

SOUTH AFRICA: ON THE VERGE OF REVOLUTION?

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Between the anvil of mass United action and the hammer of armed struggle, we shall crush white minority rule.

Nelson Mandela

History will remember the years 1975 and 1985 as a period of far-reaching upheavals in Southern Africa. They are the years when the white re-doubt began to crumble as tumultuous struggles shook the minority regime to its very foundation. Today, the white settler state of South Africa is like a city built on a fault-line -- every shift of the rocks weakens the foundations of every structure, and not just parts of it.

An editorial in the Sunday Tribune (1/20/85) summing the current political crisis in South Africa states that:

The sixties were the granite years of apartheid. Those years are decidedly out, for no longer does the Government hold with righteous fervor the belief that the equitable solution to race differences is the policy of separation. The apartheid creed, however, has been surely eroded, not replaced. The talk of reform is all flim-flam: it is the grudging make-do solution of the solely pressed, rather than a clear vision based on the philosophical rejection of racial domination. Because it is based on the exigencies of the hour, it is always too little, too late.

This essay is offered as a clarification of the forces behind the crisis. It is worthwhile at the outset to lay down the areas covered and why. The first part of the essay locates the reasons for the reforms and the second is devoted to an account of the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and its politics of refusal, i.e. the struggles it waged against these reforms. I then turn to consider the problems and limits of apartheid in which I discuss the rise of the Nationalist Party (NP) and apartheid and its present crisis. This is central to any account of the configuration and crisis of white minority hegemony.

The next section deals with the economic crisis now engulfing South Africa and the role of the armed struggle waged by the African National Congress (ANC). The armed

struggle not only strengthened the position of the extra-parliamentary opposition forces, it also forced the Botha regime to modify its tactics vis-a-vis the non-violent forces of resistance and also forced it to retreat to new defensive positions, e.g. to seek support from the 'privileged' sections of the oppressed. It was one thing for the regime to wage a counter-revolutionary offensive against the oppressed in the 1960s when they were unarmed. It is a different situation today, when their vanguard movement, the ANC, is armed and can defend the people and/or inflict damages to the repressive forces. And it is also an entirely different situation again today, when the community of liberated states encircles the only remaining white redoubt and the anti-apartheid movement in the world is becoming a decisive force in international relations. Finally, I deal with Namibia, which like an incurable ulcer is draining South Africa of vital economic and human resources.

The struggle for liberation of the people of South Africa has always had a global significance. Today the imperialist supporters of South Africa cannot act with impunity; their support for the most audible system of racial oppression and exploitation has been exposed more clearly than ever before. For instance, the struggle of the black population made a mockery of the well-laid plans of the Botha regime and its allies that would have given a face lift to apartheid in order to make the apartheid regime acceptable to Western public opinion. The collapse of Portuguese rule in Angola and Mozambique raised serious questions about the durability of South Africa as the heartland of imperialism. In fact, the events of 1974/75 destroyed the assumption of the 1969 National Security Council Report (NSSM 39) which urged the United States government to 'tilt' towards the minority regimes because of the indefinite picture of stability they presented.

The Reagan administration's so called Constructive Engagement policy had as its cardinal goal the pursuit of the aims of NSSM 39 under changed circumstances: viz. the preservation of white minority rule in South Africa as a bulwark of Western interest. In the meantime South Africa through armed diplomacy had been given a green light to force Mozambique to sign the so-called Nkomati Accords and Angola the so-called Disengagement Agreement.

South Africa today is approaching one of those brief but decisive moments of historical and social contradictions, when the routines of normal life are shattered, when the possibilities of revolution agitate the minds of the oppressed and put the masses into motion. This has a particular significance for a country like South Africa, a country where

we have a combination of two class wars which Marx viewed as unusually favorable for the victory of socialism.

The deep-rooted interest of imperialism makes South Africa a veritable hot-bed of more than local antagonism: the country embodies all the contradictions of the modern period of imperialism: the oppression of South African people by a dominant white minority, and their brutal exploitation by monopoly capital. Because of the crisis in the world economy, the condition of the mass of black population in South Africa is worsening and creating a crisis in the policies of apartheid which structure the process of accumulation. A revolution in South Africa, everybody admits will bear tremendously not only for the situation in Southern Africa, but on the course of events in the whole of the African continent. It will maximize the possibility of socialist revolutionary change everywhere.

Michael Howard, Professor of Modern History at Oxford University, warns that the 'sudden collapse of White rule in SA would lead to a catastrophe comparable to that of the Russian revolution itself.' He adds:

In SA itself there would be anarchy, ineluctably succeeded by tyranny and the resultant economic collapse would shake the world's trading system to its foundations.... Nobody in the West, apart from a few fanatics, wishes to see SA collapse into revolutionary chaos. Most are clear-sighted enough to realize that under any successor regime all but a tiny elite, whether black, white, or coloured, will look back to the present position, with all its inequality, as a vanished paradise.

But whether SA avoided the perils of revolution would depend on what happened in SA itself, not on outside intervention which could neither avert nor reverse revolution (quoted by Legum, 1983-4:713).

Why this alarmist talk by the professor? To begin with, in South Africa imperialists own many pivotal industries, and they also indirectly control others, especially in the crucial State sector like Sasol (which converts coal into oil) by means of credit and financial allocations. For the military industrial complexes of the West there is a lot at stake in Southern Africa (see Magubane 1979; First, Steel and Gurney 1973; Seidman and Seidman 1978 among others). South Africa is also of strategic importance to America in the cold war and is the source of a number of vital strategic minerals (see Spence 1970).

The fact that South Africa's mode of accumulation is racially structured makes its defense by imperialism awkward. According to Legum even such a Right-wing apolitical figure as Lord Chalfont, a notable British critic of South Africa's opponents, questioned whether it was enough for South Africa to rely on Western support because its government was opposed to communism, provided many of the West's strategic minerals and commanded the sea route 'carrying the bulk of the West's oil' (Ibid). In an address to the Institute of Directors in Johannesburg, he warned that SA had to realize that a great number of people and a significant number of governments regard the principle of apartheid as indefensible and unacceptable. He made it very clear that unless there were perceptible signs of change within the country, SA's friends abroad who were ready to help were powerless to do so. 'I would be less than honest if I did not tell you that in my view we are losing ground. SA is in danger of losing the battle for men's minds. And winning it is not just a matter of putting one's case persuasively. It is also having a powerful case to put.' It was for the government of South Africa to decide how far and how fast it should go in dismantling or radically modifying the system of separate development, he said. But no nation today could live in isolation from the rest of the world (Ibid).

The Roots of the Crisis

To appreciate the momentous nature of what is happening in South Africa today, one needs to take a glance back to the middle of the 1960's. The repression that followed the banning of the ANC and the PAC had succeeded in completely suppressing the tradition of mass-based, extra-parliamentary resistance to apartheid. This rupture created a crisis and threw students into the frontline of organized anti-apartheid opposition. They used the ideology of black consciousness and stressed black unity and leadership in this resistance. The Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) argued that African oppression had produced an inferiority complex that needed to be overcome by the movement engaged in consciousness raising, first among intellectuals and then among the masses.

The BCM gave birth to many forms of grass-roots struggles: community organizations, open politics despite many difficulties, a sense of pride in African history and culture, a determination to struggle and to assert black humanity even in the face of the most repressive conditions. Steve Biko exemplified the spirit of the generation of Soweto, a youth with the courage to stand up for one's principles even unto death. This is not to say that the BCM did not exhibit difficulties and limitations. Nevertheless, black consciousness touched a chord in the black community; large

sections of the black oppressed associate their plight with the structures that are manned and dominated by whites. As Baruch Hirson (1979: 6) puts it:

Capital and finance are almost exclusively under white control. Industry and commerce are almost entirely owned and managed by whites. Parliament and all government institutions are reserved for whites, and all the major bodies of the State are either manned by or controlled by white personnel. The conjunction of economic and political control and white domination does divide the population across the colour-line.

Be that as it may, because the BCM excused the class basis of African oppression and exploitation, and because of its blissful ignorance about the struggle of the 1940's to the 1960's, the BCM offered partial and one-sided answers. This would prove to be a major limitation; even as its program became so beguiling because of its simple premises, and even simpler premises of the politics of pride without, apart from and even in competition with classes in the case of the advanced contingents of the BCM.

Besides the BCM, the early 1970's also saw the revival of the African Labor Movement that had almost disappeared as a result of harassment and the use of draconian laws like the Suppression of Communism Act and other anti-labor legislation. The rapid growth of unregistered black unions alarmed the ruling class, which began to scramble for new controls of this force. Before the ruling class could formulate new control the Soweto rebellion began. The 1976 crisis was caused among other things by a slow down in economic growth, a rise in unemployment, an increase in inflation, a fall in workers' buying power; all these developments produced uncertainty, disquiet and latent anxiety.

The advent of black ruled States that had won independence through armed struggle on South Africa's borders also revitalized the national movement in the country. This wave of organizations was accompanied by a change in the political strategy and tactics. Operating in a more politicized environment, these organizations were more militant and assertive. Their leadership was drawn from workers who had risen through the ranks of the student movement and whose consciousness grew out of experience and struggle. In the early eighties, black consciousness gave way to a class analysis of society. The non-racial democratic demands of the Freedom Charter became the guiding principle of the 'new' movement. Local community groups, national students organizations, trade unions, and movements started linking up

their immediate demands for reform to longer term principles of a new form of society based on the Charter.

Total Strategy

The labor strikes of 1972-74, the Soweto uprising and the subsequent period of crisis which led to the killing of Steve Biko and the banning of several organizations in 1977 produced a crisis. It became quite obvious that the settler State could not rule in the old way. Indeed, the Muldergate scandal crystallized the crisis leading to Vorsters' ignominious resignation and the accession to power by P.W. Botha. In 1979, soon after Botha assumed the premiership he asked the White population to "adapt or die." Botha was forced to call for a sober assessment of the dilemma the white minority regime faced in the context of growing social tensions. A group of military experts, at Botha's request estimated the chances of keeping the Black majority subdued by force of arms, and came to the conclusion that the army, despite its growing appropriation, would be unable to control "internal strife." The military told Botha that they could only contribute 20% toward maintaining the status quo, the remaining 80% they said must be contributed by political reforms. The Johannesburg Star, whose editorial opinion reflects the thinking of the ruling interest recommended that "A more realistic concept of an advanced line of defense has to be sought in the solution of the social problems."

When Botha talked of reforms in the context of "total strategy," he did not envisage the elimination of apartheid. On the contrary 'reforms,' in Botha's lexicon, are an attempt to fine tune the controls of black labor and secondly of the black community in order to ensure the status quo. Botha's strategy of "change" envisages a combination of beefed-up military muscle and a stream-lined apparatus of repression, with a minimal improvement in living conditions of a section of the urban working class, who are vital to continued capital accumulation.

The Botha regime does not and cannot contemplate any fundamental changes in the nature of the White supremacist state e.g. the granting to the African majority even a semblance of political power in the settler state. The Botha regime's spokes persons have stressed ad infinitum that 'reforms' will not tamper with the present structure of White settler power which is the foundation of the country's capitalist prosperity.

The so-called 'total strategy' is therefore an attempt by the capitalist class to save capitalism. The growth of the mass-based organizations and the trade union-movement whose

ideology associates black oppression and exploitation with the functioning of racially structured capitalism required a renovated ideological response.

In 1979, 1981 and 1983, Prime Minister Botha called together the representatives of the capitalist class to ask for their help in reforming apartheid, so that its fruits could be enjoyed by all. In these meetings, Botha talked about the need to defend "free" enterprise rather than White privileges. His brief was two-fold: the obnoxious aspects of apartheid had to be removed so that the benefits of the free enterprise system could be seen to trickle down to the African population, whose anti-capitalist sentiments were known to be very strong. Second, apartheid, the crude policy of oppression had become a problem and an embarrassment to the country's international standing as we have seen.

The large corporations and the South African branches of multi-nationals welcomed Botha's proposals and began to initiate their own programs that would convince Africans of the virtues of capitalism. Among other things big business recommended the creation of a black middle class. Also the large corporations and South Africa's branches of multi-nationals began to initiate programs to defuse potential flash points: personnel and industrial relations were expanded to monitor and contain the problems of black workers. And since harassment, banning and arrest had been unable to destroy the black labor movement, big business reluctantly accepted the reality of black trade unionism. Through registration, the captains of industry would try to co-opt the union and thus prevent wild-cat strike actions. To compensate for shortages of skills, training centers were set up to train artisans and to upgrade African skills. Corporations also moved into the area of education offering bursaries to black students in order to create a managerial class beholden to capital. The United States Chamber of Commerce in South Africa played a major role in this area; each year it offers over a hundred scholarships to black students to study in American universities.

But, for all the schemes, there is no way to prettify apartheid. The injustices the black people are struggling against are built into the very structures of the settler state and its political economy. The pass system, the poverty stricken bantustans, the squalid locations and hostel-barracks, ubiquitous police, etc. are only symbolic expressions of white capitalist oppression and exploitation, and the struggle which the black working class and the rest of the oppressed masses have waged and continue to wage, are inevitable.

Constitutional 'Reforms'

What triggered the continuing upsurge was the inauguration of a new constitution which was touted as a major democratic adjustment of apartheid by Botha in pursuit of his total strategy. The terms of the new constitution are well known; it creates a new parliament of three segregated Chambers - one chamber for Whites, one for the so-called "Coloureds" and a third for Indians. The Whites make up 15% of the population, while the Coloureds and Indians make 12%. For the 23 million Blacks who constitute 73% of the population there is not even a token attempt to offer any franchise. The new constitutional dispensation amounts to a final solution, i.e. the expulsion of Africans from their land, in pursuit of the settler imperative.

The constitutional dispensation must be understood as a response to a number of problems facing the regime. First, the regime is facing a manpower crisis. Spelling out the need to include Coloureds and Indians in the White power structure, Foreign Minister 'PiK' Botha stated: "In the face of a growing communist threat, should we not give them the right at last to have a say over their own affairs and shared say over our own general affairs" (Quoted Davis 1985: 15)? In 1982 a government report had stressed needs of the military for more man power. As the report put it: "The South African Defence Force is mainly dependent on white males as a source of man power. It is in the national interest that the white male should no longer be utilized as the only man power source" (Ibid). By extending its soiled arm to the two and a half million Coloureds and 800,000 Indians, Pretoria hopes to solve its demographic problem. Together with the whites those "non-whites" make up almost 8 million people, which would just about balance up the African population in the 'white' areas.

Furthermore, the constitutional reforms are intended to satisfy the fears of the likes of Lord Chalfort and the regime's other imperialist backers and supporters. For instance, Reagan and Thatcher were quick to claim that the constitutional dispensation was proof that the policy of "constructive engagement" was showing results, i.e., that South Africa was showing signs of motions, albeit slowly, and therefore deserves Western support and encouragement. Finally, the constitutional reforms were accompanied by a new law that awaits enactment; the so-called Orderly Movement and Settlement of Black Persons Bill (OMSB), described by the ANC as the Genocide Bill. The bill is a key component of the apartheid strategy of making South Africa a "white man's" country without any Blacks as citizens, i.e. of reducing

Africans to mere units of labor power to service the so-called white economy.

The aims of the "reforms" can now be explained; they were not intended to usher the country on a new road to progress; the aim is a reproduction of the oppressive conditions to meet the new circumstances white minority rule is facing. In the Orwellian world of 1984; total organization; total control, and total deceit are the footstools on which white minority rule reposes.

The United Democratic Front

The first death in the black township unrest occurred in February 1984 when a 15-year old black schoolgirl, taking part in a school boycott in protest against inadequate black education was run over by a police armoured vehicle in Atteridgeville, near Pretoria.

As student boycotts and protest meetings spread through other townships in the Vaal Triangle, centered on Johannesburg, and the Eastern Cape, they became intertwined with the broader black opposition to the new constitution spearheaded by the United Democratic Front (UDF).

The rise of the UDF, a loose coalition of over 700 affiliated church, community and trade union organizations which claims over 2 million members, is one of the most significant developments of the past 18 months. Launched nationally on 20 August 1983, the UDF had an epic quality about it. Its formation marked the renewal of an extraordinarily profound process of mass political mobilization last seen in the tumultuous years of the Defiance Campaign of 1952-54. The UDF campaigns marked an active and unprecedented participation of the popular masses, accompanied by important advances in the ideological sphere, with the class perspective surplanted the 'nationalist' or black consciousness perspective. The advent of the UDF and other organizations accelerated the process of national and social liberation in South Africa. Today, mass struggles over democratic rights, wages, rents, and educational reforms have become part of one cresting tide buffeting the entire system of white minority rule and capitalist exploitation.

The organizing efforts of the UDF brought hundreds of community organs into active political opposition to apartheid. Since its formation, daily struggles continue to impose new challenges, which so far it has met with fortitude. To appreciate the momentous nature of the formation of the UDF, we need to remind ourselves that the rulers of South Africa cannot afford independent black political expression.

Any opposition, even a funeral is seen by the regime as a challenge to its authority. The passivity of the masses; their indifference and fatalistic submission is key to white minority rule. Those who organize any protest can expect the full might of state power to be unleashed on them.

The UDF saw the constitutional dispensation and the "Koonhof Bills" as part of the same attempt to divide the black population while modernizing apartheid and it organized for the rejection of the whole package. Because of UDF's mobilization of the masses the attempted cooptation of the Coloureds and Indians boomeranged as both groups gave a resounding 'No' to the sham elections. Such a challenge and a rebuff to the regime meant a new milestone had been reached by the resistance movement. If there is anything that strikes fear into the heart of the apartheid regime, it is the fear of unity in struggle by Africans, Coloureds, Indians and Whites. The importance of the UDF in uniting these groups cannot therefore be over emphasized. It challenges the very foundation of white minority rule, based as it is on a well thought out strategy of keeping the oppressed peoples not only divided, but at each others throats, through the differential treatment and access to the crumbs the regime discards from its tables.

The UDF is a mass movement that was ready to happen, it was organized in less than a year and involved mass mobilization at the grass-roots levels of all sections of the community. In 1979, under the slogan "Unity in Action," the ANC had called on the various communities in South Africa, Blacks, Coloureds, Indians and Whites to forget their superficial differences and to concentrate on those basic issues that they shared in common; the creation in South Africa of a society based on the principles of the Freedom Charter. The UDF became a historical vehicle to carry out this program.

Dr. Allen Boesak in a speech to the Transvaal Anti-SAIC Committee (January 22-23, 1983) said: "There is no reason why churches, civic associations, trade unions, student organizations and sports bodies should not unite in the struggle for a non-racial democratic and unitary South Africa, pool their resources and inform the people of the fraud that is about to be perpetrated in their name."

Amidst the cries "Amandla" (Power) an ANC slogan of the Defiance Campaign; Nelson Mandela, imprisoned in Pollsmoor jail, was formally named as the Chief patron of UDF. Albertina Sisulu, whose husband shared a cell with Mandela, and who herself was in detention, was elected as president, along with two other veterans of the ANC, Archie Gumede and Oscar Mpetha. Conspicuous among the UDF organizers were

Indian and white students. According to the UDF Declaration, "The mobilization of our people for the rejection of these constitutional and reform proposals should complement and reinforce the ongoing day to day struggles on basic issues which face workers, communities and students."

September 1984: Revolt in the Vaal Triangle

When in 1981 the U.S. proclaimed the policy of constructive engagement with South Africa and when in March 1984 Pretoria signed the Nkomati Accord with Mozambique and a ceasefire agreement with Angola, it appeared as if the white minority regime was well on the way to re-establishing its credentials as a hegemonic power in South Africa. Its grip on Namibia seemed to be tight, the rear bases of ANC and SWAPO seemed to be imperiled, and P.W. Botha as a reward for his achievement was accorded invitations to Western Europe where he made a triumphal appearance.

Then in August the Coloureds rejected the constitutional dispensation and in September the Indians in even greater numbers followed suit. In the midst of all this the Vaal Triangle exploded. Since then things have come full circle; today the country is in the grip of the deepest and worst political and economic crisis. To add to the crisis, a growing number of bombs against apartheid institutions continue to shake the country. The Pretoria regime's proud edifice cracked from its built-in contradiction, its callousness, and its attempt to turn back the wheel of progress. The London Economist (8/18/84) summed up the crisis in these words:

Violent unrest in South Africa has made a bad start to Mr. P.W. Botha's new five-year executive presidency, to which he is due to be sworn in on September 14th. On streets in and around the black township of Sharpeville some 30 people have died in the worst riots since the Soweto upheaval of 1976. Mixed-race Coloureds and South Africans of Indian descent have snubbed Mr. Botha's revised constitution, which creates separate parliaments for these two non-white minorities. In elections held during the past three weeks fewer than a fifth of the eligible Coloureds and Indians voted.

Municipal rent raises, not exclusion from voting, seem to have set off the black riots, but it is scant comfort for Mr. Botha that these tremors along apartheid's fault-lines were not directly linked. Both the Black riots and the Coloured and Indian boycott have for background a shaken economy. Mr.

Botha's government had been hoping, wrongly, that a rise in the gold price would help South Africa out of its worst recession since the 1930's. Real GNP fell 3% last year. Inflation is at an annual rate of 11%. Drought afflicts the countryside. On top of all these difficulties, Mr. Botha's own ruling Dutch-descended Afrikaner tribe has split over the new constitution.

Even more troubling for the regime in the current upsurge are the open expressions of support for the ANC, which emerge from the floor at meetings across the country and in buses and trains that carry black workers to and from work. Howard Burrell describes what happens in the trains and buses: "Oliver ..." a voice often chants from within the anonymity of a crowd. "Tambo" comes the unison reply - and the chants go on and on." "The ANC President," according to Burrell, "might be in exile but he's 'home' in the hearts, minds and hopes of many thousands" (New Statesman, 7/7/84).

Anthony Robinson (Financial Times (London), May 10, 1985) agrees with Burrell and writes that the ANC has in all respects durable ties with the masses.

Nobody who has visited the black townships and attended political rallies or funerals of unrest victims could ignore the vitality of the ANC and the popularity of its songs and symbols. Coffins are frequently draped in the black, yellow and green ANC flag and lowered to ANC songs and the clenched fist salute. Speeches are interspersed with rhythmic shouts of "Tambo, Tambo" or "Viva Mandela."

Robinson goes on to acknowledge that there is little doubt that the creation of countrywide organizations such as the UDF, the various student organizations and trade unions, and the underground ANC network, has been a potent influence behind the unprecedented geographical spread of recent township unrest.

The scale of the August/September 1984 upsurge led the regime to arrest 43 boycott leaders, among them UDF President Archie Gumede. The UDF was accused of being a front for the ANC - a treasonable offence. Louis Le Grange, the so-called Minister of Law and Order, justifying the detentions, said South Africa had moved into a 'potentially revolutionary situation.'

By November, the whirlwind of rebellion and repression culminated in a massive two-day general strike with more than 800,000 Black workers participating. Moreover, the two day stay-away spilled over into the automotive center of Port Elizabeth and East London in the Eastern Cape region where the

greatest concentration of foreign capital is invested (especially the multi-billion dollar investment of American corporations) and it is there where South Africa's economic crisis is disclosed in both double-digit unemployment and Black worker militancy. It is there where popular demands for unionization are being repressed more - and co-opted less - by the apartheid State whose room for maneuver has been much reduced.

The UDF and other organizations have published a useful pamphlet, Repression in a Time of "Reform", which by looking into developments in the Transvaal since August 1984 gives a scope of the crisis. Between the end of World War II and 1979 there was only one treason trial in South Africa lasting from 1956 to 1961, in which 156 leaders of the Congress Alliance were accused of treason. In 1984 alone there were 44 people accused of treason in different trials. More than 20 political organizations were declared unlawful. In 1984, over 1000 people were detained, some under Section 29 of the Internal Security Act, which provides for indefinite detention under extreme conditions of social isolation. Others were detained in terms of Section 28 of the same Act, which provides for a form of 'preventive detention.' Some 1,200 people were banned, 130 were killed in 1984 alone.

As 1985 opened there was a major explosion at a slum called 'Cross Roads' just off the Cape. In that explosion 18 people were killed, and on March 21, at least 32 people were killed during the demonstrations at Uitenhage. To date, almost 500 Africans, including children who choked to death from tear gas fumes, have been slaughtered. Unable to quell the popular upsurge and frustrated by Mandela's rejection of conditional amnesty, the regime was forced to bring out the army and the railway police to back up the 46,000 regular police force whose resources were being over-stretched. The regime also staged a massive country-wide swoop on leaders and organizations of the resistance movement, and 16 of them were charged with High Treason! There is no question that the widespread nature of the unrest, if it has done anything else, it has demonstrated that the ability of 4.7 million whites to control the lives of 26 million blacks has its limits.

Summing up the 1984 popular upsurge, Oliver Tambo, the President of the ANC pointed out that, the UDF by its efforts defeated the efforts of the Botha regime to mobilize Indian and Coloured sections of the Black population into acceptance of the apartheid constitution. As he put it:

These victories were of great importance for the further advance of our struggle. They served to raise the degree of isolation of the oppressive regime, and strengthened the democratic revolution

in our country. They confirmed our commitment to the revolutionary perspective of the seizure of power by the people and the building of a new society in united, democratic and non-racial South Africa (Sechaba; March 1985: 4).

In spite of Coloureds and Indians resounding verdicts of "No!" against the reforms, Interior Ministry F.W. de Klerk, expressed the determination of the regime to go ahead with the farce. The minister said that he regarded the official 31 percent poll in the coloured election (18% if based on the total number of Coloured adults) and the official 20% Indian poll (16% of Indian adults) as sufficient mandate for the constitutional change. This refusal to face reality expresses the regime's dilemma.

The Sunday Tribune (9/2/84) after dismissing the regime's charge that the Press adopted a negative attitude to the "new dispensation" editorialized that:

What we do believe is that most in the Indian and Coloured communities do not believe in the new constitution; are not prepared to suffer the anger of their Black brothers who have nothing to do with the new dispensation; and want a just and fair society for all. And we believe the result bears this out.

The regime, of course could not admit this. It pressed ahead with the so-called constitutional "reforms." Botha, the newly elected State President called the low turnout "a minor obstacle on the road to the future." The question is: 'What future' (Ibid)?

The Collapse of the Urban Bantu Councils

The Coloured and Indian constitutional dispensations, it must not be forgotten were a third leg of a three legged strategy to forestall majority rule, maintain racially structured capitalism intact, and of course to entrench white settler superiority. The first leg was already in place in the form of Bantustans. The Transkei, Boputaswana, Ciskei, Venda and Laboa were already performing the assigned task. The second leg was the Urban Bantu Councils. After the Soweto uprising of 1976, the most traumatic in South Africa's brutal history, the regime sought to channel black aggression away from revolutionary politics, and into areas that would not seriously challenge the status quo.

Even though Africans had boycotted elections to these dummy institutions, the strategy if only as a delaying tactic, showed signs of "acceptance." Then in Sebokeng, an area hard

hit by a deepening economic crisis; the puppet Councillors decided to increase rentals by up to five dollars. Given that the entire black population lives on the margin of subsistence, even a minimal rent increase translates into taking bread out of the mouths of babies.

The power of the boycott, a passive weapon of the weak, has seldom been so impressively demonstrated as it was used when Africans refused to pay the rent increase and in opposition to Coloured and Indian elections. The ruthless power of the White minority, in the meantime, stood in stark contrast. The regime's frenzied display of armed force shows not only the brutality of apartheid as a socio-economic system, but above all, the regime's social and political weakness.

Reacting to the brute use of force, the Africans attacked black urban council officials and murdered the deputy mayor of Sharpeville and three other urban councillors. Several other Councillors went into hiding. As a result of these attacks, many urban councils have collapsed, as their members resigned. Those who have not resigned were forced to withdraw the rent, water and electricity price hikes that had sparked off the uprising in the Vaal Triangle. Even in the areas where there had been little community uprising as yet, the councils withdrew pending price hikes in order to avoid such action. According to Solidarity News Service (4:16:85):

In the Eastern Cape townships, state control has all but collapsed. The town councils have collapsed and there is not a single black policeman living in the townships of Kwanobuhle and Langa. In other townships policemen and administrators are attacked with monotonous regularity as petrol bombs and increasingly hand grenades are thrown at their homes and businesses.

The boycott of the Coloured and Indian elections and the urban uprisings show not only that, for all the divide-and-rule strategy of apartheid, there is massive unity among all South Africans who reject apartheid and the institutions being imposed on them by the white minority regime. Furthermore these boycotts have made blacks in South Africa ungovernable. Yet, by its own rules, the regime can only deal with Africans, Coloureds and Indians through puppets of its own creation; whilst imprisoning, banning and murdering those leaders that command respect of the majority of the black population. This is what explains the regime's dilemma and the anger vented by Africans on those blacks who collaborate with the regime. The message of the current upsurge is clear: collaboration with apartheid from now on

will face the retribution of the Black masses. The regime, too, stands warned. The oppressed people of South Africa will not be distracted from their demands with anything short of genuine freedom.

Twilight: Apartheid in Crisis

The emergence of a mass movement depends on a complex of factors: economic, social, political and psychological. It can be said to be the culmination of the contradictions of a mode of production which have erupted into the sphere of class relations, into the sphere of politics and have developed into a crisis of power. In South Africa, discontent accumulated over these decades of apartheid has been transformed into mass political ferment that has become a source of social energy for revolutionary action.

In South Africa as the twilight of capitalism threatens, there are signs of exhaustion everywhere, and further economic possibilities for this ruthless system of accumulation look very gloomy indeed, and confronts the regime with difficult choices. What are the origins of the economic crisis? South Africa, it has been said is a mirror, and intense magnification of colonial-capitalist exploitation, social oppression, and racial degradation. In South Africa, Blacks who constitute 87% of the population can legally reside only in 13% of the land designated by the 1913 Land Act. These are the so-called independent homelands. The white homeland is the other 87%; with all the mineral resources, the best agricultural lands and all the main industrial towns and seaports. Outside the "Bantu homelands" Blacks must carry the pass - that badge of slavery. Daily, some 2000 blacks are arrested for the violation of the pass laws. Black people have been deprived in the most fundamental sense of their birth right, turned into foreigners, not in England or Holland, but in their own country South Africa.

The Bantustans and the pass laws basically exist to create cheap labor to be used at will by capital - especially mining and agricultural capital. Both these fractions of capital are highly subject to trade cycles. True, South Africa has the largest industrial base in the whole of Africa, but a coalition of 'gold and maize' fractions of capital continually necessitates the reinforcement and strengthening of the pass-system and other inequalities of racial capitalism. Racial degradation has forced down the wages of black workers by taking the cost of social insurance, of unemployment, the cost of raising the next generation of slaves and relegated these costs to the Bantustans. When the worker is too old to work, he is thrown back on the reserves. When there is no work, he is displaced back to the Bantustans

where he becomes the responsibility of his kinsmen. There his children are raised, there he is buried at no cost to the capitalist. To date the regime has moved almost 3,500,000 from the so-called white areas to the bantustans. If we take the sum total of African disabilities we have the profound meaning of the South African Communist Party thesis that the white settlers vis-a-vis the African population practices colonialism of a special kind.' Within the boundaries of one country there exists two societies - "black" with all the characteristics of a mercilessly exploited colony; and white," which is tantamount to a colonial power that has reached the stage of monopoly capitalism.

As long as the South African economy was based on extractive industry - mining and agri-business for export purposes, with minor processing industries, racial capitalism with the aid of repressive laws worked. In the 1950's the lack struggle for liberation entered a new phase, which after the Sharpeville massacre resulted in the banning of the ANC and the PAC. Faced with the process of decolonization and the demand for the imposition of sanctions by the ANC, the ruling class in South Africa decided on a policy which would move the economy from a supplier of raw materials to one of being an industrial power in its own right, with the capacity to process into finished manufactured goods its own materials. The change over required a revolution in the relations of production. It required not only the use of sophisticated technology, but also the development of a stable, skilled labor force. The regime had to make a choice, whether this killed labor force would be imported from outside at exorbitant costs or whether it would develop from among black workers.

Beginning with the diamond mining industry in 1866 and accelerating with the discovery of gold in the 1880s, the South African State has had relatively little autonomy from capitalist interests. The very large role it has always played in promoting private capital accumulation and economic development, was continued in the 1920s with the creation of SCOR. The essence of the business-state, as far as the reproduction of labor power is concerned, was institutionalized in the period following the Anglo-Boer War.

The coming into power of the Nationalist Party in 1948 saw the partnership between the capitalist class and the State reach new levels. In 1959 the Viljoen Commission recommended import substitution industrialization to develop the industrial infrastructure in the shortest possible time. South Africa opened its economy to the influx of foreign capital. Trans-national capital, by its very nature, goes to countries where labor is cheap, where the regime is stable and where it will not be threatened by nationalization. By 1960 the

superstructure of apartheid was already in place, and from 1965 to 1973, South Africa experienced the greatest boon in its history.

It was this period which also saw the black working class mature into an independent political force. That is, the black proletariat grew numerically and was inserted into the very heart of the South African economy. In the early 1970s, just prior to the Durban strikes of 1972-75, South Africa's racial capitalism had reached a state of crisis. Substitution industrialization had led to the importation of vast amounts of capital goods, whose share of all imports grew from 30% in 1957 to 115% in 1970. This gave rise not only to a balance of payment problems but to other problems as well.

The events in Durban in 1972-73 served to clarify what had been happening in the country since Sharpeville. A working class had matured and developed not only a collective will, but also a collective praxis, and the collective praxis of the workers in the Durban strikes of 1972-73 established a new historical reality. From now on, the bourgeoisie had to contend with a working class which was increasingly conscious of its power, which organized itself, and which finally imposed a new balance of forces.

This development underlined the fact that the struggle against apartheid was not just a national question, but more fundamentally it was a class question. From 1980 to 1983, membership of black trade unions grew by a dramatic 200 percent from 220,000 to 670,550 and is now reckoned to be almost 2 million. The tremendous growth of trade unions brought with it a new assertive mood. The number of strikes in 1983 was 336 while in 1984 it was 469. The number of days lost through strikes in 1983 was 184,594 while it rose to 378,712 in 1984, according to figures from the Department of Manpower (Rand Daily Mail, March 8, 1985).

Divisions in Afrikanerdom

The appearance of P.W. Botha, the State Executive President to be, before the representatives of the capitalist class, signalled something even more fundamental in the evolution of South African capitalism. In 1948, when the NP came to power, it represented most of the Afrikaner classes in whose memory the humiliation in the Anglo-Boer War called for revenge and the ravages and crisis of the agrarian capitalism was still fresh. It was an Afrikanerdom that had supplied the large bulk of poor whites, its workers had fought brave battles with capital for about two decades culminating in the Rand Revolt of 1922. In 1948, the NP represented the interests and aspirations of all classes: workers, small

capitalists, middle civil servants, teachers, predicants, professionals and farmers. British capital and imperialism were counted among the many enemies of Afrikanerdom. In the bosom of the Afrikaner there existed an uncontrollable ferment of racism mixed with chauvanism and xenophobia.

The mandate of the NP was to use its power to put everyone in their place, to build up the economic power of Afrikaners by wresting the commanding heights of the South African economy from British imperialists and Jews. The Population Registration, Suppression of Communism, Group Areas Act, the Industrial Conciliation Act, etc. were to be the cornerstone of their struggles. Job reservation and subsidized white education and stricter enforcement of the influx controls met the needs of the Afrikaner farmers. State enterprises helped build Afrikaner capital, as state funds were invested in Afrikaner banks and building associations.

In a hot-house fashion a group of fully-fledged Afrikaner monopoly capitalists tied to foreign capital emerged within a generation. The trans-national corporations and growth of the Afrikaner capitalist sector had produced a host of Afrikaners occupying many middle class professions: lawyers, doctors, managers, teachers, civil servants, etc. who prospered. By 1980 these class divisions had given rise to political differences. On the one side was a group of 'verligte' made up of a relatively well-to-do middle class and big capitalists who wanted continued economic growth and stability and thus demanded economic reforms to improve their business interests; and extending limited political reforms to a section of the black population would, they believed, secure long term controls. On the other side was a 'verkrampste' group of lower middle class and working class Afrikaner and small business men/women, who began to lose out as verligte interests came to dominate the NP.

The Verkrampste grouping has suffered most from the recession and the cutbacks in Government spending on housing, education and health care. To appreciate the dimension of the problem, one needs to understand a few silent facts about the role of the South African State as an employer of last resort for the Afrikaner. "It is estimated that 40% of the economically active white population are employed in the public sector. The total remuneration account of the Central Government will rise this year (1985) from R7.8Bn. to R9.3bn. out of a budgeted expenditure of R31bn. in the 1985-86 fiscal year. And that is after bringing to account an estimated 550m cutback in public service remuneration by way of a 30 percent reduction of employee's service bonuses which is paid in the form of a 13th cheque" (Financial Times, 5/10/85).

These government cuts will affect State employers, most of whom are Afrikaners. They have been angered by the fact that salary increases are not keeping up with inflation and in some cases promised raises were cancelled. The regime's moves to scrap job reservation and to recognize black trade unions, have caused alarm among Afrikaner workers who have abandoned the NP and found a new political home in the Conservative Party (CP) and the Herstige National Party (HNP). The conflict between the NP Government and the White workers came to the open in 1979 when White miners struck in protest against 'Coloured' advancement in the Okiep mine. For the first time since the 1922 mine workers' revolt, the White regime ignored the miners who had to return to work under humiliating conditions (see Magubane 1984).

The final crunch came in 1982 when the NP split open over the verligte plan to bring Coloured and Indian middle classes as junior partners in apartheid. The Verkrampstes stood to lose even more ground with P.W. Botha's 'healthy powersharing' plan. The NP increasingly represents the interests of trans-national capital, rich Afrikaans capital and professionals and over a quarter of its support now comes from the English-speaking section of the White population.

These changes were reflected at the ideological level: as the economic policies of the NP moved from the interventionist State towards monetarist policies, one began to hear more and more about the virtues of a free market system. The new strategies for relaxing State controls were set out in the general recommendations of the Riekert and Wiehahn Commissions. They sought to facilitate the transition to a higher phase of monopoly capitalism by removing several impediments to the movement and provisions of certain categories of labor. On the other hand, they sought to establish a more 'stable' black labor force in the urban areas of the 'white' cities.

The reasons for this change of heart are not hard to find. The policy of reserving skilled jobs for whites had produced a shortage of skilled manpower. By 1970, the manpower shortage on the railways had become so bad that over 1000 Africans were 'temporarily employed' on work normally performed by white graded staff: mainly as flagmen, trade hands, shed attendants and stokers. Another 12,000 Africans were in jobs formerly held by unskilled and ungraded white railworkers. Other Africans were doing the same job that white 'hunters' had done, but were described as 'train marshallers,' and paid a suitable low wage. The trains functioned as well as ever (Herbestein 1979: 60).

The following statistics reveal further the declining importance of the white labor force. For example, there has been a steep decline in trained white man power - from 41,000

in 1975 to 26,000 in 1979. This makes the racist economy ever more dependent on black labor. According to Minister of Manpower Utilization, Fannie Botha, of the 5.5 million unskilled laborers available in the country, 46,000 people receive professional training each year, whereas economic growth demands that at least 500,000 be trained - naturally from among blacks. Meanwhile, a national policy to create skills and man-power among blacks would enable the country, in the estimate of specialists to increase its annual GNP by 18%. Such a prospect is rather attractive to the fractions of capital in the manufacturing sector but to the other fractions of capital, mining and agriculture, such a prospect is too extreme.

The manufacturing fraction has also discovered the enormous consumer potential of the Black population which remains to be tapped, if its wages could be improved and living conditions in the industrial areas stabilized. In the minds of white businessmen the words "black market" conjure up not underhand dealings but a sleeping giant just beginning to wake up. Even now the black buyer is a conspicuous figure on the domestic market: in 1980 Blacks spent nine billion rands (R = R1.20 in 1980); which comprised 40 percent of the total populations' purchasing power, today (1985) black buying power for the first time exceeds that of white consumers. There is a slogan beloved by advertising agents in South Africa, and that it says graphically underlines the dilemma of racial capitalism, with its reliance on black slave labor and wages. It goes, "It doesn't matter what color the hand is that gives you money."

The growing importance of the black consumer market was demonstrated against the Fattis and Monis food firm. When Fattis and Monis decided to fire its striking workers, a boycott was organized against the company's goods by the entire black population. The company faced with the loss of its profits accepted all the conditions set by the strikers. The same tactic and the same results were applied against the Simba Potatoe Chips and Wilson Rowtree companies. And recently the city of Port Elizabeth was reduced to a ghost town when a consumer boycott was called by the Port Elizabeth Civic Community Organizations.

Apartheid is also to blame for the loss of market for South African goods in many countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and for the growing consumer boycott movement in Europe and the United States. For those trans-nationals who continue to invest in apartheid the risk factor resulting from strikes, disturbances and divestment campaigns are beginning to outweigh the lure of economic advantages resulting from cheap 'docile' black labor power. If capitalists inside and outside of South Africa now were beginning to see that

apartheid was a hinderance to capital accumulation, they also began to realize it was a contributing factor even more to their difficulties in access to the markets of the world in general and Africa in particular.

As early as 1957, Foreign Minister Eric Low had pointed out that "the territories to the north of the Limpopo are the natural markets for our large and expanding industries." Economists, encouraged by Verwoerd, developed the "co-operative sphere" theory, in which the states of Southern Africa could be free to follow their own domestic policies while cooperating economically. This Capricorn common market would bring large areas of the sub-continent into South Africa's sphere of influence, with a place to be allotted, eventually, for 'independent' Bantustans. South Africa offered superior technology, agricultural and engineering skills to harness the natural resources of the area, and expected in return new markets for her manufactured goods. But Africa refused to swallow that bait. The Organization of African Unity (OAU), with its most urgent priority being the overthrow of white rule in the South, was formed in 1963. It immediately recommended a ban both on the entry of South African ships into harbors of independent black states and on overflying routes by South African aircraft. A year later it placed a total ban on South Africa; though never watertight this was effective enough to cause a diminution in trade with black Africa at a time when exports should have flourished.

During the period of defeat of the nationalist movement in the 1960s, it appeared as if apartheid would provide, even at a terrible price, the rational form of labor control, eminently functional for the development of what has been called polarized accumulation. But today, the apartheid policies and the capitalism which they support are producing economic and political problems. The American sanctions and divestment campaigns provoked the publication in March 1985 of a "reform manifesto" by six of South Africa's biggest and most ruthless employer organizations. The signatories were the Association Chambers of Commerce, the Chamber of Mines, the African Federated Chambers of Commerce, the Afrikaanse Handels-instuut, the Federated Chamber of Industries and the Steel and Engineering Industries Federation which employ 80 percent of workers in industrial, mining and commercial sectors of the economy. Their concerns and desire for reforms are motivated by fear of revolution and a lame attempt to hoodwink the black workers to accept the white regime's terms for so-called "peaceful changes."

There is no doubt also that these dominant economic interests played a major role in pushing the Botha regime to achieve a settlement with the Frontline States. Sensing that SADCC might further undermine their markets and that the

escalating conflict might further radicalize the Frontline States, the business class called for accommodation. The presence of large numbers of businessmen at the signing of the Accord at Nkomati and the role some of them played in preparing the ground for the conclusion of this agreement, attest to their strong influence. As soon as the accord was signed businessmen were tripping over each other to get to Maputo first so that they could pre-empt this new avenue of investment.

Add to this the diplomatic embarrassment South Africa's white minority regime has experienced when it was expelled from the UNO and currently the daily demonstrations and arrests staged in front of the South African embassy by the Free South Africa movement in the U.S. Civil disobedience and campaigning for divestment by churches and colleges has made apartheid a public issue in America. Indeed, things do turn into their opposites.

The Economic Crisis

In 1976 as the country was being racked by student uprisings and workers' strikes, the symptoms of an economic crisis loomed large. The South African Reserve Bank (June 1976) admitted in its report for the second quarter of 1976 that "...the South African economy has now been in a downward phase of the business cycle.... At present the South African economy is faced with an unfavorable balance of payment, a rate of inflation which is still too high and a relatively low rate of economic growth."

In 1980, with the price of gold reaching \$850 an ounce, the country experienced a binge. Suddenly in 1981, the economy went into a precipitous decline from which it has not been able to emerge. For instance, the GDP for both 1982 and 1983 was negative, being minus 1.2 and minus 3.1 respectively. As 1985 began, the outlook was still gloomy with unemployment worsening and many bankruptcies being recorded. According to the University of Stellenbosch Bureau of Economic Research report (BER), economic prospects in late 1985 looked grimmer than they had in October 1984 when the BER produced its prospects for 1985.

The short term causes for the depressed economic picture are: (a) the strength of the dollar, (b) lower international commodity prices, (c) the restrictive monetarist policies which have caused interest rates to remain too high, (d) the rise in the General Sales Tax from the expected 11% to 12%, etc. Even more disturbing than these short-term reasons is a conjuncture of long-term structural factors. There has been a restructuring of the South African economy toward a new phase

of monopoly, which explains the increase in structural unemployment. Second, since 1960 there has been an unprecedented militarization of the South African economy, but unlike in the United States and other developed capitalist economies, the spill over effect has been minimal.

One of the characteristic features of the general crisis of capitalism is an intensification of the problem of markets and investments spheres. This intensification is engendered primarily by the growing disparity between the rise in production and the absorptive capacity of local markets. The denial of free access of South African goods to markets of most African countries continues to be a serious problem for the South African economy. In fact the share of South Africa's export entering other African countries declined from 16% in the late 1960s to less than 9% by 1977. The effects of independence of former Portuguese colonies and Zimbabwe and the restructuring of these economies away from South Africa's co-prosperity sphere are still to be felt in their full force. The Financial Times (5/10/85) writes that:

The need to seek new world markets is only one part of a broader attempt to tackle some of the structural rigidities of the economy. It is not only too dependent on its traditional mining base but saddled with a plethora of control boards, agricultural and consumer subsidies and the cost of maintaining the whole bureaucratic apparatus of apartheid.

One of the world's leading economists, summed up the crisis faced by the South African economy in these words; "Inflation is on the march, unemployment is growing, the balance of payment is in disorder and there is no growth" (Sunday Tribune, 9/9/84). Among the reasons the Economist cited for the poor performance of the economy included the drop in the price of gold, the drop in commodity income in volume price, "sluggish" economic development in the industrial sector and the drought. In 1984, new pointers to the desperate state of the economy emerged: these were predictions by leading economists that inflation will rise by 15 percent and that more than 300,000 workers will claim unemployment insurance benefits by the end of 1985, that more workers will be retrenched, that many businesses will fold individuals sequestered in large numbers. These predictions are now realities. According to Business Day (5/16/85):

The number of unemployed whites registered with the Department of Manpower has increased to 22,500 from last year's 14,900. The comparable increase for Coloured and Indian registered unemployed are about 50%...The Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) has had

to sell investment worth R300m because it is now paying out R2m - R3m a month more than it receives. According to Market Research Africa's employment index, more than 100,000 urban white adults were unemployed in March. Another 30,000 were in part-time employment and looking for full-time work.

The cost of the Bantustanization of South Africa (currently running at R2.2billion) is also becoming prohibitive. Treasury officials are suggesting that the nature of the funding has to change to prevent the Bantustan puppets from building useless prestige projects. Dr. Otto Count Lambdsdorff, until recently West Germany's Economic Affairs Minister has been quoted as saying that "separate development was the most expensive economic method which could be used to solve South Africa's problems." It can not pay its way and would stress any economy even that of the richest industrialized country" (Sunday Tribune 9/1984).

One of the world's largest banks, New York's Citicorp, in a recent issue of Economic Week, says that the South African economy is unlikely to improve until next year and, even then, the prospects are not very bright. In an unusual focus on South Africa, it states that the recession has only just begun. "The recent monetary expansion combined with current depreciation of the rand (a decline of 35%) means that prices will rise at a faster rate most of this year and next." Like other economists Citicorp gives as reasons for the economic crisis the drought and the fall in the gold price -- "a \$45 change in the price causes a \$1000 swing of the trade balance."

Citicorp's forecasts that economic growth in 1984 would reach 1.4% -- down from earlier forecasts of 2.5% -- were over-optimistic. As 1985 reached mid-point the economic situation showed no sign of getting better. In fact the longer the price of gold stays below the \$400 to \$450 range, the longer it will take South Africa to get back on the path of economic recovery. "If the price of gold stays low, stagnation will persist until South Africa's dependence on imports can be reduced and other exports replace gold."

The conclusion of the Economic Week is sobering:

An end to the recession in 1985 also hinges upon the level of activity in the rest of the industrialized world. There's a good chance that the U.S. economy will be slowing in 1985 as rising inflation and a tighter monetary policy cut into real activity. By 1986 there could well be a general slowing of the industrialized world's growth. For South Africa,

that would be particularly unfortunate (Sunday Times, London 7/10/84).

The impact of this economic decline has fallen heavily on the African workers. Mass unemployment (the general index of misery in a capitalist economy) today totals three million or 30 percent of the work force and is expected to rise to six million or 45 percent by the year 2000 if the current trends of centralization of capital in agriculture and further mechanization of production in agriculture and mining continue.

The marked worsening of the conditions of most Africans is a further symptom of the present recession. Unemployment is no longer their exclusive lot, but now encompasses some whites. Thus the situation in South Africa is explosive and this is admitted even by some of the employers. D.L. Lock-Davis, chairman of the South African Life Association, one of the country's major insurance companies said in Cape Town:

Increasing the number of disaffected views on the street corners of the (black) townships can have very serious implications, especially in view of the volatile situation in many areas of the country (Los Angeles Times, 9/30/84).

If the South African economy cannot afford the administrative costs of separate development, can capitalism afford the 'social costs' of genuine democratic changes? The pioneer capitalist societies were able in their formative years to extend bourgeois liberties to the working class, because the needs of capitalist accumulation required a work force that was "free," not only to be part of the anti-feudal struggle, but also to sell its labor power "freely" in the market-place. These liberties were in the final analysis built on colonized slave labor. It was on millions of slaves, millions of indentured and contract laborers that parliamentary freedoms in the capitalist world were built. The political relations in South Africa created those millions from among the vanquished Africans. As Joe Slovo (1985:6) puts it:

In general, capitalist exploitation and race domination are not symbiotically linked. They can exist without one another. But in every phase of South African capitalism, from its emergence to its stabilization and to its growth and development, race and class have been inextricably and inseparably joined together.

Denga (1985: 65) agrees with Slovo's analysis: "For the coloniser to acquire cheap labor and thus reap major profits, the second-rate status of the indigenous people -- a form of extra-economic compulsion - was a necessity. The colonisers therefore shaped the political institutions, the ideas and political relations to reinforce this domination not only over subordinate classes, but over whole nations and people."

That is why all attempts at legal tinkering and semantic juggling with apartheid have failed. There is no way the rulers of South Africa can reconcile the fundamentals of accumulation based on apartheid with democratic principles. Dr. Herman Giliomee, a liberal Afrikaner intellectual sums up the thrust of verligte reformism as an attempt to "find a formula for sharing power without losing control." And Professor Degenaar of Stellenbosch University, a conservative, has chastised verligtes of "schizophrenically" living "both in the real world of injustices and the make believe world of good intentions." They are fooling themselves by imagining they can achieve a democratic system within the confines of National Party policy (London Economist, 1/26/85:33).

Guerrilla Warfare Takes Its Toll

The Commissioner of the South African police, General Johann Coetzee, recently warned that South Africa was experiencing a unique type of rioting, not encountered anywhere else in the world. Speaking at a graduation ceremony in Pretoria, General Coetzee said South Africa was a country still facing a violent revolutionary onslaught led by the banned ANC and the South Africa Communist Party. He said the onslaught took the form of hit-and-run operations, insofar as relatively small groups of rioters spread their acts of violence over a wide geographical area then dispersed quickly to regroup and strike elsewhere. The General said between 1976 and the 19th of March 1985, 275 acts of "terrorism" had been committed by the ANC in South Africa. He said of that number 61 were against the police, 125 against the economy, 56 against state and public buildings and members of the defence force, while 33 acts of "terrorism" were directed against private citizens (BBC Monitoring Report, Johannesburg, 8:4:85).

On the day P.W. Botha was installed as President, a dynamite mine was found in Johannesburg's Supreme Court building. Only two days earlier, a bomb blast had ripped through the Johannesburg Office of the Department of Internal Affairs causing extensive damage. Let me cite a few statistics that reveal the cost to the regime of sabotage inflicted by the ANC insurgents over the last four years. On 1 June 1980, the

world witnessed the first major economic sabotage -- the blowing up of the strategic SASOL oil-from-coal installation. Damage not only delayed the opening of the facility for over a year, the cost of the damage was estimated at R 6 million (Rand Daily Mail 6/3/80). On October 13, 1981, the Citizen Newspaper reported a bomb blast in Durban, that was heard over 10 km away, and which destroyed the local office of the Department of "Co-operation and Development," causing R 7 million in damage. Electrical substations were damaged in the white suburbs of Rosslyn and Capital Park. The Wonderboom Port Police Station was destroyed and on December 16, 1981, the 20th anniversary of the M-K (the armed wing of the ANC), an explosion at the Pretoria Power Sub-Station plunged the city and suburbs into darkness for 24 hours. The years 1983 and 1984 saw the destruction of economic targets reach new heights. On October 10, 1984, a series of limpet mine explosions rocked the northern Transvaal town of Warmbaths, destroying six petrol tanks -- containing 216,000 litres of fuel -- two railway tankers and a truck. The cost was not given.

An article in the newspaper Business Day (6/19/85) says that to quantify the cost of the unrest and violence over the past nine months defies calculation. The article goes on: "In just 45 days in one small area, the Vaal Triangle, the bill apart from the huge social cost in wasted lives and injuries, was R15m." And since September, unrest has become "a way of life in many parts of the country." While the cost - aside from the human toll - is impossible to estimate the article gives these figures of the cost gleaned from various sources. At least R31m damage has been caused to property; R12m damage to vehicles and trains; 10,000 people arrested due to unrest-related incidents; 43 schools damaged in the Eastern cape alone; Putco Bus Company has lost nearly R10m, either through damage to buses or lost earnings; the South African Special Risks Insurance Association (Sasria) has had claims totalling R35m; and 440 people have died and 1500 have been injured.

Apart from damage to property, millions of rands have been lost in unpaid rents and levies. The Minister of Co-operation and Development, Gerrit Viljoin told parliament recently that more than R13m from 16,000 households in Lekoa township had not been paid (Ibid). Mr. le Grange pleaded with the "right-thinking" people to realize that there would not be immediate funds to rectify the damage in black areas. They should fight the UDF and other organizations "which are trying to make the country ungovernable" (Johannesburg Star, 4/30/85).

According to statistics kept by the Institute for Strategic Studies at Pretoria University, 1984 had seen by October 24 acts of "terrorism" -- exactly the same number as

for the corresponding period in 1983. Most of the incidents involved destruction of government buildings. As we have already noted a new dimension had been added in the current wave of struggle: the petrol-bomb attacks on black township councilors and Indian election candidates. Professor Hough of the University of Pretoria Institute of Strategic Studies points out that these statistics do not provide a complete picture of the ANC activities in 1984 and should be seen in conjunction with increased number of arrests and shoot-outs between the members of MK cadres and the police that followed the signing of the Nkomati Accord (Sunday Tribune 9/9/84).

Thom Lodge, Senior Lecturer in Political Studies at the University of Witwatersrand and author of "Black Politics in South Africa since 1945," contends that the current unrest is more aggressive, structured and purposeful than it was in 1976-77. It has more conscious political content. While much of the violence in 1976-77 was committed by enraged crowds who vented their anger on targets which happened to be within range, the current violence is generally more calculated and deliberated. The underground activities of MK have made the ANC emerge as the movement with the greatest popular support in South Africa's townships. Lodge asserts that the ANC has formed cells in all the main townships and labels the destruction of economic targets as the "most sustained, violent rebellion in South African history," and predicts that it will develop into a full-scale revolutionary war" (Solidarity News Service No.11/83).

Thom Lodge's prognosis confirmed by Col. Reg. Otto, Commander of the Armoured School of Tempe, who told a Parent's Day Meeting on 15 December 1982, that "People do not realize that war against South Africa is at their door steps" (Legum 1983-84). In a desperate attempt to win support from its Western allies the South African regime identified its enemy as being 'World Communism' led by the Soviet Union; and those actively resisting its power - such as the ANC, Legum says, are perceived by the regime as 'instruments of Soviet policy.' He then quotes John Coetzee, the chief of the Police Security Branch, who claims that the ANC had become 'an integral part of the global strategy which the Soviet Union is employing against Western countries. Coetzee further accused the ANC of pursuing three initiatives to isolate South Africa in every possible sphere, to promote confrontation between White and Black in South Africa, and to intensify terrorist attacks as part of the total onslaught against South Africa (Legum 1983-84: 3715).

As a result of the intensifying guerrilla warfare, Pretoria's grip on the far-flung corners of the country is being tested not only in the urban areas, but in the northern borders of the Transvaal. The exodus of white farmers from

the border areas is causing great concern to the military. In May 1983 new measures were announced to halt the depopulation of areas along strategic borders. In the future people who buy or rent land would be required, either themselves or their white employees to stay there for 300 days a year 'to insure that it is properly farmed' and roads and fences are maintained (Ibid).

Research by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC), a government funded institute, identified farms along the borders of Botswana and Zimbabwe as those where the white exodus from the frontier zones had been most active. The HSRC report found that 42.8 percent of the farms, 116 out of 279, on the Botswana border were not occupied by whites. Figures for farms without white inhabitants in the Zimbabwe and Mozambique borders were 38.8% and 14.3% respectively.

At the end of March (1985) the Minister of Defence, Magnus Malam, announced plans to erect barbed wire barriers along South Africa's borders. These will have 20,000 volts of electricity running through them. Part of the border with Zimbabwe is already so defended and innocent peasants have been electrocuted. The question still remains, can the regime have enough barbed wire and electricity to seal the entire country?

The Minister also acknowledged that the ANC was concentrating at the moment more on the local training of 'terrorists' in the rural areas, which put the organization in a position to bring about a condition of ungovernability with the aid of these locally trained 'terrorists' and of UDF activists. He further stated that "At the same time the local population is, according to classic revolutionary theory, encouraged to establish alternative structures of authority. A course in this connection has already been offered by Black Power members at the Wilgespruit Fellowship Center.' Actions had occurred recently as prescribed by the ANC.... Telephone wires had been cut at Fort Beaufort.... After September 3 the unrest had also expanded to the East Cape, the Free State and the Western Transvaal. A disturbing aspect was the fact that the unrest was not limited to the larger centers, but had already spread to country towns, especially in the East Cape, the Karoo region, northern Orange Free State and to a lesser extent in the northern Cape" (Citizen, 4/30/85).

Che Guevara defined guerilla warfare as follows:

Guerrilla warfare is not, as is so often thought, a small-scale war, a war conducted by a minority grouping against a powerful army. No! Guerrilla warfare is war by the entire people against the reigning oppression. The guerrilla movement is

their armed vanguard; the guerrilla army comprises all the people of a region or country. That is the reason for its strength and for its eventual victory over whatsoever power tries to crush it; that is, the base and grounding of the guerrilla is the people. (Granma, Havana, December 3rd 1967) (Quoted by Comrade Mzala 1985: 26)

Mzala has posed the following questions: What are the possibilities of developing a guerrilla war of a mass character at the present moment in South Africa? What are the prospects of arming the masses in corresponding process as the development of our people's war? This, he says, is no longer a theoretical question; the current events throughout the country and in the Vaal triangle in particular demonstrate in no uncertain terms that the masses have definitely resolved to change the situation by organized violent means (Ibid).

Lenin's brilliant analysis of the importance of conscious activity by the masses of people and the role of objective conditions was best illustrated by his solution of the key question of how revolutions originated. Marx and Engels had already demonstrated the deep-rooted causes of the revolution through their analysis of the conflict between the productive forces and relations of production. Such questions still remain. How does a revolution erupt in the storm of day to day political events? How does the revolutionary initiative of the masses gather momentum? What are the conditions under which it erupts? Which political phenomena can lead the revolution when the conflict between productive forces and the relations of production came to a head? These are fundamental questions!

One of the main symptoms of the revolutionary situation is the growing political activity of the masses, their destruction of the forms of political life established by the ruling class, which undermine its power, and create the mass social basis for the revolution. This activity of the people ultimately depends on their economic situation. Lenin said that "a revolution can only be made by the masses, actuated by profound economic needs" (CW Vol. 11: 423).

We have seen how the Soweto uprising and the current surge are ultimately rooted in the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production. Its fundamental basis is the conflict between capitalism's growing productive forces and its obsolete relations of production and its obsolete relations of production. But the revolutionary situation does not arise automatically from contradictions of the capitalist mode of production. There are also political and class relations whose development finally precipitates the revolutionary situation. The precise moment when the

revolutionary situation matures and the forms and rate of its development depend on the development of the crisis of state power, on the strength and experience of the revolutionary class, and on its links with the masses, and on the general political situation.

The masses in South Africa have demonstrated their revolutionary energy, their revolutionary creative power and initiative over and over again. Lenin's insights on spontaneity, militant and creative activity that workers exhibit in the heat of struggle - are important and must be heeded. In 1916 he spoke about "an outburst of mass struggle on the part of the various oppressed and discontent elements" (CW Vol. XIX). That the mass strike represents high points in the class struggle cannot be doubted.

Indeed, the scientific forecast contained in Che's and Lenin's prognosis is being corroborated by current events in South Africa. Today the masses are evincing tremendous strength and confidence and increasingly the struggle is being waged, not for isolated reforms, but for a whole complex of reforms that cannot be satisfied within the current arrangements of South Africa's political economy. These demands are creating the prerequisite for revolution.

The role of the subjective factor is becoming more evident in South Africa as the revolutionary situation matures. The subjective factor in the maturing revolutionary situation has a definite effect on the balance of class forces and the political situation in general. In South Africa today all the subjective elements necessary for the success of the revolution are definitely coming together.

The decade-old upsurge has thrown the minority regime off balance and has thrown it into a state of utter confusion. It is scrambling unsuccessfully to mend the cracks in the dykes of apartheid. The disarray of the regime was exemplified when it called out 7,000 troops, many of them conscripts to surround Sebokeng and other townships on the Rand. When this show of force did not work, the regime launched its police to arrest leading members of the movement.

In a desperate move to save white minority and capitalist exploitation, Botha and his regime wrestle with desperate blue prints and imaginary fancy franchises, just as their counterparts did in Rhodesia. "Their minds are full of improbable schemes for separate white 'homelands,' for voting systems based on property and education, for excluding the poorest 5 percent of whites from the voters' pools as the price of buying off the wealthiest 4 or 5 percent of blacks. Anything to fend off reality, any escape from the inexorable

vance of majority rule which has now reached the Limpopo" (ante 1985: 808).

Summing up the events of 1984, Oliver Tambo, the ANC president made the following observation, important enough to serve quoting at length:

Through struggle, we have forced the apartheid regime into a situation of confusion, indecision and an inability to define for itself any consistent direction of state policy. This situation has arisen because the efforts of this regime to project itself as a representative of the so-called forces of moderation, gradual and peaceful reform have ended in failure. According to this tactical manoeuvre, the racists sought to present themselves as a reasonable and acceptable alternative to the revolutionary alliance headed by the ANC, on one hand, and the fascist coalition of the HNP and the Conservative Party on the other. Knocked out of balance by the intensity of our offensive, the White minority regime lurches from side to side, fumbling for an equilibrium it can no longer regain. On one day it pretends to be concerned about the condition of the Black majority and on the next, pledges itself to the maintenance of White minority domination.

At the same time, the posturing of this regime has angered large sections of the diehard racists among the Whites who see the maintenance of the apartheid system as holy crusade. Moved by their attachment to the benefits that accrue to them from the system of national oppression and the super-exploitation of the Black majority, the political representatives of this tendency in White politics are challenging the Botha regime for the allegiance of especially the Afrikaner population.

The disarray in the enemy camp has compelled some to examine the fundamental premise of the entire system of racial oppression. The realization has begun to dawn on some of Botha's own supporters that no solutions to the problems confronting our country are possible without the participation of the Black and democratic majority, and the leaders of this majority.

There are yet others from among our White countrymen who, more far-sighted than others, have decided to break with a system that is so patently criminal. These have joined the democratic movement. We are

confident that the numbers of such White compatriots will grow as an integral part of the forces of liberation which are destined to defeat the apartheid regime and liquidate the criminal system it upholds. In order to hasten the advent of that day, we must give the enemy no respite; no time to regroup and recover lost ground. It requires that we must stay on the attack (Sechaba, March 1985: 10).

The struggle in South Africa, most people agree, has entered a new and decisive phase as the oppressed rise up to swell the ranks of the liberation momentum in the intensified struggle against minority rule. As the revolutionary situation develops in South Africa, the role of the subjective factor becomes ever more important. Recently, the ANC called on the oppressed people of South Africa to prepare for a long general strike, for small armed bands of youths to turn black townships into 'no-go' areas for anything less than a huge police contingent, and for black police and soldiers to quit government service. A leading member of the Military-Political Council (PMC) explained that "we believe a very rare combination of revolutionary factors are maturing before our very eyes. If the liberation opposition seizes this very important moment and builds upon it, the prospects of people's power is within our sight" (Guardian (London) 5/10/85).

The War in Namibia

In 1980 South West Africa Namibia Information Service, South Africa's propaganda body, published a pamphlet Counter-Insurgency a Way of Life, which among other things called for a Total Strategy to uphold Western civilization as developed by White rulers of South Africa. 'Total Strategy,' the pamphlet explained 'requires a continuous and controlled reciprocal relationship between the economic, political, military, diplomatic, and cultural facets of the state.' A section on the economy states 'war is a costly process.... The soldiers fighting at the borders threatened by insurgents (sic) provide a safe climate for internal economic growth.... In this climate, for instance, a farmer who is experiencing problems with his labour force is still prepared to contribute by doing military service or making it possible for his son to do so... Firms must make employees available for military service without any detriment regarding their financial welfare.'

Behind the distorted logic of this propaganda, there is an element of desperation. The illegal war and occupation of Namibia by South Africa used to cost R 1 million a day five years ago. Today, however the cost is over R 3 million a day. This expense, as the propaganda sheet quoted above tries to

ide, does not take into account the cost in time and manpower. Today almost everybody in Namibia is affected by the war in some way. The Windhoek Observer (12: 21: 79) says that Namibia "in proportion to number of citizens" is a country experiencing, "the world's greatest military occupation" - there is one South African soldier for every six Namibian adults. Also, Namibia is a country where the entire White population and an expanding number of overseas mercenaries and their black counterparts are heavily armed. Apart from the 10,000 odd troops under SADF and SAAF command, there are 10,500 police.

Security precautions cost man hours and money, besides creating psychological fear and stress. What the illegal war has cost the apartheid regime in military equipment, in refurbishing of new weapons such as G-5 and mobile cannons, is not been disclosed. Robert Furlong editor of International Defence Review recently told Graham Ferreira of the Sunday Tribune in Durban that in terms of military equipment, South Africa's war was very expensive. And Professor R.H. Green, an economic consultant to the United Nations on Namibia and senior staff member of the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex concurs. He calculates the gross cost to South Africa of holding onto Namibia at a staggering 9 percent of total government spending estimates for 1984/85. This estimate includes the hidden cost of the continuing fighting and the subsidies South Africa made to the territory's almost bankrupt economy (Sunday Tribune, 8/9/84).

The 18 year old war was cited by Owen Harwood, former Minister of Finance, together with drought and low gold price, as reasons for the depressed state of the South African economy. As the Sunday Tribune, (9/9/84) puts it: "The war has cost South Africa and South West Africa/Namibia dearly in hard cash. The cost in human life is incalculable."

South Africa's military spendings have increased astronomically since 1961, when the ANC embarked on an armed struggle. In 1961, military expenditures stood at R 72 million, by 1981 it had increased to R 3,000 million and in 1984 it rose by 21.4 percent to R 3.75 billion. Among the reasons for such a jump in defense costs are escalating attacks by MK in South Africa and South Africa's military ventures, like Askari into Angola in December 1983.

South Africa's newfound eagerness to reach some kind of a peaceable agreement with the Frontline States has arisen from the sudden awareness that South Africa now has more on its plates than it can handle. On top of the endemic revolutionary agitation and armed struggle going on inside South Africa, there has been a traumatic drop in the value of the rand

against the American dollar. The illegal occupation of Namibia indeed has come home to roost.

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