

# Smash Apartheid! No to 'Power Sharing!'

The current round of negotiations between the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African government marks a new phase in the decades-long struggle against the hated system of apartheid, one of the vilest manifestations of capitalism on the planet. The white-supremacist regime's traditional claim that allowing civil rights for the black majority would quickly turn South Africa into a Soviet satellite is no longer taken seriously by anyone but the most paranoid, far-right elements in the Afrikaner laager. The current infatuation with "free market" economics in the former Soviet bloc has encouraged the ANC leadership openly to advocate a capitalist future for South Africa. Once seemingly irreconcilable foes, the ANC and the apartheid rulers are seriously exploring the possibility of a deal. Although formidable obstacles remain, some kind of settlement cannot be ruled out.

The replacement of racist hard-liner P.W. Botha by the more pragmatic F.W. de Klerk as head of the South African government was supposed to signal a new reform tack by the apartheid state. War-torn Namibia has finally been permitted its independence. Parts of the vast web of apartheid legislation have been repealed, particularly laws that were already unenforceable, like the pass system. Mandela and Sisulu have been released, along with other prominent ANC figures. Anti-apartheid organizations, such as the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP), have been officially unbanned. The four-year old state of emergency, which gave the police virtually unlimited powers, has been lifted in most parts of the country.

The South African government has not been suddenly seized with an attack of conscience. In the best tradition of bourgeois reform, it is acting to shore up the long-term security of the white ruling class. Some of the changes also represent a belated recognition of reality. Many blacks in the homelands were so desperate that they ignored the pass laws and worked illegally, even if it meant being caught and jailed for several months. However, the fundamental structure of South African society has yet to be changed. Savage political repression remains commonplace, and right-wing vigilantes spread terror with police approval. Large numbers of anti-apartheid prisoners are still in jail. ANC members have not been granted immunity from prosecution. Even as the negotiations were about to begin, a new SACP "conspiracy" to overthrow the government was discovered by the police, resulting in more detentions. Black workers still receive a small fraction of the wages of whites, and capitalists continue to reap huge profits from superexploitation. A thin layer of affluent black professionals and businesspeople has emerged, but the vast majority of blacks still live in poverty, while whites enjoy opulent lifestyles. Apartheid remains a grim real-

ity.

De Klerk's reform policy is based on a recognition that things cannot go on in the old way. This is partly a result of pressure from South Africa's imperialist allies, but chiefly because of the inability of the state to control the militant black working class with traditional methods. Under immense popular pressure, the more farsighted elements among the South African bourgeoisie (traditionally the English-speaking section, but now also embracing some of the Afrikaners) have come increasingly to understand that there is a contradiction between the strictures of apartheid and their aspirations to turn South Africa into a genuine imperialist colossus. South Africa cannot develop its industrial and manufacturing capacity without transforming its indigent, migratory black workforce into a stable labor pool. Ensuring a reliable, skilled workforce not only requires investments in social infrastructure (healthcare, education, housing, etc.), it also means that the black population cannot be totally excluded from political life.

The prospect of granting even limited rights to blacks has produced a white backlash, spearheaded by Eugene Terreblanche and his fascistic Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB). These ultra-racists have substantial support in the state security apparatus, and particularly among the Afrikaner population outside the big cities. They threaten to meet any "negotiated settlement" with a fanatical white-supremacist insurgency.

The commencement of negotiations between the government and the ANC coincided with an upsurge in murderous attacks on ANC supporters in the townships around Johannesburg by the tribalist vigilantes of Gatscha Buthelezi's Inkatha, abetted by the state security apparatus. Whether these attacks originated from the government, or were instigated by Buthelezi in order to secure a seat at the negotiating table, they redounded to the benefit of the regime. The Inkatha attacks inflamed hostilities within the black population, damaged the ANC's credibility and increased pressure on Mandela for more concessions at the bargaining table. What's more, de Klerk has used the attacks as an excuse to impose "Operation Iron Fist," a measure ostensibly designed to put an end to the violence, but which in reality reintroduces the state of emergency lifted for most of the country in June.

Going into the discussions with the ANC, de Klerk publicly remarked that he has no intention of negotiating himself out of power. But the ANC is not going to ask him to. At this point it is difficult to predict what an eventual deal between de Klerk and the ANC might look like. Any settlement that includes some form of "group rights" (the euphemism for maintaining privileged status for whites) would be a mere modification of apartheid. Even if the bizarre legal superstructure of white

supremacy were modified, the substance of racial oppression, which is an organic component of South African capitalism, would remain.

Full-fledged bourgeois democracy is not a viable option for South Africa's capitalist rulers. The masses of the oppressed are too numerous, too impoverished and too volatile to be contained by the parliamentary politics and electoral machines used to control the working classes in the advanced capitalist world. A social revolution, which will expropriate the capitalist class and put the workers in power, is necessary for the complete and genuine resolution of the tasks traditionally associated with the democratic (or bourgeois) revolution. This is the Trotskyist perspective of permanent revolution.

The South African proletariat, which comprises an absolute majority of the black population, is fully equal to this historic task. Over the past ten years, it has demonstrated a militancy and combativity unequalled by any other working class in the world. South African workers have organized mighty unions and conducted furious class battles under the whips and bullets of the racist gangster-police. With only a militant gut-level grasp of class politics, they continue to flaunt the hammer and sickle emblem in defiance of their oppressors, even when Stalinist parties the world over have laid it down. Yet without a leadership firmly based on the program of permanent revolution, the struggle of the black South African masses for genuine equality cannot be fought to a successful conclusion. Such leadership will never be provided by the organization which now claims to speak in the name of the black majority--the African National Congress.

No one familiar with South Africa's recent history can fail to be impressed by the courage of Nelson Mandela, or the heroism of the thousands of rank-and-file ANC militants who have faced prison, torture and death. But dedication and heroism alone are not sufficient. Despite the ANC's widespread popularity with the Western left, and the support lavished upon it by organizations that call themselves Trotskyist, the fact remains that its program is purely bourgeois-democratic. While revolutionaries must defend the ANC against government persecution, spreading the illusion that democracy is classless and can be achieved without social revolution means calling on the South African proletariat to relinquish its struggle for social liberation. The ANC therefore constitutes an obstacle to the revolutionary transformation that can alone emancipate the non-white population from the shackles of racial oppression and capitalist wage slavery.

Any organization that stands as an obstacle to revolution inevitably proposes itself to the ruling class as a political and ideological prop to the existing social order. It remains to be seen whether the ANC can play this role without major defections from its ranks, or whether the apartheid state is flexible enough to permit the ANC to act as its "democratic" front. But the negotiations now underway in South Africa have about them the odor of impending betrayal. To anyone familiar with the ANC's real history and ideology, as opposed to the heroic

myths that proliferate in the left-liberal swamp, such an outcome will be no surprise.

### The Class Character of the ANC

Although Stalinist dissimulation and right-wing hysteria have combined to obscure the real agenda of the ANC, its pro-capitalist orientation has been well documented throughout the organization's 80-year history. The ANC has never claimed to be a working-class revolutionary organization and, despite the substantial role of ostensible communists in the ANC, it has never sought to end capitalist exploitation in South Africa. For three decades after its founding in 1912 by a small group of Western-educated blacks, the ANC could only be characterized as a petty-bourgeois civil rights organization—and a rather tame one at that. Its constitution was, in the words of one historian, "in the spirit of the black American educator Booker T. Washington" (Leonard Thompson, *A History of South Africa*).

In its early years the ANC leadership advocated a gradual extension of civil rights to Africans, on the model of the piecemeal enfranchisement of different classes in England. The first beneficiaries of this program were to be the educated black petty bourgeoisie; only later were the black masses to be included. Teaching "loyalty to all lawfully constituted authorities," the ANC even opposed Gandhi's tactics of civil disobedience. Instead, they submitted polite petitions, lobbied for white support, and participated in the Natives Representative Council, a sham institution of pre-apartheid segregation.

The ANC was quite conscious of its class role. In 1918, for instance, ANC leader and founding member Sol Plaatje was contacted by the De Beers Diamond Company for assistance in dissuading Africans from joining whites in strike action. "I had to attend the Native Congress at Bloemfontein to prevent the spread among our people of the Johannesburg Socialist propaganda," he wrote of the incident (quoted in Baruch Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash*).

In 1943 the ANC Youth League (ANCYL) was launched under the leadership of Anton Lembede. From the outset, the Youth League cadres, including Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu, took a more aggressive approach than their seniors. Their program was African nationalism. While explicitly rejecting communism, the ANCYL advocated Christian morality, African unity, African leadership, African culture, African business, and, for good measure, "African socialism." This particular kind of "socialism" was not at all incompatible with African capitalism, as a 1944 editorial in the ANCYL journal explained: "let the average African realize that the businessman in his own community is his surest friend and champion of his liberation" (*Ibid.*)

During World War II and the immediate postwar period, the demand for industrial labor led to the rapid expansion of the urban black working class. New unions were formed, and a series of strikes and boycotts broke out. The growing power and assertiveness of the black working class provided the main impetus for the formal imposition of apartheid in 1948. Shortly afterward, Man-

dela, Tambo and Sisulu attained leading positions in the ANC, and their new nationalist orientation was adopted by the organization. The ANC's new program of action signaled a turn towards civil disobedience and the boycott of apartheid institutions. This gained the ANC substantial support among black workers.

The softening of the ANC's anti-communism in this period was more a tactical than a programmatic change. While maintaining their own organizational profile, the Stalinists supplied many of the ANC's key personnel, and embraced the ANC's politics. As a result, the ANC leadership, and Mandela in particular, value the contributions of the SACP, and have rebuffed all government attempts to drive a wedge into the alliance. Yet the ANC/SACP relationship is not evidence of a socialist orientation by the ANC, as both professional red-baiters and apologists contend, but rather of the lack of one by the SACP.

While prepared to accept any "socialists" willing to adhere to its program, the ANC has always been hostile to those who would raise independent working-class politics. The only real change from its earlier blatant anti-communism is that the ANC now uses Stalinist terminology and tactics against those "ultra-lefts" who advocate socialism in South Africa.

### **The Freedom Charter: Petty-Bourgeois Utopianism**

The 1955 Freedom Charter, still the ANC's main programmatic document, is garnished with a few vague socialist phrases; but as the ANC inches towards an accommodation with de Klerk, it is playing down even the mild social demands of the charter. Crafted in true popular-frontist tradition to be all things to all people, the Freedom Charter has been interpreted by some wishful leftists as a socialist document; but in general even its supporters concede (or proudly affirm) the contrary. Mandela made this clear in 1956:

"it is by no means a blueprint for a socialist state but a programme for the unification of various classes and groupings amongst the people on a democratic basis..."

"For the first time in the history of this country the non-European bourgeoisie will have the opportunity to own in their own name and right mines and factories, and trade and private enterprise will boom and flourish as never before."

—quoted in Alex Callinicos, "Marxism and Revolution in South Africa," *International Socialism* No. 31

Thirty-one years later, the ANC's official journal affirmed:

"the Freedom Charter is not a socialist document but a national democratic one..."

"Acknowledging that it is not a socialist document, and was never intended to be, is not a point of criticism or a matter for regret.

"the African National Congress was never a 'political organisation of the working people;' it was, is and has to be neither more nor less than the linchpin of the national liberation struggle."

—*Sechaba*, May 1987

Ruthless repression by the apartheid government, which culminated in the Sharpeville massacre and the

banning of the ANC in 1960, pushed the organization into a turn toward "armed struggle." It was a grossly unequal struggle, and within a few years the ANC underground was crushed. Mandela, who was jailed for 27 years for his role in the campaign, observed at the time that the ANC's military tactics were calculated primarily to influence public opinion. While the military campaign kept the ANC in the news, the crushing state repression effectively eclipsed the organization both militarily and politically for over a decade.

After the setbacks of the early 1960s, the next resurgence of anti-apartheid struggle took the form of a wave of working-class strike actions a decade later. These struggles arose quite independently of the ANC, which was pursuing a low-intensity guerrilla campaign from bases in the frontline states. While the ANC's guerrilla activities may have had a certain symbolic value, they never posed a serious threat to the South African regime. ANC Secretary-General Alfred Nzo remarked in February 1990 that: "we must admit that we do not have the capacity within our country to intensify the (armed) struggle in any meaningful way," (*San Francisco Examiner*, 2 February 1990).

### **UDF Violence in the Anti-Apartheid Movement**

The growth of the independent black trade unions and the left wing of the black consciousness movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s overshadowed the ANC's influence within South Africa. The ANC, however, with a substantial number of new recruits after the Soweto rising in 1976, began to regain its predominance with the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983. The UDF brought church, community, student and youth groups together with black business organizations under a single umbrella organization loyal to the Freedom Charter. It only excluded the white bosses' organizations and the collaborationist homeland leaders. The UDF addressed the felt need for some mass organization to coordinate the struggle against the state on a national level and, in the absence of an effective national political organization to its left, gradually harnessed the anti-apartheid movement to the ANC's program.

The ANC and its supporters had long claimed a political monopoly on the anti-apartheid movement. As the UDF moved toward hegemony, this claim began to be enforced physically. Ultimately, not only undemocratic tactics but many gruesome acts of violence were employed against the UDF's left-wing critics, indiscriminately designated as "workerists," and their families. Supporters of the Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO), the major "black consciousness" organization, which frequently criticized the UDF for being too conciliatory to the white rulers, were repeatedly attacked. There were also instances of counterattacks on UDF members. While the sequence of events is disputed, the preponderance of evidence points to UDF supporters as the initiators. There is no doubt that critics of the UDF were on the receiving end of most of the violence.

It is hard to tell what level of the UDF/ANC organized this internecine carnage. There is no reason to doubt

Mandela's personal sincerity in deploring some of the worst excesses. ANC leaders of his generation were known for their advocacy of restraint in the use of violence. But the ANC leadership's unmitigated hostility to left-wing critics created a climate in which the murder of members of other anti-apartheid organizations became acceptable.

The May 1987 issue of *Sechaba*, the ANC's official journal, contained the following:

"We are faced again and again with the dead weight of 'workerism' and the ultra-left. Whatever the subtle distinctions between their various factions, so far as South Africa is concerned, they are united only in their attacks on the Freedom Charter and the ANC and those who stand with it, in the hollow booming of their empty slogans, and in their parasitism."

In case anyone missed the point, the article stated explicitly: "so far as those who attack us with the arguments discussed above are concerned, they are not even traitors; we never trusted them. They are part of the enemy." By this definition, anyone who criticizes the ANC or the Freedom Charter (including militants who spent years in jail for anti-apartheid activities) is automatically "part of the enemy." In the present circumstances this amounts to calling for their execution.

The ANC's ferocious hostility, both physical and rhetorical, toward its "workerist" critics echoes the anti-Trotskyist campaign of the Stalin apparatus in the 1930s. Once a political organization begins to employ violence as a substitute for political debate in its struggle for mass influence, it is only a matter of time before such techniques are used against internal dissidents as well. Former members of Umkhonto We Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), the ANC's military arm, have alleged just that. In the 1980s, hundreds of ANC members in Angola were reportedly detained and tortured for criticizing the leadership, and many were killed. Conditions at one detention camp were reportedly so horrible that the mere threat of re-detention drove some former prisoners to suicide (*Sunday Correspondent*, London, 8 April 1990). Nelson Mandela has publicly acknowledged and condemned ANC torture of its own members (*San Francisco Examiner*, 15 April 1990). But ANC dissidents have alleged that the abuse goes on (*New York Times*, 25 April 1990).

### ANC's Struggle for Hegemony in the Unions

The ANC/UDF/SACP's Stalinist tactics also extended to the trade-union movement. The independent black unions, which emerged in the early 1980s as the most powerful force in South Africa opposing apartheid were, on the whole, significantly to the left of the ANC. ANC supporters initially denounced the independent unions for registering legally with the state, but this criticism was soon refuted by the unions' success in defending the workers and extracting concessions from the state. The growth of these mass working-class organizations, and particularly the existence within them of explicitly pro-socialist tendencies, challenged the ANC's claim to be the sole authentic representative of the anti-apartheid movement, and at least implicitly challenged its whole popular-frontist strategic frame-work.

The UDF attempted to neutralize the trade-union left by simultaneously creating a mass popular-frontist alternative, and struggling to gain control of the unions from within. Factions were organized within the unions to advocate exclusive political affiliation with the UDF. They were successful at first in a few of the weaker unions, but the powerful industrial unions maintained their tradition of political independence. It soon became apparent, however, that when the "UDF only" factions could not win a majority, they were prepared to split the unions. Through a series of splits, again primarily in weaker unions, the UDF was able to expand its original toehold. The fear of splits was then used, often in combination with more direct forms of intimidation, to extend the UDF's grip.

In late 1985 the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) was launched through a merger of the major independent and pro-UDF unions. By this time the UDF was clearly gaining the upper hand, even though it had still not been endorsed by the core industrial unions. The trade-union left was divided into two wings, one sympathetic to the left wing of the black consciousness movement, and the other essentially syndicalist. The major unions sympathetic to the black consciousness movement did not join COSATU, and later formed a separate, smaller organization, the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU). The syndicalist current in COSATU lacked both a clearly counterposed political program and any internal organizational structure. While critical of the UDF's multi-class strategy, the left unionists tended to value unity, and were therefore inclined to be conciliatory. The better financed and better organized UDF faction won a disproportionate share of the positions in the COSATU leadership.

The pro-UDF factions next launched a campaign in each union to endorse the Freedom Charter. In this venture they employed intimidation, slander, vote-rigging and a variety of other bureaucratic maneuvers. The February 1988 issue of *Azania Worker* reported that before a vote on the Freedom Charter in the National Union of Mineworkers, references were made to necklacing Charter opponents. In the Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union (CCAWUSA), the "Charterist" minority led a split rather than accept majority rule, whereupon the COSATU leadership recognized the minority and refused to recognize the majority. When another vote was conducted after the majority had been vindicated in an out-of-court settlement, the minority resorted to stacking branch meetings with members from other localities, bringing in non-union members to vote and ballot stuffing (*Azania Frontline*, April/May 1988).

### The Disintegration of the Trade-Union Left

At COSATU's second convention in July 1987, the left completely collapsed. The CCAWUSA majority had not been recognized by COSATU, and so its delegates were excluded from the convention. The National Union of Metalworkers, the second largest union in COSATU, sponsored a contradictory compromise resolution that accepted the Freedom Charter as a minimum program,

but also talked about the necessity for working-class leadership to go forward to socialism. But the motion died for lack of a second. The other unions which had come out against adopting the Freedom Charter did not put forward any motions of their own.

Many unionists recoiled from the class collaborationism of the UDF, and many more were appalled by the crude techniques by which the UDF/ANC supporters attempted to gain control. Although it had strong support at the base, the syndicalist left was unable to defeat the ANC supporters politically because it never coalesced as a disciplined political formation with a coherent alternative program.

At the convention, the COSATU leadership had lined up numerous speakers from the UDF, and had messages read from the ANC and SACTU (an SACP-dominated exile trade-union front), harping on the supposed danger of endorsing socialism as an objective of the union. Advocates of an as yet unwritten “workers’ charter,” the syndicalists’ projected alternative to the Freedom Charter, were taunted and derided. All this took place while worker delegates on the floor held aloft pro-socialist banners. According to an eyewitness:

“after these messages and speeches against socialism the workers got up on their feet to chant ‘Forward to Socialism’ and other songs in praise of socialism! Clearly, some people are having problems explaining to workers that they must not now support socialism.”

—*Azania Worker*, February 1988

When it all was over, the Freedom Charter was adopted, and COSATU was formally aligned with the UDF. The trade unions, the most formidable obstacle to ANC hegemony in the anti-apartheid movement, had, at least for the moment, been effectively brought to heel.

Not long after this victory, UDF supporters dropped their insistence on allegiance to the Freedom Charter. The real issue, the authority of the ANC, had been settled, and the UDF could afford to tone down its heavy-handed tactics against the left. This new “glasnost” posture has helped the UDF’s successor, the Mass Democratic Movement, and the pro-ANC COSATU leadership to deflect criticism for their earlier behavior. Meanwhile the Stalinists of the SACP and SACTU had the audacity to circulate their own reformist drafts of a “workers charter” in COSATU.

The trade-union left was composed of outstanding union militants who had the capacity to tough it out with the bosses on the shop floor. But the leadership had little access to the history of the international revolutionary movement and no connection to an organization that embodied it. They were thus unable to make an adequate bridge to larger social struggles. As the limitations of undifferentiated syndicalism became clear, many of the shop-floor activists who had previously been critical of the Stalinists’ reformist program, ended up capitulating to the ANC/SACP for want of an alternative.

### The Perestroika Connection

The SACP/ANC’s reformism is particularly grotesque when applied to South Africa, a regional subimperialist power with a developed industrial infrastructure. In South Africa the black working class comprises an

absolute majority of the population and has a relatively high level of class consciousness. Yet the Stalinists insist that a struggle for proletarian power is not on the agenda.

The ANC’s attempt to reach an accommodation with the apartheid rulers has been actively encouraged by the USSR, the ANC/UDF’s main international backer. Even before the Kremlin began to openly advocate a wholesale return to market economics, the Soviet bureaucracy was pressuring the ANC to be more conciliatory to the apartheid regime. Gleb Starushenko, a leading Soviet authority on South Africa, argued in 1987 for “group rights” for whites, a formula for the continuation of apartheid, which the ANC has so far rejected (*Zimbabwean Herald*, 27 July 1987, quoted in *Azania Frontline*, December 1987). Victor Goncharov, another Soviet expert, declared that socialism could not be achieved in South Africa for a century.

The uncertainty of future Soviet aid and the disappearance of the ANC’s support network in Eastern Europe have made it more dependent than ever on good relations with imperialism. As it gained international respectability, the ANC has been distancing itself from the ambiguous “socialist” phrases of the Freedom Charter, and asserting its commitment to private property. The economic program contained in the ANC’s 1988 document “Constitutional Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa” is pure and simple capitalism.

The ANC’s message has not fallen on deaf ears. Shell Oil’s South African branch greeted Nelson Mandela’s release from prison with an ad in the *Weekly Mail*, which proclaimed: “Welcome Back, Nelson Mandela! The stars will shine brighter tonight. Tomorrow, a brilliant future beckons” (*New York Times*, 20 February 1990). Mandela commands the respect of all anti-racist militants for his steadfast defiance of his apartheid jailers for 27 years. His release was a victory for all those exploited and oppressed by the apartheid regime. Nonetheless, Marxists cannot let themselves be blinded to the fact that Shell had good reason to celebrate his release.

Various bourgeois governments are now discussing direct aid to the ANC. During Mandela’s summer 1990 world tour, plans were laid for the formation of an international investment bank for South Africa along the lines of the World Bank, contingent on a political settlement. The idea was first suggested by the president of the Rockefeller Foundation, Peter Goldmark, at a meeting between Mandela and American business executives in New York. The working group set up to promote the project includes Goldmark and Thomas Nkobi, the ANC treasurer, and Thabo Mbeki, foreign secretary of the ANC (*New York Times*, 5 July 1990).

The ANC has lately taken great pains to assure the international bourgeoisie that black majority rule will not mean wholesale nationalization of industry. The Freedom Charter states:

“The national wealth of our country, the heritage of all South Africans, shall be restored to the people;

“The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole;

“All other industries and trade shall be controlled to assist the well-being of the people.”

Fearful that even the above standard third-world nationalist language may cause a grimace or two in the boardrooms of the IMF, the ANC leadership has issued a new statement on economic policy, which says: "The A.N.C.'s basic perspective is that of a mixed economy in which all sectors contribute towards defining and achieving broad national goals and objectives for the benefit of all," (*New York Times*, 4 October 1990).

### **Courting the Chiefs**

Besides reaching out to the imperialist bankers, the ANC is also seeking to embrace South African tribal chiefs and homeland leaders, some of the most reactionary elements in black South Africa. Earlier in the ANC's history, all chiefs were automatically enrolled as honorary vice chairmen of the ANC, and given veto power over ANC policy. Subsequently, the chiefs, who were entirely dependent on the apartheid regime, severed all connection to the anti-apartheid movement.

During its guerrilla period, the ANC denounced the tribal chiefs and homeland leaders as stooges for the regime and called for "Death to collaborators!" However, this did not prevent the UDF from establishing the Congress of Traditional Leaders (COTRALESA) in 1987. By 1989, COTRALESA claimed to represent a majority of the chiefs (*African Communist*, 2nd quarter 1990).

Under the blows of vigilante terror, the ANC and Mandela are again seeking a reconciliation with Gatsha Buthelezi and his murderous Inkatha organization. The ANC has recently been referring to General Bantu Holomisa, who has run the Transkei bantustan since taking power in a military coup in 1987 with the aid of South African military intelligence, as a "comrade." Holomisa, the first black graduate of the staff and management course at South Africa's army college, refuses to hold elections and has repeatedly ordered attacks on striking workers (*Inqaba ya Basebenzi*, January 1990). "Comrade" Holomisa also considers it unwise to unban the ANC in the Transkei just yet on the grounds that "irresponsible elements" might take advantage of any political openings to challenge his rule.

Following the ANC, the SACP has also recently embraced the "patriotic" chiefs. A recent article in the *African Communist* (Second Quarter 1990) suggested that the SACP's previous assertions that chieftainship was outdated and fundamentally undemocratic "could cause a lot of political problems for us." Using the time-honored technique of reformist sellouts, the SACP leadership blames its capitulation on the backwardness of the masses: "one must not confuse one's advanced political consciousness with that of the people," for "not everybody will agree that [chieftainship] must wither away." Instead of trying to organize the masses for struggle against this reactionary prop of apartheid rule, the Stalinists propose that, "A lot of political work will have to be done to raise the consciousness of both the chiefs and the people as a whole on whatever formula of coexistence we find" (*Ibid.*)

### **The ANC's Prospects for the Future**

The ANC's program of reconciliation with the white rulers in an egalitarian capitalist society is simply uto-

pian. The most it can produce is a deal in which apartheid de jure is replaced by apartheid de facto, an arrangement whose main black beneficiaries would be the thin petty-bourgeois layer. For the ANC to realize its aspirations of sharing power, it must become a bulwark of South African capitalism, and help administer the state that it once labeled fascist. Already it is calling on the apartheid state to take action against right-wing extremists. It is also raising the question of the integration of Umkhonto We Sizwe, the military arm of the ANC, into the South African Defense Force.

The entry of the ANC into a white-controlled government would certainly generate an enormous, but short-lived, outpouring of popular good will. The intense social contradictions of South African capitalism and the complex system of racial oppression to which it is inextricably welded will continue to generate massive unrest, whether or not de Klerk et al. end up sharing power with the ANC. And once in office, the ANC would be forced to assume responsibility for acts of state repression against its base.

Serious militants must start with a realistic assessment of the class character of political movements. It is no service to the working class to endorse misleadership, however personally heroic and steadfast its cadres may be. Those leftists who argue that the ANC's recent concessions to the right are merely tactical are engaging in wishful thinking. It is the ANC's occasional verbal radicalism that is merely tactical. The interests of the working class must be clearly articulated and counterposed to the class-collaborationist "national liberation" politics of the ANC.

### **The Struggle Against Apartheid: A Class Question**

For left-liberals and their "socialist" hangers-on, talk about "solidarity" with the struggle in South Africa means identifying with the ANC leadership and endorsing its politics. At home this means seeking to pressure the "democratic" imperialists to compel Pretoria to reform and share power with the ANC. But the imperialists can never be forced to act for the liberation of the oppressed in South Africa or anywhere else.

The attachment of so many black workers in South Africa to the great egalitarian ideals of socialism reflects their understanding that their interests are separate from, and counterposed to, the owners of the factories and mines. The workers who have been exploited and oppressed under apartheid tend to be suspicious of the fuzzy utopian visions of the petty-bourgeois ideologues of the ANC.

The struggle to smash apartheid cannot be separated from the struggle for a black-centered workers government, the only way in which a non-racialist and truly egalitarian society can be created. This is first and foremost a struggle of the black working class in South Africa, but it is a struggle which must be open to all, including those whites who are prepared to throw in their lot with the black masses.

Class-conscious workers outside South Africa can play an important role in supporting the fight against

apartheid through class-struggle actions in solidarity with the black masses of the apartheid state. A good example of such an action was the eleven-day political strike against South African cargo initiated by a Bolshevik Tendency supporter in the longshoremen's union in San Francisco in 1984 (see: *Bulletin of the External Tendency of the iSt*, May 1985).

### **Break with the ANC—For a Trotskyist Party in South Africa!**

Putting an end to the misery and hopelessness that grips sub-Saharan Africa will ultimately require the creation of a federation of workers states in the region, linked to socialist regimes in the imperialist heartlands. But the basis for workers power exists today in South Africa. It is a country with a modern industrial infrastructure and a powerful working class which has the numbers, social weight and self-confidence to act in its own historic interests. What is required is a leadership with the program and the political will to attack the system of racial oppression at its roots--private ownership of the means of production.

An organization rooted in the black proletariat, with the courage to fight for a program of revolutionary opposition to the class-collaborationism of the ANC, could grow explosively at the present juncture. With every step toward reconciliation with the apartheid re-

gime, the ANC leadership finds it harder to keep control of the militants who make up its youthful base. The job of revolutionaries in the present circumstances is to create a programmatically-based nucleus around which subjectively revolutionary elements can regroup.

A socialist revolution in South Africa can only be achieved by connecting the struggle for democratic demands with the necessity of the expropriation of the capitalists. The fight for "one person, one vote" from a common voter roll, and the struggle against all manifestations of the racist apartheid system are essential for uniting the broadest layers of the oppressed masses behind the proletarian vanguard. We raise the call for a constituent assembly not in order to institute the fraudulent equality of bourgeois democracy, but rather as a revolutionary democratic demand which can only be realized through smashing the apartheid state apparatus. It is not a demand for power-sharing with the white rulers—the real program of the class collaboratorist ANC; it is a call that can mobilize the deepest strata of the masses for popular insurrection, and the creation of organs of workers power. This is the perspective of permanent revolution—the program of irreconcilable struggle against all wings of the racist ruling class and of the eradication of all forms of social oppression through the self-emancipation of the proletariat as the champion of all the oppressed. ■