

South Africa

Revolutionary Crisis Deepens





There is no going back. Prospects of times of normalcy have been turned to ashes by the rebellions sweeping South Africa, whose flames are snaking ever closer to a situation resembling some form of open struggle for political power. Over the past months the explosive atmosphere has recharged again and again, the indefatigable struggle of the Azanian masses mounting in the face of all efforts by the white settler state to crush it, pushing out into every corner of the country and igniting still broader sections of the people.

From Cape Town to Johannesburg, from Port Elizabeth up to Durban, battles have continued to rage in the streets of the townships

and homelands with almost daily frequency. The black ghettos sealed off to protect the white settlers by the barbed wire of apartheid have increasingly become danger zones for the enemy, political bases for the oppressed to regroup and launch their counter-attack. Whether set off by taunting black youth throwing up fiery barricades against white soldiers and police atop armoured lorries that have penetrated into their territory, or by the most recent murder at point-blank range by the same scared thugs sparking immense funeral marches, the crescendoing struggle has delivered its response.

The determination of the Azanian masses has redoubled, and is transforming into a higher level of

struggle—both more defiant and more organised—which has been required to sustain resistance and up the ante in the face of the enemy's intensified repression. From successful, widespread boycotts of white businesses and public transport to organised actions against police stations, to planned forays into formerly unapproached white suburbs and the downtown areas in the whites cities, the rebellions have spread roots deep and wide, crisscrossing through workers in the mines, to schools, to farm and factory, drawing to the front the bold, unbounded impatience and anger of youth from all over.

The government shut down nearly 500 "coloured" schools in the Cape Town area, for example, which students had transformed into bases to organise their political struggle, while in other explosive areas like Soweto, police arrested hundreds in one day to try to force students back to school and end the boycott there. In the mines some union skirmishes (historically largely confined to economic demands) are spilling over into the political arena as debate grows about the future of Azania and the role of the working class. The general strike action called *against the government* for the first time—as an advance reply to President Botha's threats to retaliate against foreign-imposed economic sanctions by expelling migrant workers—was widely followed despite the regime's efforts to stop it. Other scenes becoming more common range from youth commandeering buses and lorries to organise demonstrations or build barricades, to their use of molotov cocktails, to pulling over and torching whites' vehicles. In short, within the jaws of greater repression both the masses' targets and their means to fight reveal a certain casting off of hesitations to employ revolutionary violence, in turn pushing the upsurge forward and into new areas.

Another such example is the virtual collapse of the black administrative structure set up by the white central government to help maintain political order. Local black

councils have been convincingly dismantled in key black townships, as black mayors and councillors have resigned in droves, or have "disappeared," discovering the same fate as black cops and police informers. Of course when the masses take a decisive stand against such elements in the heat of class struggle, reducing them to charred memories of their service to the white ruling class, this sets the bourgeois press wolfhounds howling about the "bloodthirsty" blacks "provoking" the current violence.

But few apologies could be heard from among the unarmed masses for this taste of counterattacking the militarised oppressor by amputating a few of his fingers and toes. The important practical value of this type of action in strengthening the revolutionary movement is also evident. As one youth said, "You have to do it, you have to teach people a lesson. And it works—they don't become informers so easily afterwards." Indeed, in an interview, Chief of the South African police Johann Coetzee lamented the isolation of his black snitches, who he has relied on heavily for "unraveling systems of support" among the black movement in the past.

Breakdown of "Normal" Order

With these official Uncle Toms temporarily out of service (although others such as the Zulu Chief Buthalezi have stepped into the breach, attacking mass demonstrations alongside the police) the white settler state stood nakedly poised before the Azanian people, reduced to administering sheer blood and terror in an effort to reestablish order. To little avail.

The state of emergency declared several months ago by the white regime has accurately advertised its unprecedented crisis. The fact that, for the first time in 25 years, the South African government had to resort to "special" repressive measures illustrated vividly its political impotence in the face of the rebellions and just how out of control the situation had become. President Botha's July 21st announcement—"rubber pellets are ineffective, we find we need recourse to real gunpowder"—gave

rein to a renewed license to kill, fueling in turn a further burst of fury from the masses. Both the army and "private" vigilante groups were brought in to assist the apparently overtaxed South African police, arresting thousands and murdering hundreds more. These "emergency measures" only served to narrow the corner the regime is backing itself into, facing off against an increasingly politically aroused oppressed majority, many of whom are ready to die to overthrow them, while revealing more savagely the need and intent to preserve white rule.

A widening crack in the ruling minority's overall staunchly loyal white front has been the participation by some white youth and students in anti-apartheid protests, particularly on the campuses. And a significant anti-draft movement, especially among Anglican youth, has sprung up, puzzling and infuriating central South African Defense Force authorities. According to some Western military sources, 8,000 out of 30,000 youth did not report for their call-up in 1985, a figure four to five times greater than recent years.

Yet, while loading and reloading its live ammunition, the government has been forced once again to begin shuffling reform legislation. If the regime's desperation was revealed through its declaration of emergency, its fundamental weakness has been further emphasised by the fact that it is not strong enough to just crack heads, but must also dish up some carrots to the masses, however limp and tasteless. Its feeble attempts to remove the official "whites only" signs from the doors segregating off some facets of daily life, or to build soccer fields and volleyball courts for the black youth, have not had the desired effect, as Lenin once described the purposes of such reforms, of allaying the unrest of the people or forcing the revolutionary masses to cease, or at least slacken, their struggle. On the contrary, each new round of self-exposure by the Botha regime and the imperialists behind it has aided the masses' political understanding of the enemy's basically weak position, despite its militarised exterior, as well as their

determination and struggle.

Ripening Revolutionary Situation

It has been well over a year since the outbreak of these rebellions in South Africa, and well over a year that the imperialists and white settlers have been unable to extinguish them. As we pointed out in "South Africa Summoned by Revolution," in *World to Win* number three, the revolutionary situation has been long developing in South Africa—stemming from the imperialist-designed and financed colonial set-up and all its economic and historical particularities—producing several important rounds of mass eruptions during the past decades. South Africa is gripped by a profound political crisis. The past year of sustained confrontation between oppressed and oppressor has sharpened up the terms of this crisis, and, together with this breakdown of routine order and ability to rule, has jolted the situation towards a more direct confrontation over political power, heightening the revolutionary climate.

This political collision has pitted the white settler ruling class, whose solutions are literally shriveling up as each step they take to regain control exposes them more, against the dynamic and rapidly growing but unarmed and still mainly spontaneous, unorganised struggle of the masses, which although it is lacking proletarian revolutionary leadership, is learning and pushing ahead as the enemy lashes out to stop it. The political initiative of the masses has ripped up the stability of the bourgeoisie, objectively boosting the level of the struggle beyond the bourgeoisie's means to quell it without paying a much higher political price, as youth, stones in hand, mock its armed forces, and its feathery reforms are met with derision.

With the rule of apartheid no longer tolerated by the masses, and the apartheid rulers no longer able to preside as before, the smell of a struggle for political power is in the air. The leading edge of the rebellions no longer represents simply a venting of anger or a convening of mass pressure to ease the chokehold of apartheid—whether

for higher wages, the elimination of passbooks, or a better seat on the bus to hell that the system reserves for blacks. Even if still spontaneous, a political awareness gained in the furnace of accelerating struggle with the enemy along with sensing his wounded condition have enabled the revolutionary-minded masses to perceive their strength and begin to search for the tools and means to destroy the way they have been forced to live. It is these ripening elements of the revolutionary situation that are posing—though still indirectly for the moment—the possibility that some form of open contest for state power or even civil war between the white minority ruling capitalist class and the Azanian masses may emerge.

This is not to say, of course, that the masses' struggle is soaring forward in a straight line, uninfluenced by obstacles and with no divisions for the bourgeoisie to foment, nor is it in the least to minimise the problems which will hold it back without a revolutionary line and organisation in command. A crucial starting point to move in this direction is thoroughly understanding the deep and irreversible crisis facing the South African state and its imperialist mentors.

Imperialist Bourgeoisies' Options and Constraints

The state's political crisis has in turn caused new financial wrinkles in South Africa's already severe economic crisis. The political instability has had repercussions in Western financial and economic circles, causing minor tremours such as some capital flight and loan withdrawals, including the much-publicised departure of a few companies, supposedly triggering a banking crisis. These circles have mainly applied their leverage to accelerate changes aimed at releasing the pressure cooker which may wreak much worse havoc if ways are not found to cool it down.

Barclays Bank declared that even if it is a "convenient target" (referring to anti-apartheid graffiti appearing on its branch walls in Britain), it is a "force for the good" in South Africa. Or, the West German Dresdner Bank, which found a trail

of blood painted between its doors in Frankfurt and those of the South African Consulate representing its complicity with the apartheid regime, sees no reason to level severe criticisms, because nearly half of their \$2 billion in outstanding short-term loans fall due in the next year. Regardless of whether it's entirely accurate, a government report claimed that if South African chromium exports were reduced by 30% for a year, West Germany's gross national product would fall by 25%. All this has only highlighted further the political role apartheid plays to preserve the extremely profitable trade and investment conditions pumping high returns into the Western imperialist world. And it has also underscored in fluorescent colours how totally this crisis is the crisis of Western imperialism, and how determined its corporations and its rulers are to stay.

Despite the stream of rhetoric about sanctions, and counter-rhetoric about cutting the supply of vital minerals, a statement to President Botha from the South African business community, as they like to call themselves, put it plainly: "Our survival depends on making the necessary structural changes to uphold the political, social and economic values pursued by our major trading partners."

That the imperialist captains holding the decisive pursestrings and the keys to NATO installations rather than the *sjamboks* (whips) right on site are extremely worried can be seen in the reams of editorials in every language on both sides of the Atlantic, asking from a thousand different angles, "What should we do?" as they eye the options dwindling before them and the flames of rebellion grow higher. This didn't turn out as a passing "spasm of social unrest," as some of their wishful columnists doggedly persist in describing this most serious and sustained crisis yet, for which no "Way Out" is clearly indicated.

The imperialists must stabilise South Africa and put a stop to the rebellions shaking this critical region. The struggle impels them to try to make some rapid adjustments in apartheid and to implement some

reforms while building up their ties among the bourgeois opposition in order to better accomplish this. At the same time, their overriding compulsion is to support the regime in power and its oppressive apparatus which their own architects created in the first place, for if other factors allow, this is ultimately the best guarantee that South Africa continues to serve the needs of their Western imperialist alliance.

This dilemma is not easily resolved practically, nor does it make for a comfortable seat of command. Tactically, the imperialists must still basically rely upon various combinations of the carrot and the stick. Their "emergency" stick hasn't worked, in fact backfiring dangerously. And any analysis of their reforms would be a brief exercise, so few have there been. Shallow offers such as granting citizenship to blacks formerly living in the homelands, followed by the hint of establishing a black consultative body to "advise" the President's Council, for example, speak for themselves. However, despite these negligible steps, the Western imperialist powers have performed excruciating gymnastics to portray reform rather than terror (or letting the situation drift on its own) as their road to stability in South Africa, forced by the new constraints of outraged public opinion in the bourgeois democracies they preside over.

But also figuring in this terrain is the fact that the rabid dogs under their command... have rabies, and are not easily fenced into the democracy charade required in moments of extreme crisis and exposure which risk damaging everyone's interests. The seeming lack of cooperation and enthusiasm for reforms by the ruling mercenaries who are trying to literally shoot the struggle dead partly reflects the continued division of labour between imperialists and colonialist dictators, but also stems from contradictions within their own reactionary social base. More importantly though, the basic problem is not civilising some backward, stubborn boers into better democrats (emulating perhaps the colossal statesmen-murderers in

London, Paris or Washington?); the system of white settler rule in South Africa means that any real bourgeois democracy is impossible there.

At the same time, slight divergences, reflecting primarily a further division of labour within the ruling class, have emerged over strategies for maintaining their supremacy. While the most diehard of the reactionary Afrikaaner political elements threaten worse retaliatory violence if "reforms" proceed any further, some South African businessmen have been reincarnated into a "liberal opposition," a voice of moderation, "concerned" over the slow pace at cleaning up apartheid's image. This section of financiers, including Anglo-American Corporation magnate G.W. Rely and mining industrialist Harry Oppenheimer, who also belongs to the bourgeois opposition alliance, the United Democratic Front, made a big spectacle of meeting with the reformist, pro-Soviet leaders of the African National Congress in exile and of proposing numerous harmless goodwill reforms. The most dramatic-sounding ones included various power-sharing schemes, alongside their call for Botha's departure, who has supposedly "proved his ineffectiveness" in times of crisis. These are of course the same business figures who helped catapult him to power, and backed him through earlier phases of this same crisis. This newborn "opposition" above all gives the regime more room to manoeuvre, and can itself conduct negotiations that have so far been impossible with various badly exposed capitulators and pro-U.S. black elements.

An additional factor is that while overall the Western imperialist bourgeoisies are fundamentally united on their goal of "normalising" the situation in South Africa, some differences about how to do it certainly exist, which have been used to carry out a similar division of labour in the South Africa debate between those calling for staunch support of the regime and those "vigorous opponents" of apartheid seeking faster reform.

In the final analysis, the rulers of

the major investor countries are unmistakably intent on crushing the revolt, and a strong current among them favours letting the dogs loose without the currently popular critical rhetoric attached... This position is most eloquently represented by Ronald Reagan and his right-wing religious fanatic associate, Jerry Falwell—the first foreign visitor Botha allowed inside his jails. While Pretoria's latest round of emergency repression undoubtedly had the highest backing, the negotiators among the imperialists have nonetheless also been actively trying to pave the road for some cosmetic changes.

Those within Western ruling circles playing the "great reformers," such as Senator Ted Kennedy and his ilk at the *New York Times*, promote changes such as establishing a voting system to include blacks, legalising "non-white dissent," improving the gross disparities between schools of different races, and eliminating other blatant segregation laws, while black leaders are reasoned with to help carry this out, and to convince the people. The French pro-government press echoes much of this, polished with their special human rights adjectives, believable only from the lips of "socialists" who sink ecology boats to defend their sovereign claim to test nuclear bombs, or suppress the independence movements in their colonies like Guadeloupe and Martinique, but find apartheid just disgraceful.

More honestly speaking for the French position was Socialist Party spokesman Jacques Huntzinger, who in his appeal to avoid "murderous disorder in the whole region," clarified that they did not wish to see the collapse of this "giant with clay feet...we are not for the most extreme strategy: it is through dialogue that deep and necessary reforms must be brought about in South Africa." No revolution, please.

Although occasionally liberal posturing can also be found in the British press, along with pleas to lift the state of emergency, the bourgeoisie there has tended to agree with the more conservative (and probably overall dominant U.S. posi-

tion) that openly backing the regime is the safest route. The liberal British daily *The Guardian* wrote unabashedly: "For if change without tragedy is your hope, then Botha and his (to our eyes extremely unattractive) political skills are about the only possible agents of it within the present framework of South African politics...Outsiders should be content to warn and to encourage the economic prosperity of South Africa, which is actually the best chance of peaceful change."

The British, whose economic crisis is causing major problems of its own, have tried to take advantage of the lack of a large, tenacious anti-apartheid movement, such as exists in the U.S., to argue at every opportunity that jeopardising national interests—Britain's trade and investments in South Africa—is neither necessary nor "effective."

But unfortunately for these demagogues, whether in Britain or North America, each hypocritical remark about the ghastly conditions for blacks in South Africa quickens the fuse burning among the volatile sections of the masses in their own imperialist cities, who themselves have something to say about national oppression. Black, Asian and West Indian youth in Handsworth, Brixton and Tottenham recently introduced a new element into the discussion in the streets of mother England. And the events of the world, including their rulers' crisis, are hardly lost on them. One youth, speaking about the Birmingham riots said, "It's just like South Africa here. For us, we don't see any difference."

The Azanian masses' unrepentant, unceasing rage has stirred many new forces across the world into political activity as well over the past year, particularly youth and students in the U.S. and Europe. The widespread movements opposing the U.S. as the main imperialist muscle behind apartheid have responded to the major developments in South Africa and spawned campus sit-ins, debates, and demonstrations along with massive arrests aimed particularly at forcing corporate and university divestment. The struggle to break free from imperialism in South

Africa, together with this activity to support it, have unveiled the enemy's face and nature more clearly to rebels everywhere, in the course of which raising big and important questions about what it takes to overthrow this system worldwide.

When An Imperialist Sanctions Himself

It was this storm of public outcry inspired by the Azanian upsurge which provoked the debate over levying government-sponsored economic sanctions which the major investor countries have been wallowing in for months. The liberal imperialist position has sought to "allay the unrest" of public opinion and reinforce the notion that the situation in South Africa is certainly "democratisable." Like the tale well-known to children growing up in the West, in which the emperor paraded himself stark naked before his subjects, believing he had donned a suit of new clothes, the imperialists' frantic efforts to dissociate themselves from apartheid's ugliest crimes have only revealed their tight collaboration. Applying any serious economic pressure through their transparent sanctions was never the issue; rather, it was to mould the terms for publicly hammering out these *political* sanctions, intended to confound who are the dogs and who are the masters as well as to retrieve some lost confidence in imperialism, newly distanced from the most odious features of apartheid.

Editors of bourgeois papers everywhere asked craftily, "Should the sanctions really bite Pretoria hard or just be symbolic threats? Who would really be most adversely affected by such measures? How much time will it take to get South Africa to comply," etc. Most commonly these writers tried to champion the cause of the "downtrodden," arguing that blacks would be hurt most by sanctions since...Botha threatened to lay them off or expel them if sanctions were imposed, or to retaliate against the West, jeopardising the ability of blacks to advance economically.

As international pressure mounted for the big powers to make some kind of warning gesture to the

South African government, just how illusory—and vacuous—these sanctions were became clear. This was not altogether surprising, considering that any meaningful economic measures would amount to these heavy trading partners and investors sanctioning themselves.

France broke out to lead the imperialist pack in daredevil anti-apartheid sanctions. The Elysée recalled its ambassador and temporarily shut down the nuclear centre at Koeberg, promising no new investments for 18 whole months. And they took it to the United Nations! Ronald Reagan was mad. He dragged his feet and protested and refused to budge. It wasn't until the U.S. Congress, in reaction to widespread pressure and sizeable opposition (considering the politically charged climate in the U.S. today, which has polarised even further around South Africa) that Reagan did an "about-face." Again, for Reagan, this was a purely political question, of not condemning the regime he supports. And iron-lipped Maggie Thatcher held out even longer against sanctions, "as a matter of principle," balking first at Common Market proposals, and then going against the whole tide of the Commonwealth.

The inoffensive U.S. sanctions that were finally passed called for a curb in computer and nuclear technology sales to South Africa, no new loans, or at least not directly through U.S. companies. This certainly did not exclude loans through the U.S.' British affiliates, who never made any pretence of levying sanctions, until a watered-down version of the U.S. ones were adopted by the Commonwealth countries, under pressure by lackey African neo-colonial leaders who are after all supposed to be on the Africans' side.

Both the resulting toothlessness of their measures, and their painstaking efforts to spray the increasingly foul stench of bloody, direct links to apartheid with perfume provided rich new self-exposure. And secondly there was the great defence of bourgeois democracy, as opposed to the supposedly unrelated barbaric and racist ways of the South Africans. Listen to the agonised contortions of *The Guardian* hailing

President Botha's citizenship offer to township blacks as an "historic intellectual volte-face": "...it would be quite wrong to dismiss yesterday's changes as unimportant simply because they will have little immediate practical impact. Mr. Botha has dismantled the ideological basis of apartheid, the repugnant concept of extra-territorial citizenship under which all blacks were deemed to have been citizens of the homelands even if they did not live there. It is this travesty which enabled the whites to delude themselves that they were living in a democracy." On the other hand, they have a point: one of the wonderful advantages of bourgeois democracy is its ideological value in promulgating almost unlimited bullshit.

Apartheid Not Democratisable

The imperialists' dilemma in trying to resolve the conflict in South Africa is as fundamental as it is monumental. For essentially they *cannot* end apartheid, or at least the basic system of rule it has become the nomenclature for. The crisis of imperialism, which has been steadily accelerating on a world scale and sharpening in the context of global tensions between East and West, has been severely reflected in South Africa, as well. This framework dictates that now more than ever, the Western imperialists cannot and will not give up this lifeline of a highly profitable and rich supply of key resources that pulses into their empire; nor will they abandon to the Azanian masses or the Soviets waiting offstage the strategically indispensable southern outpost which they have crafted South Africa into over recent years as part of preparing for world war.

Why are they unable to "democratise" apartheid, or transform the ruthless armed white rule into a "just, civilised, multi-racial [and bourgeois] democracy"? True, apartheid is a brutally oppressive system but not without its logic, however twisted. It was designed to provide the necessary political structure for the extraction of the maximum amount of wealth from the labour of the Azanian masses by international capital. On this basis a white settler capitalist

class of European origin has arisen, which relies on these superprofits, in part, to pay off and secure the support of the white population as a whole. With its hideous features inherited from the period of settler colonialism apartheid has evolved to become an integrally functioning part of the modern world imperialist system.

The political and economic subjugation of the black majority by the white minority is a structural necessity for the historically specific dynamics of the capitalism that has evolved in South Africa. The emergence of a South African capitalist class and the development of a modern capitalist economy under the auspices of imperialist capital is based on the coerced and cheap labour of the indigenous black population. This is what made South Africa such a lucrative site of accumulation for this same capital.

Apartheid happens to be a particularly ugly mutation of the logic of imperialist capital and its domination of the oppressed nations throughout the world. It is actually a vivid self portrait of the imperialists and their system—in which the political contradictions it superimposes in South Africa reveal these relations in raw, brutal form: a relatively large white settler state is licensed to exploit and terrorise the company slaves—the black majority—without even a democratic pretence of racial equality (or even admitting black compradors into this process of imperialist exploitation, necessary in other neo-colonies).

Furthermore, the much trumpeted 'democracy' and prosperity in the imperialist countries rests on the misery, impoverishment and the blood and guns dictatorships in the oppressed nations which South Africa typifies so starkly. No amount of sandpaper, paint, or even major body work will or *can* change this basic animal.

Blueprints Blurry

Concealing this reality has thus become a key part of the imperialists' charting their way through the present stormy waters. Various bourgeois studies examining the leaks in their ship, including

the strength of the opposition, have assessed that they can quiet the rebellions before they spread to any kind of generalised armed confrontation.

In the short-term, in order to make apartheid appear more "equal," on the path to further "progress," and to try to defuse the situation, this means that while they primarily continue to restore law and order using whatever level of repression is required, they will probably gradually dispense with some of the most exposing and blatant aspects of apartheid. This technique of balancing carrot against stick, refined throughout scores of bloody chapters of imperialist history, partly aims to exacerbate divisions that inevitably exist among the oppressed, separating the more advanced and revolutionary elements from those unable to see the real enemy and tantalised by the dangling of wisps of equality and democratic rights. These manoeuvres buy the imperialists precious time and occasionally even succeed in temporarily derailing the mass struggle.

A major factor in this is courting and propping up the most bourgeois among the black opposition elements, who are needed to somehow breathe life into illusions about these reforms (white credibility is a poor investment...) and who, if useful or necessary, may be ejected into honorary positions within the white governing structure, under the banner of "power-sharing" or some new rubric.

Overall the bourgeoisie has not been able to find the right man or capitulating group for the times, though it is madly negotiating and trying to prepare for as many scenarios as possible during the unknown events ahead. Head of the Anglican Church Bishop Desmond Tutu has continued to be widely promoted as a lingering voice of reason in the face of the "violent youth." Actively joining the imperialists' sanctions debate, his standard litany of "Too little, too late" was followed by his push for "real" sanctions, and approval of French initiatives and subsequent Common Market measures. Prime Minister Laurent Fabius, quoting the reverend during his talks with him in France, unwittingly

provided a near-perfect description of just how useful Tutu is to anyone in Azania seeking liberation: "A white prime minister who walks with a black bishop without police protection, now *that's* freedom." Now this would be a man for the job, if his teary pleas for non-violence, his collaboration with and protection of informers and cops, his campaign for a rightful voting ballot, along with countless other cases of obstructing the masses' struggle had not so thoroughly exposed his counter-revolutionary aims.

The African National Congress (ANC) has also been wooed extensively by the West, despite its ties to the Soviets and long antagonisms with the apartheid regime. While Reagan and the British Tories want to stomp this Soviet-inspired "communist" threat, the liberal imperialist representatives meet with ANC President Tambo in exile in Zambia. These do not represent different strategies, and how the Western imperialists will actually relate to the ANC is not totally clear, but their present inclusion of the ANC in negotiations is largely to widen rifts within it and at the same time utilise its position of relative strength among less revolutionary sections of the masses. The ANC's popularity among these more intermediate sections stems mainly from past upsurges, from the days of the banning of the ANC and the pro-China split-off, the Pan Africanist Congress, back in 1960 after the Sharpeville Massacre, when a number of its political leaders, including reformists like Nelson Mandela, were jailed.

In the masses' search for forces who can lead in the present upsurge, the ANC, with its militant posturing and talk of stepping up the armed struggle, has managed to gain some new support. However, alongside the vast press play of the ANC is frequent mention of the "militant, young blacks" who don't go for the reasonable strategy and middle class, old men running the ANC who (in the ANC's own words) have "grown fat with conscience money" and the open admission that it is not deeply rooted enough among the

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masses to truly play the difficult capitulatory role required.

The animosity between the ANC (and the United Democratic Front it works within) and radical black nationalist forces has also been a source of open antagonism. This seems to be based, among other things, on the ANC's inactivity over past years, its reactionary position on the national question (promising to unite white and black under one South Africa), its completely unrevolutionary Freedom Charter programme—which holds out a rosy future to western investors under an ANC-shared power—and its opposition to genuine national liberation. Much of this, along with the decisions at the ANC's recent congress where multi-raciality was officially adopted, was published by the bourgeois press, which is searching here for possible openings for the West. It's not that the ANC has abandoned its Soviet sponsors, who continue to provide its arms and support it with rhetoric internationally.

While mainly parading the ANC's militant new stance of "stepping up the armed struggle to do away with apartheid," the Soviets reveal their own revisionist conception of "liberation" which amounts to using the armed struggle merely as a pressure tactic to win some democratic gains. According to an editorial in *Moscow News*, the 20 million Africans "are demanding the granting of universal suffrage, abolishing the ban on democratic organisations' activities, as well as limiting the dislocation of indigenous people in the country, and freeing political prisoners. Not reforms, but the elimination of apartheid!"

This jargon from the Soviet press is thin disguise for armed "freedom fighters" who meet with the chief South African capitalists, working to "establish dialogue" where Botha refuses. Of course the West wants also to avoid their rivals gaining any further foothold in this crisis for the West, during which the Soviets have remained conspicuously silent. But their main purpose in negotiating with the likes of the ANC (who along with Tutu and Oppenheimer,

are influential in the UDF) is to siphon off what credibility they do have towards more moderate figures like Tutu and Buthalezi—putting out the message that it's okay to be seen in public with the imperialist bloodhounds from Washington D.C., because the "guerrillas" of the ANC are also there.

For his part, Chief Gatha Buthalezi, as the head of the Zulu homeland, is also a favoured imperialist choice, but again, alas, has few secrets to hide. His open past and current collaboration with the South African government and its security forces to attack the masses—using the despicable cover of "tribal divisions" that spawn violence in the ranks of the people—has won him ridicule and hatred. He has echoed various lines of the bourgeoisie which promote black prosperity (especially his own) and black "heads of state" (his name is frequently mentioned, not just by Botha's Nationalist Party, but also by the extreme right-wing Conservative Party) and has threatened non-cooperation if black power-sharing with the white government is not part of the solution to the current crisis.

The fact is that the Azanian masses' struggle has outstripped by a long distance the national bourgeois and petit bourgeois nationalist forces generally relied upon by the imperialists to rein in the rumblings from below in their colonies or neo-colonies. The various fence-sitters and hand-wringers seeking compromise, if not direct service to the current white power structure, have not altered the political situation significantly. As much as the imperialists try to discount any possibility of revolution, frequently pointing to the lack of a force capable of challenging them for state power, they are also keenly aware that the sentiments of the masses are quite revolutionary, and not at all hemmed in by reformist leaders with hegemony over the struggle, which the bourgeoisie habitually yanks into their trenches of capitulation. Yet they have no choice but to negotiate and manoeuvre frantically in this direction, to try to avoid the masses putting their armed overthrow on the

immediate agenda, counterposed to more apartheid, which is all they have to offer.

These apologists for imperialism who want to jump in bed with the white settler state in order to lord over the black masses themselves have also fueled another attack emanating from the bourgeoisie which like to describe the situation as a bloody "race war." This is then contrasted with honeyed talk of improving blacks' horrendous conditions side by side with new forms of integration between white and black, in which the dagger of "equality" is poised to distort and defeat the concept some have already considered—a revolution by the Azanian masses.

For just as white minority rule is there to stay, at least short of revolution, the crisis cannot be solved in its present framework. Perhaps the imperialists will resort to massive murder to physically maim the struggle into temporary submission, or perhaps other short-term delays will be gained by bringing black faces in government places into view, replacing Botha, or by even eliminating some formal elements of apartheid. But regardless of the particular combination of more terror and more illusion they implement, greater mass outbreaks are in store, and the prognosis for a stabilising imperialist solution is not at all good.

History calls for destroying the whole apartheid machinery and routing its white foremen, for ripping Azania out of the jaws of imperialist logic altogether. Nothing short of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, unleashing the political initiative of the masses and leading the armed struggle that will bring about a New Democratic revolution, can do this. The call we made for Azanian revolutionaries to link up with the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement remains all the more valid and urgent. The revolutionary crisis in South Africa sending shocks throughout the imperialist empire today provides an excellent situation for this proletarian internationalist line to take root among the Azanian masses. □