

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

P.O. Box 10018, Palo Alto, California 94303

Telephone (415) 494-1532

September 8, 1978

Boston Coalition For
Liberation of Southern Africa
P.O. Box 101
Boston, MA 02123

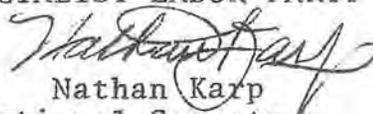
Dear Friend:

At its 31st National Convention, the Socialist Labor Party of America adopted the enclosed resolution on the Liberation Struggle in South Africa. The resolution has since been endorsed by a party referendum.

The resolution is being sent to inform you of the Socialist Labor Party's support for the struggle of South Africa's black majority to free themselves from racism, imperialism and exploitation.

May their struggle end in an early and complete victory.

In solidarity,
SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY


Nathan Karp
National Secretary

NK:DGB



SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY
National Headquarters
P.O. Box 10018
Palo Alto, California 94303

LIBERATION STRUGGLE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The following resolution on South Africa was adopted by the SLP's 31st National Convention on May 30, 1978

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Southern Africa is fast becoming the "Vietnam of the 70s." As in Southeast Asia a decade ago, so in southern Africa today the rising struggles of a long-oppressed people against imperialism, racism and colonialism have gripped the world's attention. And while this struggle has spread to all parts of the vast African continent, nowhere are the forces and issues more compressed than in the racist fortress of South Africa.

No American worker can look to South Africa without noting, first of all, that as in Asia in the past, it is U.S. capitalism that stands side by side with the most reactionary forces in the region. Far from being a "neutral observer" the U.S. is, along with the other Western powers, the leading prop of apartheid.

Over three hundred and fifty U.S. firms have investment stakes of more than \$2.5 billion in the South African economy. And as chief racist John Vorster has noted, "Every time a South African product is bought, it is another brick in the wall of our continued existence." U.S. banks have underwritten the apartheid system with loans of more than \$2 billion, and U.S. firms have sold South Africa "nonmilitary" items such as telecommunications hardware, computers and helicopters, which are used by the state apparatus in its systematic repression of blacks.

When IBM sells computers, Mobil Oil petroleum products, Polaroid cameras, and General Motors trucks, and when one of the nation's largest arms manufacturers, Olin Corp., falsifies export documents to conceal the South African destination of shipments of small arms and ammunition, U.S. imperialism plants itself firmly on the side of the white supremacist system.

The Apartheid System

Despite sham reforms by U.S. corporations operating in South Africa, and brazenly hypocritical rationalizations that U.S. investments are in the "best" interests of blacks, the overall condition of blacks in South Africa has worsened considerably since huge sums of U.S. capital began flowing into the country after the Second World War. South African blacks face dire poverty, starvation and brutality on a daily basis.

To ensure the cheapest possible labor supply for the domestic capitalists and foreign multinationals, South Africa has erected one of the world's most repressive systems. All blacks must carry passes, are prohibited from entering "white-only" areas except to work, and are herded into barren "homelands" where women, children and surplus workers are forced to eke out a pitiful existence.

Strikes by black workers are outlawed, they are barred from entering skilled jobs and their trade unions are denied recognition. Black wages of only \$60 to \$140 a month enable U.S. firms to reap profits well above the world average.

The capitalists getting rich off black labor in Johannesburg and Salisbury are the same ones benefiting from racism in New York and Detroit. For this reason alone, it's important for the workers of the world to stand with the oppressed workers and peasants of these African nations as they wage their difficult fight.

The South African Resistance

Despite the jailing, torture and murder of blacks by South African police, the protests that erupted in Soweto two years ago still continue to grow. And there is every reason to believe that the guerrilla struggles in Namibia and Zimbabwe will intensify in the months ahead.

Contrary to the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Andrew Young, the struggle in South Africa is far more than a "civil rights struggle" that can be waged by peaceful protest. The repressive nature of the Vorster and Smith regimes have left the peoples of southern Africa no choice but to wage an armed struggle against the racist regimes.

While the South African struggle will have many similarities with others (including the probable emergence of rural-based guerrilla war), it may also be different. There is a sizable black proletariat in some southern African nations, especially South Africa. Accordingly, the struggle could take on a proletarian character possible only where a relatively industrialized economy exists. The independent organization and activity of African workers would not only immeasurably strengthen the liberation movement, it would influence the nature of the revolutionary government to emerge after victory.

Today all forces are being mobilized for a basically national fight against the white regime. But as the struggle develops, class divisions among the black population will take on added importance. To the degree that working-class interests become predominant, to that extent the possibility will open up for a revolutionary transformation of social property relations as well as race relations.

The U.S. Response

The U.S. ruling class can be expected to do everything in its power to prevent this outcome. The U.S. government's sudden concern

for majority rule in Africa and its rhetoric about a "peaceful solution" are motivated solely by a desire to control the outcome. Its interest in a "negotiated settlement" is motivated by a concern to maintain its investments, access to raw materials, communications network and control of the vital shipping lanes around the Cape of Africa.

The U.S. government is reluctant to do anything that might hasten the downfall of Smith or Vorster. During the past 25 years, the U.S. and the CIA have toppled any number of governments, installing butchers like the Shah of Iran and Chile's Pinochet when the need arose. Now when African guerrillas begin a struggle so obviously just that it can't be openly opposed, the U.S. still refuses to throw its full support behind the insurgents. Its counter-revolutionary instincts and interests are too well developed.

By contrast, the revolutionary instincts of the American working class are not yet developed to a similar high pitch. Yet many workers and students do see the basic justice of the struggle against racial oppression as well as the fact that U.S. corporations are profiting from inhuman suffering. Many socially aware workers and students are expressing their opposition to apartheid and their solidarity with the African struggle by staging protests. Though still in its infancy, this movement holds the potential to become a mass movement on the scale of the anti-Vietnam war movement and could politicize millions of black as well as white workers throughout the country and awaken them to the realities of imperialism.

While the anti-apartheid movement currently has many limitations (for example, its demand that U.S. corporations divest their interests in South Africa perpetuates the false notion that it's possible for there to be a "clean" capital investment anywhere in the world), the movement can expose the U.S. role behind apartheid, and help build international solidarity with Africans while building an arena for further education.

The Role of Socialists

While recognizing the movement's limitations as well as its possibilities, socialists, working within the anti-apartheid movement, can widen its horizons and draw attention to the common class nature of the imperialist enemy oppressing workers in both South Africa and the United States. It can make the connection between imperialism abroad and capitalism at home and it can raise the international banners of proletarian solidarity and socialist revolution as the path to freedom.

The struggle in southern Africa will not put an end to all the oppression in the world or even to all the racism in Africa. But it is part of an international class struggle which, as socialists, we believe must culminate in the overthrow of capitalism in the industrialized countries and the establishment of a world socialist order. Until that struggle is won, the system of class rule and the racism it breeds will remain international--so, too, must the resistance and solidarity of the workers of the world.