the past period. Even where once-powerful mass workers' parties existed, largely in the form of "communist" parties, a vacuum was created when these were destroyed through the mistakes of their leadership. The masses can then turn towards nationalist, radical "anti-imperialist" parties.

Such was the situation which developed in Pakistan where the masses turned towards Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) forcing the leader of the party to adopt a radical "socialist"

and at times "anti-capitalist" rhetoric.

The same applies in Sri Lanka to Mrs Bandaranaike's Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). Powerful mass workers' parties such as the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) and the Communist Party had the opportunity in the past to establish an unrivalled position in the working class which could have drawn behind them the mass of the peasantry, thus shattering the SLFP. However, mistaken policies and methods have led to the complete undermining of the mass base of these parties. Not just nature, but politics, abhors a vacuum. In the situation that was created, radical sections of the working class have now turned towards the SLFP.

In Pakistan, on the other hand, a small but growing layer of workers, disillusioned with the turn towards the right of Bhutto's daughter, Benazir, now leader of the PPP, have raised the idea of a workers' party based on the trade unions. This indicates that at a certain stage the working class is compelled through bitter experience and inevitable disappointment with nationalist radical capitalist parties, to move to form their own party.

### **The workers' party in South Africa**

South Africa will be no different and may develop at an even greater speed. However, for the formation of a mass workers' party it is not sufficient for the advanced layers alone to arrive at this conclusion. The mass of the working class, which in general learns through experience, must pass through a period when they see that their aspirations are not going to be realised by parties who remain within the framework of capitalism. Only then will they transfer their hopes to the idea of a separate workers' party.

This is the reason why *Militant* and *Congress Militant*, while in general supporting the idea of a workers' party, did not advance the slogan of a workers' party in the immediate period before the election. Such a slogan was premature at that stage. The working class had first to test out the ANC in action. It was

therefore vital that the greatest possible majority was achieved during the election, giving the ANC leadership no real excuse for delaying action on the demands of the masses.

Now, in the aftermath of the elections and over a period of time, events will teach the working class, first of all the advanced workers and through them the mass of the working class, that it is necessary to put the idea of a workers' party on to the agenda. But we pointed out before the elections that the larger the ANC ranks in the new parliament, the more difficult it will be for the ANC leaders not to carry out their promises.

A critical mood towards the leadership of the ANC has reflected itself in the debate within COSATU on the need for a "workers' party". The most significant aspect of this development is that this idea of a workers' party developed in South Africa before the coming to power of an ANC dominated government. It is a promissory note for the future as far as the South African working class is concerned.

In the immediate period before the elections, it was not something which the mass of the working class, nor even the advanced workers in the main, would be prepared to act on. The South African masses correctly drove towards the greatest possible majority for the ANC in the elections, which the Marxists around *Congress Militant* entirely identified with.

## Workers voted for liberation

The African workers saw the vote as a weapon which would usher in their "liberation". When Mandela spoke to the ANC youth in January 1994 he said: "If the ANC government is unable to deliver the goods, then you should overthrow it." The working class may well heed this advice. The ANC will not be able to deliver the goods if it bends the knee to capital. But at the same youth conference, Mandela both opposed nationalisation and sought to mollify international capitalism by declaring: "We have guaranteed international investors against confiscation of their property."

An ANC government will be between the millstones of an

aroused working class and the need to pacify capitalism. Even in the months before the election, and at the slightest upturn in the economy, the working class moved into action. They tried to take back what they had lost in the recession. Strikes broke out on the issue of wages in the textile, food and metal industries as well as amongst health workers. This is but one symptom of the growing radicalisation of the African working class.

### **Class lines are being drawn**

A class differentiation within the ANC, already in its early stages, is inevitable in the future. Cracks along class lines have already begun to appear. Before his assassination, Chris Hani warned against the move to the right of the ANC leadership and spoke of the possible future formation of some new socialist force after the ANC came to power. The election of Winnie Mandela to the presidency of the ANC Womens' League in December 1993 further reflected the suspicions of many rank and file ANC members. Despite her evident political weaknesses she is seen by a big layer of the youth and the working class as being in opposition to the ANC's move to the right.

### **The lessons of SWAPO**

Developments in Namibia to the north have been noted by South African workers. SWAPO (the South West African Peoples' Organisation), which now governs Namibia, had a proud tradition of struggle against colonialism, like the ANC. It waged a valiant armed struggle and was unstinting in its "commitment to revolutionary ideals". Moreover, just as COSATU has been the bedrock of ANC support, the Mineworkers' Union of Namibia (MUN) threw its weight behind SWAPO at its January 1989 national congress "to render all support to the national liberation organisation, SWAPO of Namibia, in the forthcoming elections." It also argued "that SWAPO will create a more

favourable climate for workers to fight exploitation.”

And yet in November 1993 the very same SWAPO government deployed its riot police against the MUN picket line at the strike-hit Consolidated Diamond Mines (CDM).

One South African commentator, Amrit Manger, writing in the *Sunday Nation* on 21 November 1993, commented that it “rekindled memories of 1 April, 1989, when 50,000 Namibian workers marching against privatisation were driven back by 300 kovert (South African apartheid police).” The explanation as to why the SWAPO government took this brutal step was given by Andimbo Toyoyatova, a former railworker who was once incarcerated on Robben Island but is now minister of mines and energy in the SWAPO government. He stated that the government could not afford a prolonged strike. “Namibia depends too much on the mining sector. It has become vital to the welfare of the country.”

This is the logic of SWAPO’s decision to remain within the framework of capitalism. Accepting capitalism, they must bow to the dictates of the market, of native and international capital.

## **The lessons for South African workers**

There are powerful lessons here for the South African working class. How long will it be before an ANC government sends in police and army units against striking workers or rebellious inhabitants of the African townships? The coalition government, with the ANC as a majority, will be subject to remorseless contrary and counter class pressures. Mandela and the right of the ANC have already bent the knee to capitalism, both within the country and on an international scale.

It is virtually ruled out that they will take over some commercial banks as the Merg group advocates, or even introduce bigger taxes on capital in the form of a serious wealth tax. On the contrary, as with the capitalists in the ex-colonial world as a whole, it seems that the ANC have opted for a “open” economy without even limited controls on the inflow of capital.

This could have disastrous consequences for the weakened South African economy, particularly for indigenous industry. Imperialism will be able to exercise an even greater stranglehold than at present on the economy. This in turn will prevent the ANC from introducing a programme that can satisfy the mass of the working class.

### **The land question**

Even on the land question, the new government will find itself between two millstones. Some five million Africans have been forcibly removed from ancestral land; five million whites in a population of 38 million now own about 83 per cent of the land.

The cry of “kill the farmer, kill the boer”, although ultra-left as a slogan on the lips of people like Peter Mokaba, leader of the ANC Youth League, nevertheless has deep historical roots. It resonates particularly with impatient layers of youth when set against the background of the systematic robbery of the land of the African people over generations. Even on this issue the ANC will not act to satisfy the demands of the masses. On the other hand, the threat of a “white backlash” is undoubtedly fuelled by a perceived threat to take over white farms. This in turn was one of the factors which led to the demand for a separate Boer homeland, a Volkstadt, in the immediate period before the elections.

### **Counter-revolution**

Faced with certain defeat on 27 April, the parties of yesterday, gathered together in the misnamed “Freedom Alliance” threatened to bring the house crashing down. This organisation was an alliance between the Afrikaner Volksfront, led by General Viljoen and “Gatcha” Buthelezi’s Inkatha Freedom Party. They threatened “civil war” and the creation of a Bosnia-type situation. However, Viljoen, who

straddled the “respectable” Afrikaner right and the neo-Nazi AWB, trod a very narrow line between threats of white resistance and at the same time warning his supporters of the futility of such steps.

This attempt at counter-revolution, however, including a bombing campaign, only served to harden the mood of the African workers. This culminated in the explosive events around the so-called “homeland” of Bophuthatswana in March 1994.

In effect, the dispossessed masses in this dumping ground rose in an insurrectionary movement which overthrew the homeland ruler, Mangopi, the stooge of apartheid. He was refusing to allow Bophuthatswana to participate in the April elections. Faced with an uprising, the Afrikaner right then intervened in what they considered to be a “turkey shoot” of blacks. They got more than they bargained for. The Bophuthatswana police and army went over to the side of the masses and attacked the white ultras who then fled. But this was not before three neo-Nazis had been shot in full view of the world’s media. This in turn shattered the alliance between Viljoen’s organisation and the neo-Nazi AWB.

## **White utopia**

While the capacity of the white ultras and the neo-Nazis can never be underestimated they do not possess either the support or the military capacity to have created a Bosnian-type situation. The demand for a white homeland in South Africa is completely utopian. There is no area of the country in which the whites could now command a majority, allowing them to construct their own state.

Nelson Mandela made it clear before the elections that the ANC “would never contemplate a separate state for Afrikaners, that the ANC could accept a state where Afrikaners exercise autonomy so long as all people in it have the same citizenship and voting rights.” Yet the concept of an autonomous area for whites, which at the same time allowed blacks and Coloureds

citizenship and voting rights, is a contradiction in terms. The whites would be a minority in their own "autonomous" state. If they evicted blacks and Coloureds in this area, it would merely be a mini-apartheid regime. Mandela has made it clear that this will be totally unacceptable to the African majority. Moreover, fearful of economic isolation, the majority of whites would not want to be part of such an autonomous region.

The majority of the white population rallied in the election behind the National Party on the slogan of "stop the ANC from getting a two-thirds majority." This is not the heady stuff of stubborn white resistance leading to separation. The ANC leadership after the election could now just conceivably concede a spurious "cultural autonomy" for Afrikaners with limited local self-government. But this will stop well short of a separate state.

### **Buthelezi's isolated support**

Isolated, Buthelezi at one stage threatened "a low intensity guerrilla war in Natal" and the Zulu king even threatened to form a "separate Zulu state". The main reason why Buthelezi was hesitant to participate in the elections was because he did not want to advertise the pathetic support for Inkatha on a national level. Participation in the election demonstrated that he had no more than ten per cent of the vote. In his home base of Natal, the 50 per cent vote for Inkatha was the result of massive vote rigging. Many only voted this way because they were coerced by the Inkatha warlords.

Buthelezi's artificial Kwazulu state possesses no soldiers and only 4000 police. It is utterly dependent on the subsidies of the Pretoria government. The ANC dominated government could now completely withdraw this financial support leading to the collapse of Buthelezi's empire.

South African capitalism no longer supports Buthelezi. In the past, Inkatha was financed and armed as a wedge against the ANC. Now the ruling class have realised that Mandela offers the best defence of their position in a changed South Africa.



## **A new stage in history**

An entirely new situation has opened up in the aftermath of elections in South Africa. Enormous pressures will be exerted on the new government, particularly by the ANC on the African population. Any agreed constitution will not be the last word.

The ANC leaders will undoubtedly attempt to use the presence of the National Party and Inkatha in the cabinet as an excuse for not carrying out the demands of the African people. Pressure will therefore grow for the eviction of the anti-ANC forces from the government. This in turn could lead to the ANC governing alone.

The present constitution in this situation could be ripped up. The plan for a five-year timescale before the possibility of "majority rule" could be considerably shortened under mass pressure. It is not excluded that there could be a series of governments, either with the ANC in coalition or holding power by itself. The ANC could, in the course of time, become the main instrument for the political rule of the South African capitalists.

In actual fact, the South African capitalists were forced to rule through the right wing of the ANC, through the medium of the Transitional Executive Council, in the run up to elections. Under the hammer blows of events, the National Party could shatter with big sections finding a home under the protective embrace of the more and more pro-capitalist wing of the ANC.

On the other hand, an increasingly radicalised working class will seek to cash in its promissory note of a workers party. The ANC could split with the left coming together with COSATU to form such an organisation.

## **The struggle for workers' power ....**

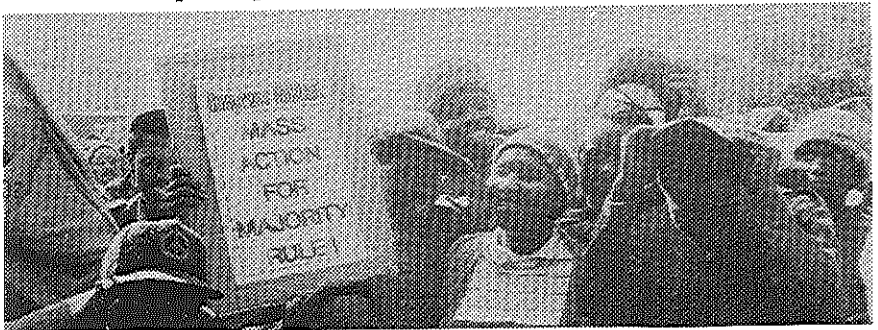
Thus the end of apartheid and 350 years of political slavery is not the end of the matter for South Africa. On the contrary, it is the beginning of a new and glorious chapter which will see the emergence of a powerful and inspirational

South African working class under its own colours and challenging for power. The South African working class will test and retest the ANC government. But they will see in action that it will not satisfy their demands. They will become more and more radicalised and will look for those ideas which can show a way out of the impasse. It will inevitably return to the ideas of the Freedom Charter, to the concepts of nationalisation, of a new society, of democratic socialism.

These ideas still burn fiercely in the hearts of the most class-conscious South African workers. Events, of course, will not develop in a straight line. But at a certain stage, a collision will develop between the different wings of the ANC, between a growing right-wing, pro-capitalist section, and a radicalised layer reflecting the pressure of the working class. Workers will see, through experience, that it is the ideas of Marxism, of *Congress Militant*, which offer the programme to realise their aims.

### ... and socialism

A combination of the powerful organisations of the South African working class, of COSATU, above all, and the ideas of Marxism, can forge a real socialist alliance which can guarantee a transformation of the lives of the South African working class and with it open up a new socialist vista for the whole of Africa.



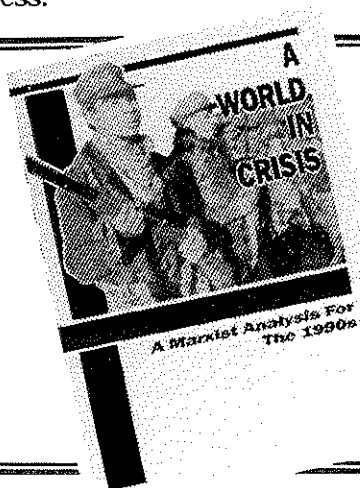
*Congress Militant on the march*

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In December, 1993, representatives of **Militant Labour** met together with delegates from Marxist organisations throughout the world in an International Conference organised by the **Committee for a Workers' International**. Discussions ranged across perspectives for the advanced capitalist countries, the ex-stalinist states, and the former colonial countries, as well as questions of programme, strategy and tactics.

25 countries were represented at the Conference, with a further six unable to attend. In countries such as South Africa, France Britain, Ireland, Nigeria, Germany, our sister organisations are in the forefront of the fight for socialism against racism and capitalism.

The decisions of that Conference have now been published in a 134 page book, **A World In Crisis**. For your copy, send off £4.50 to World Socialist Books, 3/13, Hepscott Road, London E9 5HB. For more information about **Militant Labour** or the **Committee for a Workers' International**, write to **Militant Labour** at the same address.

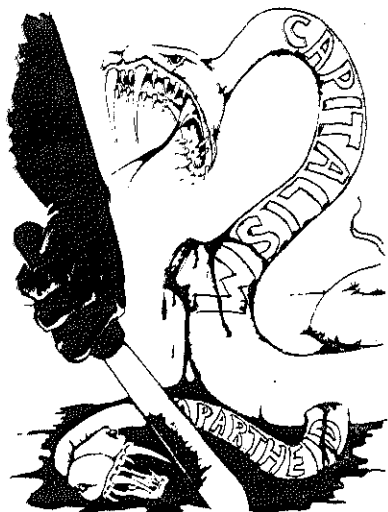


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The end of apartheid, marked by South Africa's first ever elections open to everyone, has inspired workers and youth across the world.

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