

ruled by a fascist clique at the time, placed obstacles in the way of an agreement between Britain, France and the Soviet Union designed to prevent a Hitler attack — obstacles which Britain and France did nothing to eliminate.

When the Soviet Union realised that all attempts to build a firm anti-Hitler alliance were in vain because of imperialist intransigence, it came to the conclusion that it would have to take a different course to protect its own security. In August 1939 it signed a non-aggression pact with Germany, winning a breathing space of nearly two years during which it was able to build up its defences and strengthen the socialist foundations of the Soviet state, threatened as it was on two fronts — nazi Germany to the west and militarist Japan to the east. This non-aggression treaty has been much criticised by the enemies of the Soviet Union, but subsequent events were to prove its validity.

For Britain and France the agreement was a chilling signal that Hitler was not going to carry out his struggle against Bolshevism on their terms. The nazi leadership reasoned that it would have to subjugate the whole of Europe before it would be safe to launch an attack against the Soviet Union.

After Poland was overrun, the period of the 'phoney war' set in, with Britain and France failing to act, whilst nazi Germany invaded Denmark, Norway, Holland and Belgium. France's turn came next with the bourgeois government capitulating in July, 1940. The invasion of Yugoslavia, Albania and Greece followed and in the far east Japan occupied large parts of China and Korea. In all these countries only the communists offered organised resistance, but the speed with which the fascist forces took over, owing to the lack of resistance by those bourgeois governments, built up the myth of Hitler's invincibility.

At this stage nearly all of Europe, with the exception of Britain, lay at Hitler's feet. At his disposal he had the combined economies of all the occupied countries and the support of the fascist coalition which, apart from Japan and Italy, included such allies as Finland, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania. As far as the west was concerned, it was a case of the monster biting the hand that had fed it. Under his command, Hitler had 300 million people and he had more coal and steel than the USSR. Europe was thus a source of labour and resources for the war he now felt more confident of waging to the east. Moreover, since his forces were in control of the Atlantic shoreline, he considered that he had secured his rear.

The Soviet Union Attacked

The thunderclouds of war had built up over the Soviet Union. On June 22, 1941, the nazi generals unleashed a blitzkrieg (lightning strike) across the

Soviet frontier: A three-million-strong army had been assembled with 193 divisions comprising the first echelon of attack. The nazi forces, having overrun many countries, were experienced in modern warfare and, despite stiff resistance, their tank and motorised units sped deep into Soviet territory. The aim was to knock out the Red Army and within two months reach the Ural mountains, the line dividing the European part of the Soviet Union from the Asian part. Japan was expected to advance on the Urals from the east. So confident was Hitler of success that he already had invitations printed for a victory dinner at Leningrad's famous Astoria hotel and the nazi dictator expected to enter Moscow within six weeks.

Thus commenced the Great Patriotic War, so named because the Soviet people were defending their socialist motherland in a war on which the future of all mankind depended. This was a just war against the fascist aggressor, but it was not merely a war between two states. In the first place it was a class war in which the mission of the fascist enemy was to destroy socialism and with it the world working-class and national liberation movements.

The Enemy Advance Halted

The early days of the war were grim ones indeed. The Red Army was compelled to retreat and relinquish large parts of Soviet territory. From the outset, Leningrad had been besieged by nazi forces operating from Finland. The Baltic republics, Byelorussia and the Ukraine were overrun, the enemy broke through to the Black Sea and advanced steadily on Moscow. But the time for easy war for Hitler's forces was over. The small Brest Litovsk fortress on the Polish frontier had held out for six weeks. By the time the winter of 1941 was setting in, one-third of the enemy invasion force lay dead or wounded.

The Soviet people were shaken but not demoralised by the initial success of the invasion. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union rallied and organised them for the war effort. The whole country was put on a war footing under the direction of the State Defence Committee headed by Stalin. Everywhere communist party members were to the fore, inspiring the soldiers and the people, volunteering for the most dangerous missions and tasks, be these on the battlefields, at the points of production or in the occupied territories where partisan (guerilla) detachments were formed to harass the aggressor's rear and make Soviet land burn under his feet. In a tremendous feat of organisation, 1,360 industrial and agricultural enterprises were moved to the Urals and the eastern Republics of the Soviet Union, where they were soon in operation for the war effort.

Already Hitler's blitzkrieg had failed, for the Soviet Union was no easy victim like the other countries he had overrun. The fascist offensive began to weaken, whilst Soviet resistance increased and became steadily better organised. The order of the day in this grim opening phase of the war was to halt the enemy, who had to fight for every inch of territory. Besieged Leningrad was turned into an impregnable fortress and was to hold out for an incredible 900 days of starvation and bombardment until its relief. By October, with the enemy 16 kilometers from Moscow, the battle for the Soviet capital had begun.

This was the most critical stage of the war, with the nazis launching what they hoped would be the final offensive on the city. They had brought up fresh reserves, and a force of 80 divisions converged on Moscow. The traditional November 7 parade was held in Red Square, with the columns of infantry, tanks and artillery passing the Lenin mausoleum and going straight on to the front. With the Party declaring "The defeat of the enemy must begin at Moscow!" the Soviet command brought up fresh organised forces and in December launched its first major counter-offensive. This was a tremendous test for the Red Army which crashed through the nazi lines and, by the spring of 1942, had thrown back the enemy 400 kilometres from the Soviet capital.

The battle of Moscow was a decisive event of the war. It shattered the myth of the German army's invincibility, wrecked Hitler's blitzkrieg plan and forced him into a prolonged war. It revealed the strength of the Soviet Union in war, gave hope to the world and strengthened the anti-nazi camp.

Anti-Fascist Coalition

On January 1, 1942, twenty six states, including the USSR, USA and Britain agreed to form an alliance to defeat the Hitler-Mussolini-Tokyo Axis. The more sober British and American statesmen understood the dangers of fascism presented to their own countries. They realised that without the Soviet Union it was impossible to halt Hitler. Moreover, the USA had cause to understand the treachery of the aggressors when the Japanese launched a surprise attack on their naval base at Pearl Harbour. A compelling motive behind the US and British decision was to see imperialist Germany, as a competitor in the world market, crushed. At the same time they hoped to see the Soviet Union weakened.

Senator Truman, the future American President, summed it up when he said: "If we see that Germany is winning we should help Russia, but if Russia is winning we should help Germany." Put another way, the wish was "to see

Hitler in the grave and Russia on the operating table." But the people of Britain and America, inspired by the heroic Soviet feats, forced their rulers to adopt a more resolute policy. Britain and the USA undertook to open a second front in Europe as soon as possible, but it was another three years before they fulfilled this promise, and in all this time the Soviet Union stood alone in Europe where 70% of the world war was being waged.

Whilst the Americans fought the Japanese for control of coral islands in the Pacific, Churchill followed the myopic policy of regarding the north African desert rather than the English channel as the shortest route to Germany. This conduct prolonged the war and therefore cost millions more lives.

Decisive Battles

During the course of 1942 the initiatives still lay with the nazi aggressor who built up a new offensive in the south. With a million strong force the enemy broke through the Soviet defences and drove on to the Volga. The aim was to seize Stalingrad (now Volgograd) and push on to the Soviet oilfields at Baku. Success would have enabled Hitler to smash through to the Middle East and India.

On August 23, 1942, the great city on the Volga was flattened and the fiercest battle of the war took place as literally every street, house and room was fought for. The fighting raged for months while the world watched anxiously, aware that its fate hung in the balance. The Soviet command's plan was to wear the enemy down while building up fresh forces on his flanks. By November 19, a shattering blow was unleashed and Hitler's 6th Army of 330,000 troops was encircled and gradually crushed. In February, 1943, 96,000 survivors surrendered. Never before in history had such a large formation of troops been surrounded and destroyed.

The tide of war was turned on the Volga and the German army could never be the same again.

Churchill tried to make out that it was the Battle of El Alamein that changed the course of the war. It is instructive to point out that the German general Rommel had a mere 9 divisions under his command in the African desert, whilst the German forces at Stalingrad comprised 22 divisions, out of a total of 257 fascist divisions on the 'Russian' front.

With this signal victory the Red Army at last wrested the initiative from the enemy and, in what can be regarded as the second period of the Great Patriotic War, commenced the struggle for the expulsion of the invaders from Soviet soil.

This was no easy task. The fascist beast had been lamed, but it was not yet beaten. Hitler had built up freshly equipped armies, but so too had the Soviet Union. Soviet scientists and workers improved tank and aircraft design and developed weapons like the ferocious rocket missiles popularly known as 'Katyushas'. Factories functioned round the clock and a continuous stream of improved arms and equipment flowed to the front. Soviet industry was producing 2½ times more tanks and 20,000 more planes than Germany. Not only was the Soviet Union beginning to produce more weapons, but these were proving superior in battle.

By July, 1943, the Nazi command sought to reverse their Stalingrad defeat by attempting to launch another powerful offensive. They concentrated their forces in the region of Kursk, south of Moscow, and with a battering ram of 50 divisions, 20 armoured and motorised, hoped to smash through the Soviet defence line. The battle that developed at Kursk was the biggest in history, involving huge numbers of planes, tanks and artillery. The German offensive was not only halted, but the Red Army launched a spectacular counter-offensive which demolished the enemy and hurled him back across the Dnieper, opening the way for the liberation of Kiev and the Ukraine. Kursk placed the German forces in a near catastrophic position. They were never again able to assume the offensive. The outcome of this battle so significantly altered the balance of forces and capacity between the two adversaries that it is rightly considered the turning point of the war.

The Enemy Driven from Soviet Soil

By the end of 1943, the tide of war was irreversibly changed in favour of the Soviet Union. During the course of 1944, tremendous blows rained down on the enemy formations in Byelorussia and the western Ukraine. These were dramatic proof of the Soviet army's mastery of military art, with generals such as Zhukov and Rokossovsky proving themselves the most outstanding. The enemy had to contend with the Soviet partisans who came into their own as the Red Army advanced. Tremendous chaos was sown in the enemy ranks as they attempted to retreat. The aptly named 'Railway War' launched by the partisans against the enemy supplies accounted for five times more damage than allied bombs. In the summer of 1944, the Red Army mounted a general offensive along the whole front from Leningrad to the south. By the autumn the enemy had been driven from Soviet soil. Tens of thousands of captured Germans who had once dreamed of seeing Moscow received the opportunity as they were marched through the city's streets to captivity. On

Soviet soil the German army lost 8 million men, killed and captured, 19,000 guns, 62,000 planes and 55,000 tanks.

But the Nazis had exacted a horrific toll in the Soviet lands they had overrun. They had destroyed 1,740 towns and cities, razed to the ground 70,000 villages, slaughtered civilians or driven them into slavery. Wherever they set foot, they left ashes and ruins. Four hundred mines were destroyed in the Donetsk coal basin; 25 million people were made homeless. The loss to industry was 679 billion roubles and the estimated complete cost of the war was 2½ trillion roubles. The 20 million dead (one million alone in the siege of Leningrad) was an incalculable loss.

By comparison the USA made a profit out of the war of 52 billion dollars and lost only 340,000 soldiers. Car accidents in the USA account for this number of casualties every five years. Of course, not a single bomb fell on America.

Liberating Europe.

The Red Army now turned to its campaign of liberating the European countries from the yoke of fascism. Eleven European countries, including Poland, were freed by the Soviet forces who were greeted everywhere as liberators.

By this stage the long awaited opening of the second front in France had taken place in June, 1944. There is no doubt this was spurred on by the decisive victories the Soviet Union had been scoring on the Byelorussian and Ukrainian fronts. By then the war had already entered its concluding stage. As many as 370 enemy divisions had been wiped out on the Soviet-German front and Nazi Germany was incapable of making good these losses. The chief consideration of the US and British rulers was to share the 'victory pie', with postwar alignments in mind, and to shake hands with the 'Russians' as far to the east as possible.

The American and British armies made slow progress from the west, even though they had overwhelmingly superior force. The German troops they faced were Hitler's second best, for the most experienced divisions were concentrated on the eastern front. At the time of the Normandy landings there were only 50 German divisions in France and by the time the Red Army was preparing to cross on to German soil in January, 1945, Hitler had only 20 divisions facing the allies in the West.

At this point the Americans and British were engaged in the so-called Battle of the Bulge in the Ardennes mountains of France. When things went wrong for them, Churchill appealed to Stalin to advance the date of the

proposed Soviet offensive and Stalin obliged. Hitler was forced to transfer another 12 divisions to the eastern front and the Germans thus had only 8 divisions to face 1,000,000 American and British troops. It is salutary to note in passing that Tito's partisans in Yugoslavia tied down 16 German divisions.

In the closing period of the war Hitler and his henchmen were hoping that the western allies would do a deal with them and save their skins from the advancing Red Army forces. The nazis were putting up token resistance in the west and desperately digging in against the advancing Soviet tide. In the bitter fighting for Berlin, 300,000 Soviet soldiers gave their lives, but nothing could prevent the final collapse of nazi Germany under the hammer blows of the Soviet forces. Germany was defeated and the fascist leaders and war criminals suffered the grim retribution of popular justice.

As a result of the Yalta Conference the Soviet Union undertook to declare war on Japan in order to bring the war to a speedy end. The declaration was made on August 8, 1945, and Soviet forces immediately acted against the 1.3 million strong Japanese army in Manchuria. This force was routed by September and all its equipment was handed to the Chinese communists. However, on August 6 and 9, 1945, the USA dropped atomic bombs on Japan, killing hundreds of thousands of civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This was an act of barbarism for which there was no military necessity. Japan was already finished as a fighting force. The main reason for dropping the bombs was to warn the Soviet Union of the USA's potential as an aggressor.

Source of Soviet Victory

The Soviet Union played the chief part in bringing the war to a victorious conclusion. It saved humanity from fascist slavery and in so doing fulfilled its internationalist duty to the peoples of the world. The gains of the socialist revolution and of Soviet power had been protected and socialism was turned into a world system. With the defeat of the most reactionary capitalist country and the weakening of others, the world balance of forces was radically altered and many countries in eastern Europe and Asia were set on the socialist path. As a result of the weakening of imperialism and the enormous desire for freedom that spread everywhere in the wake of the war, the colonial system began to collapse.

As to the source of victory in the Great Patriotic War and the crushing of Hitler in Berlin, this is not hard to pinpoint, even though the imperialist falsifiers of history will have us believe it was the Russian winter and particularly Generals December and January who were responsible!

falsifiers of history will have us believe it was the Russian winter and particularly Generals December and January who were responsible!

The Red Army proved more than a match for the nazis, in all conditions, whether summer or winter, on Soviet soil or German soil. The Soviet people triumphed because their socialist system enabled them to mobilise the necessary human and material resources for victory. The Soviet people were fighting to defend their way of life and the gains of the October revolution against an aggressor who was fighting for motives of imperialism and conquest, to subject the world to the bestial control of the master-race in the interests of the monopolists. The Soviet soldier was a patriot and an internationalist. As Lenin prophetically stated: "The workers and peasants can never be defeated if they are fighting for socialist power".

Consequently the Soviet people, united and determined, were able to withstand tremendous hardships and displayed unexampled endurance, sacrifice and mass heroism to make their victory possible. The inspirer and organiser of the people was the Communist Party which welded together the Army and the people, the front and the rear. By their personal example the communists inspired the fighting men and the workers to perform heroic feats. "I want to go into battle as a communist" was the sentiment that fired the best of the Soviet people.

The Fight for Peace Today

The Soviet people's great victory being celebrated on May 9 is also our victory and our celebration. That victory is directly linked to the struggle for world peace today. Now, as then, imperialist warmongering threatens us all with extinction. Now, as then, the Soviet Union is the sheet anchor of world peace and humanity.

ZOYA ON GUARD

By ANC Khumalo

I first saw Zoya
aglow in the Moscow Metro
then learnt her name

It was love at first sight
I was drawn to Zoya
like the moth
to brightly burning flame

A partisan girl on guard
noble and strong
her sculpted form lovingly cast
radiating spirit and life

My guide was quick to impart
the tale of courage and devotion

Guarding Moscow's approaches
from the ice age onslaught
she fell into the grip of demons
who tore away her clothing
hurling her into the ice hard night
hoping to unlock her tongue

But she was frost to them
heart ablaze with love
for her motherland

So they strung her up
like a pagan offering
on their drunken crusade

It is known
how that crusade began
and ended where it began ...

Zoya perished in that pagan night
but forever glows
and not only in Soviet hearts
but for all on our planet
who cherish the sunshine

And in our world today
when ice age pagans
again gamble on ghostly crusades
challenging the right to the light
of every human being

Zoya pulsates lifebeams
of firm resolve
like the sun bestowing energy
into the lushgreen spring

Zoya on guard
at the Izmailovskaya station
stands like a shield
between the pagan night
and the light.

Note: The poem refers to Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, the partisan heroine executed by the nazis in November, 1941. A statue of her stands at the Izmailovskaya Metro station, Moscow. Both Zoya and her brother, who was a fighter pilot, were awarded the title Hero of the Soviet Union.

U.S. "STAR WAR" PLAN MUST BE SCRAPPED!

Some points made by ANDREI GROMYKO, Foreign Minister of the USSR, in a television interview with a group of political analysts from the Soviet mass media in Moscow on January 13, 1985.

If one strives to put an end to the arms race and to the removal of the threat of war, or to put it briefly, if one strives for a lasting peace, it is necessary to ensure that the arms race does not begin in space and is stopped on earth.

Weapons intended for use against objects in space should be categorically banned, just as weapons designed for use from outer space against the Earth as a planet. In other words, against objects on the ground, on the sea, in the atmosphere.

I must say that during a long time US proponents of the plan for the so-called large-scale anti-missile defence were "drowning" individual components, individual phases of that problem, never differentiating between them. Later on they realised, naturally, that that position was weak; facing criticism and, I would say, exposure of its nature, they somewhat corrected it and came to the conclusion that the deployment of relevant

objects and their testing could be prohibited. They first stated this clearly in Geneva.

As for research, they claim that it should be conducted. Their motivation was that research could be not prohibited all the same since such a ban could be verified. The problem of verification is of course difficult. If research is done by way of preparing relevant papers indoors, obviously, verification will not be easy.

But there is often some proving ground next to a laboratory and it is used for relevant purposes.

Even assuming that verification is difficult, why should work be conducted, even if it is called research, when there exists an accord that the goal of the ultimate and complete elimination of nuclear weapons should be pursued?

Why should research be conducted to develop a whole system of new types of weaponry for deployment in space? So the position of the US administration, as regards the research is vulnerable. Why should preparations be carried out, even at the initial stage, for the subsequent testing and deployment of new types of armaments?

And who can guarantee that the line will be drawn after research has been completed? Will not there be people, scientists and others, who will say: we have spent so many billion dollars on research, so why waste all this money? Isn't it better to use it and go over to the next phase, that is, testing and deployment? Can this happen? It certainly can. We know the US administration and know the situation in the United States. That is why the policy of conducting research with a view to developing a large-scale missile defence system stands criticism, both morally and politically, and I want to stress this most resolutely. This policy is vulnerable and must be rejected.

Frankly speaking, there is a very short distance between this position and absurdity.

The fact that this plan or system — they like the word "system" better — has been called "defensive" by the US Administration does not change anything. Some sections of the public are taken in — this should be admitted frankly. But, of course, there is nothing at all defensive about it.

These are offensive weapons and the whole plan, frankly speaking, is a plan for aggression. I emphasise, aggression. We are resolutely against it. We think that anyone trying to take an honest stand on these questions should be aware of the goal pursued by this plan.

Let us allow, by way of theoretical analysis, that the United States has developed this system but does not use its capability to launch missiles at the Soviet Union and to deliver a nuclear strike. But it would have a possibility to do so if it had such a shield. Would it not be used for pressure, for blackmail?

This fits the line of the US administration aimed at securing a position of world domination, a position enabling the United States to dictate its terms. In this case it is a matter of concern to the Soviet Union. We resolutely reject this system, this entire plan. I want to stress anew that the firm basis for doing business in the future is equality. Equality and equal security. There is no other basis.

Even if there are people in the United States who believe that their country will achieve dominance in one way or another, by carrying through its plan to develop the above system or without implementing it, and that the Soviet Union will find itself in a subordinate position, they are mistaken. It is a gross mistake. This will never happen. I want to stress anew, using the occasion, what Konstantin Chernenko pointed out in his statements and what he personally wrote to President Reagan, this is ruled out. We will never allow it.

We have colossal material and intellectual resources, sufficient to ensure our security. This holds true both for the Soviet Union and for our allies and friends. Our people had sufficient strength to emerge victorious from the unprecedentedly devastating war against German Nazism. The world was amazed to see this happen. The Soviet Union carried the brunt of the war. Figuratively speaking, our people, politically, were emitting nuclear energy. And they were victors. They will never allow any country or a group of countries to dictate conditions stemming from ideological considerations. And that the American plans are pervaded in good measure with ideological considerations is beyond doubt and, I think, this is clear to everyone in the Soviet Union and not only in the Soviet Union.

DRAMATIC GROWTH OF THE DEMOCRATIC TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

by L.N. Machlalela

"Our struggle is advancing in a defiant way so that the regime cannot rule in the same old way". (South African Congress of Trade Unions, National Executive Committee statement, November 1984.)

The growth of the democratic trade unions in the last ten years has accompanied the accelerated resistance to national oppression. The urban working class have at last pressed back the boundaries of state and employer repression and joined the trade union movement in their thousands. They totalled 713,134 in 1975; 974,970 in 1980 and 1,545,824 in 1983; an increase of 58% in less than three years.

For the first time in the industrial history of South Africa, the African workers form the largest single group of organised workers (43.4% as against 33.34% for white and 22.7% for Coloured and Indian workers). Yet only 15% are unionised, and 4.5 million workers remain to be recruited. The democratic trade union movement nonetheless is already a formidable force and despite the fact that it is still in its infancy, it is, alongside the women, the youth and the rural poor, a major component of resistance to the regime, the employers and the state.

Of the one and a half million workers who are attached to trade unions the most important formations are the democratic and independent unions that in greater or lesser degree link their struggles for wages and greater control over the conditions of production with the urban conflicts concerning rents, housing, education, influx control and struggle for political rights. While the

federations (with the exception of CUSA and the independent GWU) have not yet formally affiliated to the United Democratic Front, their constituent unions have directly or indirectly identified themselves with the political campaigns for national emancipation, which they recognise (at times more sharply than their leaders) as indispensable to their success on the shop floor, and the ending of social and economic inequality.

The major configurations of the democratic trade unions are:

	MEMBERS IN 1983	% OF TOTAL 1983
CUSA	140 592	9.1%
FOSATU	108 166	7.0%
INDEPENDENT	696 755	45.1%
TOTAL	945 513	61.2%

The remaining union members (38.8%) are lodged in racist federations from which the more class conscious workers are steadily extricating themselves, although the process is slow. (There was a 10% decline in TUCSA membership in 1983: 54,000 boiler makers and 25,000 members of MICWA). The two main bodies are:

	1983	1984	1983	1984
SACOL	121 890	N/A	7.9%	N/A
TUCSA	478 420	90 000	30.9%	N/A

Before Wiehahn

In the same way as the burgeoning black trade union movement has accompanied the movement of national resistance to the regime, it has also been at the centre of profound and complex changes in the growth and structure of capital. This was manifested initially in the increase in the workforce and (since the seventies) the restructuring of the labour force and labour relations legislation, as the application of new technology made its impact upon the economy.

This process has wrought substantial changes which no analysis of the contemporary trade union movement can afford to overlook: it forms the backdrop to the "Wiehahn legislation" which, on behalf of the larger domestic firms, local conglomerates and monopoly capital, partially reversed three quarters of a century of exclusory labour practices to re-arrange the industrial relations system, and by implication, the racial division of labour. The speed of these developments and the historic

transformation of the labour movement over a single decade, quite often mask the enormity of capital's retreat in the face of the national resistance to the regime and the workers' challenge to the gross exploitation that accompanied the economic changes since the end of the sixties.

The Wiehahn Report was officially presented on May Day 1979 — an irony that capital may in the future regard with less enthusiasm than the proposed legislation generated at the time. It reflected the defiant way in which class and national struggles had advanced and the fact that neither capital's needs nor its capacity to contain the struggles made it possible for it to continue in the same old way. For the workers to appreciate the impact of their resistance, they need only look back on the decades of discriminatory legislation that obstructed their earlier organisation: the racist consolidating legislation of 1911; the exclusory provision of the 1924 Industrial Conciliation Act; the War Measures that frustrated their unionisation; the two and a half decades of the bureaucratic imprisonment of the black trade union movement between 1953 and 1979, including the strait-jacketing legislation of the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act of 1953 which was vainly designed to bleed the trade union movement to death; the notorious Industrial Conciliation Amendment Act of 1956 with its extensive provisions for job reservation according to race, and the challenging of industrial negotiation through bureaucrats of the Bantu Labour Office.

The South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) functioned under the most rigid attempts by employers and the state to institutionalise a bureaucratic system of racist industrial relations. SACTU grew in defiance of the harsh anti-trade union legislation of the time, which entrenched racist job reservation, recognised NO African trade unions and offered advisory works committees instead. Employers, bureaucrats and police combined to provide a classically repressive structure for the management of black workers. Meanwhile, the last Act of the 50's legislated against strikes and legally registered black trade unions.

Wiehahn in Perspective

Between Wiehahn and the early sixties, the period of the greatest economic growth and technological change, the regime was characterised by the most rigorous national oppression and class confrontation. The former was accompanied by the tightening of labour-regulating mechanisms (labour bureaux — influx controls — pass laws) in order to canalise the workforce and supply labour to the developing sectors of the economy, especially to the transnational and other foreign investors, whose capital has invaded the

mining, automobile, textile, hosiery, petroleum, chemical, capital goods and engineering industries between the Sharpeville and Soweto uprisings. By the beginning of the eighties, total foreign investment had gone over the 25 billion dollar mark and manufacturing alone accounted for 43% of the total foreign investment in 1973 — the year that proved to be a watershed in the history of the democratic trade union movement.

In that year, the class confrontations were characterised by the 1973 strike waves and their aftermath. These were directly linked to the economic growth of the sixties and early seventies, in which profit rates rose to 25% (compared to 14% in some developing countries and as low as 4% in the advanced industrial countries). Gigantic changes in the structure of capital accompanied this growth. This took the form of large-scale replacement of men by machines and the massive recruitment of women's labour as mechanisation changed the labour processes and rendered the work more monotonous and the least well paid.

A new army of unemployed emerged from capital's assault on the cost of production. One million Africans were unemployed in the sixties and, between then and the present, the figure has risen to 3 million; nearly a quarter of the workforce. The armies of unemployed added to the populations of the bantustans, in effect, domestic labour colonies where the inhabitants, already rightless and voteless, were also deprived of their citizenship.

The state assisted this process by revising the institutional machinery of national oppression and revamped the urban areas legislation, the pass laws and the system of labour bureaux to "harmonise" (i.e. coerce) workers to supply their labour power to employers where it was most needed, irrespective of the level of wages or individual choice. Whilst the regime extolled the virtues of the free market, it institutionalised a system of force and compulsion in the labour market that has few, if any, equals in the world.

However much the new labour relations system might be projected as a package that "deracialises" capitalism, collective bargaining is totally undermined so long as it is accompanied by any form of institutionalised command over the labour force. Workplace victories in South Africa have little solidity in the long term without national liberation. This is the Achilles Heel of "Workerism", with its base on the shop floor and its isolation from those forces who are equally oppressed but away from the points of production.

Two phases can be discerned in the period since Sharpeville: The first was highly characteristic of the sixties, where the colour bar in industry was upheld by an assortment of strategies including legislation, negotiation between white unions and management, and customary practice. This

however did not succeed in overcoming the crisis of skills which the 1.4 million white employees could not fill. A policy of "floating" the colour bar was adopted, together with a search for overseas immigrants and a process of job dilution which served to increase the entry into industry of African workers in skilled capacities — at lower rates of pay. This classic phenomenon of contemporary capitalism, the constant fragmentation of the work process, 'deskilling' and job re-classification, was accompanied by changes in technology which enabled large numbers of the black labour force to perform the new mechanical skills. The role of whites as supervisors increased, as well as their wages, the high price of their labour being recognised (as ever) as the cost of the colour bar. For the moment the disadvantages were offset by superior profits.

In effect the floating of the colour bar was a substitute for *statutory* inaction. Changes in the racial division of labour were likely to be as politically subversive among the ruling party's traditional supporters (the white workforce, the petty bourgeoisie) in the sixties, as they are now in the eighties.

What marked off the second phase from the first was the co-operation of monopoly interests, whose capital needs were neither satisfied nor compatible with the existing ordering of the racial division of labour. Moreover, the regime was prepared to confront its former allies and co-opt other elements of the population, something it could not do earlier. The patch-work changes and the ad hoc alterations to the racial division of labour were expensive, inadequate, inefficient and, *as they stood*, inconsistent with the requirements of monopoly capital. They also did not square with the codes of conduct which had been established in the USA and EEC countries to make investments in South Africa more acceptable in the face of growing criticism.

Employers had for a long time, in the earlier phases of the country's growth, capitalised on the historical cheapness and regulation of African labour power. The extensive changes produced in the two decades between 1960 and 1980 — an industrial revolution in many respects — led employers to change their patterns of employment, and the state to change its style of industrial management. But not before the exploitative practices that accompanied nearly two decades of economic growth produced the inevitable explosion — during the strike waves of 1973 and again in 1976, with the urban revolts that started in Soweto.

The industrial scenario that confronted Wiehahn when his Commission of Inquiry into Labour Legislation met in 1976 was quantitatively different from the previous decade, or any other time in the country's history. The

growth in the clothing, textile, metal, machinery and transport industries had transformed the face of the economy — and with it the size and stability of the workforce, the density of the urban population, the demands on housing, transport, schools, services and amenities: the latter being items for which neither the employers nor their state had traditionally felt much commitment to find resources.

It also highlighted the poverty wages. The ratio of average African to average white wages in 1977 — one year after the Soweto Revolt — was one to four in manufacturing; one to five in construction and one to seven in mining. Along with the below-subsistence wages went the dearth in services, the inflated rents and food prices — and the subordinate legal status of urban African workers and the differential legal status of migrant workers on contract.

The changes in the economy and the growth of the urban working population had made it more difficult for the state to contain resistance than at any time before. Moreover the economy continued to expand: in manufacturing, the number of firms had grown by 60% between 1945 and 1976, and led to an increase in employment, output and capital investment. The low level of wages contrasted sharply with the high level of output per average firm: After World War II, the average output per firm was R117. This grew three times by Sharpeville and seven times by the Soweto uprising. What was specially pertinent was the leap in the average investment in plant and machinery — the major factor that revealed the presence of foreign capital — which produced changes in the work process, the division of labour and giant increases in production. The growth in the number of workers, work places and output is best appreciated when seen in table from:

Manufacturing	1945	1960	1976
Establishments (firms)	9,316	10,264	15,461
Av. Output (rands)	117,800	349,600	753,500
Av. investment in plant and machinery (rands)	39,200	77,500	151,800

The significance of this for the labour movement — whose resistance in the mid sixties mirrored the intensified repression that accompanied the urban expansion and industrial concentration — cannot be overemphasised. Compared with the mass strikes of the 1950's, only 2000 workers went on strike during the 1960's. The strikes were for increased wages, improvements in conditions and protests against political repression. But the decade was

not a militant one. It is easy for critics to say with hindsight that had the trade union activity on the shop floor been stronger, better organised, more militant; the character of the decade would have been less bleak for the labour movement. But it was not an era for militant trade union activists: the intense repression of SACTU personnel, the repressive legislation and collusion between police, employers and the state to suppress the labour movement, provided little scope for a democratic mass movement of the trade unions. Other critics point to SACTU's alliance with the Congress Movement in the fifties, and suggest that as a reason for the heavy retaliation of the state and the consequent quiet of the late sixties. *But this is to deny the very strength of SACTU: it was from its linkage with the ANC and its allies that it drew its vitality, resources, political assurance and the confidence of the workers — before and long after the banning of the ANC.* The alternative (a workerist approach) was to work within the parameters of the apartheid labour legislation and court co-option by the employers and regime. The problem is not unfamiliar in the present time.

Economic Growth and Change

Despite the relative quiescence of the sixties, the structural changes in employment, output and the impact of mechanisation during the decade and into the seventies, belied the surface "calm". Indeed the processes at work were corrosive to the existing political suppression and form of industrial relations control. In the space of twenty five years, between 1951 and 1976, all the social contradictions that had previously been on the agenda multiplied incalculably as foreign investment advanced to sustain the economy. By 1980, 2000 foreign companies including 65 transnationals had extended their operations to South Africa. Domestic concerns, conglomerates and monopoly capital separately or in co-operation combined to sustain the regime, defend it internationally and determine its strategies. In return, the state (in close collaboration with the military) acted to secure the appropriate conditions for the reproduction of monopoly capital and organise itself to contain the rural poor and the unemployed. At the same time it developed strategies to cope with the impact of the armed struggle and internal resistance to class and national oppression. By the time Soweto flared up into revolt, the level of growth had surpassed all the calculations of the regime's numerous ideologues and social planners, as the following table shows:

Growth of employment in manufacture:

	1951	1970	1976
Total employment	536,275	1,095,577	1,362,079
Output per man (rands)	1,189,381	3,101,889	4,517,513
Av. value of machinery per man (rands)	885	1,481	1,639

The impact of the change was felt in the seventies, when wages fell in relation to inflation; the cost of food escalated and so did the cost of clothing and transport. Between 1958 and 1971, prices rose by 40%. During that time, those who were in employment — euphemistically styled structurally or technically or seasonally out of work — became increasingly desperate.

The industrial expansion produced a new level of determination and militancy among the urban working class and has not abated since it started at the end of 1972, except for brief pauses.

The new militant unionism

The 1973 strikes that heralded the Wichahn legislation are, on their own, a special chapter of South African labour history. Their significance lies in the scale of strike action — 165,000 workers struck work in Durban in the course of the year, beginning in January with the brick workers, whose 61,000 strikers demanded a rise from R8 to R20 and marched in a demonstration with a red flag before them (for the traffic, they explained!) They did not get all of the rise they wanted but their mass confrontation with the employers and their unity led to their victory and set the scene for other struggles and important victories.

The wave of militancy was too powerful for the employers to respond to with customary force. Moreover the changes in technology and their higher return on capital (profits) made it easier for them to absorb the increase in wages that the workers had won. Mechanisation in the future would mean fewer workers and the process of intensified mechanisation therefore proceeded throughout the decade. The large-scale investment (capable of sustaining short-term losses) made employers less dependent on police intervention in their industrial relations and they sensed the potential for widespread disruption of production. To some extent this was borne out in the following year when the strikes assumed a national character: 22,000 in the Transvaal, 23,000 in the OFS, 18,000 in Natal and 13,000 in the Cape.

It is from this period that the democratic unions emerge, some new, some previously formed. In 1971 there were 10 pathetic parallel unions, some of them a fiction of their parent bodies. By 1974, in the wake of the strike wave

there were twenty five unions with 66,000 workers, 17 of these formed after 1973. Their traditions were informed by SACTU in that political involvement in the communities and in the struggle for national emancipation was accepted as indispensable to meaningful advances at the economic level.

The unions learnt by trial and error on the shop floor or in the process of organisation. What characterised the new militant unionism was their determination to confront the power of the employers, despite the heavy social, political (and physical) consequences. They developed their unions without the institutional procedures of collective bargaining that the subsequent Black Labour Relations Act provided, although they were to learn that not even this gave them immunity from the state, employers or the police. They were formed despite the lack of information about the formal methods of trade union organisation — or difficulties normally associated with the organisation of those who had never before been unionised.

Conflict — Settlement

The Soweto uprising fuelled the flames of the new unionism, demonstrating once again the significance of struggles beyond the shop floor. It is significant that Wichahn followed, closely on the Soweto uprising, his Commission beginning in 1976, and addressing itself to the potentiality of crisis in labour relations — but not immune to the wider ramifications of industrial conflict. The Commission, appointed to investigate labour legislation, was confronted by a rapidly expanding number of black independent trade unions. The economic development over the past decade had run into crisis, described by the ruling class as structural. But it was clearly deeper. Wichahn was ordered to cope with "the crisis in labour" and the drift of capital away from South Africa in the aftermath of Soweto: to deal with the increased internal disputes, especially mechanisms of conflict-settlement that did not include the security police and which were more consistent with the various recommendations and conventions of the International Labour Organisation and the codes of conduct referred to above.

Transnational investment in South Africa reflected a sensitivity to accusations of coercive labour practices: not only at the point of production but in the framework of the system itself. Its investment in South Africa was dictated by the high annual return it yielded, and the earlier capacity of the regime to contain industrial and political conflict. The entrepreneurs had in a sense invested in the regime as much as in the various economic enterprises. The conditions that would be most conducive to the reproduction of their

capital required a re-ordering of the institutional arrangements, particularly those that were overtly discriminatory. Together with the task of finding a formulation that would meet these requirements, Wiehahn was finally set the task of eliminating "bottlenecks" within labour policies — ie to find a way to eliminate strikes. His report was presented on May 1st 1979.

The government responded with indecent haste: a White Paper was circulated between May and October 1979 and in the latter month a new Industrial Conciliation Amendment Act was introduced. In the following month the National Manpower Commission was established, headed by Professor Wiehahn himself. Industrial relations were seen to be fluid and the role of the original Wiehahn Commission was more or less to design and plan a labour policy and programme for the sustained surveillance and control of the industrial relations system. Its recommendations included one unitary trade union system rather than separate systems, although there was provision for racially exclusive trade unions. At the outset, the recommendations included the need for registration for full participation in the industrial relations system. This meant the disclosure of membership records, names of officials and the union's financial affairs to the registrar. Initially, only permanent urban workers were eligible for trade union organisation — but following an outcry from the organised movement the right to trade union membership was extended to contract workers. The establishment of an Industrial Court to deal with unfair practices was clearly intended to condition employers to the new dispensation and to provide a carrot for registration.

Co-option?

There are various interpretations of the Wiehahn legislation. Their importance lies in the degree to which unions take the legislation at face value and accept the provisions of the Labour Relations Act and its subsequent amendments. Full participation in the Industrial Relations System includes registration, access to industrial conciliation boards, the industrial courts and the various other 'concessions'. The danger lies in the possibility of co-option by the employers and control by the State. Wiehahn set out to design and plan a labour policy and programme among other things for the sustained surveillance and control of the industrial relations system, the importance of the registration process ought not to be minimised. It is the first step in the process of control and the institutional mechanism by which the finances, membership, office personnel and proceedings of the union can be monitored by the State.

It comes as no surprise that the Labour Relations Amendment Act of July 1984 retrieved the initiative for the state and made it more difficult for unregistered unions to reach agreements with employers. The amendment provides that agreements reached between employers and unions are not enforceable in court if either party fails to supply the Dept. of Manpower with details of their constitutions, membership, office address, names of office bearers and fails to keep its finances in good order. The amendment was a response to the success the unions had in winning recognition agreements without succumbing to the monitoring processes involved in formal registration. By 1983, 194 unions with an average membership size of 6,566 had registered, and many of them had participated in the industrial conciliation machinery and the Industrial Court. In the latter case with some success, although the flexibility and favourable disposition of the Court is in jeopardy with hints from the state that the interpretation of unfair labour practice will be more limited in the future. Approximately 46 unions with an average membership size of 9,712 have refused to register in the belief that militant leadership and shop floor unity could force employers to sign recognition agreements irrespective of formal registration. On principle, however, they rejected state control and the voluntary submission of information to the state that could place the union, its personnel and its membership in jeopardy. The 'registration debate' as such began with the advent of the Wiehahn legislation, although the process of state control and cooption is not new to the South African labour movement.

The Co-option of the white workers

The industrial conciliation mechanism was the option the state imposed on the white working class, following the 1922 Rand revolt and nearly a decade of white union militancy. It was less than an historical compromise but preferable to outright suppression of trade unions at the time. Instead it institutionalised the unions' power and left capital in command. The historians of the 1924 I.C. Act confirm the state's success in co-opting and bureaucratising the labour movement. The Act facilitated the formation of unions and enabled them to take advantage of the new network of regulations and institutions. But the 'adroit negotiator' and the bureaucratic office administrator replaced the militancy of the shop floor so that the rank and file became increasingly alienated from the bargaining process. Accommodation rather than confrontation was more often the case as the strike weapon became more or less obsolete. Between the passage of the Act and 1929, only 6 strikes had taken place and the succeeding years reduced

that number still further. A government commission that reviewed the Act 10 years after its passage observed (correctly) "that (statutory) wage regulation made unions less militant" and they were quick to confirm that the Industrial Conciliation Act was an indispensable part of the industrial relations process. According to Rob Davies (1982):

"Within the union structures power passed more and more into the hands of a bureaucracy of permanent officials who spent most of their time involved in statutory bodies with employers and government officials. More and more decisions were taken at the top and almost inevitably ... common interests multiplied across the table in the boardroom..."

Few would deny the co-optation of the white employees. The price they paid for the entrenchment of their privileges and racial exclusiveness in the collective bargaining process was the militancy and independence of their unions. It is a well-worn phrase of Marx that history enacted once is drama: the second time round it is farce. In this instance, after decades of struggle in which the black democratic trade union movement has established itself through the militancy of its members, its incorporation would be little short of tragedy.

"Remember that an injury to one is an injury to all, be he black or white. While the black worker is oppressed, the white worker cannot be free.

"Before Labour can emancipate itself Black workers as well as White must combine in one organisation of Labour, irrespective of craft, colour or creed. This is Bolshevism: The Solidarity of Labour".

From the leaflet "The Bolsheviks are Coming" by D. Ivor Jones and L.H. Greene, 1918.

LESSONS OF THE TWO-DAY STAY-AWAY

By R.E. Nyameko

For two days, November 5th and 6th, 1984, workers in the Transvaal stayed away from work in response to the leaflet distributed for a regional Transvaal stay-away. The leaflet was distributed in many thousands in the black townships. It read: "Your sweat, your labour and your energy have been exploited for years and centuries.

"For decades and generations, the blood of your people has been shamefully spilt in vain.

"Stand up, you who are oppressed and crushed.

"Wake up, you who are oppressed and exploited.

"Rise up, you who have been fooled and hoaxed."

The leaflets demanded:

No more rent increases in the township.

No more bus fare increases.

No more tax and GST increases.

No more police and army in the townships.

No more community councils in the townships.

Trade union leaders and other leaders must be freed from jail.

The Simba Quix workers must get their jobs back.

The government must give students a better education. They must stop teachers beating students. They must stop age limits and allow all students to finish school. And the government must allow students to choose their own SRC's.

AZIKHWELWA!!!

MONDAY AND TUESDAY THE 5TH AND 6TH
NOVEMBER 1984

Ngomambulo nangolweleli ngomhla ka 5 and 6th November 1984 kuya yanke Transvaal ababonisi bayacelwa ukuba bafike emakhaya. Isacelela ukuba ababonisi amabhunu ukuba angabakhi be jufi amandla athi singowabonisa ngendlela efanayo ngayo. Ina silina ukumbona bona ibo chinyi begad letha, lala esipho ngomhla nemjuka yabaseli befu.

Sina babone ukuthi verkhohlele mona. Sini phansi ngendlela. Phansi ngoo luhabakala, kuya Molahlani nabanye abalana naba. Malibonise abanyathise ababonise ukuthi avuzho umabeni waba.

Ineni ihyika mihla le ngodl, abanwano befu anolunde ngama yendlela abophethe ngayo edokweni, Ingi hrabo idutyuwa ngomaphela abonyi basemejela, la ma Councilors ane ngazo zonke lala lali, sili Phansi ngama Councilors, Phansi ngombuso anobandakulo ka lotha.

Sina siphinda phinda ukuthi Mabathalane bonke laba bonke ababonise ngomhla ka 5 and 6th, leba lenolunde malibonise abandakulo ababonise Inbulu efanayo yiba ezi kubonisa edokweni ngoba lombuso avu inelele ukuthelga nabonise kanye nokudakula lali lene nga ababonisi barali babo ababonise kubom-bonano nabanwano befu. Siphinda sili SEKWANELE sithathile ukungcwaba Inzila namakanga Asebenzi ama Community Councilors, malaphume anolupho emakhaseni abantu ababonise amahlekele nama SEC's ka DEI enelele ngalipen.

**AMANDLA! NGAWETHU!!
MATLA! KE A RONA!!
POWER TO THE PEOPLE!!
EACH ONE TEACH ONE!!**

Small text below the slogan, likely a printer's mark or reference code.

Small text below the slogan, likely a printer's mark or reference code.

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL!!!

Transvaal as a whole!!! Regional Stay-away!!!

"Azikhwelwa!!!" — We Won't Ride — is the heading on this leaflet distributed in thousands in the black townships of the Transvaal before the two-day stay-away last November.

The leaflet and demands were issued by the Transvaal Regional Stay-Away Committee (TRSC), and distributed by people from many organisations. The TRSC was not affiliated to the United Democratic Front (UDF), but the 37 TRSC organisations, including CUSA, are affiliates of UDF. Thami Mali was Chairman of the TRSC and is also Chairman of the UDF in Soweto. He is of the new generation of young blacks who were blooded — politically speaking — in the upheavals of 1976-77. He told the *Financial Mail*:

"In previous stay-aways there were problems with the hostel dwellers, we realised we had not done our work there. This time we did a lot of groundwork there before we produced the stay-away pamphlets. The first meeting convened by COSAS was on October 10th. We decided to go to the communities and assess our strength there... We got a very good response."²

Chief Gatsha Buthelezi warned that stay-aways are ill-advised until there is black unity. The police said the same. The people have proved in action that they are not going to listen to Buthelezi's reactionary advice.³

The people did not rush into the stay-away. People chose a special Committee — the Committee decided to have the stay-away on the 5th and 6th November. Workers needed time to talk about it.⁴

A shop steward from a big factory in Johannesburg said:

"Workers need time to decide such things... Workers must talk about things like stay-away. They must have meetings and decide for themselves."⁴

The people decided. According to the findings of the Labour Monitoring Group (LMG), an academic body which has produced a preliminary analysis of the stay-away, they attempted to contact all firms in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand and Vereeniging — PWV — area which have recognition agreements with an independent union. Responses were received from 71 firms; six firms refused to divulge information. The findings of the group were: Unionised factories gave overwhelming support to the stay-away with some 70% of the companies in their sample reporting a stay-away rate of over 80%. The unionised factories were concentrated in the East Rand and the Vaal — the areas where the stay-away rates were highest.

The stay-away in Atteridgeville township was almost total, but commuters from Bophuthatswana went to work. The pattern was similar in Brits with township dwellers supporting the stay-away and commuters working. All sectors where unions were present were equally affected. Mining was an exception, with lack of participation being attributed to isolation from the townships and the aftermath of their recent strike.

The stay-away did not weaken on the second day: 56% of establishments maintained the same level of stay away on both days; 20% weakened; and 24% actually intensified on Tuesday. There was no significant difference in the response of migrants and township dwellers to the stay-away. Migrants formed a significant proportion of the work force in nine of the 71 establishments surveyed. In five of these there was more than 90% participation which suggests a critical weakening of the influence of Inkatha on the Rand. Chief Gatsha Buthelezi's opposition to the stay-away call distances him even further from the mainstream of opposition in South Africa.

In short, the two-day stay-away elicited a 60% response in the PWV area — with anything up to 800,000 people participating. It was most successful where strong trade union organisation existed. The numbers involved in the stay away are considerably higher if the approximately 400,000 students who boycotted school on those two days are included.⁵

The Bosses were shocked

Employers and government were shocked by this two-day stay-away, which was a big success. The reaction of the regime was brutal. Ten people were killed, mostly in battles with police on the first day of the strike. Six mothers were killed on the night of November 5-6, while at least 12 Africans and one white, a policeman, were injured.

On November 8 security police raided three offices — UDF, The Media and Research Services (MARS) and FOSA'TU — detained six members, including four members of the TASC, Thami Mali, Mr Moses Mayegiso, Regional Secretary of MAWU, Mr Themba Nontlanane of the Municipal and General Workers' Union, Mr Peter Makgoba, Regional Chairman of COSAS and Mr Obed Bapela, an employee of MARS — in fact by then at least 50 trade union, student and community organisations' members were in detention.

The regime warned that it could not allow "its labour and economic spheres to become a political battlefield. No matter how unpopular it might make us in the outside world, strong action will be taken against instigators, arsonists and radicals".⁶

Very few employers took action against their employees for participating in the stay-aways. But the government's oil-from-coal plant Sasol at Secunda fired 6,500 workers — because they supported the stay away in the Transvaal.

The regime's vicious revenge

On the first day of the stay-away, at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, helicopters flew over the hostels and dropped thousands of pamphlets. The pamphlets told the workers to be back at work by 10 o'clock the next morning — or they would lose their jobs. The workers' leaders had an all-night meeting. They decided to call a meeting of the workers early in the morning. The leaders wanted to tell the workers to think about going back to work.

They told the bosses about the meeting and the bosses agreed to let the workers have a meeting in the hostel grounds. They also agreed not to call the police or the army. The meeting started at 6 o'clock that morning. But soon

after two 'hippos' drove into the hostel grounds and straight into the workers' meeting. The workers got very angry and decided to carry on with the strike.

On Tuesday the 6th November the Chemical Workers' Industrial Union was informed that 6,500 workers were fired. The next day the police surrounded the hostels. The workers were told to pack their belongings and leave. Outside the workers found the money vans, and they were paid off under the eyes of the police. Next to the money vans, the buses were waiting with signs on them — Qwaqwa, Bushbuckridge, KwaZulu and Transkei. In the words of the union, the workers "were bussed back to the human dumping grounds in the bantustans". The manager at Sasol blamed instigators "who forced workers to stay away from work". The fired workers maintained that nobody forced the workers to stay away from work; in fact their union told their members that workers from government factories did not have to join the stay-away. But the workers at Sasol wanted to stand together with all the other workers in the Transvaal.

Clearly the regime had decided to fire the 6,500 workers to punish them and the thirty or forty thousand people for whom they were the only breadwinners. The regime also hoped to break the Chemical Workers' Industrial Union.

How the Union was Built

Mr Tshidiso Mothupi, who spoke at the workers' meeting, had worked at Sasol for four years before becoming an organiser for the Union. He said: "Sasol is one of the biggest factories in South Africa, but they pay very low wages". Other leaders said: "The bosses saw that the union was getting stronger in the factory".

The leaders built the union by meeting with small groups of workers in hostel rooms and in private homes in the township late at night. They spoke about their best weapon — unity. Slowly they built their union... Slowly the union won rights for the workers — to pay membership fees to their union by stop order, to let the organisers talk to the workers in hostels and the hall. When the bus fares went up, the union got the bosses to pay for part of the bus fares. When the workers said they didn't want to get their wages sent straight to their bank accounts, the union again got the employers to pay workers in cash.

"Everytime we won more rights for the workers, we won more members", said Tshidiso. "Just a few weeks ago, the workers elected shop stewards. Now that the workers and their families will go hungry, our union is much weaker. We all know that in the struggle there are ups and downs. We will now work even harder. The struggle does not end here".

Mr Manene Yoliswa, as he climbed into the bus that was taking him back to the Transkei, said: "There is no time for us to feel sorry or afraid. We must show Sasol that we are brave."

On the very day that Mr Yoliswa spoke, the *Rand Daily Mail* published the stay-away figures released by the Federated Chamber of Industries members as; Kempton Park 100%; Springs 90%; Germiston 85%; Wadeville 95%; Industria between five and 50%; Boksburg up to 98%; Denver 20%; Vanderbijl-park 90%; Benoni 50%; Benrose 60%; Elandsfontein 20%; Randfontein 9%; and Sandton 20%." These figures are higher than those of the Labour Monitoring Group quoted above. This is no doubt due to the fact that six firms refused to divulge information and that LMG had not researched in the Pretoria area.

Steve Mbatha, Assistant Secretary of Inkatha on the East Rand, spoke the language of the Sasol bosses when he said: "We feel they were victims of a situation not of their own making ... We in Inkatha believe ... the stay-away was ill-timed".⁹

Comrade O.R. Tambo, President of the African National Congress, in his message on January 8, 1985, on the occasion of the 73rd anniversary of the birth of the ANC said: "We should treat the injury done to the 6,500 Sasol workers as an injury to all workers, and to all of us".

FOSATU and all democratic unions campaigned for the reinstatement of the 6,500 Sasol workers and mobilised international working-class support for this aim.

It should be noted that the two-day stay-away was called for the Transvaal only. Social and labour analysts and journalists declared the stay-away a success, with the exception of the *Citizen* which declared it a failure because the strike did not take place in Natal, for which the paper thanked Chief Gatsha Buthelezi.

AZAPO Negativism

The black consciousness organisation AZAPO at its fifth national congress in Cape Town held on December 17, 1984, discussed a paper delivered by Rev. Joe Seoka (the present Deputy President). After abusing the organisers of the stay-away for being caught up in the "passion for self glorification", he maintained that the two-day stay-away on the Reef had not advanced the working-class struggle in South Africa. "Seven thousand workers had learnt a very bitter lesson never again to heed the calls for stay-aways, for only

distress and suffering follows from them... the boycott or stay-away was basically a weak weapon".

His views are quite contrary to those of Mr Manene Yoliswa.

After lengthy discussion and the expression of negative attitudes reminiscent of the Unity Movement's hostility to strikes, stay-at-homes and other forms of militant action, AZAPO was obliged at its Congress to give what it called 'qualified' support to legitimate weapons of protest. Saths Cooper, the outgoing Deputy President, told the Congress that "the resolution was intended to rebut the charge that Azapo rejected all boycotts... and express the organisation's support for the revolutionary black working class".

AZAPO also declared that the main enemy is capital. Some delegates protested that denunciation of apartheid alone without opposition to capital was counter-productive.¹⁰

This is an advance on the defeatist attitude adopted in the past by the Unity Movement, the National Forum and AZAPO spokesmen towards the concept of mass struggle favoured by the liberation movement as a whole and articulated in the programme of action of the United Democratic Front. However, one must note AZAPO's singling out of the 'revolutionary black working class'; thus ignoring the working class of other communities.

Let us make no mistake about the composition of the South African working class. The SA Communist Party throughout its history has emphatically applied the concept of the working class in a Marxist-Leninist way to include wage earners of all races and both sexes. We stand by this; while condemning those white workers who introduce racial chauvinism into the trade unions and working-class organisations.

With reference to Rev Joe Seoka's statement that the "stay-away has not advanced the working-class struggle in South Africa", we could do well to refer to Lenin who said:

"Every strike concentrates all the attention and all the efforts of the workers on some particular aspect of the conditions under which the working class lives. Every strike gives rise to discussions about these conditions, helps the workers to appraise them, to understand what capitalist oppression consists of in the particular case and what means can be employed to combat this oppression. Every strike enriches the experience of the entire working class. If the strike is successful, it shows them what a strong force working class unity is, and impels others to make use of their comrades' success. If it is not successful, it gives rise to discussions about the causes of the failure and to the search for better methods of struggle."¹¹

The two-day stay-away brought to the fore the conflict between elements of big business and the state. It jolted white South Africa into a realisation of

how dependent the country is on the contribution of black workers, how vulnerable commerce and industry are to the withdrawal of their labour and how deep the level of black discontent has become.

The leaders of big business expressed their wish to preserve the "free enterprise system, to ensure their economic survival and position of control over economic resources as an issue separate from white supremacy". Tony Bloom, managing director of Premier Milling, one of South Africa's major corporations, called on the government to open negotiations with the ANC. Representatives of capital called for the removal of 'influx control', the Group Areas Act and other pillars of the apartheid system.

Gavin Relly, Chairman of the Anglo American Corporation, said: "If we, and the country, are to reap the benefit of investments we have to be able to rely on the on-going use of more skilled labour without the disruptions of a migratory labour system... If we are to realise the full potential of a free enterprise society it is not enough only to be racially integrated on a work basis... Important changes to the Group Areas Act are needed if we are to be able to attract professional people of colour to manage our mining operations."

Mr Justice Jan Steyn, Chief Executive Officer of the Urban Foundation, said: "We in South Africa believe in a free enterprise economic system: Blacks currently perceive capitalism to be the other side of racism..." He said it was necessary to destroy "the myth that salvation lies on the road to naive socialism."

Regional congresses of the Progressive Federal party have called for an end to military conscription and for the party to open its membership to members of all races, defying the Political Interference Act which prohibits people of different racial classifications from belonging to the same political party.

The leader of the ultra-right Conservative Party, Dr Andries Treurnicht, told a political rally on November 27 that the government is ignoring its own warnings of a few years ago that racial integration would lead to civil war.

Within the ruling party itself there are growing differences as to what form a 'solution' to the present crisis should take. Emerging from these conflicts is a new movement among verligte (enlightened) Afrikaner intellectuals within the Party who demand that changes be made now — not only in style but also in structure.

The debate goes on. The stay-away has activated political discussion among people of all races, nationalities and classes.

The main component of the stay-away

The Transvaal Stay-away Committee was formed after the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) called a meeting of black organisations to discuss the educational, civic and labour 'crisis' confronting blacks.

Trade union delegations were present. The Committee consisted of Thami Mali, Themba Ndotane of the Municipal and General Workers' Union, Moses Mayegiso, Transvaal Secretary of MAWU, and Mr Ephraim 'Oupa' of the Soweto Youth Congress. The two trade union leaders on the Committee succeeded in mobilising the unions' support for the stay-away.

The Unions which supported the stayaway included: the Federation of South African Trade Unions, with nine affiliates and a membership of nearly 110,000; the Council of Unions of SA, with 12 affiliates and a membership of more than 140,500; the Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union of SA, with a membership of between 100,00 and 130,000.¹²

Professor Edward Webster of the Witwatersrand University had this to say: "The two-day stay-away strike on Monday and Tuesday was the most successful stay-away strike in the 35 years that it has been used as political weapon... There is a strong correlation between the degree of organised labour in an area and the success of the stay-away."¹³

For some years radicals at home and in exile have debated what role the African trade unions can play in the national liberation struggle. Some radicals have argued that the changes brought about by the Labour Relations Act 57 of 1981 do not represent any forward movement, but are cosmetic and intended to tame the African unions. Most progressives, however, have argued that the Act was a blow against racialism, a triumph for militant working-class action and the international support it received, and an advance in the position of the dispossessed working class.

There is no doubt the two-day stay-away provided a striking vindication of the latter view. However, it also exposed problems that must be dealt with in the future.

*The scabbing of the commuters who went to work in Pretoria and Brits. We have to get to the workers in the bantustans and explain tirelessly that our struggle is their struggle, and that workers' solidarity is essential for victory. We succeeded with the migrant workers; we must now win over the commuters.

*The non-participation of the African miners, largely due to their isolation in the compounds. It is time for the trade union movement to campaign for the abolition of these antiquated and dehumanising institutions and the labour system they represent.

*The scabbing activities of Inkatha with Chief Buthelezi at its head. It is now clear that Buthelezi supports the regime on the key issues of armed struggle, disinvestment, strikes and boycotts. We must explain to the people that under his leadership Inkatha is an obstacle to their liberation. Members

of Inkatha can and must be mobilised to work and fight side by side with their brothers and sisters in the democratic trade unions, youth, women's and all organisations of our movement.

*The role played by unions affiliated to TUCSA in this stay-away must be examined.

In the words of Thami Mali, the stay-away has shown "that we have power in our hands. It showed that we can bring the machinery of this country to a standstill."¹⁴

This has been proved in the Transvaal. Our country is big. Now we have to organise the workers in all centres to have "power in their hands" at the same time.

References:

1. This factory fired nearly 400 workers in September. The workers got their jobs back just before the stay-away began.
2. *Financial Mail* November 16, 1984, page 56.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Learn and Teach*, November 6, 1984.
5. *Financial Mail*, November 16, 1984.
6. *Cape Times*, Nov 9, 1984.
7. *Learn and Teach*, Nov 6, 1984.
8. *Rand Daily Mail*, 9/11/84.
9. *Cape Times*, 18/12/84.
10. *Cape Times*, 19/12/84.
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AFRICA NOTES AND COMMENT

By Macandrew

ETHIOPIA: Socialist and Capitalist Aid

One of the greatest scandals of the Ethiopian famine has been the way Western politicians and media have attempted to blame and punish Ethiopia because of the alleged sins of its government — always described as "Marxist" and "Soviet-backed". The fact that famine has gripped many countries in Africa, both capitalist and non-capitalist, including our own South Africa, where the maize crop has been a disastrous failure, is hardly ever mentioned. Ethiopia has been singled out for attention — possibly because it is one of the few countries in Africa which has attempted to cope with the drought in an organised way. It is acknowledged that many western countries have been slow to come to the aid of the suffering Ethiopian people because they are reluctant to do anything to help the economy of a socialist-oriented country survive the present crisis. Remembering that the regime of the late emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown because he had failed to do anything to limit the effects of the great famine of 1974, the enemies of socialist Ethiopia have been hoping that popular discontent arising from the present famine will similarly lead to the destruction of the government of Mengistu Haile Mariam.

In October 1984 the British academic Charles Elliot, former director of the charity Christian Aid, accused both Britain and the United States of deliberately withholding food aid from Ethiopia in the hope that their action might contribute to the destabilisation of the Mengistu government. In Elliot's own words:

"Their long hostility to the regime caused them to refuse to release adequate funds for food".

Perhaps this is also the explanation why much of the aid promised so freely by western leaders in the last quarter of 1984 failed to arrive at its destination, or was sent instead to anti-Mengistu secessionist groups in neighbouring countries.

Mengistu Replies

Speaking at a press conference in Addis Ababa last November, President Mengistu attacked western journalists and politicians for spreading "false and baseless reports" that the Ethiopian government had been more concerned with spending money on celebrations accompanying the foundation congress of the Ethiopian Workers' Party than with relieving the famine. In particular, he attacked those who tried to make out that the western countries had supplied far more aid than the Soviet Union, which was supposed to be Ethiopia's "best friend".

While expressing gratitude for aid coming to Ethiopia from all quarters, President Mengistu said:

"It is very difficult to compare assistance given to socialist Ethiopia by the socialist camp, and the USSR in particular, with the food aid given to us at present by the USA and some Western countries. To show that the assistance to revolutionary Ethiopia by the USSR cannot be compared to a limited amount of food, one just has to see — even during the celebration of the 10th anniversary of our revolution — the parade reflecting Ethiopia's growth in a short time which it had not seen in the previous 40 years, the building of various development institutions and industries, and the question of how big a share the USSR and other socialist countries made in achieving this".

President Mengistu said that in addition to aid by way of food supplies, the Soviet Union had contributed the means of delivery.

"It is the helicopters and aeroplanes of the USSR that are now transporting three-quarters of the relief aid to various parts of the country. As you know, the Arab world refused us fuel, and the fuel which we are using to activate our economy and deal with the current dangerous situation comes from the USSR".

President Mengistu said some western countries were hoping to promote their own political aims through their humanitarian aid to Ethiopia. They were trying to undermine the revolutionary process now under way in the country by forcing the government to negotiate with the terrorists and secessionists in the northern regions where the famine was most severe, alleging that the Ethiopian government was keeping back food from these areas. President Mengistu replied:

"It is true, it is not something which we deny, there are some terrorists in some parts and some corners of our country. After moving around in some of the forests and mountains, they live by stealing from the peasants, who are suffering a lot. There are also certain mercenaries who oppose the economic system pursued by Ethiopia. We do not deny this.

"But the majority of such terrorist mercenaries and mafias are not in Ethiopia. There are terrorists and mafias in every European country, who kill leaders in broad daylight and destroy property. So what is just? That these terrorists and anti-people bodies be brought to justice or that they be given a political forum in the

name of humanitarian aid? Is this a humanitarian view? Is it not interfering in the internal affairs and violating the sovereignty and unity of a country?"

President Mengistu said:

"We have heard of efforts made in other parts of Africa to use the temporary natural and man-made problems and weaknesses of some countries to blind them to apartheid, the most revolting system of our time, and to help it. Now we see some quarters, who have a similar objective and desire, trying — individually or as a team — to use the current drought in Ethiopia. This is something which cannot be tried in Ethiopia. It cannot be contemplated, let alone carried out. We will never negotiate with terrorists, let alone now. Even at a time when the (Italian) fascists were raining poison, dropping chemical bombs, our people never negotiated with fire."

The world was shocked into a realisation of the gravity of the famine in Ethiopia as a result of the screening on television last November of scenes of suffering and death amongst the starving population in the worst affected regions. The impression was created that until that moment the Ethiopian government itself had done little or nothing to cope with the famine. In fact, the Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission established by the Ethiopian government in March, 1984, reported that over 5 million people were facing a food shortage in 13 administrative regions and appealed for urgent international aid. There was very little response to this appeal until the TV pictures were shown. Who, it may be asked, authorised the visit of the TV crews to the famine area? How is it that the foreign relief agencies operating in Ethiopia have all praised the work of Ethiopian government agencies in distributing famine relief?

Imperialism and Neo-colonialism

But above all it should be realised that the recurring famine and deepening poverty of African and other third world countries is not merely an act of God, but largely a consequence of centuries of plunder and exploitation of the human and natural resources of the third world by imperialism and neo-colonialism. The United Nations Report on Children published in 1961 stated:

"It is a tragic fact that at the beginning of the Second United Nations Development Decade there are more sick, under-nourished and uneducated children in the world than there were ten years ago.

"Unless the international community is prepared to give vastly greater support, the next ten years will find the number of neglected children increased by millions — despite all the efforts of developing countries including some to curb population growth."

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