

educational notes

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The new period of revolutionary struggle internationally is now being fought on two main fronts. The first is southern Europe, where revolutionary upheaval has already broken out in Portugal, a new workers' movement is growing rapidly in the struggle for democracy in Spain, and a major crisis is also building up in Italy. The second front is southern Africa. Already this year a successful war of national liberation has been won in Angola, and a major new war is beginning over white Rhodesia (Zimbabwe).

We must understand that at this point our knowledge of much of what occurs in southern Africa is very inadequate. The main reason why we know much less about most of southern Africa than we know about, say, Portugal is that in Portugal there is a revolutionary workers' party, the PRP, with roots in the main factories and all the regions of the country. It has a revolutionary Marxist analysis of the struggle as it unfolds every week and puts its theory into practice with a strategy, a political line for agitation in the factories, unions, workers' commissions, etc. Because of our links with the PRP we are able to get a rich understanding of week-by-week events in Portugal and why they are happening.

Nowhere in southern Africa does such a revolutionary workers' party yet exist. There is a very wide variety of national liberation movements, political currents and underground movements. But there is no group of working class revolutionary Marxists whose experience and analysis we can directly draw on. This necessarily means that much of what we know about the struggle itself is incomplete, abstract and very difficult to test in practice. But, from the struggle in Angola and Zimbabwe, and the role of various class forces in those struggles, we are beginning to understand how a revolutionary workers' movement and revolutionary parties will in fact come into existence.

There are three important articles and documents in print so far which comrades should try to read. They are: "Angola: Another Congo?" by Alex Callinicos, which appeared in I.S. journal #83 (from Britain) and reprinted in our pamphlet on Angola; "Southern Africa: The Great Carve-up" by Alex Callinicos in IS Journal #86; "Southern Africa: The Melting Pot" by Callinicos in IS Journal #87; and the document from the EC, "Imperialism, National Liberation and the war in Angola" which was recently sent out to all the branches.

The purpose of this article is to give some introduction and background on the politics of southern Africa which should help to make the more indepth articles clearer. Comrades should also read the centerfold in Workers Power #152.

South Africa: Political Background

South Africa is called the "Republic of South Africa" by its white rulers (black nationalists sometimes use the term "Azania"). This is a nation of 18 million blacks and 5 million whites. There are separate racial classifications for Indians and Colored. All except the whites are effectively stripped of all political rights.

The best way to understand South Africa is by imagining a system where the Ku Klux Klan holds total power. In addition to this, it must be understood that in South Africa racial oppression and class exploitation are almost one and the same

thing. The vast majority of proletarians are black.

In other words, in South Africa the instrument for racial terror against black people is not unofficial gangs of "night riders" who burn crosses or lynch people while police look the other way. Rather, the whole economic, legal and political structure is an institutionalized system of terror. It is a businessman's paradise as well!

The white South African population is divided into two different language groups: Afrikaaner (descended from Dutch) and English-speaking. The relations between these groups have at times been uneasy, hostile or even violent. It was the Afrikaaners who represented the most extreme, virulent and consistent racism. Eventually, organized in the powerful Nationalist Party (founded in 1914) the Afrikaaner whites won control of the government bureaucracy, police and practically all political power. All of international capital, especially British and American, are partners in maintaining this system.

It is important to remember that there has been no "slow reform" giving blacks a few more rights. Rather, almost interruptedly things have gotten worse as blacks have been more and more totally disenfranchised, and policies of total apartheid (racial separation) have been institutionalized. It is in some ways similar to what happened to blacks in this country between 1876 and around 1914, mainly but not exclusively in the South, where they lost most political rights and economic positions (like the right to practice various skilled trades) they once had. In South Africa these restrictions have been written into rigid law as the doctrine of racial separation - so that black doctors can only treat black patients; education is totally segregated; all blacks must carry "pass books" stating their tribal ancestry, job record, etc. They must have special permits to live in the main parts of the country, which are designated "white areas". If they lose their job, go on strike or engage in any kind of anti-government activity they can be automatically sent back to their "tribal homeland", where they cannot find work, and must either starve or live off relatives.

The system of total racial separation carries with it certain contradictions, which the regime is trying to resolve. As the South African economy becomes more advanced, there is a need for skilled black labor and even for a small black professional middle class. For example, the fact that blacks have been totally excluded from any jobs has created a shortage of labor and consequently higher wages in some skilled jobs for white workers than employers want to pay. Furthermore, South Africa is now extremely interested in creating economic and political ties with many independent black states in Africa. To build up these ties the white regime needs to create an appearance of "reform" and even a small layer of blacks who support it. To accomplish this some of the so-called "petty apartheid" laws in the major cities - such as segregated bathrooms, railroad stations, and the like - have been removed. Middle class blacks have also been given back the right to lease their own housing, which was taken away in the 1950's. This may create an atmosphere somewhat more comfortable for visiting black diplomats or for visiting stars like tennis player Arthur Ashe, but for the majority of black South Africans it is pretty irrelevant.

For most blacks in South Africa, the reality is what the government labels "separate development." The basis of "separate development" is to maintain an economy based on black industrial labor. In order to keep blacks from gaining any political rights in most of "white" South Africa, the plan is to turn the "tribal homelands" into phoney "independent republics" supposedly ruled by independent

black governments. The first such "black homeland republic", Transkei (on the east coast) is scheduled to be set up October 26, 1976.

Here is an idea of what this "independence" will look like. About 83% of all grown male Transkelans can find work only in "white" South Africa. Of the 47,500 who do actually work in Transkei, nearly half are in government service. Only 4,050 are in manufacturing industry! The political leader of Transkei is a stooge named Chief Matanzima set up by South Africa. His "legislative assembly" is made up of 64 appointed traditional conservative chiefs, along with 45 elected representatives. Over three-quarters of the territory's total revenue comes directly from the South African treasury.

There are already other black enclave states, Borswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, which are similarly totally dependent on South Africa. In other words, "separate development" has nothing to do with real political independence or power for blacks. It only gives a "legitimate" cover to a system where black men are forced to travel hundreds of miles from their homes, leaving their families behind, to work in factories or gold mines where they live in horribly overcrowded barracks.

The only significant politically powerful opposition to the South African Regime comes from the black workers. Especially in the last five years, huge strike waves have swept through gold and diamond mining areas. Blacks have often won wage increases of 100% or more. Tremendous violence is unleashed against these strikes - hundreds or even thousands of workers have been killed by police and soldiers. But the revolutionary potential of the South African black working class is as great as that of any working class anywhere in the world.

The Rest of Southern Africa: Political Background

After South Africa, the most important place is Zimbabwe - called "Rhodesia" by the 500,000 whites who live there. They make up 20% of the population, which means there are 2½ million blacks. The whites issued a "unilateral declaration of independence" (UDI) from Britain in 1965 to prevent any power being given to blacks. Rhodesia is set up on a system similar to South Africa, although the white population is English speaking, it is very closely tied to South Africa economically and politically. It has much less industry and manufacturing than South Africa - most of its economy is based on agriculture and chrome mining, with consumer goods luxuries for whites.

Whites in Zimbabwe are rich farmers, businessmen, officials and other assorted parasites. They are so unproductive, so totally over-privileged and unused to work for a living that one liberal opposition clergyman calls them "totally morally underdeveloped." In the countryside they live on their farms armed to the teeth while black farmhands do the work.

The white Rhodesians are so accustomed to the "good life" they have enjoyed under UDI that they are incapable of seeing it is about to be destroyed. They do not have a large enough army to patrol the border with Mozambique, where black guerilla forces are now training in large numbers.

The political currents in the Zimbabwe black nationalist movement are more complicated than in Angola. At the present time, there is a wing of the movement led by Bishop Abel Muzorewa which is committed to all out armed struggle to overthrow white rule. Another wing, led by long-time black politician Joshua Nkomo, has just been engaged in long drawn-out negotiations with white leader Ian Smith, the Prime Minister who heads the ruling white Nationalist Party.

These talks have now broken down. As a result all black nationalist factions at this point seem committed to a liberation war. However, when Nkomo and Smith broke off their talks Nkomo deliberately left an opening for them to be renewed. Joshua Nkomo clearly intends to be the future leader of Zimbabwe on the basis of a deal worked out among the forces of South Africa, Britain and the black African states. However, sentiment among black Africans and Zimbabweans is now so overwhelmingly for armed struggle for liberation that he cannot afford to continue his entanglement with Ian Smith. There are a reported 15,000 black guerillas trained under the auspices of Mozambique now ready for battle.

Namibia, called "South West Africa" by South Africa is illegally occupied by South Africa. South Africa's eventual strategy is to turn Namibia into another "black separate development republic." But with the victory of the MPLA in Angola, South African rule in Namibia is under growing pressure. The black organization, SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organization) is formally legal, but a major campaign of repression and political trials are underway against SWAPO under South Africa's "Terrorism Act."

Zambia, Tanzania, and Mozambique are independent black states that are sometimes called the "confrontation states" because in the confrontation between white South Africa and the black African continent, they are on the front line. Of course, independent Angola is now in the same position. The Presidents of these countries are, in order, Kenneth Kaunda, Julius Nyrere, and Samora Machel. While there "confrontation states" are real enemies of South Africa, they are also economically dependent on it. This is particularly true of Mozambique and Zambia. Without the South African mines, Mozambique's economy would be shattered - 100,000 or so Mozambique workers labor in South African mines and a large portion of their wages are paid directly to the Mozambique government by South Africa. Zambia's economy depends on copper, the price of which has fallen to about \$1,175 a ton whereas it costs Zambia \$1,500 a ton to produce! As a result Zambia depends on credit from South African banks to avoid collapse.

Because of their poverty and narrow social base, the regimes of Zambia and Tanzania are extremely repressive - even though they claim to be based on the "philosophy of humanism"! Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia has just put in force new "emergency" restrictions because of growing dissent over the economic crisis, from both businessmen and workers.

As a result the trend of the past seven or eight years is for the independent black states to be pulled into the economic orbit of South Africa. South Africa saw in these countries a tremendous potential field for investment and markets. This is partly why South Africa has emphasized "separate development" internally and tried to make its image a little more acceptable. This developing relationship has now been thrown into crisis by South Africa's intervention and defeat in Angola and the war now breaking out in Zimbabwe. This war will shape southern African politics for years to come.

Political Developments Today and Beyond

Southern Africa has entered a period of very rapid transition. At the same time the remaining power of white rule is crumbling, many independent black governments throughout central and southern Africa are going into crisis. The transition period will be one that includes national wars in Zimbabwe and Namibia; political crises and sharpening class struggles in countries like Zambia, Zaire, Angola and Mozambique; and the possibility of working class revolution by the black proletariat within South Africa itself.

The war in Zimbabwe has now begun. This is not the first flare-up of armed struggle by black liberation fighters --they launched a guerilla offensive that failed in 1972. However, today the whole context of the fighting is different: Portuguese colonialism has been overthrown, Mozambique and Angola are independent, and South Africa has already suffered a stinging military and political defeat in Angola.

The key to understanding the future of the struggle in Zimbabwe lies in world politics. The truth is that every important ruling class in the world knows that white rule in Zimbabwe is doomed. Most of them also know that white rule in South Africa is also running out of time. The real decisions about the future of Zimbabwe cannot be made by the white Rhodesian rulers, much as they want to - rather those decisions are made in South Africa, London and Washington which control the Rhodesians' purse strings.

The United States has kept the white regime in power for ten years by importing Rhodesian chrome. Now Secretary of State Kissinger says the US government is "totally committed to majority rule in Rhodesia."

The black governments of Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique last year disarmed and even imprisoned Zimbabwean guerilla fighters who were organizing for armed struggle. One Zimbabwean leader, Herbert Chitepo was murdered in Zambia, probably on the orders of Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda himself. Now, however, all these states are committing themselves all-out to the "armed struggle" against Ian Smith's regime.

Even South Africa, Rhodesia's only hope for direct military support, has not decided to commit itself to rescuing white rule there. If South Africa goes to war in Zimbabwe it will be fighting on very unfavorable terms, take heavy casualties and destroy its "detente" policies with black Africa totally. At the same time, South Africa cannot allow black Zimbabwe to win an all-out liberation war - that victory would damage the internal confidence of South Africa and give tremendous new power to black workers' resistance and militancy.

As a result, all these forces are looking for ways in which to sacrifice the white Rhodesian ruling class, without shaking up the whole structure of capitalist power in southern Africa. Each of them have their own angle.

Henry Kissinger wants the kind of "majority rule" in Zimbabwe that would maintain "peaceful" conditions for the rule of white-owned South African and international capital throughout southern Africa as a whole. He hoped the talks between the "moderate" black politician Joshua Nkomo and Ian Smith would produce a sellout, a compromist to put middle class blacks in the government 10 or 20 years from now.

The black African states want to remove the explosive issue of Rhodesia from the scene. All of them supported the Smith-Nkomo talks. They are also supporting the armed struggle against Rhodesia, in order to force Smith to offer better terms which Nkomo or another black negotiator could accept. Mozambique and Zambia, in particular, control the guerillas' funds and bases. They want to use the guerillas as a pressure tactic on white Rhodesia and South Africa to get better terms.

South Africa is in the difficult position of trying to save itself, Rhodesian white rule and "detente" with black African rulers - all at the same time! Its strategy could well become one of trying to use the pressure put on Rhodesia by the black nationalist countries to force the white Rhodesians to negotiate a settlement.

So far this has failed, as the white Rhodesian leadership sees nothing to gain by bargaining away its monopoly on wealth and power.

All these forces have one deadly fear in common - the fear that a "gradual power-sharing" deal will be worked out between white leaders and black politicians in Zimbabwe, and that the guerillas and the masses of black Zimbabweans will reject it. If that happens, the struggle for black national liberation could completely escape their control.

There is a good reason why the United States, South Africa and the leaders of black southern Africa - each of whom have their own separate interests - are afraid of the struggle of masses of black workers and semi-proletarians going too far. Once people begin fighting for themselves, it is very difficult to stop them.

The struggle for black control of the wealth of Rhodesia could stimulate black miners and dock workers in Mozambique to make demands for higher wages and workers' control, against their own black nationalist government. Similarly, black workers in Zambia could be inspired to revolt against the repressive measures introduced by Kaunda to keep his shaky capitalist economy afloat.

This is where the key importance of revolutionary socialist politics comes in. The most effective way to complete the liberation of Africa, smash white rule in Rhodesia and South Africa is with a united mass movement of blacks who realize they are fighting for common interests everywhere. The only force that can build that kind of unified movement is the black working class, which throughout southern Africa has tremendous power and no petty national privileges to protect.

The conditions of struggle in southern Africa today have created the conditions for independent working class parties to be created. The most important sectors are the South African heavy industrial workers. But they are not alone. Workers in the "popular power" movement begun by the MPLA in Angola, workers resisting wage controls and repression of unions in Zambia, dock workers in Mozambique who are forced to handle South African goods because the Mozambique government needs the fees from South Africa to remain solvent - all of them have the same interests in a total socialist transformation and unification of southern Africa.

Lenin pointed out that the whole process of socialist revolution is not a "one-shot" affair where workers seize power all at once. It involves long years of struggle for democracy, national liberation, partial economic battles and bitter class struggle before all the conditions for workers' insurrection and the seizure of power are created. There is no doubt that in southern Africa that process is now underway.

1. At the beginning of this election period, we said that both parties were in crisis. We also said that the election itself would mark a recognizable shift to the right in American politics.

Both points continue to be true. However, our analysis needs to be updated and modified in several ways. First, the Republican Party, in particular Ford, has made something of a comeback. Six weeks before the primaries began Ford's administration appeared on the verge of collapse. Ford's economic policies had zigzagged wildly. His stance on important domestic policy -- such as New York City's crisis had also been reversed and reversed again.

The only area in which Ford's administration had shown any stability was in the area of foreign policy. Here, Ford attempted to continue the policies of detente with the USSR, and strengthening the relationship with China established by Nixon. But here, although Ford's policies were consistent, the world moved around him.

His trip to China, intended as a victorious repeat of Nixon's original trip was a bust. China used it to lobby the US against continued detente with the USSR. But, it wasn't just China. US relations with Russia came under increasing attack at home. Reagan used the question of detente quite successfully to establish himself as a credible alternative, within the Republican Party, to Ford.

Reagan's candidacy pushed Ford further to the right. Ford decided to out "reagan" Reagan. This competition for the support of the right wing of the Republican Party threatened to make the Republicans insignificant in the election.

On that basis, we said that the Democratic Party would win the election and that the real political fight would take place within the Democratic Party.

2. Although the chances of Ford winning the election are not good - it is no longer totally out of the question. Ford's emergence as a serious contender is based on the economic recovery. In truth most of us haven't felt the recovery yet. There are still over 10 million unemployed. Inflation is still high, although no longer astronomical. And the last period has shown a profound deterioration of conditions at work and at home. The recovery has been accomplished off the backs of working people; through unemployment, speedup and the loss of safety on the job. At home, the decay of the cities continues at a gallop. Education has gone from bad to worse, social services from garbage collection to hospital care continue to deteriorate. Museums, libraries, fire houses, city clerical staff are all being cut back.

Nonetheless, statistics show that the economy is picking up. That fact is continually blasting at us from the TV, radio and newspaper. And, although it will not be enough to win re-election for Ford (unless the Democrats completely blow it), it is enough to keep much of the traditional big business support of the Republican Party inside that party.

We have entered a business recovery. Ford has accomplished that, and in the process, he holds the Republican Party intact.

3. The real fight, however remains in the Democratic Party. When the primaries began there appeared to be two races going on inside the Democratic Party. One for the allegiance of the right wing of the party, run by Scoop Jackson, Jimmy Carter and George Wallace; and the other for the allegiance of the relative left wing of the party. That race was run by Fred Harris, Birch Bayh, Sargent Shriver and Morris Udall. This race has almost entirely disappeared. The liberal wing of the Democratic Party is in thorough disarray and confusion. Most of the liberals have already been eliminated. Only Morris Udall remains and he is running a poor fourth.

Ahead of Udall are Jimmy Carter, Scoop Jackson and George Wallace. At first glance it would appear that the right wing of the Party has taken over. Although this is in part an illusion, it does represent something real.

Capitalism is in crisis - even if it is entering into a temporary upturn. The response of both capitalist parties is similar - shift to the right. To pull the economy out, working people have had to pay. That leaves little room even for hollow promises. In fact a new phenomenon has arisen in Democratic Party politics - right wing liberals. People like Jerry Brown (Governor of California) and Ella Grasso (Governor of Connecticut) talk a "liberal" line while cutting back on welfare, public services, and the salaries and working conditions of city workers.

The Democratic Party cannot afford to fool around with a McGovern or a McCarthy. All of the candidates, including the supposed liberals failed to make even a feeble attempt to speak to the needs of black people. Democratic Party candidates, no matter what hat they wear, are speaking directly to a white middle class audience only.

But the victory of the right wing is illusory in some ways. First off, and extremely important, the real candidate of the liberals, Hubert Humphery, is not running in the primaries. Second, the primary races already run have been mainly in non-industrial, conservative and back-woodsey states. With the exception of Illinois the big northern industrial states are yet to come.

4. The Humphery non-candidacy is revealing in many ways. First, it should be noted that the primaries are considered by many as a real symbol of American democracy. Not only do we get to chose our president, we get to chose who we will get to chose from. That of course is false. The primaries are never run on politics. They are part of the process in which the power brokers wheel and deal. The 1976 primaries are making that fact abundantly clear. Millions are being spent on campaigns in many states - and little of it counts. The real candidate of the liberals and the majority of the Democratic Party is not even running.

Humphery expects, and in all likelihood, will receive the Democratic Party nomination at a brokered convention in New York without having run in even one primary. The boys in the back room take care of their own. In fact, part of the support going to the current front runner, Carter, is really support for Humphery. Delegates running as Carter supporters will switch in New York. Money going to back Carter now is in reality being used to defeat other candidates - in particular Wallace.

When the time comes to actually chose the real candidate, many of Carter's current friends will be his former friends. This happened in Florida when UAW money went to support Carter only to defeat Wallace. It seems to also be on the agenda for Michigan.

Another ploy being used to promote Humphery without his actually running in the primaries is the "favorite son" tactic. In Illinois Adlai Stevenson Jr. and in California Jerry Brown come to the convention having won the majority of their states' delegates in the primaries. Those delegate votes are essentially uncommitted. If enough votes are uncommitted, no one can win on the first ballot. Then the convention is open. After the first ballot delegates are free to switch. And they will - from various favorite sons, from Jimmy Carter, even from Scoop Jackson - to Hubert Humphery.