

Government Unleashes Cop Terror on Unions, Township Poor, Immigrants



Masi Losi

AP (top); SABC (bottom)

Above: Cops attack SAMWU strike rally in Tshwane, March 2011. Top right: Striking workers demand ban on labour brokers. Bottom right: Andries Tatane, killed by police during service delivery protest in Ficksburg on 13 April 2011, dies in the arms of fellow activist.

Break with the Bourgeois Tripartite Alliance!

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No Illusions in Bourgeois Reforms!

For a Class-Struggle Fight Against Labour Broker Parasites!

Forge a Leninist-Trotskyist Vanguard Party!

Labour broking austerity has increasingly come under the spotlight in neo-apartheid South Africa as the biggest trade union federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), and others have raised the demand for their banning in a number of strikes and appeals to the government. For the COSATU leadership, the point of these appeals is to promote illusions in the bourgeois African National Congress (ANC) and the ANC-led capitalist government which the COSATU bureaucracy, as a member of the Tripartite Alliance, is a component part of. They constantly plead that the ANC must crack down on labour brokers in order to carry out the supposed “decent work agenda” set at the ANC’s Polokwane Conference in December 2007.

These illusions only serve to undermine the fight against labour broking slave labour—a fight which must be based on the workers’ only effective means of defence against capitalist immiseration: class struggle independent of and against the capitalists, their governments and political parties. It was the Polokwane Conference that elected Jacob Zuma as ANC leader with the strong backing of COSATU, the reformist Stalinist-derived South African Communist Party (SACP) and the openly anti-communist bourgeois nationalist ANC Youth League of Julius Malema. Since becoming ANC leader, and subsequently president following the April 2009 general elections, Zuma has predictably reneged on the rhetoric of “decent work” and “banning” labour brokers, instead preferring some form of regulation amenable to the bosses.

Capitalists and their governments engage the services of labour brokers as a cost cutting measure, to maximise their profits. Labour broking and other forms of casualisation serve to undermine trade union organisation, downgrade general conditions of employment and circumvent labour laws. The bulk of the jobs created in the last few years fall within this ambit of precarious, insecure work with longer hours, unsafe conditions and lower wages. For example, one of the main demands of the recent Food and Allied Workers Union supermarkets strike was higher wages for workers employed by labour brokers, who are paid between R1 800 and R2 500 per month as opposed to the R6 000 wage of permanent workers doing the same job (*Sowetan*, April 4). This represents a 60 percent wage deficit. Other slave conditions under which these workers toil include non-payment of fringe social security benefits like pension, medical aid, bonuses, annual leave, sick pay, injury at work and so forth.

Spartacist South Africa, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) stands for smashing the parasitic labour broker middlemen through *class struggle means*. We fight for trade union control of hiring and upgrading. Under capitalism, this is the only way to

undercut the employers’ efforts to manipulate hiring as a tool to divide the working class along racial, ethnic, national and religious lines, or as a means of screening out pro-union militants. Only through the trade unions and other organisations of the working class is it possible to fight for fair, equitable and objective criteria for recruitment of new workers and combat discrimination and persecution.

These demands must be included as part of the struggle with the bosses over the terms of employment, and linked to a political fight against the pro-capitalist, nationalist politics of the current trade union misleaders. A class struggle leadership must be forged to mobilise the unions’ power in a broader struggle against capitalist misery, uniting workers, unemployed and other oppressed layers against the common enemy—to organise the unorganised; defend immigrants, women workers and other more vulnerable sections of the working class; and fight the mass unemployment among especially black youth through a programme of jobs for all by dividing the available work among all labourers with no loss in pay. This all poses the question of the need for the working class to struggle for power.

Parasitic Middlemen

Labour broking is the practice of using employees supplied by a third party company (the labour broker). Labour brokers sell their services to a client company which pays the broker for their labour needs. The labour broker pays the worker a meagre, unliveable fraction of the cost of labour that the worker provides to the client and then pockets the rest. The worker does not take part in the contract governing the terms of the labour he supplies.

The generally low levels of wages for South African workers are central to the super-exploitation of (mainly black) labour which colonialism and apartheid perfected and post-1994 neo-apartheid capitalism preserved. This means most workers can only make major purchases like housing, furniture or even decent schooling for their children through credit, by using their retirement benefits as collateral or by forming revolving credit schemes (*stokvels*) with fellow employees. Mandla Simelane, for example, is a machine operator at Transnet who makes R3 500 per month and hasn’t had an increase in his real income for seven years. He cannot use his medical aid scheme in private hospitals—conditions in public hospitals are appalling—, nor can he access loans for housing. Thirteen percent of his wages goes to transport and he cannot support his wife and two kids with the remainder. As he explains it: “So I must rent my whole life ... my life is for rent. I live in a cycle of debt. I cannot come off debt because I simply cannot afford simple living expenses on this salary. I live on loan sharks and they live on me. This is the

life Transnet wants for all of us" (*South African Labour Bulletin*, August/September 2010).

The mechanisms for coping with low wages all require permanent employment, and so they are beyond reach for workers employed by labour brokers and other casual workers, forcing them to live from hand to mouth. The same issue of *South African Labour Bulletin* reported on the case of a Transnet worker who has been there for over 30 years, on "temporary" contract terms for the last 20, and making only R2 000 per month after deductions! Transnet is one of the "parastatals" managed by the ANC/Alliance government.

Labour brokers are used to undermine trade union organisation and reverse previous gains. In some instances companies have retrenched whole departments and rehired the same workers under labour brokers with less pay and fewer benefits. By using labour brokers, the bosses can get a legal cover to avoid being held accountable for conditions of employment. This nullifies the collective bargaining rights which organised workers sacrificed so much to achieve as part of the struggle for trade union recognition under apartheid repression. The central factor that makes it difficult to organise casual workers into trade unions is the lack of job security. Brokers can easily replace workers who join trade unions. As another attack on trade unions, labour brokers are used to provide scab labour during strikes.

Employment benefits and other working class gains under capitalism are wrested and defended through class struggle, not some chamber bargaining or treacherous so-called "social contract" with the capitalists and their government. An example of the latter is the participation of COSATU and other trade unions in the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), an institutionalised class collaborationist structure involving trade unions, the capitalists and their government. NEDLAC is tasked with negotiating a deal to inform the pending legislation to either regulate or ban labour brokers. We are opposed to such sell-out "partnerships" with the capitalist enemy class. The idea that what is good for the capitalists is good for the workers, or that the bosses' government can be pressured to serve the interests of the exploited, is a lie promoted by the trade union bureaucracy to amnesty their betrayals and sabotage of working class struggle. Workers need to understand that any gains they make face continual attacks under capitalism and can only be guaranteed by overthrowing the whole system based on production for profits through the exploitation of labour. A planned socialist economy, based on working class state power, must be constructed on the ruins of the decaying capitalist system.

It is critical for full time, unionised workers to fight for the more vulnerable casual employees to gain permanent employment at the same conditions and benefits as a measure of self defence and class solidarity. The fight to defend brokered workers should be tied to a struggle to organise the unorganised and to defend immigrant workers and others of the most oppressed layers in the working class, who are disproportionately forced into casual jobs.

A series of striking workers have won gains for temporary workers in class battles against the capitalists and their government. An important victory in the fight against labour brokers was won by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) auto strike in August 2010 against the Automobile Manufacturers Employers Organisation (AMEO). AMEO was forced to agree to stop the use of labour brokers from January 2011 while allowing existing contracts to run their course. Similar gains were also won by NUMSA strikes on behalf of casual workers in the motor sector (which includes component manufacturers, petrol station attendants, panel beaters and other workshop workers). These gains include payment of minimum rates in the industry, social security benefits like retirement, death, disability and medical aid. However, at these companies NUMSA members only managed to have employers agree to the gradual phasing out of the labour brokers.

Friends of *Spartacist South Africa* and *Workers Vanguard* in the industry reported that employers in the motor sector have since tried to renege on phasing out labour brokers and hiring casual workers on a permanent basis. Instead of mobilising the social power of the union members which won this concession to begin with, the NUMSA bureaucrats have taken the matter to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA). This slavish dependence on the bosses' courts is a cowardly diversion from class struggle which demoralises the workers and paves the way for defeats. The only language the capitalists understand is the one that hits their profits.

It is not in the interests of workers employed in the auto industry to be divided into separate, therefore weaker bargaining units (auto for car manufacturers; motor sector for component manufacturers and others; rubber for tyre manufacturers). These divisions only serve to undermine the collective strength of these workers. When the component manufacturers were on strike in September 2010, for example, auto workers belonging to the same union had to be sent home because they could not work without components, when in fact all should have gone out together in the same strike. The tyre and rubber strike from 30 August 2010 had

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the same potential of stopping car manufacturing.

We stand for *industrial unionism*, which means that all workers in the same industry should belong to one union and be covered by the same collective bargaining unit. Workers in the same industry are also divided up into different unions organised by different federations according to political affiliation. There should be one union per industry regardless of the political affiliations. The strength of the working class is in their numbers, organisation and discipline.

In May 2010 the Transnet strike by the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (affiliated to COSATU) and the United Transport and Allied Trade Union (affiliated to the Federation of Unions of South Africa) brought both exports and imports to a grinding halt. This strike won permanent jobs for some 1 000 of the more than 5 000 contract workers at Transnet. During this strike workers were wary of their sell-out leaders, warning: “The strike is ours, not our leaders. They give us feedback after negotiations and if we reject it they must go back. The leaders don’t get to decide, we do” (*South African Labour Bulletin*, August/September 2010). While this is an expression of the union membership’s genuine mistrust of their leaders, what is decisive is an organised political opposition to the union tops’ class collaborationist reliance on the bourgeois state and its politicians.

A class-struggle-based fight to smash labour broking is counterposed to, and not complementary to, the reliance on the capitalist state pushed by the pro-capitalist COSATU leadership. The union members who demand the banning of labour brokers in their strikes—strikes forced on the union leaders against their will—are fighting for their elementary class interests against a concerted capitalist ruling class assault. The reformist COSATU leadership is a component of the bourgeois Tripartite Alliance government whose job is to uphold the rule and profits of those bosses against the workers. Vavi and Co.’s pleas to the anti-working class Zuma government to implement legislation banning labour brokers are meant to retain their role as loyal (if occasionally “critical”) partners in class collaboration, to more effectively control and sell out their working class base.

The COSATU tops push the utopian notion that the government can be persuaded to act in the interests of the workers instead of the capitalists. This lie is based on a wrong and reformist view of the bourgeois state—a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole capitalist class—as a neutral arbiter between the historically irreconcilable interests of the working class and their bourgeois exploiters. The Namibian case is an example of the futility of reliance on the bourgeois state, showing once again that all bourgeois reforms are easily reversible. The Namibian government passed a new Labour Act in 2007 that banned the practice of labour broking. When a labour broker company challenged this provision in the High Court, the court first upheld it, before, in December 2009, the Namibian Supreme Court overturned the ban on labour brokers. Its justification was that the ban violated the constitutional right to “practise any profession, or carry on any occupation, trade or business”—for the capitalists and their state, the bottom line is the “right” of capital to exploit labour.

The COSATU bureaucracy has in the past used the same con game of betraying legitimate working class struggles by channelling them into appeals to the ANC-led capitalist government. Examples of this include demands by the majority black working class to close the apartheid wage-gap;

opposition to the neo-liberal Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policies adopted by the ANC government in 1996, which led to privatisations and retrenchments. During the 2007 and 2010 public sector strikes, the COSATU leaders initially promised to call secondary solidarity strikes by the strategic mining, industrial and commercial trade unions, which have the social power to shut down the economy and stop the capitalists’ profits. But both times they cancelled these solidarity strikes.

Their threats to call a general strike against labour brokers have remained just that—an empty threat—as the COSATU leaders were more concerned with ensuring ANC victory in the local government elections. In another recent act of class treason in the service of the bourgeois Tripartite Alliance, the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) bureaucracy suspended a threatened 13 May national strike by their 220 000 members-strong union to avoid embarrassing the ANC five days before the 18 May local elections. In the eyes of the COSATU bureaucracy, the workers are voting cows for the ANC’s chronically corrupt (like any capitalist government) black elite gravy trainers. Even when they do happen to call such token actions, their aim is not to fight to win but to blow off steam from their angry and restless base. Instead of opposing attacks on their members, their main complaint is usually about not being “consulted” by their Alliance partners.

The hypocrisy of calling on this state to ban labour brokers is underlined by the fact that the Zuma government is one of the biggest users of labour brokers in the country. Top ANC honchos—such as president Zuma’s son Duduzane; former economic adviser in the presidency and prominent ANC member Moss Ngoasheng; and former public service director general Robinson Ramaite; amongst others—make profits as owners of or shareholders in labour broking companies. Meanwhile, while occasionally talking tough about the need for an all-out ban, Vavi and other union leaders have repeatedly indicated their willingness to compromise and accept some kind of “regulation” of the labour broker bloodsuckers.

South Africa is one of the countries with the highest unemployment rates in the world and this is not because of this or that government policy that can be changed through pressure. Well over a century ago, Karl Marx described in *Capital* how the maintenance of the “industrial reserve army” of unemployed was an integral part of capitalism, serving to degrade working conditions and to lower wages for all workers. As Marx explained:

“The over-work of the employed part of the working-class swells the ranks of the reserve, whilst conversely the greater pressure that the latter by its competition exerts on the former, forces these to submit to over-work and to subjugation under the dictates of capital. The condemnation of one part of the working-class to enforced idleness by the over-work of the other part, and the converse, becomes a means of enriching the individual capitalists.”

Defend immigrant workers!

The use of labour brokers overlaps with labour practices that border on outright criminality by the racist (and still overwhelmingly white) South African bosses. While a norm against blacks under apartheid, since 1994 these have disproportionately hit immigrant workers. There are

commonly reported cases of employers, especially in the farms, employing workers escaping poverty and other life threatening situations in neighbouring countries, only to call the police to arrest and summarily deport them when pay day arrives. They are sometimes paid in food rations instead of money. Their wages are always much lower than local workers.

A study by researcher Jean Pierre Misago of the University of the Witwatersrand's Forced Migration Studies Programme found that labour brokers may have been directly responsible for inciting the November 2009 anti-immigrant attacks at De Doorns in the Western Cape. Both South African and Zimbabwean contractors (brokers) were supplying local farmers with workers. South African contractors complained of income losses due to competition from their Zimbabwean counterparts. They pressured local ANC leaders and incited local residents to attack and chase Zimbabweans away.

The COSATU tops' promotion of "Buy South African" protectionism fuels anti-immigrant poison and perpetuates the lie that South African workers share common interests with their country's capitalist exploiters. This is bourgeois nationalist poison that needs to be rooted out of the labour movement if the working class is to be able to fight, not only as a class in itself, but as a class for itself conscious of its historical task as the gravedigger of capitalist wage slavery.

An article in the May-July 2010 issue of the Democratic Socialist Movement's (DSM) paper *Izwi Labasebenzi* (Xhosa/Zulu for Workers Voice) exposes the parasitic nature of the labour broking bloodsuckers and criticises the COSATU tops' "posturing". But it is notable (and not surprising) that they don't say *a single word* about the need to organise the largely unorganised casual workers and defend immigrants. The DSM and its international collaborators of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) are notorious for adapting to backward consciousness. They have repeatedly supported "strikes" by cops, prison guards and other armed thugs of the capitalist state, who they consider "workers in uniform". For years the DSM was buried inside the bourgeois nationalist ANC, before more recently leaving the ANC to tail after the nationalists of the Pan Africanist Congress. The DSM reformists' current calls to "break" the Tripartite Alliance and form a "new workers' party" are not about fighting for the independent class interests of the proletariat. They are aimed at forming a "new" reformist party, which would just continue the working class's subordination to nationalism and the racist capitalist state under a new label.

In early 2009 the CWI's leading section, Peter Taaffe's Socialist Party in Britain, scandalously supported the wave of virulently chauvinist strikes which swept construction sites at Britain's oil refineries and power plants. The strikes covered themselves in the bloody Union Jack and demanded "British jobs for British workers", a slogan long associated with the fascists. The CWI whitewashed these reactionary mobilisations, lyingly claiming that they were not anti-immigrant, and a Socialist Party supporter even played a key role in the strike committee at the Lindsey refinery! (See "Down With Reactionary Strikes Against Foreign Workers!", *Workers Vanguard* No. 930, 13 February 2009.)

As experience proves, labour brokers attack both local and foreign workers thereby providing a strong objective need for united class struggle against the common capitalist enemies. Local workers must recruit immigrants to their unions with

the same rights and working conditions as the only way to combat the employers' divide and rule schemes. For instance, the National Union of Mineworkers—COSATU's biggest affiliate—has a membership reflecting the heavy concentration of immigrant workers in that strategic industry. This is despite the ANC-led government's 2003 Immigration Act prohibiting employment of "novice" immigrants in the mines, which has limited the number of immigrant workers entering this industry. Foreign workers bring rich struggle traditions from their own countries to supplement those of their local comrades. South African workers should demand *full citizenship rights for all immigrants!* We fight for the working class to take up this demand as part of our perspective of fighting for a *socialist federation of Southern Africa* extending beyond and against the existing colonialist-imposed borders which have no national legitimacy for the African peoples who were colonised.

Intensified Exploitation in the Post-Soviet World

The increased use of labour brokers is part of a broad range of increased austerity measures—including wholesale privatisations of public enterprises, retrenchments, outsourcing, two-tier wage schemes, short time and other attacks on labour—which have been aggressively pursued by the international capitalist rulers especially in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, a bureaucratically degenerated workers state. In the western European imperialist countries such attacks have seen the dismantling of the social welfare state, as the bourgeoisies of these countries see no need to continue paying for these concessions to the working class of their own countries. This increased exploitation allowed the capitalists to heap up enormous profits, squeezed from the blood of the working class and the poor. This is one reason, among many others, why we say the capitalist counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union represented a world-historic defeat for the international proletariat.

In South Africa, the fall of the Soviet Union—which had provided the main financial, military and diplomatic aid to the ANC/SACP-led anti-apartheid forces—created the conditions for the negotiated settlement with the white rulers. Concluding in 1994, this sell-out deal was a betrayal of black freedom which led to the establishment of the neo-apartheid order. The ANC/SACP/COSATU Tripartite Alliance regime was put in power (at first in a short-lived coalition with their erstwhile jailors from the white supremacist National Party) to defend the interests of the still dominantly white capitalist class against the majority black poor masses.

The use of contract labour and temporary employees in this country proliferated with the passing of the Labour Relations Act of 1995 by the Alliance government. The COSATU leaders were part of the negotiation process that passed this legislation which, for the first time, recognised labour brokers as employers of the workers they hire on behalf of the so-called "client" companies.

Adding insult to injury, the government is now pursuing the so-called youth unemployment wage subsidy which would further segment the labour market by replacing older permanent employees with even more poorly paid and super-exploited young workers with no rights. In the last decades, we have seen fierce battles fought by youths and workers against similar attacks. For example, in 2006 French youth went into the streets to protest the CPE law aimed at slashing wages and job security for youths, getting support from a

series of one-day general strikes by the main union federations. In 1999 Mexican students at UNAM University, mainly from working class backgrounds, fought a protracted and bruising battle against the assault by the country's capitalist rulers on their right to education.

Build a Revolutionary Party to Fight for a Workers Government

For the black majority the apartheid state was like a giant labour broker responsible for miserable working and living conditions characterised by slave wages; migrant labour from Bantustans and neighbouring countries living in single sex hostel dwellings barely fit for animals; pass laws for black urban influx control; denial of trade union and political rights; etc. The introduction of labour broking and other increased casualisation coincided with increased expectations for social justice and redress amongst the poor majority following the end of white minority political rule. But since taking power 17 years ago, the capitalist government of the ANC/SACP/COSATU Alliance has single-mindedly pursued policies of social decay for the majority of the population. The occasional criticisms by COSATU and to a lesser extent the SACP are only aimed at covering up their complicity and keeping disaffected workers within the political fold of bourgeois nationalism. ***Break with the bourgeois Tripartite Alliance!***

Immiseration of the working class is inherent in capitalism, especially in its epoch of imperialist decay. Prior to 1994, there is a very rich history of class struggle, mainly by COSATU unions, against casualisation. These included fighting to ban overtime work, the fight for a 40-hour working week without loss of pay and a demand to make all casual workers fulltime after three months of continued employment.

But the growing social and political power of COSATU following its founding in the 1980s was paralysed by its increasing political subordination to the ANC. In the absence of the intervention by a Leninist-Trotskyist party armed with a programme for proletarian power, none of the political currents within COSATU, including the so-called "workerist" opposition, were able to make the leap to a perspective of struggling for proletarian leadership of the anti-apartheid struggle. By the time of the 1994 sell-out deal, the COSATU bureaucracy was integrated into the bourgeois Tripartite

Alliance and jumped at the opportunity to join the capitalist government, sending 20 of their leaders into parliament under the ticket of the ANC. This further cemented the subordination of the working class to bourgeois nationalism.

Workers must refuse to pay for the economic crisis of the capitalist system of their exploiters. In the fight for employment and decent living standards for all, a revolutionary vanguard party of the working class should put forward a set of transitional demands to provide a bridge from the current struggles and consciousness to the fight for workers power. Such demands were formulated by Leon Trotsky, co-leader with Lenin of the October 1917 Russian Revolution, in the 1938 Transitional Programme—the founding document of the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution.

Trade unions and other mass working class organisations should fight for a ***sliding scale of wages***. "This means that collective agreements should assure an automatic rise in wages in relation to the increase in prices of the consumer goods", wrote Trotsky. In the fight against unemployment, working class organisations should fight for a ***sliding scale of working hours*** demanding the division of available work amongst available labour without loss of pay. These demands should lead to only one revolutionary conclusion, in Trotsky's words: "If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from calamities generated by itself, then let it perish."

This is the only programme that can guide the fight for a class-struggle leadership in the unions. This task is inextricably linked to the struggle for a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party—the instrument needed to lead the proletariat to victory in a socialist revolution. Such a party must be forged in political combat against reformist organisations like the SACP, fighting to win class conscious militants from the working class base of these organisations to a genuine communist programme. A revolutionary vanguard party must take its cue from the words of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in their March 1850 "Address of the Central Authority to the [Communist] League":

"For us the issue cannot be the alteration of private property but only its annihilation, not the smoothing over of class antagonisms but the abolition of classes, not the improvement of the existing society but the foundation of a new one." ■

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Letter of Application to Join Spartacist South Africa

8 March 2011

Dear Comrades,

In the two years since I encountered Spartacist South Africa, section of the International Communist League (ICL), I have wholeheartedly been won over to the programme of Marxism. I have been convinced of the importance and necessity of Leninism and Trotskyism, and the need to build a revolutionary vanguard party based on the principles of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky.

In the era of global imperialism and capitalist decay as we are in right now, the ravages resulting from the capitalist mode of production are numerous and severe ranging from high unemployment rates; massive starvation; uncontrolled diseases and viruses; deadly droughts and famines; pseudoscientific medical practices such as homeopathy; religious and ethnic wars, to backward and oppressive practices such as anti-gay bigotry; polygamy; forced marriage through abduction; child slavery and religious fundamentalism and intolerance. All these horrors point to the urgent need to overthrow the backward capitalist system and replace it with a planned and democratically controlled mode of production that will improve the material conditions of humans on earth and therefore lead to progressive development.

In the 12 000 years or so since early mankind first attempted to control his surroundings through agriculture and the domestication of animals, human society has developed to an incredible level culturally, intellectually, scientifically and most notably technologically. The technology possessed by mankind today is enough to lift some of the burdens of labour from everyone's shoulders. Developed even further with the advanced sciences now in mankind's possession, it could even completely free humans from all such burdens to the point that work and recreation for humans would no longer have any demarcation. Unfortunately the economic and political system that dominates human society today (capitalism) is one that limits and even threatens to reverse the scientific and political gains that humans have thus far achieved. It is also a system that breeds suffering and poverty through exploitation and oppression. Capitalism now sits as a burden on human society benefiting a few filthy rich people, who are unprepared to share the wealth that they have not even produced, at the expense of the majority of mankind.

There is no doubt in my mind that such a barbaric system has to go. But it has also become clear to me that such a highly organised, armed and heavily defended system cannot simply be wished or booted away. Rather it is necessary to arm the one class that as Marx taught is posed the historic task of doing away with capitalism, the proletariat. It is necessary to arm the proletariat politically with the correct programme to do away with capitalism, and when the time is right, it is necessary that the proletariat be armed physically for the overthrow of capitalism. Having extracted a lot from the books and documents that I have read since my encounter with the Spartacists, the importance of having a correct and consistently revolutionary programme has become clear to me.

There are plenty of organisations, groups and parties that consider themselves to be "anti-capitalist", but none that I have encountered thus far have as clear a programme and as lucid principles for doing away with capitalism as the parties

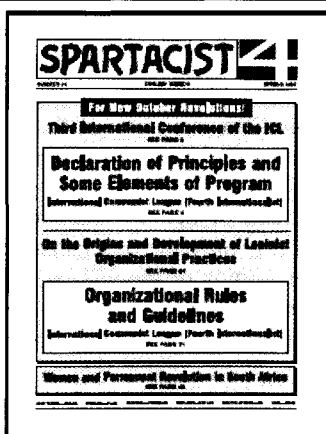
of the ICL. While many left parties speak out against some of the injustices of capitalism, very few of them present a truly revolutionary programme of how to overthrow the capitalist system, and fewer still actually transcend beyond the faculties of rhetoric to the arena of action, when it comes to their programmes. In fact it is only the Spartacists that I have met so far, and the other parties of the ICL whose documents I have read, that present what can be called a truly revolutionary programme with a solid and revolutionary plan of action.

In the highly reactionary epoch that we are in now, characterised by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the general trend of most of the radical youth is to align themselves to bourgeois or petty bourgeois political currents that only seek to fight for human rights and so called equality within the context of bourgeois democracy. I myself spent some time flirting with these ideas, and was highly frustrated by their inadequacy, in the years before I was introduced and won over to Marxism. Yet it is now very clear to me that the only road towards human emancipation is that of socialism moving towards communism, through the dictatorship of the proletariat. Even though the bourgeoisie have launched a massive and highly effective propaganda campaign, which depicts communism as having been a failed experiment, which has seen many would be revolutionaries reduced to the position of mere oppositionists within bourgeois democracy, it is clear to me that capitalism can do nothing but continue to breed the conditions for unrest and revolution that necessitate the existence of a revolutionary Trotskyist party. This has been seen in the recent upheavals in Tunisia and Egypt which ousted the dictators in those countries but left the bourgeois state intact due to a lack of class struggle and a revolutionary leadership, amongst the workers and masses, of the Bolshevik type. The lack of revolutionary leadership within these countries to smash capitalism once and for all convinces me even more of the need for me to assist in the building of a revolutionary Trotskyist party in Southern Africa to take full advantage of the inevitable upheavals, that will ensue in the region at some time in the future, and assist in directing them towards new October revolutions.

I have come to learn a lot about Marxism through my encounter with the Spartacists, and I have come to appreciate the importance of the teachings of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, as opposed to those of the nationalists, the anarchists and the rest of the reformist left such as the Stalinists. It is without a doubt that there is still a lot that I have to learn, but I am now convinced that the ICL is the only party with the necessary teachings and political programme that can arm me with the necessary tools to assume my part in future revolutions.

I would therefore like to state that I have read the "Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program" of the ICL and can say that I fully agree with these principles and accept the ICL's programme. I have also read the "Organizational Rules and Guidelines" of the ICL and am prepared to abide by the party's discipline. I vow to carry out the programme and policies of the ICL in all aspects of my public life, and I promise to act in a manner that will not

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contradict the principles of the ICL or contravene the party's discipline.

The ICL's ability to uphold the Marxist flag against counterrevolutionary petty bourgeois forces of reaction makes it a fully capable and crucial party for the steeling of young cadres such as me in communist politics and revolutionary internationalism. I therefore request to be allowed to join the ICL to help in the building of a revolutionary Trotskyist party in South Africa and assist in extending the programme of the ICL as far as I can.

Yours sincerely,
 Notshe

Neo-Apartheid Capitalism and Rising Police Terror

Cops Kill SAMWU Shop Steward on the Picket Line

The following leaflet was issued in March 2011. It appeared in Workers Vanguard No. 977 (1 April), newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S., section of the ICL.

On March 3, during an attack on a protest by striking bus and refuse workers in Tshwane (Pretoria), cops of the South African Police Service (SAPS) shot and killed Petros Msiza, a 43-year-old shop steward in the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU), affiliate of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Spartacist South Africa, section of the International Communist League, stands in solidarity with Msiza's union brothers and sisters and shares our grief with his family.

As a March 7 SAMWU statement denouncing the police killing rightly noted: "This is not the first of our members that have been shot, every few months the SAPS violently shoots at innocent protesting workers.... This attack and killing is an attack on the working class, not just SAMWU." In the same week as the killing, the Tshwane local government responded to SAMWU's "illegal" strike by firing some 1 000 municipal workers. A week later, some 22 SAMWU workers were arrested in Kempton Park on the East Rand outside Johannesburg during protests demanding the reinstatement of their shop stewards and the same pay as workers in other municipalities. We demand that charges be dropped and the workers be released.

The attacks on SAMWU come in the context of a sharp increase in murderous police violence and a general police clamp-down on all aspects of life of poor and working people, leading the *Sowetan* (14 March) to warn of a "police state". A recent report by a member of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation reveals that the number of deaths from police shootings has more than

doubled in the last five years to 568 deaths in 2009-2010—the highest level recorded since the Independent Complaints Directorate began gathering statistics on police abuse in 1997. The *Sunday Independent* (20 March) reported: "Police researchers and lawyers who specialise in litigating against the police have warned that anecdotal reports of giving electric shocks, suffocation and other apartheid-style torture methods have become more prevalent."

With mounting social unrest come increased attacks on democratic rights and threats of police bonapartism. Recently SAPS cops carried out a raid on the office of the so-called Public Protector, who is supposed to investigate government abuses of power, just one week after she announced an investigation into corruption charges against police commissioner Bheki Cele.

As Bolshevik leader V. I. Lenin wrote in *The State and Revolution* (1917), "The state is an organ of class **domination**, an organ of **oppression** of one class by another." The police killing of Petros Msiza is only the latest, most naked, illustration of this Marxist understanding of the capitalist state in neo-apartheid South Africa. While the rigid system of white rule through legally enforced racial segregation and subjugation was ended, the deal struck in the early 1990s bringing to power the Tripartite Alliance of the African National Congress (ANC), South African Communist Party (SACP) and COSATU changed **nothing** in the superexploitation of mainly black labour for the profits of a filthy rich, overwhelmingly white, capitalist class. The Tripartite Alliance is a bourgeois government responsible for maintaining neo-apartheid capitalism. This means brutal oppression of the black majority and defence of the rule and profits of the same old Randlords who ruled

under apartheid, now supplemented by a thin layer of black capitalists and others who've enriched themselves by joining in the exploitation of "their own" people.

The reformist COSATU and SACP tops do all they can to cover up this basic fact in order to justify their grotesque class collaboration of participating in the capitalist government. COSATU and SACP leaders were among the most enthusiastic backers of President Jacob Zuma as a supposed "friend" of workers. Since coming to power in 2009, Zuma has delivered on the promise of strengthening the repressive state apparatus to supposedly "get tough on crime", appointing Bheki "shoot to kill" Cele as police commissioner and unleashing the cops against public sector workers during last year's strike.

With the same nationalist class-collaborationist logic, the reformists embrace the strikebreaking thugs of the capitalist state, as "comrades". For example, COSATU includes the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU), while SAMWU and other COSATU affiliates organise security guards and cops and the SACP recruits cops into its own organisation. Whether black or white, the cops have the same job in the "new" South Africa as the police had under apartheid: to defend capitalist rule and profits by violently repressing workers and the poor. We oppose the inclusion of police or security guards in the unions and workers movement and fight for the complete independence of the workers movement from the bourgeois state. ***Cops, prison guards and security guards out of the unions!***

Protesters struggling against the brutal conditions in the mainly black townships have been particularly hard hit by police terror. Last September, cops in Free State province shot and killed Nontsikelelo Nokela, a 17-year-old pupil taking part in protests against being forced to take matric exams without adequate preparation. In February this year, Solomon Madonsela was killed and many others injured as police fired rubber bullets and live ammunition at protesters in Wesselton township in Ermelo, Mpumalanga, who were demanding jobs and service delivery. There were widespread reports of beatings and brutal torture by cops trying to extract confessions from protesters in police custody.

The situation cries out for the trade unions to mobilise to defend these protesters against the very same capitalist state which is shooting down trade unionists on the picket lines. Such a struggle, including championing demands addressing the burning needs of the township poor—decent, affordable housing for all; massive improvements in the township schools and infrastructure; skills training; and spreading out the available work amongst available labour with no loss in pay—would be a powerful action to build solidarity between the unemployed and the unions and undercut the attempts by the bosses and their government to pit them against each other. The participation of disciplined, class-conscious union marshals would also help to spike the outbreaks of anti-foreigner attacks which have become an increasing occurrence during the service delivery protests.

This requires a fight for a class-struggle leadership in the unions. The COSATU and other trade-union bureaucracies abandon the township poor to their fate out of class-collaborationist loyalty to the capitalist state which, in COSATU's case, they are a component part of administering through the Tripartite Alliance. Outrageously, the COSATU-affiliated National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa in Mpumalanga issued a February 16 statement

condemning the victims of cop terror in Wesselton for their "violent protests"!

Immigrants from other African countries and Asia also feel the brunt of police repression, from raids on bars and nightclubs in heavily immigrant districts to daily harassment of hawkers, prostitutes and others trying to eke out a desperate existence. To cite just one example, in November 2009 an Angolan street vendor in Pretoria was shot and killed by two (allegedly drunk) off-duty cops when he tried to keep them from stealing his wares. As proletarian internationalists, we fight for the workers movement to take up the defence of these immigrants and to organise immigrant workers into the unions with full rights and benefits. This is both a defence of democratic rights and an act of class solidarity for the unions' own defence. ***Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! No deportations!*** This call is particularly important right now, as the government threatens to begin deporting hundreds of thousands of Zimbabweans and is proposing draconian amendments to the immigration laws.

In the weeks following the killing of Msiza and other attacks on the union (all of which took place in ANC-run municipalities), the leadership of SAMWU caused unease in the Tripartite Alliance by warning that they "find it impossible to convince our members and the community" to vote for the ANC in the upcoming local elections and demanding that the ANC leadership "intervene urgently to address our concerns". While COSATU spokesman Patrick Craven assured the ANC that this was "not a Cosatu position", ANC general secretary Gwede Mantashe, who is also a top SACP leader, arrogantly dismissed "grandstanding by the Samwu leadership who want to eat their bread and still have it".

Despite the hostile reaction by the Alliance tops, the SAMWU leadership's protests in fact have nothing to do with working-class independence from the bourgeois nationalist ANC and everything to do with ***containing*** the anger of the union's working-class base within the framework of the Tripartite Alliance, a nationalist popular front through which the interests of the working-class base of the SACP and COSATU are subordinated to those of the capitalist exploiters. Thus the SAMWU leadership's resolution promotes the illusion that the ANC—a party of the bosses—can be made to be "worker friendly" if enough pressure is exerted.

This is a deadly illusion which will only continue to disarm the workers in the face of increased capitalist attacks and state repression. The working class can never wage a consistent struggle for its interests and those of all the oppressed if it is chained to the exploiters, their political parties and state through bourgeois nationalism. As long as capitalism exists, the gains which the masses have wrested through struggle will always be threatened. We fight to split the Tripartite Alliance along class lines as part of the struggle for a revolutionary Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party. This is the necessary instrument to lead the working class to a victorious socialist revolution that will shatter the capitalist state and erect in its place a workers state—the dictatorship of the proletariat. Break with the bourgeois Tripartite Alliance! For a black-centred workers government as part of a socialist federation of Southern Africa! ■

US Reactionaries Stir Up Anti-Gay Terror

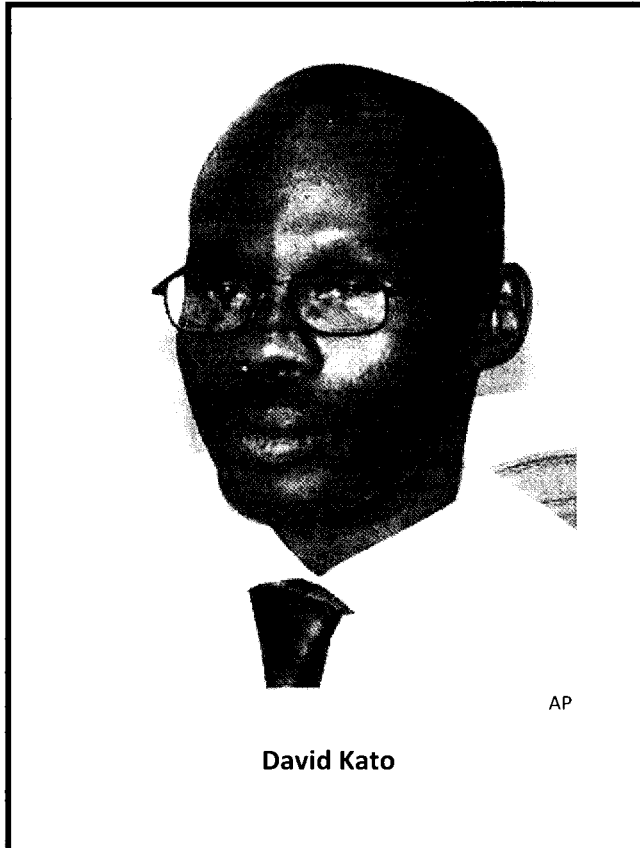
Uganda: Gay Rights Activist Brutally Murdered

The following article is reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* (No. 977, 1 April 2011), newspaper of the *Spartacist League/U.S.*, section of the *International Communist League*.

David Kato, a courageous fighter for gay rights, was bludgeoned to death with a hammer in his home in Kampala, Uganda, on January 26. He was 46 years old. A co-founder of the gay rights organization Sexual Minorities Uganda, Kato was repeatedly beaten, harassed and jailed by police. In October 2010, his picture appeared on the front page of a reactionary local newspaper, *Rolling Stone*, together with an article showing photos, listing names and revealing the whereabouts of hundreds of “known” homosexuals and gay rights activists under the banner “Hang Them!” In a landmark case, Kato sued the paper and won the equivalent of US\$640 [R4 500] in damages. Just weeks later, he was murdered.

In Uganda homosexuality—defined as “carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature”—is a crime punishable by up to 14 years in prison. President Yoweri Museveni, in power for 25 years, has called for gays to be tracked down and jailed. He continues to fuel homophobic violence by publicly claiming that gays are recruiting Ugandan schoolchildren. Now, a proposed “Anti-Homosexuality Bill”, written by parliament member David Bahati, would give the state sanction to kill gays by imposing a death sentence for those convicted of “aggravated homosexuality”, including those who engage in homosexual sex with disabled persons or with persons under the age of 18 and also including those labeled “serial offenders”. The law would also bring a three-year jail sentence for anyone who fails to report homosexuals to the police within 24 hours.

Bahati boasts of his ties with powerful American evangelicals and has been to the U.S. to study the “Christian leadership principles” of an outfit known as “the Family”. A clandestine group of prominent politicians, CEOs and others, “the Family” has long exerted considerable political influence both in Washington, D.C., and abroad. It organizes the annual



National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, which has been attended by every U.S. president since Eisenhower.

In a meeting with Jeff Sharlet, author of *The Family: The Secret Fundamentalism at the Heart of American Power*, Bahati openly stated that his aim is to “kill every last gay person”. His Anti-Homosexuality Bill was written one month after a March 2009 conference in Kampala featuring a group of well-known American Christian fundamentalists. As described in a *New York Times* (4 January 2010) article, “Americans’ Role Seen in Uganda Anti-Gay Push”:

“For three days, according to participants and audio recordings, thousands of Ugandans, including police officers, teachers and national politicians, listened raptly to the Americans, who were presented as experts on homosexuality. The visitors discussed how to make gay people straight, how

gay men often sodomized teenage boys and how ‘the gay movement is an evil institution’ whose goal is ‘to defeat the marriage-based society and replace it with a culture of sexual promiscuity’.”

Obama’s Crocodile Tears for Kato

Shortly after Kato’s murder, President Barack Obama, who personally opposes gay marriage, released a statement laden with hypocrisy. Saying he was “deeply saddened to learn of the murder of David Kato”, Obama continued: “My Administration will continue to strongly support human rights and assistance work on behalf of LGBT persons abroad. We do this because we recognize the threat faced by leaders like David Kato, and we share their commitment to advancing freedom, fairness, and equality for all.”

One need look no further than the carnage in occupied Afghanistan and Iraq, or the cruise missiles raining down on Libya, for a measure of such “commitment to advancing freedom” by Obama, the Commander-in-Chief of U.S. imperialism. In the service of Washington’s global “war on terror”, Uganda’s police Rapid Response Unit engages in

“torture, illegal detention and extrajudicial killings of its citizens”, according to a Human Rights Watch study reported in the *New York Times* (23 March). As for Obama’s sermonizing about human rights, it is the imperialists’ subjugation of neocolonial countries that perpetrates economic deprivation and other misery. Such conditions feed the religious reaction and social backwardness that brutally oppress women—seen in the prevalence in Uganda of female genital mutilation, traditional polygamy and the bride price—as well as gays.

There is much being written about the links between evangelical Christians in the U.S. and the “kill gays” law in Uganda. In fact, Christian missionaries served in the second half of the 19th century as the advance guard for British imperialism’s conquest of the territory. The rampant homophobia in Uganda today is in good measure a remnant of British colonialism, whose laws punished locals for participating in “unnatural sex”—the same proscription under which Oscar Wilde was sent to prison in Britain. To this day, “sodomy” laws are still on the books in more than 35 former British colonies around the world.

Moreover, the industrially advanced Christian West is not exactly a safe haven for gays and lesbians. The U.S., one of the most politically backward “advanced” capitalist countries on earth, is saddled with a huge burden of puritanism and religious fundamentalism. Bible-thumping bigots, “family values” crusaders and other reactionaries serve to ensure that homosexuals continue to endure violence, persecution and abrogation of their rights. This can literally be a death sentence: In 1998, Wyoming university student Matthew Shepard was beaten and left hanging on a barbed-wire fence to die; in 2002, Gwen Araujo, a transgender California youth was savagely beaten and then strangled to death by a rope.

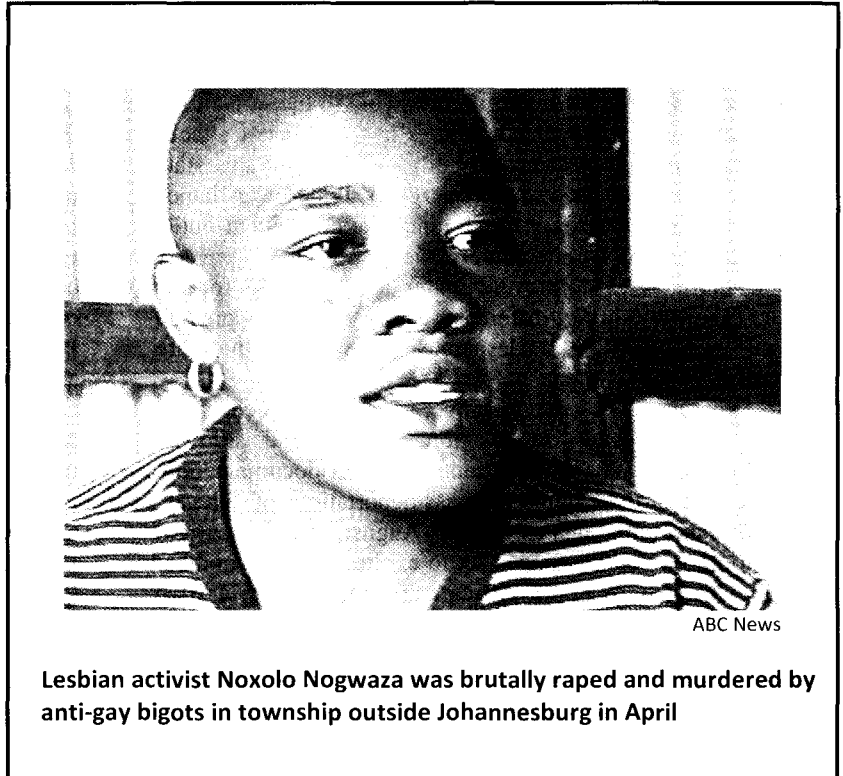
The oppression of gays is directly related to the subordination of women and youth in the social unit of the family. The main institution for the oppression of women in class society, the family instills obedience to authority and bourgeois morality, resulting in widespread bigotry that is further propped up by the considerable power of organized religion. In capitalist society, anything or anyone who deviates from male/female gender roles in the family is seen as a threat to the social order. The International Communist League fights for full democratic rights for gays. This is part of our commitment to the revolutionary struggle to eradicate all oppression based on sex, race, ethnicity and class through the overthrow of capitalist rule and the establishment of an egalitarian socialist society.

Anti-Gay Bigotry in Neo-Apartheid South Africa

In an interview, David Kato, who taught in South Africa for several years, spoke to the inspiration he drew from the fight to bring down the hated white-supremacist apartheid regime, under which homosexuality was banned: “In South Africa I fought for their liberation in Johannesburg, so when I came home...I had the same momentum—I tried to liberate my own community.” On paper, the constitution in post-apartheid South Africa, one of only ten countries in the world

that legally recognize gay marriage, opposes discrimination based on sexual orientation. But a look at the reality on the ground shows a far different picture, with violence against homosexuals both frequent and widespread. Lesbians are often targeted for what is called “corrective rape”. One high-profile case involved the brutal April 2008 killing of Eudy Simelane, a star of the South African women’s soccer team. An open lesbian, Simelane died after being gang-raped and stabbed 25 times.

South African president Jacob Zuma, leader of the



Lesbian activist Noxolo Nogwaza was brutally raped and murdered by anti-gay bigots in township outside Johannesburg in April

bourgeois-nationalist African National Congress, has himself promoted anti-gay violence. In a 2006 speech, he proclaimed that “when I was growing up an *ungqingili* (a gay person) would not have stood in front of me. I would knock him out.” Zuma has also decried same-sex marriage as “a disgrace to the nation and to God”. Most recently, he appointed a well-known homophobe who calls for the criminalization of gay marriage as South Africa’s ambassador to Uganda! This is rightly seen as a statement of open support for Uganda’s anti-homosexual law.

We should honor David Kato’s bravery in fighting the deadly repression faced by himself and other gays in Uganda. But the only road forward in addressing the brutal conditions of life throughout Africa and liberating these countries from the grip of imperialism is the overthrow of capitalist rule. The revolutionary mobilization of the powerful, mainly black proletariat of South Africa is crucial to this perspective. Only world proletarian socialist revolution can rid the planet of the imperialist order and its neocolonial front men. This will lay the material foundations for a new world in which the oppressive institution of the family will be replaced by socialization of childcare and household work. Only then can all social relations be truly based on the free choice of individuals. The International Communist League is committed to championing these liberating goals of communism and the necessarily global struggle for a classless, egalitarian socialist society. ■

Anti-Immigrant Attacks Mount as Mass Deportations Loom

Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!

No Deportations!

June 25—As the date approaches when the South African government is threatening to begin mass deportations of undocumented Zimbabweans from the country, attacks on immigrants have been rising steadily in recent months. This is no accident. The state campaign to crack down on Zimbabweans and other immigrants is wind in the sails of the reactionary mobs carrying out attacks in the streets—attacks which the cops and other armed bodies of the capitalist state regularly participate in. For the bourgeois Tripartite Alliance government, scape-goating immigrants is a convenient outlet for the anger at the base of society over the desperate poverty which continues to define life under neo-apartheid for the black majority, pitting different sectors of the oppressed against each other in a desperate struggle for the bare necessities of survival.

In September last year the government announced it was ending the “special dispensation” which had allowed Zimbabweans to stay in this country without documentation. This means that there could be mass deportations of “illegal” Zimbabwean immigrants as early as August, after the current moratorium on deportations is set to expire. With the number of Zimbabweans in South Africa estimated as high as two million, and with only about 250 000 having managed to submit their applications before the 31 December 2010 deadline, these deportations threaten hundreds of thousands who are already living in fear.

The timing of these threatened deportations is particularly dangerous to many political activists, who could be forced to return to Zimbabwe just as political repression is mounting in anticipation of elections which might be held later this year. We say: **No deportations! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!** The social power of the trade unions needs to be mobilised to fight for these elementary demands as part of a struggle for jobs for all and to organise immigrants and other unorganised workers into the unions with full rights, pay and benefits.

From the beginning this government campaign, under the label of “Zimbabwe Documentation Process”, has been carried out with the maximum amount of cruelty and negligence typical of the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) bureaucracy which is responsible for regimenting the lives of immigrants in this country. The bureaucratic nightmare facing those who try to comply with the draconian new rules has been documented in a number of studies by immigrant rights groups—the ridiculously short 3-month window for submitting applications, which meant that the DHA never could have even accepted all the applications; constantly changing rules and requirements; abuse and extortion by cops and security guards policing the queues outside DHA offices; the list never ends.

The attack on Zimbabweans is just the start of more draconian measures which will hit other immigrants from Africa and Asia. These include the Immigration Amendment Bill which would reduce the period of transit for asylum seekers from 14 to 5 days and impose jail sentences of up to 4

years for “illegal” immigrants and anyone who assists them. In the latest example of wanton cruelty, at the end of May the DHA shut down its only Johannesburg office for refugees and asylum seekers, following a court case by business owners in the area who complained it was a “nuisance”.

Since May, a group called the Greater Gauteng Business Forum (GGBF) has been going around in townships around Johannesburg threatening pogroms against foreign shop-owners who don’t shut down their stores. The GGBF thugs have clearly been given a green light by the cops, who reportedly were informed ahead of their raids in a number of cases. Recently, the Somali Community Board has filed a court affidavit charging that members of the South African Police Service and army, as well as metro cops, participated alongside the GGBF in anti-foreigner raids in the squatter camp of Ramaphosa east of Johannesburg (*City Press*, 29 May). The GGBF raids have served to encourage further anti-immigrant violence across the country. In late May, several foreign-owned shops were burnt and 55 looted in Motherwell and KwaDwesi townships near Port Elizabeth. In mid-June in Limpopo, Godfrey Sibanda, a Zimbabwean man, was stoned to death and thousands of other Zimbabwean immigrants were forced into hiding as anti-immigrant vigilante mobs rampaged.

There have been reports of groups of people standing up to the anti-immigrant bigots, such as women shop workers in Ramaphosa who defended a Somali-owned shop against the GGBF on June 1. They must be backed up by defence guards centred on the social power of the industrial trade unions with their strategic immigrant component, who could make short work of the reactionary scum represented by the likes of the GGBF.

In the face of the current resurgence of anti-immigrant violence, it is crucial for class conscious workers and other fighters against capitalist oppression to remember the deadly pogroms three years ago and draw the political lessons needed to mobilise labour’s social power to prevent them from happening again.

The 2008 attacks began with mobs in the Jo’burg township of Alexandra attacking mainly Zimbabwean, Mozambican and Malawian immigrants on 11 May 2008. The attacks then spread to other townships around Gauteng and ultimately across the whole country. Sixty-two people were killed and many more were maimed and raped, while tens of thousands were driven from their houses, shacks and shops, losing most or all of their possessions.

At the time, even government spokesmen acknowledged that the root cause of the pogroms lay in anger over the desperate conditions in the townships that still persist 17 years after the demise of apartheid. But it is the Tripartite Alliance government of the ANC and its partners in the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) bureaucracy that is responsible for these conditions. There have been continual protests in townships throughout the country over the lack of

service delivery—i.e., electricity, housing, water and sewage systems. The SACP and COSATU misleaders have to date refused to mount any kind of mass protest or labour mobilisation to combat the attacks on immigrants.

As with the increasing attacks today, the violence in 2008 was abetted by the police who, even as they flooded into the townships, carried out their own vicious attacks in residential areas and on the streets. After hundreds of people swarmed into an Alexandra police station seeking protection, Home Affairs minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula announced on 14 May 2008 that the government would not deport “illegal” immigrants at this time. The very next day, police in Olifantsfontein, near the Tembisa township, arrested 32 immigrants they had “rescued” who lacked documentation. Asked about the minister’s statement, a police spokesman replied, “We are only doing our job.” Outside Soweto two days later, police stopped a taxi van and demanded that two women they considered “too dark” to be South African show inoculation marks to supposedly prove their citizenship.

The scope of the 2008 attacks points to the danger of far wider violence pitting black African groups against each other and against coloureds and other minorities. In Alexandra, Zulu speakers were reportedly involved in attacks against not only immigrants but also South Africans who speak Venda, Xhosa, Shangaan or other languages. Interethnic hostilities, anti-immigrant terror and tribal divisions—which were reinforced under white-supremacist apartheid rule—are enduring features of the neo-apartheid capitalist order under the Tripartite Alliance. In putting forward the call for a black-centred workers government, we noted in our 1997 pamphlet “The Fight for a Revolutionary Vanguard Party: Polemics on the South African Left”:

“Widespread expectations for better housing and jobs cannot be met; even simple democratic demands such as the right to an education for all children or the right of women to birth control and abortion are denied to the overwhelming majority by social inequality and lack of facilities. If the masses’ frustration does not find expression along *class* lines it will fuel and embitter every other kind of division.”

We reprint below a leaflet originally issued on 15 May 2008.

* * *

In the latest wave of anti-immigrant violence sweeping South Africa, lynch mobs in Alexandra township have killed five people and wounded and raped scores of others since May 11. One of those killed, a South African, had refused to take part in the attacks. Thugs demolished shacks and stole personal belongings. After more than 1 000 people, mainly from Zimbabwe and Mozambique, fled to the Alexandra police station for protection, the cops announced they would demand identification papers, posing the threat of deporting “illegal” immigrants. From Tshwane (Pretoria) to the Eastern Cape, Somalis, Zimbabweans and others have been killed in similar mob attacks, while the government continues its anti-immigrant roundups and steps up repression along the border with Zimbabwe.

The situation cries out for a mobilisation of trade-union power to stop these attacks! From the mines and farms to the motor industry, immigrant workers have been integral to the economy and labour movement in South Africa. Spartacist South Africa, section of the International Communist League

(Fourth Internationalist), demands: Full citizenship rights for *all* immigrants! No deportations! The pogroms against immigrants in desperately impoverished Alexandra have spilled over into attacks on Venda-speaking and darker-skinned South African blacks. Different layers of the oppressed are put at each others’ throats to deflect anger from the real enemy: the white capitalist class, with its black front men. But for the unions to champion the cause of immigrants and the poor requires a political struggle against the pro-capitalist misleaders of COSATU, which is dominated by the South African Communist Party (SACP), and the NACTU and FEDUSA labour federations.



Guy Oliver/IRIN

Zimbabwean immigrants queue outside Home Affairs office

The bourgeois African National Congress (ANC) and the COSATU bureaucrats mouth pious phrases against “intolerance” and the “frustration” of the poor. But it is the ANC/SACP/COSATU Tripartite Alliance government that oversees neo-apartheid capitalism, under which the overwhelming majority are locked in grinding poverty and black people remain on the bottom. The poor in this country, and hundreds of millions around the world, are faced with starvation from rising food prices, which are at bottom caused not by shortages but by price-gouging and other capitalist profiteering.

Since 1994, the Alliance government has helped spawn repeated xenophobic outbreaks in which immigrants are used as scapegoats for mass unemployment, poverty and crime. Last year alone some 250 000 people were deported. Actions like the January police raid on the Central Methodist Church, long a haven for refugees, only encourage mob attacks as in Alexandra. At the May Day rally in North West, ANC president Jacob Zuma cloaked the call to crack down on immigrants with empty words of sympathy, saying that “the ANC government will naturally take strong measures to restrict illegal immigration” in line with the “human rights ethos of our country”!

As under apartheid, the capitalist state in “democratic” South Africa defends the rule and profits of the Randlords—and their senior partners on Wall Street and in the City of London—against the oppressed black, coloured and Indian toilers. To hold the popular front together, the SACP reformists provide the ideological glue of the “national democratic revolution”, which puts forward the nationalist lie that all black people—from rich businessmen like Tokyo Sexwale to Alexandra squatters—have common interests. This obscures the fundamental *class* divide in the service of containing proletarian struggle.

The COSATU tops, the SACP and the rest of the reformist left treacherously paint the cops as “fellow workers” and “comrades”. The SACP’s own Charles Nqakula is the minister of cops. The police are at the core of the capitalist state, an instrument of oppression of one class by another. In February 2001, cops attacked thousands of squatters and residents of Alexandra along the Jukskei River who were evicted in scenes that brought to mind apartheid-era forced removals. Earlier this year, mobs attacking “foreigners” in Atteridgeville, outside Tshwane, were aided by police who, according to the victims, “stood back and, indeed, encouraged the violence” (*Mail & Guardian*, 28 March). In Alexandra this week, cops broke up attempts by immigrants to defend themselves. Meanwhile on May 13, cops in Tshwane fired rubber bullets and stun grenades at up to 300 protesters from the SAMWU municipal workers union, which was on strike, near an award ceremony for Nelson Mandela that included government officials. One striker said, “What is there to celebrate when we go to sleep each night on an empty stomach?” (*Daily Sun*, 14 May). **Cops out of the unions!**

Zimbabweans, who make up much of the estimated three to five million immigrants in South Africa, continue to flee unbearable conditions of poverty, exacerbated by imperialist economic pressures, and the violence of the bourgeois nationalist Mugabe regime. In the current elections, both the Mugabe regime and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) of Morgan Tsvangirai, which is backed by white farmers and the imperialists, represent the class enemy of the proletariat. South African president Thabo Mbeki has been propping up Mugabe, while the COSATU and SACP leaderships implicitly or explicitly back the MDC.

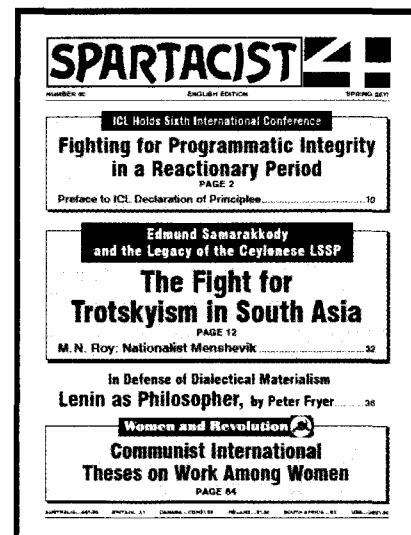
In this context, the Durban SATAWU dock workers union, affiliated with COSATU, refused to unload a Chinese ship carrying arms for Zimbabwe last month. As revolutionary Marxists, we oppose this military aid, whose only purpose would be to aid Mugabe in crushing his internal opposition. But we do not support this boycott, which was anything but the paragon of labour solidarity it was proclaimed to be by left groups and labour bureaucrats around the world. The “labour action” in Durban—carried out jointly **with the cops**—and the subsequent international boycott of the ship were in line with the anti-Mugabe campaign orchestrated by London and Washington. During her recent visit to Southern Africa, US assistant secretary of state Jendayi Frazer praised the unions involved for creating a “leadership moment”. This from a mouthpiece of the most murderous state power in history and the foremost enemy of the world proletariat! The hue and cry over the arms shipment also coincided with the reactionary “Free Tibet” campaign against the Chinese deformed workers state. The International Communist League stands for the unconditional military defence of China against imperialism and capitalist counterrevolution while fighting for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy.

The South African proletariat, which is exploited by a capitalist class whose holdings extend throughout Southern Africa, has the social power to liberate not only the downtrodden masses in this country but those of the entire region groaning under neocolonial misery. But it cannot realise this potential when it is chained to its exploiters through the Tripartite Alliance nationalist popular front. The same COSATU tops who willingly put their union at the service of the bourgeois MDC have done nothing to mobilise

union power in defence of Zimbabwean immigrants or the township poor. **Break with the Tripartite Alliance!** To unite workers against their class enemy, what’s needed is a class-struggle fight for **jobs for all** through a shorter workweek at no loss in pay, for massive wage increases to combat poverty and rampant inflation, for affordable, quality, integrated housing for all. The burning needs of the masses will not be realised short of the overthrow of South African capitalism, a system based on white privilege and the superexploitation of black labour. Spartacist South Africa fights to build a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party, which would act as a tribune of the people. Defending all of the oppressed and exploited in the struggle for proletarian state power, such a party would cut through the ethnic hatreds born of the horrendous poverty produced by superexploitation.

We fight for a **black-centred workers government** which would include a full role and democratic rights for coloureds, Indians and those whites prepared to live under such a government. We do not regard as sacrosanct the borders that were drawn up by the colonialists, which have no correspondence with tribal or ethnic groupings. Our program is for a **socialist federation of Southern Africa**, in which there will be an equal place for all the myriad peoples of the region. As we wrote in “South Africa: For a Black-Centered Workers Government!” (*Workers Vanguard* No. 911, 28 March): “The expropriation of the bourgeoisie would begin to lay the material foundations for social equality. But this perspective can only be fully realised through the extension of socialist revolution to the most advanced capitalist countries and the establishment of a collectivised, planned world economy.” Reforge the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution! ■

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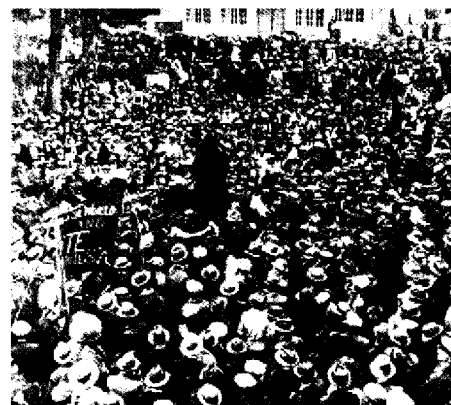
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The Communist Party of South Africa from World War I to the Sixth Congress



Left: Sydney P. Bunting, founder and early leader of CPSA, fought for Communist Party to take up struggle for black freedom and orient to black masses.

Right: Rally during 1922 Rand strike of white mineworkers in defence of racist colour bar.



Images: South African History Online

The following is an edited version of a class given by comrade Karen Cole at a Spartacist South Africa meeting in 2000.

Urgent tasks faced the Third International in its early, revolutionary years. Out of the devastation of World War I and the Second International's betrayal of the world working class, the Bolshevik Party in Russia led the first and only working class revolution. Workers around the world solidarised with this victory, and the Bolsheviks looked immediately to extending their revolution internationally. Nothing less than world revolution was on the agenda. They looked outward to differentiate among disparate elements from all sorts of backgrounds—anarchists, syndicalists, liberals, social-democratic workers, intellectuals—who subjectively sided with the overthrow of capitalism and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The task was to draw a line to exclude the reformists and centrist pretenders and regroup with the genuinely revolutionary workers.

They fought to build a new International for their own survival as well as mankind's. They had to focus on the strategic battle fronts in the advanced industrial countries where revolution seemed most imminent—where the prerequisites seemed to be all there, particularly Germany. The lesson of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution was that the leadership of a Bolshevik party like the one led by Lenin and Trotsky was the critical factor. That was the one prerequisite missing elsewhere, and it was decisive. This lesson was outlined most clearly in Trotsky's *The Lessons of October* (1924).

The newly formed Third International also organised to extend the revolution to the East and South, to the countries of belated capitalist development. The Russian Revolution had vindicated Trotsky's theory and programme of permanent revolution regarding the inseparable link between national liberation from the yoke of imperialism and proletarian revolution. Trotsky wrote in *The Permanent Revolution* (1929): "that the democratic tasks of the backward bourgeois

nations lead directly, in our epoch, to the dictatorship of the proletariat and that the dictatorship of the proletariat puts socialist tasks on the order of the day." This understanding, proved in the experience of the Russian Revolution, opened the possibility of successful revolutionary struggle under the leadership of a proletarian vanguard in the colonial and less advanced countries. Trotsky's analysis and generalisation of permanent revolution, based on the experience of Russia and, in a negative sense, the 1925-27 aborted revolution in China, laid out the necessary programme to lead the colonial peoples to liberation.

So this is the political context in which we have to examine the first years of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA)—from its beginnings in World War I through the late 1920s.

I want to briefly start with the split within the South African Labour Party which eventually led up to the founding of the Communist Party of South Africa, and describe the historical period to get a sense of the leap that the founders of the early CPSA had to make if they were to be the leadership of a South African revolution. They started out expecting that the organised and militant white mineworkers would be the vanguard of the proletarian revolution—but it didn't work out that way, reflecting the unique historical overlap between race and class in South Africa.

After the Anglo-Boer war, the policy of the British colonialists was to assist British immigrants in settling as a bulwark against Afrikaner nationalism. On the Rand, political rights were restricted to whites. The English-speaking workers who brought specialised skills from Britain were kept as a supervisory layer in the mines, and their job classifications were protected by colour-bar laws. On the Rand with its centre in Johannesburg (and I am going to mainly talk about the Rand because this was the centre of class struggle), the gold mine commission legislated the racial exclusions with the full support of the whites-only union leadership. Black Africans were permanently disenfranchised

migrant mineworkers, forced off their rural homes by hut and poll taxes and expelled by white farmers. They were confined and policed in fenced-in compounds, with no political or union rights. Blacks were considered expendable, replaceable and were offered no training. Their every movement was totally controlled and resistance was met with swift punishment and death. White workers consistently scabbed on any attempts by black workers to strike.

But the inexorable laws of capitalism which demand continual maximising of profits—particularly in the labour-intensive deep gold-mining industry—set the mine owners and white miners at odds. The Afrikaner as well as British miners engaged in many industrial struggles, and the British miners were closely linked to and influenced by the militant union movement of Britain. But the volatility of gold prices meant the mine owners needed cheaper labour, and had no need to protect the white workers. For a while, they imported indentured Asian labour but, in the long run, saw their future in super-exploiting black peasant labour.

So during the 1910s and 1920s, you see the leadership of a white working class attempting to fight to preserve its privileges on the backs of the black masses. The 1920s was a time of changing economic relations. Over time the rural Afrikaners, who had been a factor in the mines, eventually moved into the state-protected apparatus. After outbursts of bloody state repression of rearguard white mineworker strikes, the ruling class strategy developed into absorbing the white workers into the petty-bourgeoisie. Instead of the white workers being ground down into impoverishment, their relations to the means of production shifted into the overseers, managers, supervisors and state bureaucrats. Meanwhile, the bourgeoisie continued to deprive black people of the right to own land and levied taxes to compel more landless blacks to migrate into designated “locations” near metropolitan areas and become proletarianised. Brutally enforced pass systems were used to control this labour force.

The Impact of World War I

On the eve of World War I, as in the rest of the world, there was tremendous ferment among sections of the workers and oppressed. At the same time, the war highlighted, in South Africa like in Europe, the bankruptcy of bourgeois nationalism and labour reformism. There were rebellions among various sectors of the South African population on the eve of the war.

In 1913 there were uprisings and strikes of Indian workers across KwaZulu-Natal. They struck in the mines and cane fields, railways and shops. Mahatma Gandhi, who had been in South Africa since 1893, pleaded for passive resistance. Nevertheless, the cane workers clashed with police and workers were beaten and killed. Gandhi came to an agreement with the Jan Smuts government during the Natal uprisings, and called the struggle of Indian workers off with little gains. On the Rand, in 1913 and 1914, the white gold miners led general strikes, and the government killed over 20 people to put the first strike down, and deported nine trade union leaders to put the second down. In Jagersfontein diamond mine, Sotho miners went on strike when a white overseer kicked a black miner to death, and eleven miners were killed in the subsequent struggle. In Cape Town, 600 coloured stevedores struck for an 8-hour day and wage increases.

The existing misleaders of the workers and oppressed were busy lining up support for the first inter-imperialist war

on the side of the British overlords of South Africa. During World War I Gandhi urged Indians in South Africa to join the British army. As described by Jack and Ray Simons in *Class and Colour in South Africa 1850-1950* (International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1983), Gandhi earlier argued that passive resistance was “best for ‘illiterate natives.’ It taught them to break their own heads and not other people’s in order to redress grievances.”

After a brief moment of hesitation on the eve of the war, the South African Labour Party signed up for the war no less enthusiastically than the mine owners’ Unionist Party. Colonel Frederic Creswell, the leader of the Labour Party, enlisted and called for support to the war in a manifesto titled “See It Through”.

In the Western Cape, the African Political Organisation (APO, renamed the African People’s Organisation in 1919), the main political voice of the coloureds, had tremendous illusions that the British imperialists would influence their South African counterparts to drop the colour bar, and hoped that if coloureds supported the war effort, they would be rewarded for their loyalty.

Days before Britain declared war in 1914, Dr. Abdullah Abdurahman, president of the APO, proclaimed, “The present foundation of the Empire is rotten, and cannot last.” Weeks later he said, “The only question we have to ask ourselves is how we can best serve the Empire” (*Class and Colour in South Africa*).

In 1912 the South African Native National Congress, predecessor of the African National Congress, was founded by lawyers, church-trained intellectuals and tribal chiefs. Their reaction to the outbreak of World War I was to cancel a meeting to discuss opposition to the 1913 Natives Land Act which dispossessed the majority of the black population, and instead to organise recruitment of blacks into the British army.

David Ivon Jones, secretary in the South African Labour Party and later a leader of the CPSA, adamantly opposed the inter-imperialist war. When the editor of the ANC newspaper proposed a motion of condolence on the death of British Lord Kitchener at a public meeting in 1916, Jones opposed this, stating that Kitchener “was the agent of the class who exploit both native and white working class and encompass the death of millions of our fellow workers” (Baruch Hirson and Gwyn A. Williams, *The Delegate for Africa: David Ivon Jones 1883-1924* [Core Publications, 1995]). Kitchener was the military architect of British imperialism across the African continent from Sudan to South Africa.

Internationalism and the Struggle for Black Liberation

David Ivon Jones and Sidney Percival Bunting, both immigrants from the British Isles who were central party leaders, were the outspoken anti-war leaders. In September 1914, Bunting and a small group of oppositionists to British imperialism in the South African Labour Party formed the “War on War League”. They were not pacifists but revolutionary defeatists. They called for socialist revolution to bring down all contenders in the imperialist carving up of the world. After leaving the Labour Party, they formed the International Socialist League (ISL). Bunting immediately made the link between working class internationalism and solidarity with the non-whites of South Africa. Their solidarity with the struggles of coloureds, blacks and Indians in many ways had made them as anathema to the Labour

Party as their anti-war positions.

They distributed works of Marx, Engels and Daniel De Leon, a leading American Marxist. Even before the October 1917 Revolution in Russia, their newspaper enthusiastically cited German revolutionary Karl Liebknecht and comrades in Russia as fellow opponents of the imperialist war. In September 1915, they put out propaganda on the need for a new International. They were ignorant of the struggles by Lenin within the Zimmerwald conference for an anti-imperialist opposition to the war. At their first conference in January 1916, they voted to affiliate with the Zimmerwaldian International Socialist Commission in Switzerland as a manifestation of the beginning of a new International.

Simultaneously, Bunting confronted the new group with the race question in South Africa. It was and continued to be the key test of whether they had broken from the white supremacist programme of the Labour Party. Bunting proposed that the League “affirm that the emancipation of the working class requires the abolition of all forms of native indenture, compound and passport systems; and the lifting of the native worker to the political and industrial status of the white” (quoted in Allison Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution: A Life of Sidney Bunting, 1873-1936* [Pickering & Chatto, 2007]). But at this meeting Bunting’s motion was amended by others in the group to include a reactionary call for preventing the increase of numbers of black wage workers, and this version passed.

Bunting and Jones, as leaders and editors of the ISL, continually carried on a fight to incorporate demands for blacks among their small membership. In their newspaper *The International*, Jones wrote:

“If the League deal resolutely in consonance with socialist principles with the native question, it will succeed in shaking South African capitalism to its foundations. Then, and not till then shall we be able to talk about the South African proletariat in International relations. Not till we free the Native can we hope to free the white.”

—“The Parting of the Ways”, 1 October 1915 (reprinted in *South African Communists Speak, 1915-1980* [Inkululeko Publications, 1981])

Bunting and Jones were often alone. The ISL invited black men and leaders of the Native Congress to ISL meetings, which led them to get expelled from the Labour Party Trades Hall in late 1917. Bunting used the expulsion as an opportunity to denounce the racist Labourites. He hated and condemned all who called themselves socialists and claimed to support the 1917 Russian Revolution, but did not support black African struggle. In April 1919 he wrote in *The International*: “It is humiliating to have to keep on emphasising that the essence of the Labour movement is Solidarity, without which it cannot win. The outstanding characteristic of the capitalist system in South Africa being its Native labour, the outstanding movement of the country must clearly be the movement of its Native labourers” (quoted in Edward Roux, *S.P. Bunting: A Political Biography* [Mayibuye Books, 1993]).

Through the ISL conferences of this period and the early 1920s Bunting and Jones wrote articles and repeatedly introduced motions and theses calling for special attention to black workers in all sorts of ways: for classes to be instituted, for leaflets to be addressed to them, for incorporating demands for the right to vote, organise, end pass laws, etc. In early 1919 the ISL published a leaflet written by Jones titled

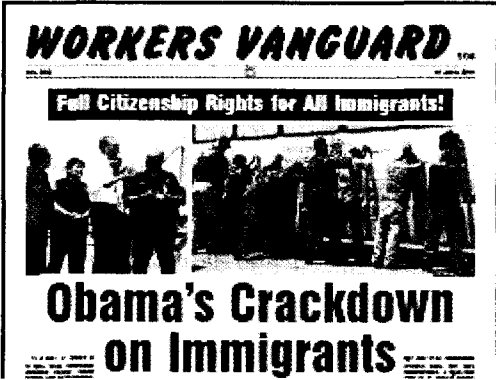
“The Bolsheviks are Coming”, which was translated into Zulu and Sotho. He combined solidarity with the Bolshevik Revolution with the necessity to emancipate the black workers—he ended by saying that this is Bolshevism—that black and white workers combine in one organisation irrespective of craft, colour or creed. In Jones and Bunting’s break from social democracy to international working class revolution, they applied their understanding of Marxism to the inseparable fight for black liberation and socialist revolution in South Africa.

The pages of *The International*, the ISL newspaper, were filled with solidarity with the Russian Revolution. Jones was prescient in March 1917 when he wrote about the February Russian Revolution that overthrew the Tsar. He hailed the Russian workers as the vanguard of world revolution: “this is a bourgeois revolution, but arriving when the night of capitalism is far spent. It cannot be a mere repetition of previous revolutions” (“170 Million Recruits”, *The International*, 23 March 1917). They serialised the manifesto of the First Congress of the Communist International in 1919 and they sought to affiliate with the Third International born out of the workers revolution.

In 1919 Bunting wrote a scathing denunciation of the Johannesburg white municipal workers strike which the workers called the “Johannesburg soviet”. He called it ironically a “White ‘Soviet’”, and attacked it for its racist hypocritical indifference to black workers. In February 1920 some 70 000 black miners went on strike, and Bunting wrote appeals to white workers to support their struggle.

The Industrial Workers of Africa

One other effort of the ISL I want to mention before I get on to the formation of the CPSA is the Industrial Workers of Africa (IWA), founded in October 1917 and modelled on the American syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). The slogan of this all-in industrial organisation became “*Sifuna Zonke*” (“We want all”). They distributed their leaflets in Zulu and Sotho. As described by Jones in his March 1921 report to the Comintern, “Communism in South Africa”: “The native workers of the IWA quickly grasped the



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difference between their trade union and the Congress [ANC] and waged a merciless war of invective at the joint meetings of their Union with the Congress against the black-coated respectables of the Congress” (reprinted in *South African Communists Speak*).

In this period they also planned to publish in Hindi and Tamil in Durban, and they organised coloured garment workers in Kimberley. One of these people in Kimberley was Johnny Gomas, who later became a Cape Town union organiser and leader of the Communist Party.

James P. Cannon, a founder of the American Communist Party and later Trotskyist leader, makes the point in *The First Ten Years of American Communism* (1962) that it took the intervention of the Comintern under Lenin to force the American communists to take up the black question. Cannon says that the best of the early American socialists, Eugene Debs, could only say that the Socialist Party was “the party of the whole working class, regardless of color”. It took the authority of the Russian Revolution to fight with the American communists against their “colour blindness” and to pay attention to the special oppression of blacks, just as the Bolsheviks had championed oppressed nationalities. Armed with the lessons of the Russian Revolution, the American communists took up black oppression as a special question of American capitalism, and they became the foremost champions of black liberation, and recruited blacks to the party.

During the course of the rise of American capitalism, the origins of black oppression in chattel slavery led to blacks becoming a race-colour caste. This is very different from South Africa where black oppression originated in colonial subjugation and national oppression. However, the comparison I want to make is that the assimilation of the lessons of the Russian Revolution would have directly guided the early CPSA. Jones, Bunting and later Eddie Roux were inspired by the Russian Revolution. Although they were physically distant from the Comintern, they grasped the centrality of the fight against black oppression, and this manifested itself in their perseverance in making the Communist Party a mass black party. But they never developed a theoretical framework to this question as it applied to South Africa. And it became more and more impossible for them to develop a programme as the Comintern degenerated into more a tool of the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy rather than an organising centre for world revolution, as it was under Lenin and Trotsky.

Founding of the CPSA

In January 1920, the ISL resolved to affiliate with the Third International and sent their rules and constitution to “convince you that our policy is on all fours with that of Communist parties of Europe and elsewhere” (quoted in *South African Communists Speak*). Apparently the application was read and applauded at the Second Congress of the Comintern.

In 1921 they pulled together various groupings from Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg and other places and formed the Communist Party. Their membership was almost all English-speaking immigrants. They debated adopting the “21 Conditions” of the Second Congress of the Comintern. Their agreement with the Comintern’s programmatic conditions for entry caused some of the syndicalists and others who refused to support the dictatorship of the proletariat to part ways.

Jones’s “Communism in South Africa” was presented on behalf of the ISL and used as the basic report on South Africa for the Third Congress of the Comintern in June 1921, which he attended. Jones initiated a motion to devote serious attention to the Negro question as a separate question of importance.

The report reflects his sensitivity to the horrendous conditions of blacks. He tries to inform the Comintern of the unique social and political groupings that make up the country. Jones denounces the Native Congress for its timid pro-government programme and its fear of the masses, and predicts that class-based organisations will dominate in South Africa. The “national and class interests of the natives cannot be distinguished the one from the other”. What comes out strongly is Jones’s desire to bring the question of black oppression to the forefront of the International. He appeals for reinforcements, and for the South African movement to come more into the purview of the Third International. He writes: “The white movement dominates our attention, because the native workers’ movement moves only spasmodically and is neglected. It requires a special department, with native linguists and newspapers. All of which require large funds, which are not available.” His final remarks are that “African natives are ripe for the message of the Communist International”.

The party remained divided as to whether their purpose should be to address white workers and about admitting black members. After Jones left South Africa in 1920 to spend his final days in the Soviet Union, Bunting continued almost alone to push the party toward the black masses.

In October 1922 Bunting wrote a document called “The ‘Colonial’ Labour Front” (reprinted in *South Africa’s Radical Tradition: A Documentary History*, Volume 1, edited by Allison Drew [Mayibuye Books, 1996]). It takes on the relation of national oppression to class based on the theses of the Second Congress of the Communist International. This document tries to explain how the bourgeoisie splits the workers of the imperialist countries from workers in the colonial countries, that racism has an economic basis. And he argues that the task of the communist parties is to bridge the divisions between white and black labour, between the workers of the imperialist and colonial countries. He says that national liberation struggles must not “postpone” labour action. Particularly in places like South Africa there is no real national liberation movement or peasant movement to link up with. He quotes from the Supplementary Theses on the National Question of the Second Congress (1920): “we must in any case struggle against control by bourgeois democratic national movements over the mass action of poor and ignorant peasants and workers for their liberation from all sorts of exploitation.”

The 1922 Rand Revolt

The newly founded CPSA had not completely broken from the Labour Party. Bunting and Jones as well still saw the militant white miners as strategic to the South African revolution. The young party was immediately faced with an enormous and contradictory class battle on the Rand mines. The 1922 ten-week strike of white miners was a hard-fought battle in defence of the racist colour bar, the reservation of higher-paid job classifications for whites. Miners seized towns and carried out armed combat with the police and army. Four strikers were hanged, and three of them went to

the gallows singing “The Red Flag”. Aerial artillery was used against striking workers. The Jan Smuts government ruthlessly crushed the strike.

The strike fundamentally had a reactionary purpose—to preserve the colour bar in mining. The ostensible reason for the strike was in defence of skilled miners who had been retrenched, but everyone knew this was part of the drive to replace these privileged white workers with super-exploited black labour. Back in 1907 when Keir Hardie, a Scottish miners’ leader, visited South Africa, he was pelted when he raised the basic demand that white unions should be opened to the blacks on the basis of equal pay for equal work. White workers’ consciousness had not changed much from that time, but the mine owners were more determined now that falling gold prices required increasing the rate of exploitation by hiring black labour.

The strike had various leaderships, and one of them was headquartered in the offices of the Communist Party led by Bill Andrews, a long-time union leader and party founder. This included expelled union leaders who considered themselves Marxists. There was a Commando faction led by Afrikaner miners modelled on the Commando units of the Voortrekkers who terrorised and murdered blacks and Indians. At a march one could see a banner, “Workers of the World Fight and Unite for a White S.A.” (*Class and Colour in South Africa*).

It is interesting to note that Abdurahman of the APO and Clements Kadalie of the Industrial and Commercial Workers’ Union (ICU), the two most prominent political leaders of the coloured and black masses at the time, both rightly condemned the racism of the strike, but coming from petty-bourgeois perspectives, they both directed their appeals to the racist Smuts government to increase their control and repression of the unions.

Eddie Roux wrote that Bunting, who had always been a regular soap boxer, never spoke publicly throughout the strike at the hundreds of meetings, and walked around muttering criticisms. The CPSA propaganda condemned attacks on black Africans. At the same time, Bunting and the CPSA didn’t directly attack the colour bar regulations, rationalising that the rules kept up overall wage levels and the fight should be for improving the wages of Africans.

In January 1923 the Fourth Congress of the Comintern sent a protest statement on the execution of the four strikers. They stated that the task was to “draw the native workers too into the struggle against South African Capitalism, and thereby ensure common and final victory” (reprinted in *South African Communists Speak*).

After the Rand Strike

In 1923 the Afrikaner Nationalist Party of Barry Hertzog and the Labour Party made an alliance to defeat the Smuts government which became known as the “Pact”. The Labour Party promised to drop any mention of socialism, and the Nationalists promised to drop their call for secession and an independent Afrikaner republic. What they had in common was white supremacism. To get a flavour of this electoral alliance, in the midst of the campaign, the Labour Party was calling for the expulsion of Asians.

From Moscow, Jones advocated a united front with the Labour Party. In this way they would be part of the anti-Smuts alliance. He argued with Bunting at the time of the Fourth Congress of the Comintern in November 1922 that this

would be an application of the anti-imperialist united front as put forward in the “Theses on the Eastern Question”. Bunting brought back from the Congress the importance of fighting for “immediate demands” and for the “united front”. Bunting argued for Comintern discipline and for carrying out the decisions of the Comintern in South Africa, and argued against sectarianism. In keeping with such arguments, the CPSA voted to apply for affiliation to the Labour Party and to support its electoral alliance with the Nationalists.

There was some resistance to this line in the Western Cape where the party had more links with black and coloured labour, but they fell in line. This strategy of the CPSA had to repel black militants. After the victory of the Pact alliance at the polls, the CPSA quickly withdrew their support, and called for Labour Party delegates to oppose putting Creswell and Tommy Boydell, Labour Party leaders, in the new cabinet. The new government as promised passed yet more laws to reinforce the colour bar and further exclude blacks.

In the article “Permanent Revolution vs the ‘Anti-Imperialist United Front’: The Origins of Chinese Trotskyism” (*Spartacist* [English edition] No. 53, Summer 1997), we criticise the ambiguity of the slogan for the “anti-imperialist united front” put forward in 1922 by the Fourth Congress, as easily interpreted as a two-stage programme for revolution in the colonial countries and as a call to ally with bourgeois nationalist forces. However, in the *Spartacist* article we also make the point that it was a sharp descent from these unclear formulations and opportunist appetites to the full-blown betrayal later of the 1925-27 Chinese revolution under Stalin and Bukharin. The South African party vastly misread the white miners’ anger coming off the smashing of the Rand strike. Their continued support to the Labour Party demonstrated their continued ambivalence toward the black proletariat.

In 1924 the CPSA national conference debated entering the Labour Party once again. Arguments based on interpretation of Comintern tactics that applied to Europe—where there were mass social-democratic parties—were used to motivate entry. By this time, the Rand strike and the Pact government had had an impact on Bunting and the party, as both made clearer that both the English-speaking and Afrikaner workers were tightly in the grip of their racist and nationalist leadership. Bunting and Roux argued against entry and that the main task was to take their programme to the black masses. This time they won. Some older members in the right wing fell away, and this cleared the way for the party to turn its face to the black proletariat.

The new youth group, the Young Communist League of the CPSA (YCL), most directly challenged the old status quo of the CPSA. In 1921 Eddie Roux, one of the first Afrikaners and native-born South Africans in the party, founded the youth group. As Eddie Roux came more under the influence of Bunting, he became an advocate for recruiting blacks to the party. Roux became a regular speaker for the Communist Party at ICU meetings. The ICU, which I will get back to later, was growing rapidly at this time. When Roux argued in early 1924 that they must recruit black youth and they must set up a Cape Town branch so they could recruit black and coloured youth, he found himself in a small minority. Roux appealed to the Young Communist International, and he was backed up, and the policy was implemented. The YCL passed a motion stating that the main task of the YCL of South Africa is the organisation of the native youth.

They recruited two blacks early on: Stanley Silwana and

Thomas Mbeki. Trade unionist Johnny Gomas, who became a long-time leader of the CPSA, heard Roux speak at a YCL meeting in Cape Town in 1924 and joined the party. Bunting had found new bloc partners with the new youth. Also, the Cape Town branch was more determined to recruit coloureds and blacks where racism was slightly more modulated than in the raw Rand area.

The ICU

There was tremendous political activity among the black workers in the mid to late 1920s. The ICU was the first mass popular semi-political union organisation of black and coloured workers. Its influence far overshadowed that of the Native Congress in its time. The development of the ICU reflected the eagerness of black workers to organise in self-defence. It was organised by Clements Kadalie who came from Nyasaland, today's Malawi. He organised the black Cape Town dockworkers in 1919, and the ICU soon grew into the main political representation of blacks in South Africa—organising city and farm labourers all the way to Durban.

The ICU was wracked with internal contradictions because it was a massive populist organisation. Kadalie endorsed the Afrikaner Nationalist leader General Barry Hertzog because he sent greetings and a donation to the ICU. Kadalie looked to British trade union bureaucrats and liberals, and by the end of the 1920s the organisation was disintegrating. In December 1926 he expelled the Communist Party members in the organisation, partly to please his newly acquired British liberal patrons. CPers had entered the ICU to recruit out of it, and in 1923 Eddie Roux helped set up the Johannesburg ICU office. Young Communist League member Thomas Mbeki became the Transvaal secretary of the ICU. Among those expelled along with Mbeki in 1926 were Johnny Gomas and Jimmy La Guma, who had joined the CPSA while in the ICU and were the Cape Town ICU leadership. By the time they were expelled, the CPSA was so popular that several branches protested their expulsion.

Night School and the Unions

The Ferreirstown night school, set up in 1925, was run by T.W. Thibedi, the first black member of the ISL and later a CPSAer. It had its origins dating back to the days of the ISL. By 1928, it had over 100 students and taught literacy with the use of the *ABC of Communism* along with other basic subjects. The school had been moved to a bigger building and was now run by a retired school teacher and militant atheist. In order to avoid arrest past nine o'clock, the teachers had to manufacture fake passes for all the students.

Much of the CPSA's work required Bunting's legal skills—he was for years the best-known lawyer in the country defending blacks against state repression. One story from this period of rapid black recruitment is interesting: Thibedi went to address a meeting of 1 000 in Potchefstroom. He was arrested, and the entire crowd attempted to follow him to the court. Thibedi was charged with inciting hostility between the races. Bunting defended him, and an unusually liberal judge acquitted him. The CPSA held an immediate rally to celebrate the victory. A group of whites attacked the celebrating crowd, including attacking the white communists. In response to seeing that a Communist lawyer could get a black man out of jail, and then witnessing the same white communists being attacked by other white men, most of the residents of the

location decided en masse to join the Communist Party.

The CPSA paper was renamed the *South African Worker* and had more than half its articles in Xhosa, Zulu and Sotho. The paper also serialised an adapted version of the *ABC of Communism*, the book used in the Soviet Union to teach Marxism and literacy. In the late 1920s, the CPSA finally made breakthroughs in both organising black unions and joint struggles of white and black workers. They formed the Non-European Federation of Trade Unions in the Witwatersrand, and membership in the unions and the party grew rapidly. A whole new layer of black leadership was brought in, and the party was transforming itself into a majority black party of a couple of thousand. The South African party had some all-black branches. They had organised industrial unions with black leadership. The party had made a tremendous leap.

The Sixth Congress of the Comintern

One cannot evaluate this period without the knowledge that a fierce battle was going on in the Comintern that impacted this small and remote party struggling to apply a revolutionary programme. In economically backward Russia there was a political counterrevolution in 1923-24, which had its material basis in the destruction of industry and the death of many of the most politically advanced workers during the Civil War, combined with the defeat of revolutionary opportunities abroad, especially the 1923 German Revolution. A parasitic bureaucratic caste led by Stalin usurped political power from the proletariat. Stalin's rationalisation for defeatism and abandonment of international revolution, "Socialism in One Country", ultimately dictated the strategy for the South African revolution, and that it would require the working class to be politically subordinated to a so-called "anti-imperialist united front" with the national bourgeoisie of the colonial countries. Supporters of Trotsky's Left Opposition, many of whom were arrested and ultimately murdered by Stalin's police, fought against the degeneration of the revolution and for international proletarian revolution necessary to build socialism.

The ramifications of Stalin's class-collaborationist policies were tragically illustrated in China. In this largely peasant country the working class was highly concentrated in a few key cities like Shanghai and by 1925, inspired by the Russian Revolution, it had begun to seek the road to power. But the Comintern leadership under Bukharin and Stalin was abandoning its revolutionary purpose. Over Trotsky's objections, the Chinese Communist Party was subordinated to the nationalist party, the Guomindang. In 1927 the revolution was crushed. Out of this decisive historical test, Trotsky generalised the perspective of permanent revolution. This was codified in *The Third International After Lenin* (1929) and later in *The Permanent Revolution*. In so doing, he both incorporated and transcended the evolved communist position on the colonial question as codified at the Communist International's First and Second Congresses. [For more background, readers are referred to the ICL pamphlet *The Development and Extension of Leon Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution*.]

The African National Congress (as the South African Native National Congress renamed itself in 1923) was the leadership of the only non-white petty-bourgeois nationalist movement in South Africa. It held disdain for workers. The ANC had consistently looked to British imperialism for their favours. They had no particular interest in the struggles of the

black proletariat. J.T. Gumede in this period was the ANC leader most supportive of the Comintern. He travelled the country after visiting the USSR to popularise the idea of communism. His report to ANC chiefs in 1928, which referred to the overthrow of the Tsar in 1917, caused the tribal leaders to express alarm that they too would be killed if there was a Bolshevik Revolution in South Africa. The degenerating Comintern courted the ANC as part of its appeal to nationalist leaders.

In February 1927, the Comintern organised the “Congress against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism” in Brussels. This conference was attended by Jawaharlal Nehru, Indian bourgeois nationalist leader; Lemine Senghor, Senegalese Pan-Africanist; Messali Hadj, Algerian nationalist leader who ended up supporting [French imperialist ruler Charles] de Gaulle’s colonialist reform schemes in 1958 in the midst of the war of independence; and Mohammed Hatta who became an anti-communist Indonesian nationalist. The Congress read out greetings from the widow of Sun Yat-sen of the Guomindang of China just as the Shanghai proletariat and their Communist Party leadership were about to be slaughtered by her party. The Stalinised Comintern had made Chiang Kai-shek an honorary member of the Comintern, thus cementing the subordination of the Chinese CP to these butchers.

James La Guma attended the Congress as representative of the CPSA. Afterward La Guma travelled to Moscow and participated in discussions with Bukharin and other CI leaders. A resolution passed by the Executive Committee of the CI (ECCI) laid out the same two-stage revolution strategy for South Africa that led to annihilation of the working-class base of the Chinese CP.

The ECCI’s resolution for the South African party, with the central slogan of “an independent Native republic as a stage towards a workers’ and peasants’ government”, was referred to the section for discussion. This was, in fact, the application of the disastrous Stalinist Chinese strategy to South African soil: that only an anti-imperialist capitalist revolution led by the nationalist petty bourgeoisie was on the agenda. The dictatorship of the proletariat is not on the agenda and must wait.

Bunting and his wife Rebecca and Edward Roux attended the 1928 Sixth Congress of the Comintern as delegates representing the majority of the party which opposed the new slogan. The Buntings found that the whole atmosphere of the Comintern had changed between the Fourth Congress they attended and the Sixth—the Fourth Congress had a spirit of hope and comradeship. They came to the Sixth Congress excited that they could report that the party was now largely black African. Out of 1 750 members, 1 600 were black. However, they were bluntly greeted with “We are going to attack you”, and were cold-shouldered by what Roux called “a hard-bitten gang of bureaucrats”. Bunting, who had fought for more than ten years to transform the party into majority black, was dismissed as a “white chauvinist”. Roux says he ran into Trotskyist sympathisers at the Congress and heard cynical statements of delegates that Trotsky was right on China, but Trotsky was no longer a Communist.

Bukharin sycophants Jay Lovestone, a careerist in the US party, and John Pepper, a Hungarian communist who had been sent to the US, are mentioned as demonstratively ignoring Bunting’s speeches in the commission. Pepper was the major advocate of a farmer-labour party policy in the US CP—basically a two-class workers and peasants party for

America. James W. Ford, a leading black American delegate, ignored them.

Bunting spoke against the “native republic” slogan, arguing that black African peasants have been drawn into the working class where they are most militant, i.e., they are proletarianised. Industry in South Africa is far advanced for a colonial country, and so consequently is the working class. Bunting objected to the fact that the draft programme of the CI referred only to “colonial masses” and not the colonial proletariat. There are *classes* in the colonial world. We do not have to wait for capitalism to develop; it has been thrust upon us. He begged for more Comintern attention to South Africa, and less ignorance of the particular conditions in different colonies of the African continent. He said in his 20 August 1928 speech at the Congress: “the class struggle is practically coincident and simultaneous with the national struggle” (*South Africa’s Radical Tradition*). Roux also argued at the Congress that it is not the task for the party to artificially build a nationalist movement: “There is no need to go through the laborious and (from the point of view of the revolution) dangerous process of building up a native bourgeois nationalist movement the leadership of which must be displaced before the proletarian revolution can be achieved” (*South Africa’s Radical Tradition*).

Bunting also argued that the slogan would alienate white workers, that either the neutrality or occasional support of white labour would be of great value as a shield against state repression for the revolutionary native movement. Such arguments undermined his valid arguments against two-stage revolution in South Africa. All the CP’s actions on the ground at home were toward Africanising the party. But Bunting did not have Lenin’s understanding that the struggle for national liberation using the methods of proletarian class struggle could be a powerful motor force for socialist revolution in South Africa. So he had nothing to counterpose to the Stalinist programme of politically chaining the black masses to the nationalist leadership.

It didn’t really matter what Bunting and Roux argued about the class forces or the status of the national movement in South Africa. Hammering out a programme for revolution was not the purpose of this Congress. In evaluating the debates with Bunting and Roux at the Sixth Congress, you have to keep in mind that really what is going on is the increasingly conservative Comintern clubbing any potential opposition to the nationally limited programme of “Socialism in One Country” and class peace with the world bourgeoisie. The Bukharinites (although Bukharin was deposed soon after this Congress) were not looking for a correct political programme for the South Africa; they were looking for followers who would toe the line of the Comintern leadership. Thus the Comintern resolved that: “Our aim should be to transform the African National Congress into a fighting nationalist revolutionary organisation against the white bourgeoisie and the British imperialists, based upon the trade unions, peasant organisations, etc., developing systematically the leadership of the workers and the Communist Party in this organisation” (Resolution on “The South African Question” adopted by the ECCI following the Sixth Congress, reprinted in *South African Communists Speak*).

Roux refers to a document that was circulating among certain delegates at the Congress—the first and third parts of *The Third International After Lenin*. Trotsky made the point that the International had no programme; it had rationalisations for defeats and generalities to cover its zigzag

policies. The Stalinists had replaced the struggle to win the working class organised in the unions to the communist party by the opportunist utilisation of the ready-made apparatus of the trade union bureaucracy exemplified in England where the Soviet government maintained a bloc with the labour leadership just as they were selling out a general strike, or in the so-called “revolutionary national bourgeoisie” as in China—in both cases ending in defeat for the workers and oppressed. Trotsky was launching an international struggle to win the communists back to the programme that had made the Bolshevik Revolution.

Seven years later, Trotsky wrote a letter to the fledgling Left Oppositionists of the Workers’ Party of South Africa in response to their draft theses. He took issue with their argument that “the slogan of a ‘Black Republic’ is *equally* harmful for the revolutionary cause as is the slogan of a ‘South Africa for the whites’.” Based on the application of permanent revolution, Trotsky wrote that the character of the proletarian revolution in South Africa will be one of national liberation of the black masses as well:

“Three-quarters of the population of South Africa (almost six million of the almost eight million total) is composed of non-Europeans. A victorious revolution is unthinkable without the awakening of the native masses. In its turn, that will give them what they are so lacking today—confidence in their strength, a heightened personal consciousness, a cultural growth.

“Under these conditions the South African Republic will emerge first of all as a ‘black’ republic; this does not exclude, of course, either full equality for the whites or brotherly relations between the two races—depending mainly on the conduct of the whites. But it is entirely obvious that the predominant majority of the population, liberated from slavish dependence, will put a certain imprint on the state.

“Insofar as a victorious revolution will radically change the relation not only between the classes but also between the races and will assure to the blacks that place in the state that corresponds to their numbers, thus far will the *social* revolution in South Africa also have a *national* character.

“We have not the slightest reason to close our eyes to this side of the question or to diminish its significance. On the contrary, the proletarian party should in words and in deeds openly and boldly take the solution of the national (racial) problem in its hands.

“Nevertheless, the proletarian party can and must solve the national problem by *its own* methods.

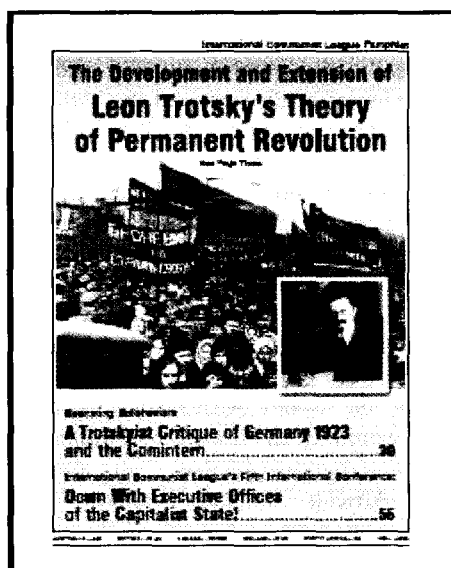
“The historical weapon of national liberation can be only the *class struggle*.”

—Leon Trotsky, “On the South African Theses” (20 April 1935), *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1934-35)* (Pathfinder Press, 1971)

Bunting and Roux never found their way to Trotsky’s Left Opposition although other communists did join Trotsky’s Left Opposition and the Fourth International. Today we Trotskyists of Spartacist South Africa are the continuity of Lenin and Trotsky’s party. We fight for a black-centred workers government as part of a socialist federation of Southern Africa. This is directly counterposed to the illusion fostered by the South African Communist Party today that the “national democratic revolution” has achieved a “rainbow nation” based on the ANC’s celebrated doctrine of “non-racialism”. We call for workers to break with the bourgeois Tripartite Alliance—a class-collaborationist nationalist popular front that ties the working class to the capitalist rulers.

Just a few final notes. Jones, always sickly, spent his last days in Moscow providing the invaluable service of translating parts of the early works of Lenin into English, including popularising *What Is To Be Done*. He also continued to write on the black question, and Africa and world imperialism. He died in 1924. Bunting stayed in the CPSA. He carried on a difficult and courageous election campaign in Thembuland with Rebecca Bunting and their comrade Gana Makabeni as Xhosa interpreter. They attempted for the first time to bring the communist programme into the rural reserves whilst being watched by police and opposed by the Native chiefs living on government salaries. Bunting and others were purged in 1931 as the party came under the direct manipulation of Stalin’s fake “left turn”, and he died some years later, still a loyal communist. Eddie Roux repudiated his communist politics, became an academic and did a service by writing *Time Longer Than Rope* and *S.P. Bunting: A Political Biography*.

The early South African Communist Party was a mix of comrades in motion, grappling with a rapidly changing reality, and wracked with contradictions. There was an element in this party that was revolutionary internationalist, trying to apply Marxism to South Africa, and particularly to the question of ending black oppression. They were inspired and transformed by the Russian Revolution, but, in the end, their struggle to sort out a strategy and programme for black liberation and the dictatorship of the proletariat was cut short as the Comintern they looked to was strangled by Stalin and his heirs. It is the revolutionary Trotskyists of Spartacist South Africa who are carrying forward the necessary fight for the programme of proletarian revolution in Southern Africa. ■



ICL Pamphlet: *The Development and Extension of Leon Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution* (R4, 56 pages)

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Miliband's Labour: No Alternative to Cameron-Clegg Britain: For a Class-Struggle Fight Against Fees and Cuts!

The following article is reprinted from Workers Hammer No. 214 (Spring 2011), newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain, section of the International Communist League.

In the final months of 2010 the country was rocked by furious student protests against the Tory-Liberal Democrat coalition government's attacks on university education. Tuition fees for students at England's universities will be allowed to rise to £9000 [R99 000], three times the existing level, while university budgets have been slashed by 40 per cent. The education maintenance allowance, a miserable payment of up to £30 [R330] per week on which seven out of ten college students depend, is being scrapped. The anger among students in universities and colleges exploded on the streets on 10 November 2010, when some 50,000 students marched in London against the new legislation. A section of the demonstration broke away and briefly occupied Tory headquarters, chanting "Tory scum" and vowing: "This is only the beginning". In the weeks to follow, students occupied campuses in several cities and mobilised in their thousands in London on 9 December, the day of the vote on university fees in the House of Commons.

Tory prime minister David Cameron and his Liberal Democrat coalition partners narrowly won the vote, despite a rebellion among Liberal MPs. Having pledged before the election to oppose any rise in tuition fees, the Liberal Democrats are now hated and the party leader is derided on demonstrations with the chant "Nick Clegg, we know you—

Defend Student Protesters!

you're a f---ing Tory too!" Despite the fact that it was a Labour government that introduced student fees in 1998, Labour MPs on this occasion voted against the

Con-Dem fee increase.

The 9 December demonstration saw thousands of students, from universities, schools and colleges, marching to London's Parliament Square. Despite a gargantuan police operation on the city streets that evening, students in Regent Street chanced upon the Rolls-Royce carrying Prince Charles and his wife Camilla sitting in traffic. Demonstrating more apparent sense of British history than the schools might be expected to provide, protesters recalled the fate of Charles I and chanted "Off with their heads!" Students spattered the royal car with paint and seemingly gave the Duchess a poke in the ribs while they were at it.

The police, who came under heavy criticism for not protecting the heir to the throne, and previously for the fact that students got into the Tory Party headquarters, are now carrying out a witch hunt against protesters. Hundreds of students have been arrested and the numbers continue to rise. Outrageously, on 12 January an 18-year-old protester, Edward Woollard, was jailed for 32 months for throwing a fire extinguisher from the roof of the Tory building, hitting *nobody*. Criminal charges remain against many of the other demonstrators. **Free Edward Woollard! Drop all charges against student protesters!**

Sentencing Woollard, judge Geoffrey Rivlin said those who "indulge in serious violence must expect a lengthy



Peter Macdiarmid/Getty Images



Matt Dunham/AP

London student demonstration, 9 December 2010.

sentence". For students who are new to political protest, lesson number one is that the good judge's words do not apply to the police, the actual source of serious violence on the demonstrations. The police "kettled" protesters for hours in freezing conditions, terrorised protesters by lunging at them on horseback and knocked student Alfie Meadows unconscious on 9 December, causing life-threatening brain injuries. That same evening Jody McIntyre, a young protester, was yanked from his wheelchair by four riot cops and dragged across the street.

Terror and violence is routine for the police, who killed Ian Tomlinson during the April 2009 protests against the G20 summit; who executed Brazilian electrician Jean Charles de Menezes on the Tube in 2005 in the name of the racist "war on terror" and who daily harass black and Asian youth using "stop and search" powers. The police are at the core of the capitalist state—which also includes the courts, prisons and military—the purpose of which is to maintain through violence the system of exploitation of the working class by the bourgeoisie.

Student organisations are building for demonstrations against student fees called for 29 January in London and Manchester, which are backed by some of the country's largest unions, including the civil service Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union, Unite and the GMB. As revolutionary Marxists, we fight for free, good quality education for all! For open admissions and a cost-of-living allowance for students! The question is how to get this. The money and resources exist for funding of schools, university education, hospitals and other infrastructure that is being gutted, but to seize that wealth requires breaking the power of the bourgeoisie. The Spartacist League/Britain intervenes into these protests with the understanding that the attacks on education, as well as attacks on working people, racism and exploitation, are endemic to the capitalist system. We seek to win students to our programme for the overturn of that system through socialist revolution.

What Programme to Fight Budget Cuts?

The coalition government's budget cuts amount to a breathtaking attack on the living standards of working people, the poor and elderly, as well as youth. Across Europe and in the US, the capitalist ruling classes are seizing on the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression to slash jobs and to demand massive concessions on working hours, wages and pensions. Any capitalist government in Britain—whether Labour, Tory and/or Liberal Democrat—will try to restore the "health" of the system by bleeding working people; while of course cuts in company profits and the stratospheric bonuses paid to bank executives are off limits. At the mere suggestion that a "mansion tax" be imposed, Blairite Peter Mandelson cried, "surely the rich have suffered enough!" Indeed, some of Britain's richest have been reduced to asking for handouts from the state: it recently came to light that in 2004 the Queen turned to a public fund earmarked for "schools, hospitals and low-income families" to help her in the onerous task of heating Buckingham Palace! In these hard times, Her Majesty cut corners by eliminating Christmas luncheon for the palace staff.

What's needed is a class-struggle fight to defend the working class and poor against these attacks. Winning decent healthcare and quality education for the working class, including its black and Asian minority components, requires

hard struggle against the capitalist class, a handful of people whose obscene wealth is gained from exploiting the working class and whose rule is reinforced by racial and other forms of social oppression. Students themselves have no social power and therefore must mobilise behind the organised working class, particularly the public sector unions, which have the social power and a vital interest in fighting against all the attacks on social services, including on state education.

But to engage the strength of the unions in an effective battle against the government's cuts requires a struggle against the pro-Labour politics of the trade union bureaucracy who are committed to defending the interests of the British capitalist rulers. What's needed is a new class-struggle leadership that will fight—in the face of capitalist austerity—for the basic needs of the working class. Forging such a leadership is key to building a revolutionary workers party.

Refurbishing Labour's Image

The student protests have sparked a debate about the role of the trade unions in fighting the budget cuts. Len McCluskey, newly elected head of Unite, said that the students had "put the trade union movement on the spot" and that the unions "have to be preparing for battle". The aim of this "battle" is to channel discontent among students and workers into support for a Labour government. McCluskey hopes that "Ed Miliband is going to continue his welcome course of drawing a line under Labour's Blairite past" and warns that: "These are Con-Dem cuts, and this is a capitalist crisis. An attempt to blame Labour local authorities for the problem is a shortcut to splitting our movement and letting the government off the hook" (guardian.co.uk, 19 December 2010).

Reformist organisations such as the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) tail the trade union bureaucracy and share the same goal: to pressure the Labour Party—which before the general election promised cuts "deeper and tougher" than Margaret Thatcher's in the 1980s; which during 13 years in office carried out imperialist butchery in Afghanistan and Iraq and racist immigrant-bashing at home.

The SWP backed Labour in the 2010 general election and now runs the National Right to Work coalition, whose prominent slogan is "Break the Con-Dem Coalition!"—a barely disguised appeal for a Labour government (backed by the Liberal Democrats). Last June the SWP provided the Cameron government with a helpful way out of Britain's economic crisis, issuing a glossy "anti-cuts" poster titled "Why There's No Need to Slash Spending". With a series of colourful graphs and pie charts, the SWP demonstrated in regard to the deficit that "we could raise the whole of that every year", merely by taxing the rich, clamping down on tax evaders, and cutting defence spending by scrapping Trident and ending the war in Afghanistan. The SWP calculates that these simple measures would bring £310 billion [R3,4 trillion] to Britain's coffers. Quick—someone alert David Cameron! He should be informed that he needn't throw people out of council housing, raise student fees or threaten workers' livelihoods.

In fact—as Marx and Engels explained over a century and a half ago—the capitalists and their government behave the way they do not because they are ignorant, irrational or simply mean people, but because they must pursue their class interests: maximising profits and all that this entails, which includes securing access to markets and resources through

imperialist butchery abroad and war on working people and minorities at home.

Counterfire, an offshoot of the SWP, together with Workers Power and others are building several “anti-cuts” lash-ups. Despite much grief among themselves about the failure to unite into a single “anti-cuts opposition” the differences are over tactical and organisational questions, not over politics and programme. None of the competing groups has a programme for the overthrow of capitalism. Workers Power, parent of the youth group Revolution, expressed the hopes and dreams of all the Labourite left when they headlined last October: “Ed Miliband elected Labour leader by workers’ votes: Now make him fight!” (Workers Power website, 2 October 2010). Ed Miliband is already fighting: he has told the compliant union leaders that he is opposed to strikes against the cuts and is appalled at the very idea of a strike in London Underground on the day of Prince William’s wedding in April.

Counterfire is heavily involved in the so-called “Coalition of Resistance”, supported by retired Labour MP Tony Benn, darling of the reformists, plus Labour MPs John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn. Also included are Green Party MP Caroline Lucas, filmmaker Ken Loach and author Iain Banks and numerous trade union leaders including Mark Serwotka, leader of the PCS and Bob Crow, general secretary of the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union as well as Len McCluskey. The Coalition of Resistance aims not for the overthrow of capitalism but for “a radical alternative, with the level of determination shown by trade unionists and social movements in Greece and other European countries”.

The mass strike waves in Greece and France last year showed the tremendous social power of the organised working class: both countries were brought to a grinding halt by mass strikes in protest against government austerity. However, these struggles were undermined by the political bankruptcy of their reformist misleaders, who accept the need for capitalist austerity, while seeking to have a say in how and where cuts should be implemented. Like their counterparts in France and Greece, the British reformists are tailing the wretched trade union bureaucracy.

Counterfire invokes the spectre of France in May 1968, “the totemic student struggle, the mark against which all others become judged” (“Where Next for the Student Revolt?”, 23 December 2010). May ’68 was indeed an immense social struggle ignited by student protests that resulted in mass strikes, factory occupations and demonstrations and led to a pre-revolutionary situation in France. The Counterfire article can’t bring itself to utter the words “socialist” or “revolution”, saying instead that “the change of a whole society” was posed in France, and that this “didn’t quite happen, for reasons that still provoke debate”. They don’t explain the reasons this “didn’t quite happen”. In fact, the workers and students were *sold out* by the reformist Communist Party leaders, who called off the strikes for a few crumbs from the capitalists’ table (see *Workers Vanguard* no 972, 21 January).

The Socialist Party-dominated National Shop Stewards Network has launched an “All-Britain anti-cuts campaign”. The politics of the Socialist Party amount to craven reformism, notably on the state. Their position is that the police and prison guards are “workers in uniform”, a flat denial of the Leninist position that the police are a core part of the armed fist of the capitalist state whose purpose is to maintain capitalist rule through repression of the working

class. The Socialist Party is known on the left for pandering to chauvinism and backward consciousness. Grotesquely, these “socialists” played a leading role in the chauvinist strikes against foreign workers at the Lindsey oil refinery in Lincolnshire in 2009 in which the slogan “British jobs for British workers” was prominent. (See “Labourites whitewash chauvinist strikes”, *Workers Hammer* no 206, Spring 2009.)

Reformist politics cannot address any of the fundamental problems facing students today. These were summed up by one of a group of minority youth interviewed by the BBC’s Paul Mason on the 9 December protest, who said: “We’re from the slums of east London. How do they expect us to pay £9,000 for uni fees, and EMA [education maintenance allowance] was the only thing keeping us in college. What’s stopping us from doing drug deals on the streets any more? Nothing.” The willful neglect of education under capitalism hits hardest at the poorest in society, especially ethnic minorities, who are more likely to attend resource-starved and decrepit schools in run-down areas. An authoritative recent study into inequality in Britain showed that:

“children from the poorest families are half as likely to achieve good GCSEs [secondary education certification exams]; black pupils of Caribbean descent are three times more likely to be excluded; four out of five young people with special needs are being bullied; between a quarter and a third of Muslim women have no qualifications.”

—*Guardian*, 10 October 2010

Labour’s much talked about “reforms” in education amounted to a “free-market” bonanza for private companies and an insidious attack on the unions in education. Education services—from teaching to catering to building maintenance and cleaning—were outsourced to private companies. This meant many different employers operating in schools and colleges, many of whom are hostile to the existence of unions. Blair saw the teaching unions as a potential obstacle to his education “reform”, and thus teachers were blamed for schools that were designated as “failing”. Performance-related pay is increasingly used, supposedly to reward good results, but in fact it undermines the national pay scales and national terms and conditions negotiated by the teachers’ unions. Blair’s legacy also includes more “faith schools”, which boost the promotion of anti-scientific religious obscurantism and creationism, and city academies which are all but exempt from local authority control and are decidedly unfriendly to the teachers’ unions.

Labour’s introduction of university fees in 1998 was a massive attack on students from working-class backgrounds. (Two years later the Scottish parliament reversed this in Scottish universities.) However an unprecedented number of students now attend university, in Britain and other advanced capitalist countries. University students in Britain incur huge levels of debt—estimated to average £25,000 [R270 000] but may be as high as £50,000 [R540 000] in London. And despite a vast expansion in the number of working-class students attending higher education, the class divide in education remains as wide as it was decades ago when the eleven-plus examination determined that 80 per cent of the population was unfit for university.

To this day, social class is the single most important factor in determining educational achievement. The class divide persists because under capitalism the education system is tailored to favour the wealthy few. Research shows that students who live in socially deprived areas are less likely to

take A-levels in subjects such as maths and science, while “children from the higher social classes were more likely to opt for subjects such as biology, further maths, English literature and languages” (independent.co.uk, 19 August 2009). In affluent areas such as London’s Kensington and Chelsea, upwards of 80 per cent of children will go to university, a rate which is five times higher than children from poorer regions. Although only seven per cent of all pupils are educated in the elite “public” (private) school system, this sector produces 75 per cent of judges, 70 per cent of finance directors and 55 per cent of solicitors (independent.co.uk, 22 July 2009).

The British ruling class sees little need to educate and train working-class people beyond what is needed for the City, which in the words of *Guardian* columnist Stewart Lansley “has sucked in the pick of Britain’s brightest graduates with some of the best young PhD mathematicians

and physicists behind the fiendishly complex mathematical formula used to run arcane financial instruments” (guardian.co.uk, 27 August 2009).

As working people and students face the hammer blows of the capitalists, the trade union misleaders and their “socialist” lackeys look to Labour to merely mitigate the worst of the assault. This perspective has proven bankrupt over many years, including under old Labour governments in the 1960s and 70s. To begin to address the fundamental problems faced by the multiethnic working class of this country requires a party armed with a programme for socialist revolution to destroy the capitalist state root and branch and replace it with a workers state that will lay the basis for building a socialist society. For that we need a revolutionary workers party—a party like Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolsheviks—which will fight for a workers government. The Spartacist League/Britain seeks to build such a party. Join us! ■

Zimbabwe: Hands Off Leftists, Trade Unionists!

The following joint statement was issued by the Spartacist League/Britain and Spartacist South Africa, sections of the International Communist League, on 27 February 2011.

The Spartacist League/Britain (SL/B) and Spartacist South Africa (SSA) condemn the arrests on 19 February of some 52 trade unionists, students, workers and activists attending a meeting of the International Socialist Organisation of Zimbabwe. We vehemently protest the fact that these men and women were arrested in a raid on a lecture in Harare by police and were detained and tortured. Outrageously, they now face treason charges, which can carry the death penalty, for the simple reason that they organised a meeting in solidarity with the mass mobilisations that overthrew the dictators Mubarak and Ben Ali in Egypt and Tunisia. These arrests are a blatant attempt to suppress protest and strike fear into left organisations who oppose the government. It is in the direct interests of the working class to oppose this naked act of state repression.

As Marxists, the Spartacist League/Britain opposes the sanctions and other machinations practiced by the racist British ruling class against Zimbabwe. From the time of Cecil Rhodes’ bloody quest to establish a “British Africa” from Cairo to the Cape, to the racist “independent” Ian Smith government, to the sanctions against Zimbabwe today, imperialist Britain never hesitated to use bloody force to assert its control and was responsible for the deaths of thousands of black Africans killed during the independence struggle in Zimbabwe.

The present British government led by David Cameron and the Labour regimes that preceded it couldn’t care less what the Robert Mugabe regime does to workers and peasants. Their only concern is that the enormous wealth that is extracted from the exploitation of black labour continues to flow into the coffers of the City of London and Wall Street.

As revolutionary internationalists in South Africa, the dominant regional economic power, SSA fights for solidarity by the South African workers movement with its class brothers and sisters in Zimbabwe and throughout the region. In particular, we fight for the workers to vigorously oppose the South African government’s harassment and threat of impending deportations against hundreds of thousands of Zimbabwean immigrants; we demand full citizenship rights for all immigrants.

We demand the immediate release of the detainees in Zimbabwe and the dropping of all charges. ■

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Defend Libya Against Imperialist Attack!

The following statement was issued on 20 March 2011.

The International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) calls on workers around the world to take a stand for military defense of semicolonial Libya

against the attack begun yesterday by a coalition of rapacious imperialist governments. The French, British and U.S. rulers, in league with other imperialist governments and with the blessings of the sheiks, kings and military bonapartists of the Arab League, wasted not a moment in acting on the green light given by the United Nations Security Council on Thursday to slaughter countless innocent people in the name of “protecting civilians” and ensuring “democracy”. French air strikes were quickly followed by U.S. and British missile attacks, while Egypt’s military regime is providing arms to the Benghazi opposition forces. From Indochina and the Korean peninsula to the U.S.-led occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan today, the “democratic” imperialist rulers wade in the blood of millions upon millions of their victims. Recall that Britain and France historically carried out untold massacres in the Near East, Africa and the Indian subcontinent in order to pursue their colonial subjugation of those areas. Recall that Italy, now providing the use of its air bases for the attack, is responsible for the deaths of up to half the population of Cyrenaica in eastern Libya during its colonial rule prior to World War II.

Prior to the current attack, the conflict in Libya had taken the form of a low-intensity civil war, heavily overlaid by tribal and regional divisions, between the Tripoli-centered government of strongman Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi and imperialist-backed opposition forces concentrated in the country’s eastern areas. *Workers Vanguard* No. 976 (18 March), newspaper of the U.S. section of the ICL, noted that “Marxists presently have no side in this conflict”. But as the article continued: “In the event of imperialist attack against neocolonial Libya, the proletariat internationally must stand for the military defense of that country while giving no political support to Qaddafi’s capitalist regime.” The civil war in Libya has now been subordinated to the fight of a neocolonial country against imperialism. Every step taken by the workers of the imperialist countries to halt the depredations and military adventures of their rulers is a step toward their own liberation from capitalist exploitation, impoverishment and oppression. ***Defend Libya against imperialist attack! U.S. Fifth Fleet and all imperialist military bases and troops out of North Africa and the Near East!***

Recall that the slaughter of well over a million people in Iraq began with the imposition of a UN-sponsored starvation embargo and a “no fly zone” in the 1990s. The latest action by the Security Council, including the neo-apartheid South African regime led by the African National Congress, underscores yet again the character of the United Nations as a den of imperialist thieves and their lackeys and semicolonial victims. The abstention by the representative of China, a bureaucratically deformed workers state, gave tacit approval

Statement of the International Executive Committee of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

to imperialist depredation, emboldening the very forces which seek to overturn the 1949 Chinese Revolution.

The crocodile tears shed by the imperialist rulers and their media mouthpieces over the Libyans killed by the

Qaddafi regime during the recent wave of protests stands in sharp contrast to their muted response to the continuing massacre of protesters in Yemen—whose dictatorship is a key component of Washington’s “war on terror”—and their ongoing support to the Bahraini kingdom, which hosts the headquarters of the U.S. Fifth Fleet. To aid in crushing mass protests, Bahrain last week invited in troops from the medievalist and theocratic Saudi monarchy, a key bulwark of U.S. imperialist interests in the region. In the eyes of the imperialist rulers, Bahrain’s Shi’ite majority and the Yemeni masses are less than human, with no rights they are bound to respect.

Numerous social-democratic leftists, typified by the United Secretariat (USec) and the British Cliffite Socialist Workers Party, have done their part to prepare the ground for imperialist massacres in Libya by cheering on the so-called “Libyan Revolution”. Having urged support for the cabal of pro-imperialist “democrats”, CIA stooges, monarchists and Islamists that comprise the Benghazi-based opposition, these reformists now feign to balk at imperialist military intervention in support of the opposition. The New Anti-Capitalist Party, constituted in 2009 by the USec’s French section, signed a call for a demonstration yesterday demanding that the Benghazi outfit be recognized as “the only legitimate representative of the Libyan people”—which French ruler Sarkozy had already done! At the same time, those left groups that have promoted illusions in Qaddafi’s “anti-imperialist” pretensions—such as the Workers World Party in the U.S.—seek everywhere and at all times to chain the working class to a mythical “progressive” wing of the bourgeoisie.

We pledge today, as we did at the time of the U.S. Reagan administration’s bombing of Libya in 1986, to “undertake every effort to propagandize the need for the world working class to take the side of Libya” against its imperialist enemies (“Under Reagan’s Guns in Libya”, *WV* No. 401, 11 April 1986). In the pursuit of profit and domination, the same capitalist ruling classes that brutally exploit the working class “at home”, only to throw workers on the scrap heap during periods of economic crisis, as today, carry out murderous imperialist attacks abroad. The struggle against imperialist war cannot be conducted separately and apart from the class struggle. Only socialist revolution can overthrow the system of capitalist imperialism which breeds war. Our path is that of the October Revolution of 1917, led by the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky, which was a beacon of revolutionary internationalism for the proletariat everywhere. We struggle to reforge the Fourth International as an instrument that can lead the working masses, from the Near East to the imperialist centers, forward to new October Revolutions and a world socialist society. ■