

SOUTH AFRICA
WHICH ROAD TO LIBERATION?

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Which road to liberation?

A MARXIST VIEW

By Monica Moorehead

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Introduction

What course will the South African struggle take? It's important to raise and assess this question from a number of points of view.

Why? Because the inevitable victory of the South African revolution will change the entire landscape of the struggle on the African continent, both socially and politically.

A pamphlet of this size can only briefly examine the current phase of the struggle in South Africa. There are many ebbs and flows in any struggle of the oppressed and exploited against their oppressors and exploiters. This is the class struggle. Only Marxism can effectively break down all of the complexities that a struggle like South Africa entails.



Hundreds of thousands march in Johannesburg to demand the release of political prisoners. Many anti-apartheid demonstrations like this one have a strong anti-capitalist theme.

About the author

Monica Moorehead is a National Committee member of Workers World Party. She is also a Contributing Editor of Workers World newspaper. Moorehead has written extensively on the struggles in southern Africa, including two articles written for Sechaba magazine, a publication of the African National Congress.

Moorehead was a member of the Nelson Mandela and Winnie Mandela contingent of the Venceremos Brigade to Cuba in 1987. Moorehead was also an invited observer to the national congress of the ANC in Durban, South Africa, held in July, 1991. She has also represented Workers World Party in a number of other anti-imperialist solidarity activities in Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic as well as Montreal and Paris.



Monica Moorehead attending African National Congress reception in Durban, South Africa, along with Sin Son Ho, the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to Zimbabwe.



PHOTO MONICA MOOREHEAD

Platform of ANC conference in Durban, South Africa, held in July, 1991. This was the first national conference of ANC held inside the country since 1959.

What is the economic program of the African National Congress?

A lot of attention is being paid to the African National Congress leadership's agreement to promote full-scale foreign capital investment in a post-apartheid South Africa.

Nelson Mandela was interviewed on this issue in the July 12, 1993, edition of *Fortune*, a magazine published in Johannesburg, South Africa. Mandela indicated that transnational corporations—as well as investors from Western Europe and elsewhere—would be welcomed in South Africa.

The main motivation? The Black working class suffers from a 48 percent unemployment rate and “we are therefore very keen for foreign companies to invest in such a way that there will be a creation of jobs for our people, a generation of wealth,” said Mandela.

He went on: “All foreign companies that invest would be guaranteed against expropriation and nationalization. They will be able to recover their profits and dividends—all of them. We are guaranteeing every foreign company that invests in our country.”

The ANC leader is seeking material aid from the capitalist West in light of the first general elections, tentatively set for April 27, 1994.

Impact of USSR collapse

It should come as no great surprise that the ANC would move in this direction. Like every national liberation movement throughout the world following the collapse of the socialist camp—especially the fall of the Soviet Union—the ANC has lost most of the material support it had received from progressive governments. The main exception, of course, is Cuba. And while Cuba can provide political and moral support, it is certainly not in a position to provide the kind of material aid the ANC used to receive from the Soviet Union and others.

Like so many other groups, this great African revolutionary organization has been put into the unenviable position of re-evaluating its tactics and strategies since the political counter-revolution took place in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union almost three years ago.

Mandela and other ANC leaders are hoping for the breakup of the handful of corporate monopolies in South Africa that dominate close to 90 percent of the apartheid economy and the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. Some of these conglomerates include Anglo-American, South Africa Mutual, Sanlam and the Rembrandt Group. The ANC is hoping that with the breakup of these giants, individual Black-owned businesses will have a chance of prospering and putting life into the dismal capitalist economy. The fact is that even if the monopolies are broken up organizationally, capitalist property relations will remain intact, regardless, benefiting the white minority.

The September 28, 1993, New York Times reported that the number of U.S. businesses directly investing in the South African economy has jumped from 120 to 135 since the economic sanctions were recently repealed. These figures do not include those corporations that are not U.S. based, like Pillsbury. It is being tagged as the first major corporation to create a joint venture with its subsidiary, the Table Top division of Foodcorp in South Africa. The venture will be known as Pillsbury Africa Ltd.

The ANC is very much encouraging similar joint ventures along with other forms of capitalist investments to help “repair” any ailing post-apartheid economy. In Marxist terminology, the ANC is attempting to launch a bourgeois democratic revolution in South Africa. What does that mean?

Comprador bourgeoisie

Let us review what Karl Marx and Frederick Engels wrote in their 1848 landmark work, *The Communist Manifesto*, regarding the evolution of class society and class struggle to see if this analysis can apply to the South African struggle.

Marx and Engels promoted socialist revolution based on the objective situation in relation to the rise of the productive forces in the newly emerging capitalist countries such as France, Germany and England. The uneven development stemming from various levels of industrialization and its impact on the

bourgeoisie and working class in each country had to be assessed. Out of these assessments came a multitude of strategies and tactics for the socialist revolution.

During this particular epoch, the bourgeois democratic revolution defeated the outmoded feudal system. That was a progressive step. But it did not mean the end of oppression. The next step is establishing socialism—that is, replacing all forms of private property with the public ownership of the means of production.

With the ushering in of imperialism, the majority of the world was in the process of being colonized by the imperialist powers in Europe along with the U.S. and Japan. Both World War I and World War II were imperialist wars driven by the need to carve up the globe and dominate markets in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. The driving force is profits; the code name is “democracy.” Profits are derived from the surplus value produced by the unpaid labor of the working class.

These two world wars were instrumental in keeping the bourgeois revolutions from developing overall in those countries where the productive forces were the lowest. The imperialists eventually found that it was in their interests to promote a native—the “comprador”—bourgeoisie to do their bidding in order to avoid directly facing the wrath of the oppressed masses while simultaneously withholding technological advances. Historically the comprador was a native agent for a foreign power. The comprador bourgeoisie is a native capitalist class that administers a repressive state apparatus to keep the masses down and subjugated in the interests of the imperialist powers. Consequently, neocolonies were established.

The comprador bourgeoisie is subjected to oppression by the imperialists as well—but they are also rewarded with certain privileges. As the comprador rulers become more entrenched and empowered, they feel compelled to get the imperialists off their back.

The comprador rulers wanted to become the ruling bourgeoisie and not the puppet—this is a classic reaction that sooner or a later becomes a decisive factor in the class struggle worldwide. The comprador rulers are only interested in a revolution as long as it is limited to kicking the imperialists out. They are not interested in taking the revolution all the way to its socialist conclusion because that would include the disenfranchised masses expropriating not only imperialist property but the compradors’ property.

The Communist Party in the Soviet Union under the leadership of Josef Stalin promoted the concept that a “democratic” bourgeois revolution in the underdeveloped countries must always be the first stage before a second socialist stage. In reality, this view shows an unwillingness to confront the political authority and the private property of the native bourgeoisie.

It was Karl Marx who was the first to raise the premise of the permanent revolution in the Communist Manifesto, meaning that a social revolution must be carried to its full conclusion until all classes are abolished.

Imperialism established South Africa

So how does all of this relate to the struggle in South Africa?

South Africa has developed into an industrialized capitalist country. The essence of South Africa's political character is imperialist in nature. The industrialization process has elevated the South African economy through the fusion of the banks and industry. This fusion—called finance capital—is an important principal feature of imperialism.

Beside the establishment of an independent South African bourgeoisie, a huge infusion of foreign capital, especially from England, Japan, the U.S., Germany, etc., has bolstered the apartheid capitalist economy. For example, since South Africa does not have any oil reserves of its own, it has to depend on U.S. and British companies for this important resource. Without oil, the South African military could not be sustained.

South Africa is also a white settler state whereby an alliance has existed since 1910 between the British who oversee the economy and the Boers or Afrikaners who dominate the repressive state apparatus—the police, military, courts, etc. This alliance grew out of the Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902. The British defeated the Boers in this war, characterized by Lenin as imperialist in nature because it was conducted to determine which colonial power would control the vast wealth of South Africa—all for the sake of super-profits based on the super-exploitation of the working class as well as building up the economic infrastructure of the “home” country.

The capitalist development of South Africa has created a number of nationally-oppressed colonies inside the borders of the country. The primary one is the indigenous African population, but others include the “mixed” and Indian peoples.

The apartheid regime set up a number of so-called homelands in the Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959. These homelands, inhabited overwhelmingly by the South African Black population are in the most barren, isolated areas of the country. This is a far cry from being independent economically from the apartheid economy. Many of the leaders of the homelands were hand-picked puppets of the apartheid regime, which attempted to put a human face on the racist regime.

The rest of the southern African region—Mozambique, Zambia, Angola, Namibia, etc.—is very much dependent on South Africa for communications, transportation, food and migrant labor—along with a great number of products that these countries are unable to manufacture themselves.

Both the internal colonies and the external neocolonies of South Africa confirm another important aspect of Lenin's *Imperialism*. The imperialists are constantly driven to divide and redivide the world to garner lucrative markets.

Despite the country's advanced industrial development since the 1920s, which gave birth to a large Black working class and a small number of Black-owned businesses, no comprador bourgeoisie has emerged. In other words, there are no Black bosses who own the means of production—i.e., the mines, telecom-

munications, textile mills, etc.—just as no significant Black comprador bourgeoisie exists within the U.S.

Unlike the situation in the U.S. where the progressive gains of the civil rights era helped to usher in a strong Black middle class, no comparable Black middle class exists in South Africa. This is even more astounding considering that the Black population in South Africa is the overwhelming majority, at least 70 percent. Compare this to the U.S. where the African American population is “officially” 13 percent.

This is an important difference in the historical development of the South African revolutionary struggle.

The African National Congress and the South African Communist Party

What has helped to distinguish this dynamic struggle from many others is the alliance between the ANC and the South African Communist Party for many decades. The ANC is a national liberation movement composed of diverse class forces including nationalists who want to see the democratic revolution succeed, socialists and others. The ANC’s main goal since its founding in 1912 has been to overthrow racist rule and establish Black majority rule, which is wholly progressive.

From its inception, the ANC has been deeply influenced by the anti-

The South African Communist Party is deeply routed in the mass struggle for national liberation. Here, a vendor sells a t-shirt outside of an ANC rally held in Durban.

PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD



imperialist, pro-socialist movements. For instance, back in 1927 the ANC attended the inauguration of the League Against Imperialism in Brussels, Belgium. Approximately 174 anti-colonialist fighters from the capitalist and the developing countries of Asia, Latin America and Africa came together under the banner of solidarity in the struggle against colonialism and imperialist oppression.

Josiah Tshangana Gumede, a founding member of the ANC, attended this conference. He spoke twice. Gumede had to confess to the conference: "I am happy to say that there are communists in South Africa. I myself am not one, but it is my experience that the Communist Party is the only party that stands behind us and from which we can expect something. We know there are now two powers at work: imperialism and the workers' republic in Russia. We hear little about the latter, although we would like to know more about it. But we take an interest and will soon find out who we have to ally ourselves with." (*South Africa Belongs to Us*, by Frances Meli, p. 75)

Gumede, who considered himself a staunch nationalist, attended the 10th anniversary celebration of the Bolshevik Revolution in Moscow, participated in the Congress of the Friends of the USSR, and made a trip to the Soviet Republic of Georgia.

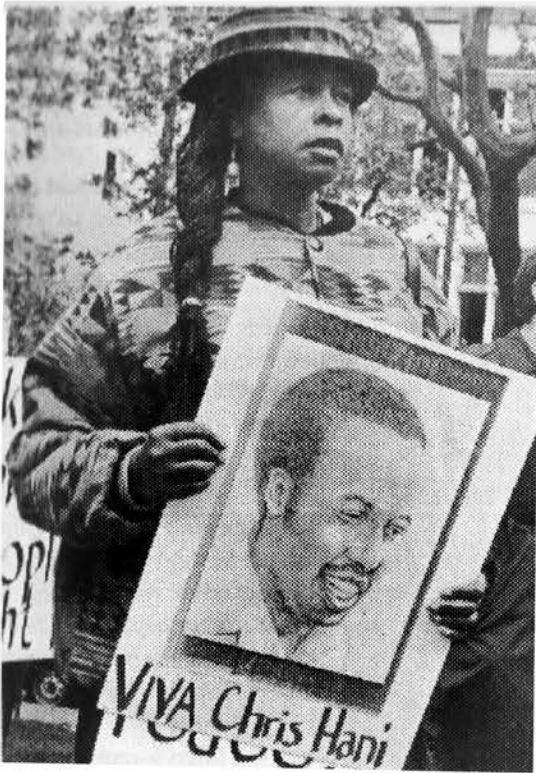
A.F. Plate, Gumede's interpreter and a professor of chemistry at Moscow State University, commented on Gumede's visit: "Gumede asked the peasants about their lives in detail. ... We visited a number of Georgian villages and returning to the hotel every time, Gumede compared the way of life of the Georgian peasants with the mode of life and labor (conditions) in his motherland. ...

"Gumede considered as one of the greatest achievements of our country that the socialist revolution managed to unite people of different nationalities in their struggles for common ideals. He emphasized the significance of this experience for all nationals struggling for their independence and considered that success in this struggle would highly depend on the unity of action of all forces fighting against racism and colonialism."

The SACP's primary interest since 1920 has been to fight for the socialist revolution and to promote the interests of the working class. The SACP has always been a part of the mass struggle, not alienated from it. The alliance of the SACP and the ANC laid the foundation for deepening and consolidating class consciousness and anti-imperialist ideas among millions of South Africa's oppressed masses, especially the workers.

A concrete example of this was the response to the brutal assassination of Chris Hani, the general-secretary of the SACP and a national ANC leader, on April 10, 1993. Millions of workers and their allies took part in the largest one-day general strike in South African history to protest this government/neo-Nazi cowardly act. There is such an openness to socialist ideas on the part of the masses because of the role that the SACP has played in helping to radicalize the ANC.

It would be helpful to briefly highlight an historical fact about the SACP's



Rally for slain South African Communist Party /African National Congress leader Chris Hani in Oakland, California, April 17, 1993

PHOTO: BILL HACKWELL

role in reaching out to the oppressed working class. The SACP was concerned with the politicization as well as the economic plight of the African working class, which developed tremendously as the result of industrialization. At the 1924 SACP conference, in recognition of the intensification of the super-exploitation of the African workers as well as their growing numbers, the party leadership adopted "the awakening of the African proletariat" as a primary task.

This helped to lay the basis for the SACP to reach out to African activists, especially those who were seasoned veterans of the trade union struggle.

Many of these trade unionists were already organizers of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union, founded in 1919, and the Industrial Workers of Africa, a predominantly African trade union founded by the International Socialist League in 1917. Some of the most prominent African communists during this period included Albert Nzulu, Moses Kotane, Johannes Nkosi and Gana Makabeni.

On the question of elections

The ANC hopes to achieve the democratic revolution with a general election of a constituent assembly based on one person, one vote that would institute a new South African constitution.

For the ANC, there are two barriers standing between a democratic revolution and a socialist revolution.

One is a binding agreement that was made between the ANC and the ruling National Party stating that a prerequisite for the "transition of power" from the minority to the majority is a written stipulation safeguarding the private property and privileges of the whites. Despite the fact that a number of legal



Striking Mercedes Benz workers in East London, Eastern Cape, 1987. These workers and millions like them create all the wealth in South Africa while receiving slave wages in return.

barriers of apartheid have been scrapped since 1990—like the Population Registration Act and the Land Areas Act, laws that classified people by race and barred Black people from buying homes in segregated white residential areas—the reality is that the living standards of the Black majority have not fundamentally changed.

On average, a Black worker's salary is one-seventh the amount of a white manager. Therefore, buying a house in a white area is still

unheard of for most. The Black majority on the whole is therefore unable to afford decent health care, housing, education, etc.

The other barrier is the role of the state—i.e., police, army, etc.—which exist solely to protect the interest of the racist ruling class by violently suppressing the masses.

Why is the question of the state such an important question in South Africa, as in any class struggle?

V.I. Lenin, the great leader of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, said it best in his timeless classic, *The State and Revolution*: "According to Marx, the state is an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another; it is the creation of 'order' which legalizes and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the conflict between the classes. ... The state is a product and manifestation of the irreconcilability of class contradictions. The state arises where, when and to the extent that class contradictions objectively cannot be reconciled. And conversely, the existence of the state proves that class contradictions are irreconcilable."

There are no indicators showing that the class character of the state will change peacefully in South Africa once elections take place. Even now, the state-

organized terror against the defiant masses continues unabated daily while the current phase of the struggle continues to proceed toward negotiations.

For example, the majority of ultra-right wing, neo-Nazi terrorist groups formed the Afrikaner People's Front on May 5, 1993, to organize and fight against a future African National Congress-led government. The Front has demanded an "independent homeland" for Afrikaners in the northeastern province of Transvaal. This fascist coalition also announced that if its demands were not met, a civil war inside South Africa would be high on its agenda.

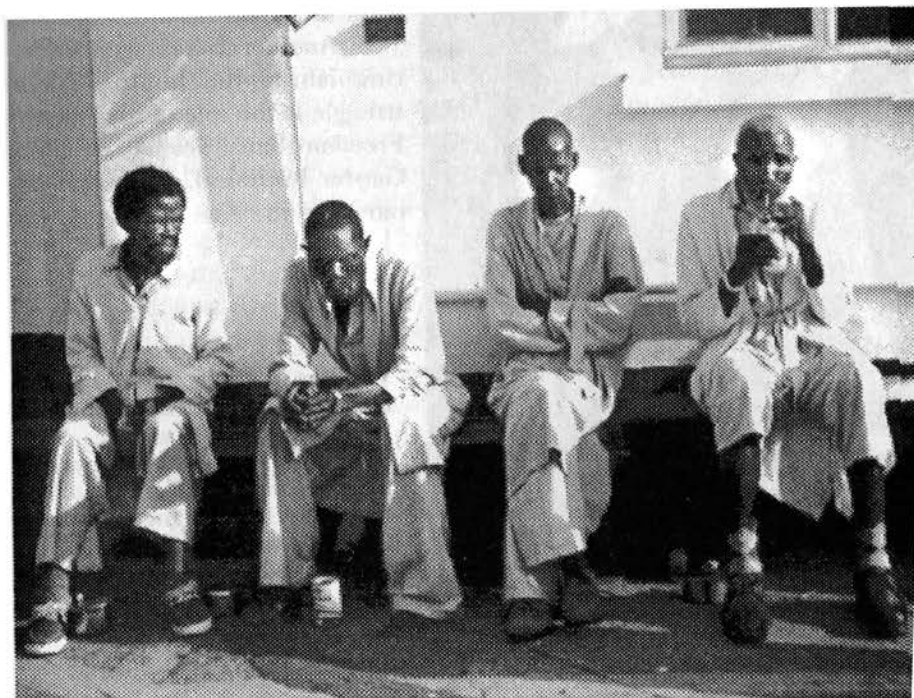
The Front is being led by four "ex" generals, including the former head of the South African Defense Forces, Constand Viljoen. This neo-Nazi was instrumental in instituting the repressive military and police occupation of the rebellious Black townships during the first of two states of emergency beginning in 1985. Viljoen also commanded the SADF in opposition to the wars of national liberation in both Namibia and Angola.

There is nothing remotely legal or progressive about their demands. These Afrikaner groupings want to paint a confusing picture of themselves as being an "oppressed" minority and therefore having the right to self-determination. The Afrikaners are neither oppressed nor exploited. They are and have been the oppressors and exploiters.

They are the ones who mastermind cowardly executions against the leaders of the anti-apartheid struggle like Chris Hani and genocidal acts against the super-oppressed and super-exploited Black masses who are impatient for

Patients wait outside King Edward, the second largest hospital in the southern hemisphere, in Durban. This institution suffers from overcrowding and a staff shortage due to lack of government funding.

PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD



their long-overdue liberation and independence. They are the ones who occupy the overcrowded Black townships with their intimidating hippos (tanks) and M-16 rifles. They will go as far as murdering any anti-apartheid opposition, even when she or he is asleep.

Who are the Boers?

The Afrikaners, or Boers, are of Dutch descent. They have plundered South Africa since they first stepped foot on African soil during the 1600s. Today, despite the rapid industrialization of the country, the Afrikaners still control huge plots of the most arable, plush lands maintained by Black wage slavery. The Boers are armed to the teeth with the most sophisticated weaponry. They are the ones who swell the ranks of the police and the military.

The consolidation of these fascist elements is a strategy to strengthen the state in opposition to the interests

of the disenfranchised Black majority. These fascists are determined to defend apartheid to the death. They would like nothing better than to turn the clock back to the days of the pre-capitalist development when agriculture dominated the economy, a period when it was very difficult to organize Black workers due to their isolation in the rural areas and the bantustans.

Another class antagonism distinguishing the South African struggle is the role of the Inkatha Freedom Party headed by Chief Gatsha Buthelezi. Buthelezi administers the KwaZulu homeland



Patricia Mcumbe and her two children living at Richmond refugee camp in Natal Midlands. Refugee camps are mostly women and children. All too often they are the only place to temporarily escape from apartheid inspired violence.

PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

outside Durban located in the Natal region. Objectively, Buthelezi's followers are an extension of the apartheid state apparatus. They have been financially and militarily armed by the apartheid regime to carry out acts of indiscriminate terror against the oppressed masses and also to target anti-apartheid leaders, especially those in the ANC. Buthelezi is also supported by right wing elements in the U.S. such as the notorious Sen. Jesse Helms and the Heritage Foundation in Washington, which funded the anti-divestment campaigns in the U.S. during the 1980s.

Lenin says in *State and Revolution*: "If the state is a product of the irreconcilability of class contradictions, if it is a power standing above society and 'alienating itself more and more from it,' then it is obvious that the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible not only without a violent revolution, but also without the destruction of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class and which is the embodiment of this alienation."

The brutal state machinery is the only barrier that stands between the small clique of racist bosses and bankers in South Africa who control all the wealth and power and the millions of Black and other oppressed groupings who create all the wealth in the areas of transportation, agriculture, service, and mining industries—but control none of it.

Nowhere has a successful socialist revolution been realized without the total intervention of the masses smashing the old state of the oppressive ruling class and setting up their own state to defend and help consolidate a working class democracy where the means of production are collectively owned and not based on private property. This is the first step to building a true socialist society where racism, poverty and exploitation are wiped out through a continuous process.

How the ANC leadership deals with these economic and political contradictions will come under close scrutiny by revolutionaries and progressives internationally as well as the imperialist bourgeoisie.

Presently, the South African struggle is going through a stage of negotiations in preparation for the first general elections in the history of the country. On November 18, 1993, a number of South African organizations—the largest being the ANC—overwhelmingly approved a draft of a new constitution based on the abolition of all apartheid laws. These laws have been on the books since the Republic of South Africa was founded in 1948 on the principle of denying any democratic rights to the Black majority. The draft will be up for ratification as part of the general elections in April 1994.

This constitution is reminiscent of some of the civil rights laws passed in the U.S. during the 1960s that outlawed segregation. Some of the more interesting excerpts include: "No person shall be subject to torture of any kind ... servitude or forced labor ... every person shall have the right to assemble and demonstrate ... to choose his or her place of residence in South Africa ... to freedom anywhere."

This new constitution should be viewed as progressive in that on paper it calls for the historically-denied bourgeois democratic rights of the Black major-

ity. The bigger question, however, is how will these rights be effectively defended and strengthened. Especially important is the right to protest. After all, the repressive South African military and police remain intact. This draft does not call for their dismantlement.

Then there is the important question of redressing the gross economic disfranchisement of the Black majority. This is only vaguely raised in the draft. And what about the Congress of South African 'Trade Unions' concerns about strengthening the rights of the working class? There is no doubt that even these basic democratic rights will have to be fought for and will be in the focus for future struggles.

Class struggle is the answer

What will be the most decisive factor during the course of the South African struggle? A raging class struggle in the form of the impatient South African masses—especially the workers, who do not want to replace one oppressor for another but to seize the reins of state economic and political power away from their racist oppressors.

The setbacks in the socialist camp may have helped to temporarily weaken the completion of the South African revolution. But it is just a question of time before the South African masses carry out their historical mission as laid out in the *Communist Manifesto*: “becoming the grave diggers of the bourgeoisie.”

Photo to the right is of an anti-apartheid rally in New York City in 1986. Below, members of National Union of Mineworkers on strike in 1987.





Brief Fact Sheet on History of South Africa and Important Statistics

Official Name: Republic of South Africa

President: F.W. de Klerk (since September 1989)

Area: 471,440 square miles

Population: 41,700,000 (35,000,000—Black), (5,000,000—white), (1,000,000—“mixed” and Indian); [estimates]

Administrative capital: Pretoria

Legislative capital: Cape Town

Judicial capital: Bloemfontein

Largest metropolitan areas: Cape Peninsula (Cape Town and surroundings) 1,911,500; Johannesburg/Randburg, 1,609,500; East Rand (Springs, Germiston and surroundings), 1,038,000; Durban/Pinetown/Inanda, 982,075; Pretoria/Wonderboom/Shoshanguve, 822,900

Monetary unit: Rand (2.80 is equivalent to \$1 U.S.)

Languages: English, Afrikaans (official); Xhosa, Zulu, and other African languages

Religions: Christianity, Hinduism, Islam

Literacy rate: 76%

Economic Summary: Gross domestic product (1990): \$101.7 billion; \$2,680 per capita; -0.9% real growth rate. Work force: 66% industrial and 34% service. Arable land: 11.59% Major industries: gold, chromium, diamonds, assembled automobiles, machinery, textiles, iron and steel, chemicals, fertilizer. National resources: gold, diamonds, platinum, uranium, coal, iron ore, phosphates, manganese. Exports: gold, diamonds, minerals and metals, food, chemicals. Imports: motor vehicle parts, machinery, metals, chemicals, textiles, scientific instruments. Major trading partners: U.S., Germany, other European Community countries, Japan, United Kingdom, Hong Kong

Geography: South Africa is located on the continent's southern tip. It borders the Atlantic Ocean on the west and the Indian Ocean on the south and east. Its neighbors are Namibia in the northwest, Zimbabwe and Botswana in the north and Mozambique and Swaziland in the northeast. Lesotho forms an enclave within the southeastern part of South Africa. Bophuthatswana, Transkei, Ciskei and Venda are “independent” states within South Africa, which occupies an area nearly three times that of California. It has a high interior plateau, or veld, nearly half of which averages 4,000 feet in elevation. Principal river is the Orange, rising in Lesotho and flowing westward for 1,300 miles to the Atlantic. Southernmost point of Africa is Cape Agulhas, located in Cape Province about 100 miles southeast of the Cape of Good Hope.

Short history: Dutch East India Company established a settler colony at Cape Town in 1652. By the 18th century, they numbered about 15,000. These settlers were known as Boers or Afrikaners.

The decline of the Dutch colonial empire opened the way in 1806 for the British to establish themselves in Cape Town. Conflicts between the Afrikaners and British were so severe that in 1834 about 14,000 Boers made the “great trek” north and east into African territory, establishing the republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State.

Although official histories minimize native African resistance, it was in fact extremely strong and organized.

Following the Boer trek, the British and Afrikaners were united in suppressing the native population. This unity fell apart after diamonds were discovered in the Orange Free State in 1867 and gold in the Transvaal in 1886.

Cecil Rhodes, who was the prime minister of the Cape and later the colonizer of Rhodesia, plotted to annex the republics. The first Anglo-Boer war for control of the riches in 1880 led to an inconclusive British victory. This was followed by the war of 1899-1902. The British were victorious and took control of all of South Africa.

The Union of South Africa was declared in 1910, composed of four provinces, the two Boer republics and the Cape and Natal provinces. Louis Botha, a Boer, became the first prime minister. The Native Labor Act, the Native Land Act and the Native Urban Area Act were part of an intricate system of racist laws, which over the years would run to more than a thousand decrees and laws—all designed to regulate the exploitation of Black labor.

The African National Congress was founded on January 8, 1912. The South African Communist Party was founded in 1921. As capitalist development flourished, many communists—including Joe Slovo and ANC members—organized unskilled and semi-skilled laborers into unions.

During World War II, South Africa entered on the side of Britain and the U.S. The pro-Afrikaner Nationalist Party opposed this, siding with Nazi Germany. During that time, from 1939 to 1945, the economic crisis generated a period of intense labor union activity. More than 300 strikes involved 58,000 Black and 60,000 white workers. The strikes gave rise to a more radical sector in the ANC led by Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo.

South Africa became a charter member of United Nations in 1945. It refused to sign the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In 1948, the Nationalist Party took over the government and made apartheid official policy.

During the 1950s the ANC and the SACP initiated mass defiance campaigns. In 1959, the Pan-Africanist Congress grew out of the ANC. The PAC was a proponent of armed struggle, which at the time the ANC was not.

In March 1960, the PAC organized a demonstration in Sharpeville to protest the pass law. The demonstration was brutally suppressed and 69 unarmed Black protesters were massacred. After the Sharpeville Massacre, the PAC, the ANC and the Communist Party were outlawed.

This led to the formation of the underground military wing of the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation).

South Africa's revolution

The South African revolution remains one of the most influential struggles on the African continent. It is also one of the most inspiring struggles worldwide. The many centuries of racist, colonial and imperialist oppression have made the Black South African masses resolute in their quest for national liberation and the right to self-determination.



INSIDE YOU'LL FIND:

- How the disintegration of the Soviet Union impacted on the struggle against apartheid.
- The historical relationship between the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party. What this important alliance means for the oppressed African masses.
- Has the bourgeois revolution been achieved in South Africa? How does this fit with the worldwide revolution described by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in the Communist Manifesto in 1848?
- Why it's important for revolutionaries and progressives to understand the role of the state, particularly in South Africa.