

A F R I C A

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ZAIRE



IMPERIALIST TROOPS OUT NOW!

ZIMBABWE

NO! TO
NEW MANOEUVRES

Interview with
South African
Revolutionary

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in struggle

T. White

Zaire: external bail out

Zimbabwe:

internal sellout



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in struggle

africa in struggle

editorial

This issue of the journal marks the return of 'Africa in Struggle' after a considerable absence. We would like to apologise to our readers and offer an explanation. Our aim in producing 'Africa in Struggle' has been to stimulate a debate on the central questions facing revolutionary marxists in Africa today. Within the editorial board a vigorous debate has taken place over the past year as to how AIS could best assist in the opening up of such a discussion. We felt that it was essential to be clear on the direction of the journal, and it is for this reason that production has for so long been delayed.

We consider that an indispensable contribution to the process of political clarification will be the promotion of a broadly based journal representing a wide body of revolutionary opinion in Africa today. We feel that the promotion of such a journal will be the product of an extensive debate amongst African revolutionaries. We believe that 'Africa in Struggle' has an important role to play in engendering such a discussion, and it is to this goal that the efforts of 'Africa in Struggle' will be dedicated.

We expect in future numbers to widen the spectrum of opinion represented on the editorial board. We hope that such a change will encourage a wider body of participants to the journal. We look forward to a free and open discussion within the journal giving our readers a

first taste of what can be achieved by frank debate. We feel that these experiences will give comrades renewed confidence to exchange ideas and hence by clarifying many key problems strengthen and develop the unity of African revolutionaries.

Perhaps the need for political clarity as a basis for a united struggle is nowhere better illustrated than in Zimbabwe. In this issue of the journal we publish an analysis of the 'internal settlement' which raises very many problems for revolutionaries in that country. We conclude our debate with the Unity Movement over the nature of South African society and the tasks of the revolution. Also, in this number we open a much needed discussion within the journal on the nature of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa. Illustrating in a very pronounced way problems which beset countries already mentioned is the article on Ethiopia, developing in a particularly clear way the meaning of the national question for African revolutionaries. Finally we print several articles concerned with solidarity actions in support of the harsh repressions in East Africa, and a report of the annual conference of the African Students Union, together with the call made by the ASU for a demonstration to commemorate Soweto.

As we go to press we learn of the imperialist intervention in Beire, and we include a note on the significance of this event for Africa.

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Zaire

THE BITTER FRUITS OF NEO-COLONIALISM

Recent events in Zaire have served, in many ways, to stress the fact that the era of imperialist domination of the African continent is far from receding.

Apart from the racist assumption of the official 'humanitarian' grounds for the French and Belgian intervention (implying that imperialism has the unfettered right to act at will when white lives are involved, while Africans have no rights at all), all informed observers admit that the French operation had a clear military objective. This was to do what the corrupt and oppressive Mobutu regime could not do - defeat the Congolese National Liberation Front in their strategic position in Kolwezi and bring 'security' (for imperialist economic operations) to the area.

Of course behind these military goals lay the objective of tightening French imperialist control of the country at the expense of both their Belgian rivals and the people of the country.

betrayal

That imperialism could embark upon such an audacious and blatant operation after a decade of being on the defensive, and supposedly outflanked by the rise of the 'third world', may seem surprising to some. But the key is easy to find: it is the increasing readiness of the rulers and ruling classes of the various African countries to openly embrace the imperialists when their own interests are under attack, as they increasingly are by the mass of impoverished Africans - poor farmers, workers and un and under employed town dwellers.

The history of French intervention in Tchad and Gabon, the collaboration of African regimes in the military operation in Entebbe, and the OAU intervention last year, were all storm clouds preceding the Kolwezi torrent. Kolwezi represents more

than a declaration that 20th century 'paratroop diplomacy' is here to stay; it is profound testimony to the bankruptcy and treachery of the neo-colonialist regimes in Africa. The OAU, rather than an organisation building the anti-imperialist unity of the African people, has become a club of dictators, more concerned with preserving the 'holy' boundaries of imperialist divided Africa, and thereby defend their own sinecures.

collaboration

The depths of this political betrayal were dramatically unveiled in the closing address of President Bongo of Gabon at the recent Franco-African Conference: 'Africa is currently undergoing a crisis the gravity of which we cannot over-emphasise. In more precise terms, I would say that it is a question of a vast subversive enterprise designed to overturn the geopolitical equilibrium of our continent...' Addressing the author of the Zaire adventure, Giscard d'Estaing, Bongo assumed an appropriate demeanour:

'We thank you, and through you the Government and people of France, for your courage, for your determination and for your concern to give content to the agreements which have been concluded between France and the majority of our countries ... we say to you simply that we have also made the 'right choice'. We must establish a distinction between those who understand us, who love us, and those who seek the regression of Africa...' 'To leave Africa to the Africans in no way signifies that we must accept the encouragement of subversion, much less its provocation. Nothing can justify murder, genocide, massacre. To preserve Africa from these evils, it is not too strong to affirm that all the genuinely civilised countries must now come to our aid...'

Union of all the 'genuinely civilised countries' to preserve the 'geopolitical equilibrium'! Giscard could not have said it better!

But the rising generation of oppressed Africans will find little of comfort in such a formula. For them the rebirth of a genuinely revolutionary pan-Africanist spirit, denying the right of imperialism to trample across the continent either in uniform, business suits or technicians costume, is on the order of the day!

Black Consciousness in South Africa

The brutal murder of Steve Biko by South Africa's security police and its blatant cover up by the coroner is only the latest in the line of repression, torture and injustice to which black oppositionists have been subjected for the past hundred years. The fate of Biko is however also a comment on the seriousness with which the racist regime regards the movement for black consciousness. Biko had been a leader in the formation of the South African Students Organisation (SASO) which split from the white dominated National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). In 1971 this and other organisations formed the unitary Black Peoples' Convention. Until their banning in October 1977 these were the foremost articulators of theories of black consciousness.

As will be attested by any recent exile, these groups were the most influential in forming the political positions of a whole new generation of activists who have developed in the 1970s. Without doubt they were the inspiration for the activists who led Soweto's students in 1976. Despite their banning there is no doubt that the ideas of the black consciousness advocates will continue to circulate and to gain influence in the coming period. Precisely because they represent the present level of political consciousness of the mass of black activists inside South Africa it is necessary for revolutionary marxists to examine their ideas and to enter into fraternal debate with them. This article, which we dedicate to the memory of Steve Biko and to the continuation of the struggle that he led, attempts to begin this process.

When SASO emerged it ended a period in which black political activity had been at a lower level than at any time for the preceding fifty years. This had resulted from the severe repression launched by the government in the early 1960s. The entire spectrum of oppositional movements, African National Congress, Pan African Congress, Unity Movement, Communist Party etc were unprepared politically or organisationally for this. After a brief period of disastrous sabotage activity most of their cadre went into exile. From there they vainly sought to organise rural guerilla campaigns. In doing so they ignored the by now overwhelming

proletarianisation and urbanisation of the mass of blacks of working age. As a result they became isolated from the key section of the black population. The black consciousness movement filled this vacuum.

politics

As Biko said: "In 1963 black people were scared of involvement in politics and there was no useful leadership..Everybody found it comfortable to lose himself in a particular position. The students have seen their role to prepare themselves for leadership role in the Black community through the political articulation of the aspirations of Black people" (Interview printed in IKwezi No 7, Dec 1977)

Critical examination of the positions of the advocates of black consciousness is made a little difficult by the diversity of views and subjects of concern within the movement. One whole wing has been pre-occupied with the development of "black theology". (For a sprinkling of writings on this theme see: Basil Moore (ed) "Black Theology, the South African Voice" Hurst 1973). Their positions are somewhat analogous to those of the independent churches that arose at the end of the 19th century in reaction to the clearly pro-colonial position of established churches. They suffer from the same glaring contradiction. On the one hand they reject white conceptions of religion, but they simultaneously sustain Christianity, which was itself perhaps the most pervasive cultural import accompanying white colonialism.

Other sections have been very much concerned with the promotion of a revival of black culture. Significantly this has not on the whole taken the form of looking back to the music, dancing etc. of pre-colonial societies. Rather it has tended to deal with contemporary themes and to be most heavily influenced by black American culture (for good summaries of work in these and other areas, see the 'Black Review', annual Durban based publication of Black Community Programmes, 1972 onwards).

It would be quite wrong to underestimate the importance of such cultural developments. Whether in the religious or artistic fields they are manifestations of a developing reaction against oppression. Of course many of their initiators (especially of black theology) grossly mislead their audience. But their very existence is of crucial importance to revolutionaries, for this is our constituency too.

christians

The most politicised wings of the black consciousness movement actually arose out of the University Christian Movement. This was founded in 1967 on the initiative of the Anglican Archbishop of Cape-town as a multi-racial inter-denominational organisation. At its 1968 conference a black caucus was founded which was directly responsible later in the year for the decision to form SASO. This stood on a policy of separate organisation for blacks. It deemed this necessary partly because NUSAS had been banned on a majority of black campuses. But its central argument was that blacks needed to liberate themselves from the dominance of whites over radical movements in South Africa and to build organisations of the oppressed which would be entirely self-reliant. In making this argument they were attacking not just reliance on liberals like Paton, Suzman etc., but, by implication, the practice of the previously dominant sections of the nationalist movement. The ANC particularly had been heavily influenced by the mainly white leadership of the South African Communist Party. According to SASO leaders, South Africa's whites were in a privileged position that effectively prevented them from 100% association with blacks. In any case it was necessary for blacks to form separate associations in which they would work through their own particular problems and achieve not just organisational but psychological liberation from white domination. Such a step was extremely significant for the rebirth of black political organisation after the lull of the mid 1960s. It came into a situation where there were no effectively functioning political organisations, with the exception of those sponsored by fledgling Bantustan governments with the aim of securing backing for themselves. If black grievances were heard at all they were articulated through the distorted medium of white liberals. SASO's insistence on the need for a rebirth of self-organisation was a key instigating the new economic and political militancy of the 1970s.

It was quickly followed by the development of an organisation with similar aims for non-students (Black Peoples' Convention 1971) and by an attempt to develop black trades unions on the same lines (Black and Allied Workers' union 1972). Later a school students' movement was set up (SASSM) which was to play a leading role in promoting the 1976 unrest in the educational system.

flourishing organisations

Despite this flourishing of organisations the new movement never succeeded in working out a coherent political programme. Nor did it develop a functioning organisation that was capable of directing struggles beyond the local. The most clear political statements of sections of the Black Consciousness movement were made in the BPC Aims of July 1972 and its 30 point programme entitled 'Black Communalism' passed at the Mafeking Conference, 30th May 1976. A further basic declaration was made by a meeting of 300 representatives of most of the organisations that would consider themselves part of this movement, held at Hammanskraal in December 1974.

In 1972 five out of the seven points of BPC's programme concerned means for raising black consciousness in a variety of fields. The other two demanded the creation of "an egalitarian society where justice is meted out equally to all" and "an equitable economic system based on the principles and philosophy of black communalism". There is no attempt to formulate any programme of precise demands for mobilisations in favour of any of these objectives. Again its 1976 Programme, while longer, is a fairly detailed charter for a "modified version of the traditional African economic life style which is being geared to meet the demands of a highly industrialised and modern economy" (Introduction, point 1) It calls for state control of major sectors of the economy with a mixture of co-operatives and small scale capitalist businesses at lower levels. If any influences are detectable in its philosophy they are those of African 'socialism', like that of Nyerere and Kaunda who currently organise precisely such economies for the greater security of imperialist capital and the enrichment of a local bureaucratic bourgeoisie. In some ways even more important than this is that the 30 point Programme is nowhere a programme for action and could not therefore play any sort of mobilising role.



In that respect the very brief concluding resolution of the 1974 Black Renaissance Convention is a little superior. It at least precises opposition to 'separate development and all its institutions' and calls for a 'society in which all people participate fully in the government of the country through the medium of one man one vote'.

programmes

Overall however, the political programmes of the various sections of the movement have been a good deal less precise than those of their forerunners of the 1950s and 1960s. This does not of course mean that these organisations have not engaged in any political actions. The record of bannings, detention and murder of their members by the government testifies to this. What has happened however is that the different wings of the movement have tended to go ahead with diverse actions within their own particular fields. At no time have any centralised initiatives been taken by all its constituents around a commonly agreed programme of action. A chain of events like that of 1976 came about spontaneously out of unplanned initiatives in a particular local struggle. But if they were not organised by the black consciousness movement they were nonetheless products of a political milieu heavily influenced by its propaganda and arguments.

Despite this tendency to political vagueness the black consciousness movement has made important strides forward on at least three key questions:

- 1) All its constituents have insisted on a definition of Black people as including the 'non-white' oppressed in South Africa. Historically all nationalist movements in South Africa had maintained racially divided organisations even if these were federated (e.g. Congress Alliance, Unity Movement).
- 2) With few exceptions the new movement has been unanimous in its rejection of all collaborationist ventures. Foremost amongst these are the Bantustan governments, but included are such bodies as the Urban Bantu Councils which came under such heavy attack during the Soweto events. Again its clarity on this point marks off the movement from the vast majority of its predecessors and readies it to play a more uncompromising role in the struggle against the apartheid state.
- 3) The black consciousness movement has maintained a generally positive attitude to the question of a united front of all movements fighting for the overthrow of apartheid. In the Ikwezi interview quoted above Biko says: "I personally would like to see the ANC and PAC and the Black Consciousness Movement decide to form one liberation group!"

petit bourgeois

On the other hand, as we have shown above, where we can find an explicit political programme it falls essentially into the same petit bourgeois category as more traditional African nationalism on the rest of the continent. Further, while the development of the black consciousness movement marks a tremendous step forward for the struggle in South Africa, it cannot escape the contradiction that the racism of whites does not by itself explain the nature of the state. Biko himself illuminates the problem:

"There is no doubt that the colour question in South African politics was originally introduced for economic reasons" (Pg 36, Basil Moore (ed) op cit)

But later in the same article we read an attack on those who "tell us that the situation is a class struggle rather than a racial one. Let them go to van Tonder * in the Free State and tell him

We stand in unconditional solidarity with the Black Consciousness movement and its struggles. We particularly commend the advances it has made in the development of the opposition in South Africa. But precisely because it is now the central expression of the aspirations of the most advanced sections of South Africa's blacks it is necessary to make stringent and hopefully constructive critiques of its policies and organisation. Such a debate will be an essential part of the necessary regroupment of forces opposed to apartheid on a principled political basis. 'Africa in Struggle' invites further contribution on this and related topics.

John Blair February 1978

*caricature of an Afrikaaner farmer.



Soweto fights on

this" (pg38). When Biko says (ibid pg39) that "white people now despise black people not because they need to reinforce their attitude and so justify their position of privilege but simply because they actually believe that black is inferior and bad" he is in part correct. Racist attitudes have indeed become internalised in the outlook of the mass of white South Africans. This fact does not mean that we have to look no further than these for an explanation for the peculiar nature of that state. In fact the institutionalised racism that sustains it becomes more and more thoroughgoing the more advanced is the development of the South African capitalist economy and it is impossible to imagine the destruction of one without the other.



ZIMBABWE

internal sellout

The 'internal settlement' reached in Rhodesia between Smith, Muzorewa, Sithole and Chirau has been universally condemned as a betrayal of the interests of the Zimbabwe people. For the past ninety years the Zimbabwe peasants and workers have struggled against their exploitation at the hands of a ruling class in collusion with international capitalists. The internal settlement leaves all the fundamental relationships of exploitation this alliance has engendered unchallenged. On the contrary, it entrenches them under the guise of a one person one vote independent black government; a government which is neither independent nor based upon democratic representation.

Amongst the provisions is that of a 100-seat parliament, 20 being reserved for white candidates elected by whites only, and another 8 reserved for white candidates elected by blacks and whites, but nominated by the present white government. Thus 28 seats are to be held by whites representing $\frac{1}{4}$ million whites, and 72 by blacks supposedly representing $6\frac{1}{2}$ million blacks - in short, one-black-one vote, one-white-ten-votes. Behind the simple arithmetic of this sell-out is revealed the full scale of the capitulation.

entrenched privileges

1. Several entrenched clauses of the independence constitution include the guarantee of existing properties, or immediate compensation upon expropriation or nationalisation. These entrenched clauses can only be altered by a 78 vote majority. The 28 white MPs will effectively block such changes. However, the real guarantee of these relationships for the white settler class and its cohorts is the effective continuation of the existing judiciary, police and armed forces and public service authority. It is only when this power is in the hands of the peasants and workers that independence and democracy will come to Zimbabwe.

2. This situation will obtain for two parliaments or ten years, whichever is the longer. Thereafter, whatever chan-

ges may be proposed must be ratified by a 51 vote parliamentary majority. The 28 whites need therefore only find 22 black stooges to block any constitutional changes. Such stooges abound in Chirau's ZUPO (Zimbabwe United Peoples Organisation, as well as in Muzorewa's UANC (United African National Council), and Sithole's ANCS (African National Council Sithole).

3. Although the 28 whites may not bloc with any one black group for the purposes of forming a coalition government, there is nothing to prevent them from forming a majority government with two or more groups! The manifest contradictions and differences within and between the three black parties, their inherent instability and petty sectarian wranglings make them highly vulnerable to splits and thus are rich pickings for the coherent white bloc.

4. The interim government provisions include an Executive Council (Smith, Sithole, Muzorewa, Chirau) and a Ministerial Council (dual portfolios for each ministry, one white for each selected by Smith, with the three blacks each selecting one third of black ministers). Any one member of the EC can veto any decision of either council. The resulting paralysis clearly favours a status quo situation - in other words, the whole gamut of the racist state, including of course its military apparatus, continues as before. Some 'victory', some 'independence' for Zimbabwe!

The leaked minutes of the internal settlement talks reveal the extent to which Muzorewa, Sithole and Chirau were prepared to bend over backwards to placate and accommodate to white fears and privileges. The issue of 'white confidence' dominated much of the proceedings. The reactionary, albeit ingenuous, contributions of Chirau's ZUPO, the party of the defunct tribal chiefs, are summed up in one statement: "I also want to tell you that the men in the bush are not ours. We may be the first to face the firing squads". Having lost their power to the colonial state, and their traditional bases to the liberation movement, these anachronisms, compromised lackeys of white rule, yet see a way in an internal settlement to recoup their position.

Sithole, a founding father of ZANU and armed struggle in 1963, subsequently and revealingly outstripped by the radicalisations of that struggle, finds himself in 1978 a crusader against nationalisation, friend of foreign investors, implacable enemy of guerilla 'terrorism' and man of peace at any price. The opportunist finds himself today traitor to Zimbabwe and an agent-in-chief of neo-colonialist enterprises.

Bishop Muzorewa, thrown up from obscurity as a voice of popular mass rejection of the Pearce Settlement manoeuvre of 1972, fails to comprehend the contradictions of courting and being courted by international capitalists and his populist rhetoric about 'ending exploitation of man by man'. As chief guest at a reception held by capitalists in the US, Muzorewa clearly revealed what 'independence' for Zimbabwe means to him. Like Sithole, his encouraging assurances in statements to them regarding nationalisation and future foreign investment defined him as a friend of international capitalism and enemy of Zimbabwe.

imperialism's response

One common interpretation of British and American government responses to the internal settlement sees apparent divergence between Young and Owen, the former sticking hard by the Anglo-US settlement proposals, the latter making conciliatory noises towards the developments in Salisbury. We should however, see these differences in imperialist responses as tactical. The strategy of all imperialist nations towards all colonial and semi-colonial national liberation struggles is coherent and united: namely, the deflection of mass militancy by the incorporation of as much of the leadership as possible into an alliance with western imperialism in their continued exploitation of those 'independent' nations in neo-colonial form. Such incorporation depends on the collaboration of these petit bourgeois leaderships, their hold over the mass organisations and the strength, coherence and identity of class interests of their petit bourgeois bases. The many thousand black capitalist farmers, businessmen and professionals in Rhodesia provide such a basis, and the three parties to the internal settlement deal such leaderships.

The problem for imperialism is its inability thus far to incorporate an essential component of the liberation movement, the Patriotic Front, whose guerilla campaigns have precipitated this frantic search for a negotiated settlement. Herein lies the source of the tactical differences between the UK and US - how best to achieve such incorporation, upon which the succ-

essful consummation of the neo-colonial solution for Zimbabwe depends. The US Government sees the current internal settlement attempt as a non-starter, since it in no way guarantees the end of the war. For the UK government, the possibility of drawing Nkomo into it is real. Thus the two imperialist governments have no strategic differences, just tactical ones. Whilst keeping a keen eye on the progress and possibilities of the internal settlement, Owen is colluding with Young in continuing to promote the Anglo-US proposals in an ongoing series of meetings with the Patriotic Front leaders.

The logic behind such tactics is that the spurious respectability accorded the UK-US proposals by the internal settlement, the weakness of stomach for a genuine liberation struggle and the fear of being outflanked by the internal settlement,



Murabe, Young, Owen, Nkomo

will all conspire to undermine the resolve and expose the socialist rhetoric of many in the PF leadership. Those militants genuinely fighting for liberation will be thus isolated and dealt with appropriately by the government of 'independent' Zimbabwe. The mechanism behind such a sell-out may well come in the form of a mongrel admixture of the two sets of formulae.

The tacticians of imperialism, drawing on their experiences in Vietnam, Angola, Mozambique and elsewhere, have pressurised the Smith regime into seeing the wisdom of conceding the trappings of state power to compliant black quislings as against the military and economic propping up of the white regime in its confrontation with black nationalism. Smith however, wishes to install a black government he himself can control in the interests of

maintaining white privilege. Owen and Young, from the greater vantage point of global imperialism that controls Rhodesia's economy and envisages the ultimate dispensability of the luxury of white privilege in its plans for the country, feel that only an incorporation of the PF guarantees the required result and gives them the whip hand.

programme vital

The crucial question now is how the anti-imperialist struggle is to continue in the face of the internal sell-out and continuing diplomatic manoeuvres. A crude counterposition of guerilla struggle is clearly inadequate. Guerilla struggle is a crucial tactic, but cannot on its own substitute for political intervention around a programme leading towards the revolutionary transformation of Zimbabwean society. A mass abstention by the Zimbabwean people in the internal settlement elections would carry far more weight than a mere military sabotage of such elections. Intense political agitation exposing the true nature of the collaborationist sell-out by the leaderships of the UANC, ANC (S) and ZUPO, and the nature of neo-colonialism and imperialism and centrally important debates with the masses around key programmatic points to consolidate the gains of the liberation struggle can produce such a rebuff to Smith, his stooges and imperialism. This agitational politics aims to prepare the people for the forms and exigencies of continued struggle, to concretely expose the inability, let alone the unwillingness, of the parties to the

Salisbury deal to confront the problems of the masses on Zimbabwe. The purely constitutional obsessions and empty populist rhetoric of Muzorewa and Sithole and their explicit collusion in the neo-colonising process offer no solution to the agrarian crisis in Zimbabwe, nor to the crisis of living and working conditions of the agricultural and industrial workers and the huge pool of unemployed. What solutions does the internal settlement propose to the disgusting living conditions of the four million black Zimbabweans crowded into barren agricultural areas and for the 3 million agricultural workers? They have no answer, and why? - the only real solution is the re-appropriation of the farm lands in the 'white' areas under peasants and workers control, a solution which demands the destruction of the colonial state, not collaboration with it.

democratic rights...

Democratic rights must be granted immediately to the Zimbabwe people, they must have the right to form trade unions, neighbourhood committees, workers and peasants committees etc - the lessons of Angola are very instructive. It is only by relying on their own self-organisation that the Zimbabwe people can achieve real and lasting independence. It is only on the basis of their own struggles that the power of the colonial state and its backers, international capital, can be broken, whether these struggles be trade union struggles or guerilla ones, whatever the form they may take.

Muzorewa, Sithole and Chirau have been in 'power' now for over two months and



have made much hot air on the question of political detainees. But what of the $\frac{1}{2}$ million Zimbabweans in Smith's concentration camps ('protected villages'). The immediate demand for their release has not been made! Smith's military forcibly drove these people from their farmlands and villages into these conditions because they aided the guerilla struggle, thereby posing serious threats to the regime. Do these Zimbabwean peasants pose a threat to the internal settlement or do the three traitors also wish to protect them from themselves? The release of these $\frac{1}{2}$ million political prisoners whose crime has been to participate in the liberation of their country and whose struggle has catapulted the likes of Muzorewa, Sithole and Chirau into 'government' must wait while these three haggle over the constitutional arrangements for their future and jostle for ministerial portfolios and the other fruits of 'independence'. Are the Zimbabweans to vote for the three stooges under the protection of barbed wire and Smith's soldiers? May the real militants of the liberation struggle freely enter these barbaric fortresses to convince the people of the fraudulence of the internal settlement and their need to continue the struggle for genuine liberation?

...suppressed

Mugabe's ZANU and Nkomo's ZAPU, the two wings of the PF, have been declared legal under the interim arrangements. Does this mean that the PF and other opponents of the sell-out may freely agitate against the internal settlement, or for demands on the transitional government, or for an abstention vote in the fraudulent elections, or for a referendum of all Zimbabweans (and not only of whites as agreed under the internal settlement) on the whole deal? The answers have already been given. Demonstrations by People's Movement Militants (the internal organisation of ZANU) have met with police harassment. On 24.4.78. a march by 300 black students from Salisbury University into the town centre to demonstrate against the settlement was forcibly blocked by police. 78 students were arrested, (demonstrations are illegal under still operating Rhodesian laws) and given suspended prison sentences by the country's only black magistrate! A virtually total boycott of classes by the 1000 black students ensued. A call by the Muzorewa appointed Justice Minister, Hove, for more rapid Africanisation of top administrative posts in government produced his immediate sacking by the Executive Council - with the knowledge, if

not the collusion, of Muzorewa himself. Muzorewa's UANC is still inside the settlement. And the war against the Zimbabwean people continues. Muzorewa himself blandly stated that Rhodesian raids against guerilla bases in neighbouring territories which in the past have caused the deaths of hundreds of refugees, will continue under the transitional government (D.T. 18.3.78). The balance sheet thus far shows clearly that Smith is very much in control with his black partners willing accomplices in his plans for Zimbabwe.

Muzorewa is now on the horns of a dilemma. UANC supporters' demonstrations outside his HQ demanding the re-instatement of Hove or withdrawal from the settlement deal caught him on the hop with their size and militancy. He is now caught between two stools. Having unequivocally renounced guerilla war and the PF, he faces political isolation or a split in his party and base. Although Hove's demands, being essentially a reflection of petit bourgeois aspirations, were hardly an answer to the real problems of the masses of Zimbabwe, his sacking and the popular response to it highlight many of the contradictions and frauds of the demagogues of the internal settlement and the class nature of the national liberation struggle. Muzorewa has been courted and feted and materially favoured by such multinationals as Lonrho and Allegheny-Ludlum. His and other UANC officials' many assurances regarding foreign interests in Zimbabwe have made him powerful friends in the international bourgeoisie. Although his feathers are ruffled, the Bishop is not yet a dead duck.

the way forward

The way forward now for the continuation of the liberation struggle clearly lies in an intensification of the armed struggle together with a concerted political mobilisation of the rural population and the organisation of the urban workers around clear exposures of all 'settlement' frauds and agents and concrete demands on living and working conditions. The A-A proposals must be seen and exposed as a more sophisticated variant of the internal settlement betrayal. The PF leadership has consistently approached Britain as the decolonising power in Rhodesia. The only decolonising power is the popular power of the Zimbabwean people, the power of struggle through their own democratic organs against all forms of oppression.

KENYA

Ngugi - popular voice silenced

This article was first published in the March issue of the ASU bulletin. It is reprinted with the permission of the author.

On the last day of 1977, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o - well known writer and playwright and author of Petals of Blood - was arrested at his home in Limuru in Kenya. In the early morning raid, the police seized over a hundred books from Ngugi's library, and dragged him to Kiambu Police Station. No grounds were given for the arrest at the time.

It was not until Jan 6th, one week after Ngugi's arrest, that a detention order was issued under the Detained and Restricted persons Regulation of 1966 which explained that Ngugi was a "public security risk".

The arrest of Ngugi marked yet another attempt by the Kenyan government to clamp down on all articulated opposition to its pro-imperialist policies. Two weeks previous to Ngugi's arrest, Oginga Odinga - founder of the banned Kenya Peoples Union - was arrested following a speech he made on the question of land distribution in Kenya: he pointed out that the land reforms which have been popularly demanded since colonial rule have not been carried out. Odinga has since been released.

But Ngugi remains under detention without trial, without access to lawyers, without the right to visits, and faces continued detention for at least six months when his case comes 'under review' again. So in fact his detention is indefinite.

Why arrest Ngugi? Why does the Kenyatta regime consider him to be a "public security risk"? To answer these questions we must look at Ngugi's background.



NGUGI WA THIONG'O

Born in Limuru, Kenya in 1938, Ngugi graduated at Makerere University (Uganda) in 1963. While still a student he edited a journal called 'Penpoint'. The journal encouraged contributions from the many whose confidence to write and discuss had been suppressed by imperialist ideology and colonial education, and was a centre for debate and discussion not only on literature, but on all aspects of political and social life in Africa.

In 1964, while working for the Daily Nation newspaper in Kenya, his first novel Weep not Child was published, and for this work he was awarded the special prize at the Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar. The novel showed Ngugi's tremendous sensitivity to Kenya under colonialism written in a 'contemplative and poetic prose style'. A theme emerged in this novel which was constantly developed in later books: political and cultural conflicts between colonialism, the church, christianity, and the African.

It was while he was in Leeds that his second novel The River Between was published (1965). A Grain of Wheat followed in 1967. It was in Leeds that he began to grapple with the whole question of 'cultural imperialism' and the issues raised by the then growing Black Power movement in the USA and Britain. The writings of George Lamming, Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi and certain West Indian writers began to have a profound influence on his ideas and writings.

In 1967 he returned to Nairobi as a Lecturer at the University College and edited a journal called Zuka. While there, he actively participated in the debates of the emerging student movement, and was in the forefront of encouraging expression - both artistic and political - amongst students. His first real clash with the Kenyatta regime came in 1969: the regime sent in armed police to smash up a student demonstration at the campus which was called to protest against the banning of a student meeting to which Oginga Odinga had been invited. Ngugi was in the forefront in protesting against this repression, and continued, together with other academics, to publicly protest against the numerous occasions on which police carried out repression of student activities. On many issues Ngugi was not afraid to make known his views. He became well known for his ardent opposition to 'cultural imperialism,'

political pen

On his return to Kenya in 1972 after a two-year stay in the USA, he again addressed himself to the politics of Kenya - this time not so much on the colonial past but much more on the relations between the colonial past and the neo-colonial present.

"History is very important to any people. How we look at our past is very important in determining how we look at and evaluate the present. A distorted view of a people's past can very easily distort our views and evaluation of the present as well as the evaluation of our present potentials and future possibilities as a people. Our history up to now has been distorted by the cultural needs of imperialism...It (history) is important because we are still not yet free of imperialist domination and exploitation. The Kenyan people must know their history in order to face up to the challenge of imperialism".

His work began to grapple with the way in which the struggles of workers and peasants were directly in conflict with the 'authorities'. The play which he wrote together with Mugo Micere The Trial of Dedan Kimathi began to address itself to this question within the context of the colonial period. The publication of his most recent novel Petals of Blood - developed these questions further.

"I am more interested in their development from the stage of black cultural nationalism to the stage of class consciousness. From the stage when (a character) sees oppression in terms of culture alone, to the stage when he can see oppression and exploitation as being total, that is, as being economic, political and cultural. From a stage where he can see African societies as differentiated between the peasantry and the workers on the one hand, and imperialism and its allies on the other".

The book Petals of Blood was launched in July 1977, ironically by Mwai Kibake, Minister of Finance in Kenya.

"In the novel I show imperialism as a monster preventing all our authentic

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Kenyan flowers from reaching out into the light".

This book is perhaps the most articulate critique from the left yet written in Kenya about the nature of neo-colonialism and the incumbent regime of Kenyatta, yet written in the form of a fictitious novel. The book has been hugely successful internationally. In Kenya alone it sold over 10,000 copies.

Ngugi has not been afraid to spell out his criticisms openly: "I have no such fears because I do believe that criticism of our social institutions and structures is a very healthy thing..If writers don't do this anywhere in the world, they would be failing in their duties".

But Ngugi has constantly fought with the problems of making his works available to the masses. He felt that his writing in English was itself a reflection of cultural imperialism. In both the Trial of Dedan Kimathi and in Petals of Blood, he continually uses African languages - in particular Swahili and Kikuyu and the anti-British imperialism songs of the past as well as those about Mau Mau.

"I think a people should express their national aspirations and their national history in various national languages of Kenya...Our national languages are international and national to the extent that they are able to stress the aspirations of the vast majority of not only the Kenyan people but also of peoples all over the world".

In order to do so, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o collaborated with Ngugi Wa Mirii in writing and producing a play in Kikuyu called Ngahika Ndenda (I will marry when I want to) which was produced in a small town outside Nairobi called Kamirithu. They were determined to smash the "myth that Africans do not like to go to the theatre". To an extent - given the huge attendance and participation - they were able to do this. But this was too much for the regime: immediately the play was banned - and shortly afterwards Ngugi Wa Thiong'o was arrested.

release Ngugi now!

Democratic rights in Kenya are extremely limited. The right to strike, the right

to political expression, the right of free speech, the right to form political organisations are non-existent. The arrest of Ngugi constitutes a further attack on already restricted democratic rights. Students at Nairobi University attempted to call a boycott of lectures in protest against Ngugi's arrest, and in spite of distributing many leaflets, have been unable to take this initiative: but this is because many of them live in fear of the ferocious attacks by the police - something they too have often experienced. It is therefore crucial that their inability to take initiatives is compensated for by the development of a mass campaign internationally to effect Ngugi's release.

We must at the same time defend all those whose rights are attacked by the Kenya government. Included in any campaign must be the call for the release of all political prisoners in Kenya.

But Ngugi's position is also special. He has openly come out and showed himself to be on the side of workers and poor peasants, defending the struggles of African students, and against imperialism and their allies in Kenya. He has risked much to place himself on the side of the oppressed.. How much are we prepared to risk for his release?

The African Students Union (UK) has already expressed its solidarity with the campaign to release Ngugi, and in London has joined forces with the Pan Africanist Association of Writers and Journalists (PAWJ) to mount a campaign in Britain demanding the release of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o.

It is urgent that whenever possible local initiatives are taken to build this campaign. A petition is being circulated at present which is available from the address below. Submit resolutions to your Society/ Union / Trade Union branch to demand the immediate release of Ngugi: send copies of these resolutions to the Defence Committee.

RELEASE NGUGI WA THIONG'O NOW!

Release all political prisoners!

F. H. (Kenyan student)

For further details and information:
Write to: Ngugi Defence Committee
c/o 28/29 Southampton St.,
London WC2

NGUGI DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

The Ngugi Defence Committee recently organised a public meeting in London to demand the release of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o. The meeting was a great success, attended by over 300 people. Below we print extracts from the speeches made at the meeting:

Alex La Guma:...Our campaign to free Ngugi is an identification with the ideas he expressed, not only for the people of Kenya, but those ideas which all the people of Africa embraced and entertain and which all progressive humanity entertains. Let me add that Ngugi Wa Thiong'o is not only a Kenyan, he belongs to the world of literature and he will not be freed only by the people of London, by the students of the universities of Britain, but will be freed also by progressive mankind, by progressive writers all over the world. And I dare to pledge to you that all those writers with whom I have contact over two continents will be drawn into the struggle to free Ngugi, to free one of the giants of literature: a giant has been imprisoned: we cannot allow the Lilliputians to keep him prisoner! "

Horace Campbell:... "We hear of Delmonte, Unilever, Union Carbide and all the multi-nationals who have now been invited to participate in the process that began with colonialism, to participate in the process of rape - I don't think it is just a simple question of exploiting labour: the conditions which Kenyan peasants, the Kenyan small farmers and Kenyan workers face is nothing but rape. And what we have under the rape of the multi-national corporations is that these so-called 'leaders' in Kenya only find it possible to reap a little through the interstices of the system..... We are here today not to cry about Ngugi, we are here today because we have the opportunity to speak out about the incarceration of Ngugi and to register to the Kenyan government that we will continue speaking out against not only Ngugi's incarceration, but also the incarceration of all Kenya's progressive workers and peasants (applause). And it is important that we re-inforce this because while Ngugi is known, so many other people who are arrested in Kenya are not known. We have to register our voices because we have the possibility to raise them. In areas of Nairobi that are preserved for the international bourgeoisie,



Plantation workers sorting coffee beans after the day's pickings

the working people are not even allowed to go... To make Nairobi safe and the streets safe for tourists, the unemployed of Kenya.. are not supposed to walk in streets, or else they will be stopped by the police. And it is this kind of draconian arrest of the working people, arrests and anti-working class laws, to which we are opposed".

Amooti Wa Irumba: .. "In the play Ngugi wrote with Micere Mugo - the Trial of Dedan Kimathi - he said that writers of Africa, and particularly himself, cannot afford to stand on the fence. You have got to choose: either to side with the imperialists, and therefore fight against the masses of Africa, or to side with the people who are fighting against exploitation. And Ngugi has opted for the side of the masses - that is where he stands.. writers like Ngugi.. and Wole Soyinka... are arrested because these people are increasingly pointing out the fact that the masses, the peasants and the working class in their countries on the continent of Africa are forced to live in wretchedness by the petit bourgeoisie in collaboration with the imperialists..." R.H.

why tanzanian students

Readers will be aware that approximately one fifth of the students at the University of Dar es Salaam were expelled after a demonstration held on March 5 this year in protest at the upping of the MPs' salaries and perks by about 100%. We have printed below the text of a leaflet which was distributed after the demonstration and explains the thinking of the students. We have added the text of a resolution passed on the subject by Bradford Trades Council. We would urge all our readers to propose similar resolutions to students' unions, trades union bodies etc..

March 5, 1978

TO ALL CITIZENS

This morning, Sunday the 5th March, 1978, we, the students of the University of Dar es Salaam organised a demonstration from the University to the city. The purpose of the demonstration itself will be explained further down, but we would first like to point out that in this demonstration we were confronted with ruthless and concentrated police brutality.

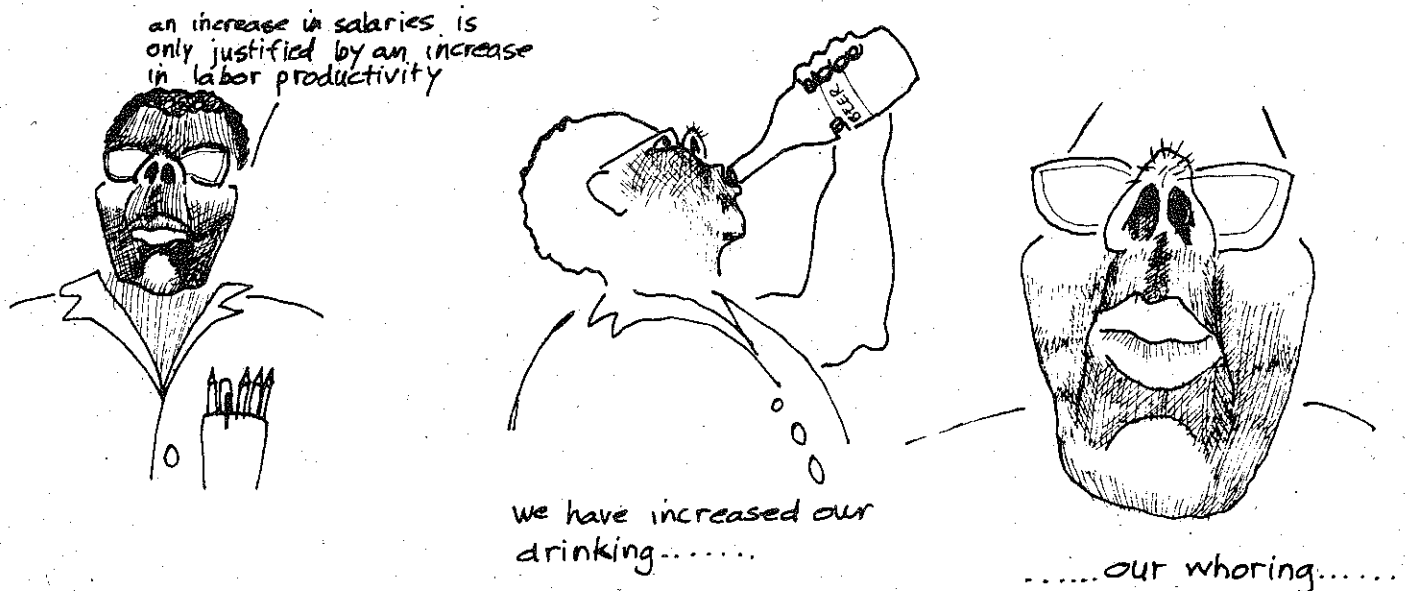
As soon as we arrived at Manzese we met a contingent of police who threw tear gas at us and started to baton us indiscriminately. Our demonstration was peaceful and none of us had a weapon of any sort. We did not even throw a stone, but the police attacked us in the most brutal fashion. Many of us including women were seriously injured as a result of the police ruthlessness. Never-

theless, we were not discouraged and continued with our demonstration after regrouping ourselves. Our aim was to go to the offices of the Government newspaper, Daily News, on Maktamba street where we planned to read out our memorandum in front of reporters. Instead, as soon as we arrived there we were surrounded by the police amid intimidation and threats of more brutality. Because our intentions were peaceful we sat down in order to avoid any disturbance. Just then, we saw police vehicles arriving at the scene and starting to load the students into the vehicles. A large group of our comrades is now, without any offence, under the police custody.

We condemn this police ruthlessness. We know that the order to round us up was issued by high authority, and the ordinary policeman was simply used as a club to oppress his comrades. This incident has made it clear to us that the state is an instrument of oppression of the downtrodden of this country.

Now why did we demonstrate? We had organised this demonstration in order to oppose the step taken by parliament in its recent sitting in Pemba where the salaries and fringe benefits were increased substantially. Now they will be paid bigger salaries, and in addition to getting a variety of other benefits, they will be paid fat gratuities after serving the parliamentary term of office.

This cartoon is taken from a Tanzanian students' leaflet



were expelled

This step has been taken at a time when workers and peasants are in great suffering and misery: their real income continues to decrease, the cost of commodities continues to rise, various commodities are not available, essential services continue to deteriorate, cholera continues to spread in the country, and a host of other tribulations. At a time when we are facing all these problems, the honourable members of parliament sit down to increase their salaries and fringe benefits! Why wouldn't they increase the salary of the lowest paid? Why wouldn't they reduce the price of essential commodities which are needed by the citizens?

These are the questions which we ourselves failed to answer and that is why we decided to organise a demonstration in order to express our opinions hoping that they will be listened to and reflected upon by those concerned. But our expectations were not correct. Instead of being listened to we were beaten up and arrested by the police - in a country which boasts of the building of Ujamaa!

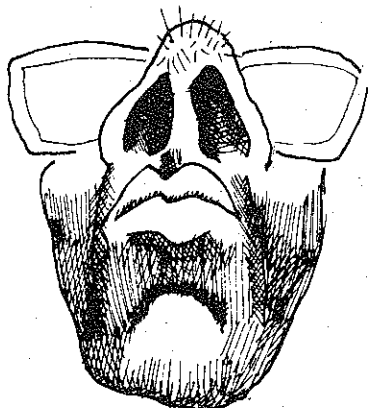
After today's incident, we now think we have an answer to our questions. We believe that the action of the parliament is in conformity with its obligation to our class ridden society. The parliament is a state instrument whose function is to enact laws which promote the interests of the exploiters and which suppress the interests of the workers and peasants. The parliament is not an instrument of the downtrodden, it is only a part of the State whose major function is to suppress the downtrodden. The police too is an instrument for oppressing the downtrodden and for protecting the interests of the exploiters. That is why it was necessary to be beaten up when we ventured to raise the questions concerning the incomes of the big-shots.

Therefore, this is what we should know from today: the interests of the workers and peasants can never be championed by the Parliament in this country. The job of the parliamentarians is to champion their own interests together with the interests of their fellow exploiters. The peasants and workers have no choice but to fight themselves for their own interests.

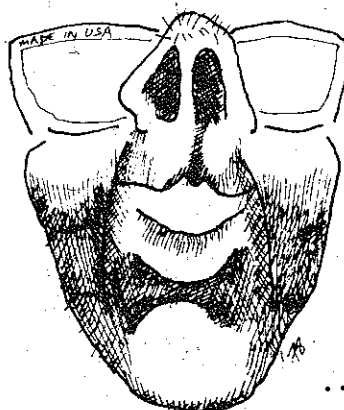
We, the students, earnestly implore all the peasants and workers to join us in opposing the action taken by the parliament and we thank the students of the Water Institute, Ardh Institute, various workers, and all citizens who have come forward to join hands with us in today's demonstration.

WORKERS, PEASANTS, PROGRESSIVE STUDENTS, AND ALL CITIZENS WHO OPPOSE EXPLOITATION: UNITE

Text of a resolution passed by Bradford Trades Council, Yorkshire, England, March. "This Trades Council wishes to express its solidarity with the 350 students from the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and related institutions, expelled from the university after a peaceful demonstration on March 5, 1978. The demonstration was directed against salary rises of almost 100% for MPs, Government Ministers, and Party Officials. We assert the right of workers, teachers, and students in every country and every educational institution to express their views on such matters without fear of intimidation and call on the Chancellor of the University of Dar es Salaam, President Julius Nyerere, to reinstate the expelled students forthwith." Addressed to: Tanzanian High Commissioner, London, Mr Amon Nsekela; Chancellor of the University of Dar es Salaam, President Julius Nyerere, State House, Dar es Salaam; Editor, Times Educational Supplement; Ministry of Education, Dar es Salaam.



.... our repression of workers, peasants & students....



.... that is why our salaries were increased!

ETHIOPIA: THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL QUESTIONS

Ethiopia is unique in Africa in never having been colonised by a European power. While colonialism was ploughing over the multifarious modes of production in most of Africa to form a European back garden, Ethiopia pursued an autonomous economic development more akin to classic European feudalism. In an overwhelmingly agricultural economy, these feudal productive relations were to remain numerically predominant until the Derg's land reform.

The political hierarchy corresponded to this social structure - a pyramid with its topmost point in Addis Ababa, reaching down through the local feudal lords to the peasant mass. The absence of colonialism determined this political structure as well, and established the co-ordinates of the national question which is at the root of the present conflict. In most of Africa the tendency has been for tribal differences to be softened in the quest for "national" unity against the colonial oppressor. The model has been one of amalgamation of the various ethnic groupings.

Ethiopia, on the other hand, has seen the assimilation of the myriad tribal elites by the expansive Amharas. The Christian religion and the Amharic language have been the main centralising ideologies, the cultural tribute which all vassal lords had to pay. And these were imposed at the point of the sword, culminating in the conquest of the Yohannes and Menelik, the two great nineteenth century Amhara emperors.

Ethiopia first

This imperial Ethiopian ideology has been taken over wholesale by the post-1974 governments. The main anti-imperial slogan of February 1974 was "Ethiopia Tikdem" - Ethiopia First! The social origin of the military rulers has a lot to do with it. With the exception of Mengistu - the first non-Hamatic ruler - they have the background one would expect of imperial servants.

More to the point, the very character of their "revolution" forces them to resort to the same imperial ideology of national mobilisation. The most accurate description of the Derg is Jacobin. Ethiopia differs from many neo-colonial countries in never having mobilised the population or any section of it in a struggle against imperialism. Instead the Derg is a radical bourgeois regime undertaking the democratic task of expropriation of the feudal and semi-feudal landed class.

The Derg did not begin this process. But tensions within the imperial regime throughout the 1960s testify to the incapacity of the old hierarchy, still dominated by the warlords and ancien regime functionaries, to carry out even the basic measures of land reform. The immovability of the old regime was rooted in the chronic weakness and underdevelopment of the bourgeoisie. For, although not colonised, Ethiopia still suffered from all the distortions and underdevelopment imposed by the world imperialist economy.

revolution

In that sense, February 1974 was a classic bourgeois revolution. The Jacobin analogy holds good to the extent that the agents of this revolution - the military - were obliged to mobilise the population on the basis of national reconstruction. And that necessarily meant the denial of national rights to groupings within the Ethiopian state.

Where the analogy breaks down is that the weakness of the bourgeoisie and the fragility of the state apparatus meant that the mass mobilisation took on a different character from the classic European bourgeois revolutions or the more standard models of the third world military regimes. The upsurge which finally did away with Haile Selassie was not initiated by the military but by the action of the masses themselves. Despite repeated attempts to damp down that struggle the Derg has nevertheless been forced to accommodate to it by repeated shifts to the left.

This explains the unusual political pluralism of Ethiopia. It is a strange military dictatorship which tolerates (however unwillingly) organisations which call for a return to civilian rule and oppose the Derg's nationality policy.

Of course, that freedom is closely circumscribed. The Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Party has remained underground and the Meison, the largest of the remaining groups felt it politic to do likewise last summer. But the problem for the Derg is that as long as it relies on a phenomenal degree of mass mobilisation through the kebeles (urban committees) and peasant committees, as well as the use of the peasant armies to supplement conventional forces, it has, to a certain extent, to accommodate to the political forces that represent the masses at that level.

There is no democracy, bourgeois or proletarian, since leadership remains with the military. The "Marxist-Leninist" groups must take their share of the blame for that. They range from the Seded (Mengistu's party) which hails the Derg as a proletarian leadership, to groups like Meison, which characterise the Derg as petit bourgeois.

The label is accurate enough, but the crucial question is: which class interests does this petit bourgeois formation serve? The suppression of democracy, the refusal to rely on independent mass mobilisation, the retention of the bourgeois state apparatus and the maintenance of the economic status quo in the capitalist sphere all point to the answer. So, most strikingly, does the Derg's policy in the national question.

Eritrea

As in most such cases, you can choose between two versions of Eritrean history, depending on which side you support.

Crudely, the Eritrean nationalists argue that their country was always independent from Ethiopia until the United Nations voted for the federation of the two in 1950. The Ethiopians argue the reverse: that it was only Italian colonialism which broke Eritrea away from its parent state. Both are distortions.



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Eritrea is composed of eight different tribal and linguistic groupings, each of which overlaps with another neighbouring state: Ethiopia, Sudan or Djibouti. Similarly there is a clear religious division between the predominantly Muslim coastal strip and the Christian highlands. There is nothing in its ethnic or geographical make-up to suggest a nation.

Under the Axumite kingdom of the first millennium AD Eritrea as a whole was part of what now is Ethiopia. The mountain Tigrayans were to remain at the core of the Abyssinian empire that succeeded it. But the coastal strip became the subject of a series of foreign invasions and prolonged occupations: Turkish, Egyptian and Sudanese. The motive then as now was the trading and strategic advantages of a Red Sea port.

These successive occupations explain the distinct religious and social evolution of the coastal strip, though the area regularly changed hands between Abyssinian and successive Arab invaders.

If you believe in "significant historical dates", the present conflict dates from 1869. That was the year of the opening of the Suez Canal - which transformed the strategic significance of the Horn - followed by the establishment of the first Italian coaling station on the Eritrean coast.

In 1872 a section of the coastal strip was occupied by the Egyptians under Khedive Ismail, while Britain took over another section in its fight against the Sudanese Mahdists. The British offered to hand the territory over to Yohannes, the Ethiopian emperor, in return for military aid against the Mahdi. But after some strange dealings at court, Yohannes' rival Menelik allied with the Italians, Yohannes conveniently died, and Menelik came to the throne to hand Eritrea over to the Italians.

invasion

The Italians saw Eritrea as a base to launch an attack on Ethiopia as a whole, linking up with its Somali colony and making the Horn an Italian protectorate. Their first bid was in the 1890s when they were roundly defeated at the Battle of Adowa. The second, successful attempt came in 1935.

The invasion plan was important for Eritrea's internal development, since it necessitated the evolution of an infrastructure capable of supporting military operations. Hence the rapid town-building programme as well as the development of more conventional colonial economic forms such as mines and plantations.

The British occupation of Eritrea in 1941 signalled further attacks on the living standards of the Eritrean working class, but also their first opportunity for independent organisation. A trade union federation was set up and party political life flourished, though this was centred exclusively on the national question and there was no independent working class party.



In 1952 the UN resolution for federation with Ethiopia was implemented. Trade unions were banned, along with all political parties except the pro-Ethiopian Unionists, representing the upper strata of the bourgeoisie. US imperialism quickly penetrated the area, both for its strategic value and the fact that it was the only section of Ethiopia which had undergone any substantial development.

In 1960 the puppet Eritrean Parliament voted to demote the local government to advisory status and in 1962 dissolved itself to make way for annexation by Ethiopia.

Resistance to Ethiopian occupation began peacefully and was based primarily on the workers movement. The turning point came with the brutal repression of an economic general strike in 1958. In the early 1960s the Eritrean Liberation Front at that stage based mainly on the lowland Muslims, began its military actions against the occupying army.

The internationalisation of the conflict in the Horn is nothing new. In the late 1960s US planes were used and napalm used against Eritrean villages and Cuban advisers were brought in to train the ELF.

factions

In the same period serious factional differences emerged in the ELF leading to the formation of the Eritrean Popular Liberation Front in 1970. From 1972 until February 1974 there was civil war between the two, ending only with the mass upsurge against Haile Selassie, in which the Eritrean working class played an important part.

The present military situation overwhelmingly favours the nationalists, with the entire countryside and all important towns except Asmara, Massawa and Assab under their control. All reports indicate overwhelming support for Eritrean independence among all sectors of the population.

What is less clear is the situation of the nationalist groups themselves. Their relationship has been complicated by the formation of a small "third force" - confusingly known as the Eritrean Liberation Front- Peoples Liberation Forces- with strong Arab backing and by a number of splits, mainly from the ELF.

Since 1974 there have been a series of unity negotiations between the two major organisations. Each time unity was postponed, until last year it seemed that there was agreement for almost immediate unification. Since then the EPLF has pulled back, rejecting a number of agreed positions and arguing that for the moment unity should not extend beyond joint military action.

The exact military and political balance of forces between the two is equally impenetrable. Estimates range from rough parity between the two organisations for soldiers in the field to a strong preponderance for the EPLF.

Current Western thinking, echoed by much of the left, describes the EPLF as the Marxist wing of the Eritrean movement. In fact the programme of both organisation is nationalist. Nationalisations are only envisaged in the context of the national liberation struggle. The EPLF, for example, leaves the question of the expropriation of both foreign and domestic enterprises suitably vague. If anything the ELF programme does not go as far in providing a role for domestic capitalism in an independent Eritrea.

Our support for Eritrean national self-determination has nothing to do with sterile debates about who controlled the coastal strip under the Axumite regime! The important point is that a national political consciousness has been forged creating a framework for the activity of all classes. And, it appears, all classes favour separation.

Not only would the secession of Eritrea weaken the Ethiopian bourgeois state; it also provides an indispensable precondition for unity between the workers and peasants of both nations. Such unity has to be based on the voluntary cooperation of the organisations of the masses, not the military imperatives of the capitalist state.

Somalis

The case of the Ogaden Somalis is in various respects both simpler and more complicated. Simpler because the Somalis within Ethiopia constitute a clearly definable group, ethnically identical to the population of Somalia itself. More complicated because it involves the expansionist aspirations of another capitalist state.

There are something over a million Somalis in Ethiopian territory. The largest group, about half, is the Ogaden Somalis proper. With the exception of a small community of settlers around Jijiga, who tend to be racially mixed, the population is entirely nomadic. As far as it is possible to tell, this majority backs the demand for secession from Ethiopia and integration into Somalia.

The Somali population of Ethiopia has been subject to extreme social discrimination. The feeble attempts of the Amharas to create an educated pro-Ethiopian elite have backfired, simply providing a petit bourgeois cadre for the nationalist organisation, the West Somali Liberation Front.

The Western press has speculated on the economic motives behind the Derg's fanatical desire to hold on to the Ogaden. But the area is arid and uncultivable. There are small mineral deposits around Harar, Jijiga and Dire Dawa, but hardly enough to go to war over. There has been further speculation that oil is the cause of the dispute. Yet twenty years of prospecting by successive Western oil companies has turned up with nothing.

The real reason for the conflict is simpler: the nomads see the national struggle as a way of winning basic political and social rights; the Ethiopian and Somali regimes see it as unavoidable if they are to hold on to their political power. On the Ethiopian side the territorial integrity of the old imperial state is irrevocably broken. Not only the Eritreans, but the Tigres in the north and the Oromos in the south have won considerable tracts away from the Derg. This makes the retention of the Ogaden all the more vital.

Siad Barré

In Somalia, as President Mohamed Siad Barre readily admits, irredentism is the key to maintaining popular support. Somalia, the only ethnically homogeneous unit in sub-Saharan Africa, was torn apart by the colonialists. In 1965 the former Italian and British colonies were reunited in present day Somalia, but the substantial Somali groups in Ethiopia and northern Kenya remained separate.

The idea of a "Greater Somalia" incorporating all these groupings (as well as

the non-Somali territory of Djibouti) was briefly put forward by British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin in the 1940s. The imperialists quickly ditched the plan, preferring to maintain stability through the retention of colonial boundaries in post-colonial Africa, but successive Somali dictatorships have gratefully latched onto the idea.

For all the rhetoric about "scientific socialism", Somalia remains high up in the unenviable league of backward Muslim states. Siad Barre's social reforms have achieved precious little, the bulk of the population remains nomadic, the barbaric practice of clitoridectomy is widespread, and there is a full Muslim penal code. Chest-beating promises of a "Greater Somalia" are all that keeps the Siad Barre regime in power.

Obviously we cannot subscribe to these absurd Somali nationalist posturings. Our support for self-determination for the Ogaden Somalis is the same as for Eritrean secession. Without the recognition of that democratic right there is no chance of winning unity between the oppressed masses of the entire Horn of Africa.

Derg

The Derg, probably under pressure from its Soviet backers, now proposes a different solution, a "federation" of Ethiopia into a dozen autonomous regions. Before the expulsion of the Russians from Somalia and the beginning of the Ogaden war, the Soviet Union proposed something similar, but extended its "socialist" federation to the entire Horn with autonomy for Ogaden and Eritrea.

Cloaked in pseudo-Leninist chatter about the right to self-determination, this is a last-ditch bid to preserve the unity of the Ethiopian state. Without the right of each nation to determine its own relation to the Ethiopian or Somali state, self-determination becomes a sick joke.

It is hardly surprising that the Eritreans and Somalis don't think the Derg's scheme worthy of consideration. As they see it - and they're quite right - it doesn't differ a jot from the imperial "solution" to the national question.

In 1956 Haile Selassie made a speech at Gabredare in the Ogaden which could just as easily have come Mengistu: "We are confident that they (the Somalis)..will also remember that unity is strength, even as the Eritreans recognised that unity is strength (!) Not only they, but the whole world will recognise that we are united by race, colour, economics, and that we all drink from the same great river".

OAU

The black African states, even the most reactionary, are united in support of "Marxist" Ethiopia. For the central plank of the Organisation of African Unity is the recognition of the old colonial boundaries. Never mind that the colonial boundary could easily be used on the side of the Eritreans. What is at stake is the principle which unites the neo-colonial states: the retention of bourgeois state power through the defence of its territorial boundaries. Not only is the principle reactionary; it is plainly iniquitous in a case like Somalia's where colonialism has cut a single nationality into separate parcels. The phenomenon was repeated in almost every African country.

The OAU policy also provides the rationale for the United States' refusal to intervene directly in the conflict. Nevertheless it is an issue which has opened rifts within the Carter administration. The "Africanist" wing, led by Andrew Young, argues for the minimum of direct imperialist intervention to allow the African client states to create their own equilibrium. But "global strategists" like national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski are chafing at the bit, arguing that the Soviet intervention in the Horn demands retribution at the level of bilateral relations between the US and the Soviet Union, such as the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks.

Neither faction is yet prepared to countenance direct military intervention or even an open supply of arms to Somalia at this stage. Other imperialist states are less reticent. West Germany is making little secret of its championship of Somalia, which represents a potential toe-hold for German imperialism after the co-operation afforded by the Siad Barre regime in the Mogadishu 'anti-terrorist' operation last October. And massive quantities of US arms are reaching Som-

alia through reactionary Arab states like Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The conflict has become a weird refraction of the Middle East situation, with states like Libya, South Yemen and Israel lining up behind the Derg. For the conservative Arab regimes the idea is to hold the Red Sea as an Arab shipping lane and to counter Soviet military presence in the Indian Ocean. Israeli realpolitik demands that it back Ethiopia to counter this threat, while the pro-Soviet Arab states are obliged to fall in with their master's designs in this region.

But the most apparently baffling aspect is whether the rapid shift in alliances at the beginning of 1977 will hold fast. In rapid succession Mengistu gained an assurance of Soviet military backing and cut ties with the imperialist powers, while Siad Barre, who had long received Soviet backing, did the opposite.

But the US is certainly keeping its options open. Part of its desire not to escalate the conflict can be explained by a wish not to risk a once and for all break with Addis Ababa regime. In February Brzezinski's deputy David Aaron visited Addis with proposals for limiting the war. The apparent Somali decision to pull its troops out of the Ogaden seems to have been the result. But it is inconceivable that the American delegation didn't win something in return. The US probably hopes to exploit the continued fears about the spread of Soviet influence among sections of the Derg.

Soviet Union

The Soviet Union has similarly not given up hope in Somalia. There is still a pro-Soviet faction within the officer corps and informed sources in Mogadishu confirm the possibility, first rumoured in the Western press, of a pro-Soviet coup to get rid of Siad Barre.

These manoeuvres are only explicable if we remember the principles behind Soviet policy in Africa and the neo-colonial world generally. It is guided by the need to extend Soviet influence: primarily political and strategic, secondarily economic.

Proletarian revolution would be one way of doing this, but only at the expense of a reversal of the international status quo which would threaten the very

basis of the bureaucracy's rule in the Soviet Union. Where such revolutions have occurred - China, Vietnam - it has been because the struggle itself has ruled out any possibility of any middle road between imperialist victory and the overthrow of capitalism. In such cases revolution - albeit deformed and undemocratic - has happened despite, not because of, Soviet influence. The preferred model would be Angola or Mozambique - states which remain capitalist while firmly within the Soviet sphere of influence.

This cynicism towards the class character of the state explains why it is possible for the Soviet Union to support brutal petit bourgeois regimes in Somalia and Ethiopia, Indifference to the struggle and interests of the masses in those countries means alliances can be shifted at will - yesterday's 'progressive' becomes today's 'reactionary'.

Cubans

The Cuban role is more complex, if only because the subjective motive for Cuban intervention in Africa remains a distorted proletarian internationalism. Increased economic dependence on the Soviet Union - heightened by disasters like the failure of the 1970 sugar harvest - had its most obvious impact in the abandonment of support for guerilla struggle in Latin America. But the last couple of years have seen the exemplary internationalism of Che Guevara's intervention in the Congo (or military aid to the Eritreans) perverted beyond recognition, as the Cubans have become no more than shock troops of the Soviet Union.

The war in the Horn casts important light on the Cuban intervention in Angola. Then the Cubans were universally welcomed by the left - at least emotionally - as the Angolan people's defenders against imperialist military interference. The Cuban role was progressive to the extent that it represented a defence against the South African army. But insofar as it marked a defence of the interests of the Soviet Union and the MPLA against the possibility of proletarian revolution, the Cuban role was counter-revolutionary.

The Soviet and Cuban impact in the Horn has been equally baleful. Apart from their defence of a regime with a repressive record which must be the envy of most African states, they have succeeded in driving the nationalist opposition movements into the hands of the imperialists and reactionary Arab regimes.

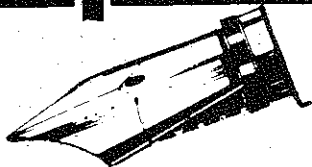
The EPLF refusal to ally with the ELF can probably be put down to its fear that reactionary Arab backing for the latter could lead to the EPLF's isolation and complete destruction in the future, pro-Arab independent Eritrea. Certainly Soviet support for the Derg has isolated the left within the Eritrean movement (which is not the same thing as the EPLF) and driven the nationalists as a whole to greater dependence on Sudan.

Similarly in the Ogaden, the failure of the standard bearers of 'socialism' to offer support or a political perspective can only strengthen the reactionary ideology of 'Greater Somalia'.

In the midst of this tragedy - for no other word adequately describes the situation - it is left to the still tiny forces of revolutionary socialism in Africa to keep alive the principles of proletarian internationalism.

RICHARD CARVER

Report: ASU conference



The March 1978 Annual General Conference of the African Students Union (UK) marked the second anniversary of the mass anti-imperialist union of African students.

Of the many issues discussed at the Conference, three issues of importance are taken up in this report. (fuller details of the resolutions discussed and passed are available by writing to the ASU Secretary at the address given below)

Soviet & Cuban intervention

This discussion arose out of a report submitted by a majority in the outgoing executive. This document advanced an analysis of the African continent in the last year which made the continent the battlefield for the struggles between the 'two Superpowers' - the USA and USSR. It denounces the Soviet Union as 'social imperialist' which it describes as the most cunning, insidious and dangerous enemy of the African people'. The proponents of these arguments fervently denounce the support given by the Soviet Union to reactionary regimes in Africa. Yet ironically these same people have been totally silent on the similar support given by China to similarly reactionary regimes - for instance to the Mobutu regime in Zaire.

The proponents of the document came well prepared to the Conference; they circulated a leaflet (4 pages long) in which they attempted to express their reasons for why the Soviet Union was the 'main enemy', why it was 'imperialist'. The themes explored in the latter document will be the subject of an article to appear in a future number of the journal.

Two major reasons for this response by African students lie behind the virulent attack against the Soviet Union - a positive and a negative reason. Positively, on the one hand, the response is that only the peoples of Africa can solve their own problems themselves. There can be no doubt at all that this is a fundamentally correct position. The toilers and oppressed of Africa can and will find their own liberation through their own struggles. They cannot emancipate themselves without depending on their own potentials and strengths. Africa will be liberated by the oppressed of Africa for the oppressed of Africa, not by anyone else. Anyone who advances any argument contrary to this position can only do so on the basis of paternalism, which is so commonly experienced by Africans from liberal white bourgeois ideologues.

There is also a basic disgust, and correctly so, for the manoeuvrings of the Soviet Union in its relations with African despots and regimes. Such manoeuvres derive not from the interests of the oppressed and their struggles in Africa, even less so from the interests of the Soviet working class: they derive from the specific needs of the Soviet bureaucracy - which long ago (following the death of Lenin) appropriated political power from the hands of the Soviet workers - in their diplomatic manoeuvres of detente with imperialism. And what is the object behind these manoeuvres? - the defence of the policy of building 'socialism in one country' - all their policies and international relations are subservient to this need. The struggles of the oppressed throughout the world become secondary to the utopian dream of building socialism in the USSR, and equally important, secondary to allowing the bureaucratic state leadership maintaining its political domination in the Soviet Union.

The behaviour of the Chinese leadership has not, however, been objectively (no matter what rationalisations they may give for their international relations) that much different - and not only on the African scene. Was not China one of the first to recognise the military junta in Chile following the destruction of the Allende government? But why, we must ask, do the proponents of the thesis of 'social imperialism' not also call China 'social imperialist'? It is good that they understand that China is not so - but they are inconsistent to say the least! Yet when it comes to Cuba they are content to call that 'social imperialist' because of its close relationship with the USSR.

One can only presume that their deafening silence on the role of China in Africa is because they have decided to adopt the political positions of the Chinese leadership. Their loyalty to this workers state is touching, but somewhat romantic!

Neither China, nor USSR, nor Cuba are imperialist!

It is clear that the proponents of the 'social imperialist' thesis differ with Lenin on the nature of imperialism. We refer readers to the article by Erich Earl: 'Is the USSR an imperialist country?', in AiS Vol.1 No.2 for a detailed critique of the thesis. Let us here make one point: the African countries remain today in the grip of imperialism as they have for the last hundred years: the lesson to be drawn since the 'independence' of these countries is clearly that one cannot legislate imperialism out of a country: one cannot simply demand that it goes. Surely the lessons of the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions tell us something...that without a thoroughgoing socialist revolution imperialism remains to stay and dominate the country. Yet, I will ask the comrades one question: how was it that Egypt, without any mass mobilisation or any socialist revolution, was able two years ago to get rid of the USSR from that country...likewise, and more recently, Somalia...? If they are imperialist, and moreover 'the most cunning, insidious and dangerous enemy of the African people' as well, presumably the other imperialists should be easier to get rid of?

The executive report, however, was only accepted by the Conference by a small majority, with 40% voting against. It was felt that the ASU should organise seminars in which this discussion could take place further. It is hoped that such a seminar will take place, and that it will allow a broader debate to take place than is likely in the conference to be organised this year by IKWEZI. The latter promise a conference that "will be firmly in the hands of those organisations that have a clear cut anti-imperialist, anti-social imperialist and anti-hegemonic position". (Bulletin on the Conference on Social Imperialism in Africa, Nol, March 1978)...in other words, only those who agree should attend!

Women & the ASU

The conference agreed to the need for 'an independent organisation of African women and women of African descent'. The 'Organisation of African Women and Women of African Descent' (OWAAD) is now in the process of being formed by women in the

Build the African Students Union

Union. This move marks an historical step forward in the struggle of women to fight their own oppression and to fight against all forms of sexism among African students.

Of particular importance was the fact that the women won the right to form an autonomous organisation of women, and at the same time remaining part of the anti-imperialist unity of African students. The subject of womens oppression in Africa has been one that has only rarely been taken up in a serious manner. It is hoped that the formation of OWAAD will open up new horizons in this arena of struggle.

Soweto

3) The final point of major importance was the resolution unanimously approved on the question of Soweto. We reprint this resolution in full:

Resolution on Soweto

This Conference acknowledges the historic and heroic role of the students of Soweto who went into struggle against the racist state of South Africa in June 1976:

With their own blood and their bare hands they faced alone one of the most powerful and ruthless regimes in the modern world. By their action they put a stop to the cruel deceit of 'detente' in Southern Africa, and opened up a new period of struggle against the apartheid regime.

June 1976 deserves to go down in the history of Africa as a memorable date.

We pledge ourselves to ensure that the Soweto students will never again have to fight alone. We will do everything possible to guarantee that in their present and future struggles they have behind them the whole of Africa, and the support of all those who oppose racism and imperialism around the world.

The African Students Union Conference therefore appeals for a mass commemoration of the second anniversary of Soweto in June this year. At a time when British imperialism is frantically manoeuvring to prevent the destruction of the white racist regime in Zimbabwe, it is essential that a demonstration of mass support for the liberation struggle in Southern Africa should take place in London.

Conference calls upon all organisations concerned with the struggle in southern Africa, all organisations of the student, labour and socialist movement, and all groups opposed to racist and imperialist oppression to support this appeal. It mandates the Executive of ASU to convene a meeting of such organisations supporting this appeal at the earliest possible date, with a view to forming a united mobilising committee, and ensuring the broadest possible support for the commemoration of the Soweto anniversary and the cause of freedom in Southern Africa.'

In spite of the rapid growth of the ASU, there is still a need to continue to struggle to build a truly representative union of anti-imperialist African students.

We urge our readers who are not already members to join immediately. We urge those who are already members to attempt to build local branches of the Union. As is apparent from the above discussions, many different viewpoints amongst anti-imperialist students exist - each have the right to struggle for and voice their views so long as they accept the basic constitution of the Union. You are not bound to agree with the positions of any grouping within the Union - be it in a majority or minority. If you disagree with the views or activities of the Union, join it to change them. If you agree - join it to keep it so!

For more details write to:
African Students Union (UK)
1, Cambridge Terrace,
London N.W.1.



DEBATE: PROGRAMME FOR SOUTH AFRICAN REVOLUTION

The following article has been received from comrade B. Msarwana of the Unity Movement of South Africa. It takes up a debate that began in AIS with a review by J Hunt of the pamphlet 'Soweto, June 1976: the Call to Arms' by V.K. Ntshona. It was continued in a reply to this review by A. Sondlo and A. Benjamin and a comment by the editors in Issue No.5

Because this reply contains certain misunderstandings of the points which we have made previously we have appended a series of notes taking up the most important points of these. We are of the opinion however that to continue the debate in the essentially historical terms posed by cde Msarwana will not be very fruitful. Rather, what is urgently required at the present moment is a debate about the realities of the southern African revolution at the present moment and about perspectives for building it. For that reason we are closing the present debate with these comments. We invite all interested parties from whatever tendency to submit material which we undertake to publish, subject to restrictions in length, which deals with the present situation and the prospects for the socialist revolution in that area.

The Unity Movement of South Africa and the Legitimacy of the National Liberation Struggle, by B. Msarwana.

The levity with which 'Africa in Struggle' approaches serious political problems and the manner of conducting the debate borders on the dishonest. First, Mr. V.K. Scrape Ntshona writes a pamphlet on Soweto whose political contribution is nil. Its purpose was:

- a) to discredit all the 'traditional' political organisations of South Africa, including the Unity Movement whose member he claims to be, without any analysis of the different programmes and policies of each of these organisations.
- b) to separate the youth with its various organisations at home, and sow seeds of antagonism between them and all the 'traditional' organisations. He palms off the pamphlet as a publication of the UMSA his home address as that of the movement. The IMG assist in the distribution of this dishonest pamphlet and the AIS honours it with a review as a publication of the UMSA, thus compounding the fraud, despite knowing that all the while

Ntshona has been suspended from membership on security grounds.

When A. Sondlo and A. Benjamin took up the cudgels in defence of the UMSA and exposed Ntshona's politics and his fraudulent claim to membership, the editorial defended his political position and endorsed some of his accusations against the Movement. But, like a bolt from the blue they conclude their commentary with this astounding statement: "If Ntshona is not indeed a member of the UMSA then we consider that his publication of this pamphlet under the name of the UMSA is highly unprincipled...this answer is in no way intended to align ourselves with him, nor to defend his political practice". This double talk is all the more reprehensible considering that the members of the UMSA in England had for months discussed with the AIS group the positions of Ntshona, and that the documents suspending him were accessible to the AISG. Even in the latest issue it still persists in giving the impression that V.K. Ntshona was the victim of the UMSA bureaucracy and of sectarianism.

Interview

The latest issue of AIS contained a question and answer interview with a "South African Trotskyist who has been in the black liberation struggle since the early 1950s". Significantly this Trotskyist too gave a swipe at the Unity Movement. What is strange is that in the early 1950s all the progressives, the socialists and Marxists in South Africa with one exception participated in one or other of the two tendencies in the liberation movements, the African National Congress on the one hand and on the other the organisations affiliated to the UM. But none of these organisations now operating in Lusaka have any knowledge of this Trotskyist. The exception was a small group which called itself the 4th International, whose attitude was: a plague on both tendencies. This group soon disintegrated.

It will be noted that the only article in defence of the UMSA drew some sharp editorial comments. But those discrediting it were printed without comment. We must therefore conclude agreement of the AISG with these articles.

Indeed, piecing together these omissions and the editorial comment on the article by A. Sondlo and A. Benjamin, it becomes abundantly clear that these critics of the UMSA have a common denominator: a refusal to accept the legitimacy of a national struggle in South Africa. They are not alone in this. The Communist Party of South Africa took up the same position in the 1930s when there were serious discussion on whether it was correct for revolutionary marxists to help form a national liberation organisation. Today the same question is being raised, particularly amongst those in England and Europe. The approach takes many forms. Some argue that because South Africa, like Europe, is a highly developed industrial country and therefore a bourgeois state, there is no need for a national liberation struggle. Others go so far as to argue seriously that there is in fact no such thing as a peasantry in South Africa. Thus more than seven million people are wiped out of existence because they do not fit into the intellectuals' scheme of things. To return to the editorial comment in reply to the article by Sondlo and Benjamin. It opens with a quotation from the Transitional Programme of the 4th International 1938. On the basis of this AIS proceeds to suggest that the UMSA might be classified as 'Classical Social Democracy'; that there is nothing either 'principled' or marxist about their use of the term 'minimum programme'; that it uses the term to 'hide the essential sectarianism that guides its politics'. Presumably this essential sectarianism can 'be amply demonstrated by the fact that the UMSA has always claimed itself to be a National Liberation movement .. a non-Leninist term'.

confusion

The confusion here stems from the non-Marxist refusal to distinguish between a national liberation movement and a Marxist party. In the quotation from the Transitional Programme Trotsky was addressing himself to the revolutionary marxist parties of the world. The very first phrase makes this clear: 'It is necessary to help the masses'. Who are the masses? Surely not members of marxist parties?

It would appear from the editorial comment that Lenin never used the term 'national liberation movement' and that its use is a violation of Leninism. Time without number Lenin wrote and spoke of national struggles and national movements with approval. He supported the

right of oppressed nationalities to self-determination. Is it the insertion of the word 'liberation' in between 'national' and 'movement' that is so objectionable and non-Leninist? What then were these national movements (that Lenin approved of) fighting for if not for political liberation from the domination of oppressor nations? Lenin writes: 'From the socialist point of view it was undoubtedly a mistake to ignore the tasks of national liberation in a situation where national oppression existed' (in 'The National Liberation Movement in the East'). We emphasise here that to denounce the very existence of, or even the term 'National Liberation Movement' in conditions where national oppression exists is, to say the least, non-Leninist and non-Marxist.

The Minimum Programme and the Maximum Programme.

The editorial commentary declares: '...there is nothing either 'principled' nor indeed anything marxist about their use of the term 'minimum programme'. It is behind the use of this term that the UMSA and the two comrades alike attempt to hide the essential sectarianism that guides their politics'. The mysterious trotskyist adds his piece in the interview published in the same issue: '...The leadership of the UMSA in exile says that there is a 'maximum programme' but that this is the exclusive property of the leadership'. Trotsky denounced the programme of 'Classical Social Democracy' which was divided into two parts, the minimum and maximum programmes without any connection between them. Therefore the words Minimum Programme become a swear word and shield to cover up 'essential sectarianism', 'opportunism' etc.

The UMSA is not a party. It is a National Liberation Movement, a federation of organisations at different levels of political development. It was born under specific political, economic and social conditions. It must be evaluated in this context. It has a programme - the 10 point Programme which is a demand for bourgeois democratic rights and a policy of non-collaboration with the oppressor. It sets itself the task of mobilising the oppressed population, the African, Coloured and Indian, the workers, peasants and the petit bourgeoisie on the basis of a clearly enunciated programme and policy. Non-collaboration in this context meant the rejection of all inferior political institutions created for their own oppression. Under the given condi-

ions the programme that had a mass appeal to all the sections and classes amongst the oppressed was a demand for democratic rights which they all lacked. The petit bourgeois could not fulfil his aspirations because as a black man or woman he/she lacks democratic rights. For the same reason a peasant could not buy land where he chose and in most cases could not buy it at all even if he had the money to do so. The black working class was discriminated against on the grounds of colour because it lacked democratic rights. In fact, even normal trades union demands: the right to form unions, equal pay for equal work, the right to apprenticeship and to strike are, in the conditions of South Africa, not merely economic demands. They are primarily political demands in the sense that they are demands for therecognition of the Black workers as equal to the White workers who alone have democratic rights. This demand and struggle on this basis in the conditions of South Africa was and still is a necessary and progressive step until such times as the potentialities of the national movements have been exhausted. To appreciate the policy of the UMSA - non-collaboration-it is necessary to know that when the white government threw the whole of the African population out of the body politic, it became necessary for it to create channels of communication between itself and the black masses. These were in the form of Bungas (Native Councils) in the rural areas and the Native Advisory Boards in the urban locations.

quisling

The main task of these quisling bodies was to transmit all oppressive laws and regulations passed by the white parliament and the white city councils to the masses in a palatable form with a view to getting the masses to accept them and at the same time to see to it that they were obeyed. The policy of non-collaboration was directed specifically at destroying these and similar institutions. It takes little imagination to realise the potency of propaganda that calls for the boycott of institutions that are the instruments of one's own oppression.

The programme of the UMSA which is a demand for full democratic rights was called a 'minimum programme'. Why? What does that mean?, jeeringly asks the editorial commentary in AIS. It simply means that all those organisations which ask for anything less than full democratic rights are precluded from affiliation to the UM. The term was

designed to exclude government created political institutions or organisations and suchlike stooge bodies. If this constitutes 'essential sectarianism' then the UM must plead guilty before these stern and irate judges. But it will continue to regard its political stand as a principled one.

We turn now to the question of the 'maximum programme' and we quote from AIS: '..the leadership of the UMSA in exile says that there is a 'Maximum Programme' but that this is the exclusive property of the leadership'. Further it goes on: 'In addition, it refuses to build an independent revolutionary organisation (read party) outside the UMSA'. We have explained above that the UMSA was founded as a federation of organisations which were at different levels of political development. Amongst these organisations were socialists and marxist parties. It is taken for granted that revolutionary marxist parties must have, in addition to a transitional programme, a maximum programme. We have explained too that the reason for calling the UMSA programme a minimum programme was to fix the lower limits, that is to exclude those who demanded less than full democratic rights. But the upper limit was deliberately left open in order to allow marxist parties to affiliate and participate in the decision making conferences of this national liberation movement. In this way they could fulfil the demands flung at the UMSA by the editorial in the form of a quotation from Trotsky: 'It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between the present demands and the socialist programme of the revolution. The bridge must include a system of transitional demands stemming from todays conditions and from todays consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat'.

maximum programme

It is not necessary to answer here the question: where is the maximum programme of the UMSA? Why does the UMSA refuse to form an independent marxist party? The ridiculousness of asking such questions of a national movement it too patent to warrant an answer. What we must however draw attention to is a much more serious accusation. The editorial commentary would have its readers believe that the UMSA has two programmes, the minimum and the maximum and that in the fashion of classical social democracy there is no connection between them.

This impression is gathered on a gossip level from the Scrape Ntshona and repeated by the mysterious Trotskyist. It does not even occur to AIS to investigate whether this absurdity is true or not. Or is it that the UMSA in stating its case on this subject did not repeat the exact words of Trotsky? They do not even notice that the UMSA's position has already been made clear on this point. In a pamphlet 'The Revolutionary Road for South Africa' issued by the UMSA (May 1969), in a section that discussed the dilemma confronting the various socialist groups in South Africa during the crisis created by the notorious Hertzog-Smuts Bills, the UMSA states on pg 8: '..the Communist Party of South Africa, ever reformist in outlook, conceived the struggle as divided mechanistically into categories and stages. The first stage was for equality between white and black, in other words for bourgeois democracy. When the oppressed become absorbed into this system they would learn to organise themselves for class struggle. In short, theirs was a reformist policy of gradualism which determined their strategy and tactics...'

'That group which was later to constitute the leadership of the UM conceived the struggle very differently...After a thorough analysis of the objective situation in South African society, economic, political and social, this group came to the conclusion that the problem of the oppressed could not be solved within the framework of the capitalist system. It would require nothing short of a revolutionary socialist overturn. Even the bourgeois democratic demands for the oppressed black masses could not be achieved except under the dictatorship of the proletariat assisted by the peasantry'.

A marxist group or party which holds a false political position must, in a crisis, surely land four square on the side of the bourgeoisie. Ominous clouds of crisis are fast building up in Southern Africa. Imperialism has already foreseen this. It has certainly learnt its lessons from the mistakes in Angola where, for various complex reasons, it moved too late and too hesitantly. It is now moving in on Rhodesia and Namibia, both of which are buffer states of South Africa. It is mobilising its client black states to crush the revolution. Imperialism rarely makes a mistake in recognising its 'friends' and 'potential allies'. Why does the Liberation Committee of the OAU still refuse to recognise the UMSA? Is it an accident that large numbers of SASO students on landing at the first African country are presented with a choice: either to join the ANC, sometimes even PAC, or return to South Africa? The manoeuvres of imperialism in Rhodesia and the massive international support given to the Communist Party controlled ANC of South Africa and to a lesser extent to PAC point clearly to the fact that imperialism has already made up its mind about what it is going to do in South Africa to divert and abort the revolution in that citadel of imperialism. If the editorial board of AIS is serious about the revolution it cannot afford to perch on a high pedestal and adopt the attitude: a plague on all your houses.

B. Msarwana

we reply ..

1. We published a review of Scrape Ntshona's pamphlet because we think it necessary to discuss any and every contribution to discussion of the perspectives for the South African revolution. Unlike comrade Msarwana, we discussed it at that level. We repeat that to review a document does not imply editorial agreement with its contents or with the political practice of its author. It is the right of the UMSA to exclude Ntshona from its number on 'security grounds'. It is not their right to prevent his political views being discussed.

2. Because we do not comment on any given article does not imply political agreement with it. The comrades of the 4th International are currently involved in a thorough discussion of the whole history of the movement in South Africa. We shall publish our conclusions, which will certainly make criticisms of all its sections, as a contribution to an urgently necessary debate. We hope that comrade Msarwana and as many others as possible will participate in an enterprise whose only purpose is to equip us more soundly to face the future.

3. We do not 'wipe out of existence' more than seven million people in the villages'. But we do know that the overwhelming majority of these are dependent for their actual subsistence on the urban economy (see eg a recent analysis of the Transkei by Innes and O'Meara in Review of African Political Economy no.7) Thus we conclude that the future South African revolution will be centrally based amongst the working class.

4. We are not opposed to national liberation movements. In fact the 4th International consistently makes defence of their fight world wide a central part of its programme and actions. But as marxists who adhere to the theory of permanent revolution, we are committed to the construction of revolutionary parties of the working class which alone can ensure the successful meeting of democratic demands in the era of late capitalism. We read above that the UMSA is similarly totally opposed to the stagist theory (at least from 1969). Unfortunately the minimum programme which it placed at the centre of its propaganda for the previous 26 years precisely rests on such a conception.

5. The comrades that 'were later to constitute the leadership of the UM...came to the conclusion that the problems of the oppressed could not be solved within the framework of the capitalist system' Excellent! But what did they do about it?

Unfortunately they devoted their entire energies to building a national liberation movement on a programme of bourgeois democratic demands and entirely neglected to build a party which could forward this solution to the 'problems of the oppressed'.

6. Revolutionary marxists in all situations take a position of non collaboration with the ruling class. For instance, they absolutely oppose participation by workers parties in bourgeois governments (the 'popular front'). But, unlike the UMSA they distinguish between the principle of non-collaboration and the tactic of boycott. In certain circumstances it is perfectly permissible for revolutionaries to use campaigns for election to state institutions as a means of propagandising their politics (e.g. the Bolshevik participation in the Duma, 1906-11)

7. We are strongly opposed to the kind of sectarianism contained in comrade Msarwana's comments on ANC and PAC. We have as many criticisms of these organisations as he does. But we do not think that slandering them as effective agents of imperialism is the means by which to begin an urgent debate around the formation of that united front of all opponents of the apartheid regime which is an essential for its destruction.

John Blair.

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