

21 MARCH 1960



# THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE

Strike action by Black workers in South Africa in the past three months has driven home the fact that Sharpeville was not the end, any more than it was the beginning, of the fight for liberation in South Africa. Leader of the Opposition in the all-White Parliament, De Villiers Graaff, has said that labour unrest among Africans is even more dangerous than terrorism. Others have referred to the crisis as being the greatest since the Sharpeville Massacre. The strikes, concentrated especially around January-February, 1973, have, at times, involved up to 50,000 workers. Natal was particularly hard hit, with numerous industrial firms being forced to close down.

The strikes assume a new importance when one bears in mind that for a Black man in South Africa, strike action is a criminal offence carrying a \$1400 fine or 3 years' imprisonment or both. That they went on strike in total disregard of these possible consequences demonstrates THE DETERMINATION OF THE WORKERS to obtain a fair share of the wealth they help to produce, and to work under humane conditions. The strikes have, furthermore, included both professional people and labourers, and have hit several large centers at the same time, including Durban, Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Pretoria. Random examples are:

\*October 1972: Black doctors employed by the Johannesburg City Health Department strike successfully for equal pay with their White co-employees.

\*January 1973: African brickworkers in Natal go on strike.

\*January 1973: Numerous industrial firms in Durban, Pinetown and Hammersdale close down as Africans down tools and demand immediate pay increases.

\*February 1973: Johannesburg municipal bus drivers and conductors strike successfully for higher pay -- thousands of Black commuters are unable to reach their places of work, thus bringing about involuntary stoppages, and demonstrating the key position of public transportation employees in a national strike.

\*January 12, 1973: Ms. Lucy Mvubela, a Natal Black trade union leader, predicts more strikes unless the exploitation of Black labour stops.

The workers continue to organize themselves into unions, despite lack of official recognition; thus in January 1973 THE BUS DRIVERS FORMED THE TRANSPORT AND ALLIED WORKERS' UNION.

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## OPPRESSIVE LEGISLATION AT A GLANCE, AND REACTIONS TO IT

1910: South Africa Act concludes post-Anglo-Boer War peace negotiations, unites Boer and Briton into Union of South Africa; Constitution excludes Blacks from franchise. Native Affairs Department established.

1911: Mines and Works Act excludes Blacks from skilled work and apprenticeship to qualify for it.

1912: Formation of the African National Congress (ANC) after deputation to England had failed to obtain redress for the Blacks' grievances.

1913: Land Act prohibits purchase of land by Blacks in the rural areas except in the already overcrowded Reserves. Makes it illegal for them to occupy land on White farms as squatters or on rental basis. Can only stay there as farm labour or go to the mines. Blacks made homeless -- no more roots in the soil.

1919: Formation of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) -- succeeded for several years in organizing the Blacks into a formidable force.

1923: Natives (Urban Areas) Act segregates Blacks in the towns -- takes away their property-ownership rights. Locations established where residence only a privilege as long as Blacks work for Whites in the area.

# IN SOUTH AFRICA

SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL ACTIVITIES have also been going on -- the formation of the all-Black SOUTH AFRICAN STUDENTS' ORGANIZATION (SASO) in 1969, despite the strict surveillance of Black students by the White authorities; and the BLACK PEOPLE'S CONVENTION (BPC) in 1971-72, despite the Unlawful Organizations Act of 1960 and similar laws. Both organizations are founded on the principle of BLACK SELF-RELIANCE: "Black man, you are on your own!" was SASO's clarion call in 1971. Mr. Mashwabada Mayatula told delegates to the first national conference of the BPC in January 1973: "We as a people refuse to become products of Western capitalism or Eastern communism. ... Gone are the days when we looked at ourselves through the White man's mirror, the days when our endeavours and achievements were measured by White standards. No other but ourselves have the right to find solutions for our problems." Mr. B.A. Khoapa, addressing a SASO meeting in Pietermaritzburg, rejects White education "which arrogantly assumes the Western White man's cultural superiority."

## REACTIONS AND SCAPEGOATS

- \*In some cases the government has admitted that the strikers had legitimate grievances. It reprimanded one Natal firm for previously pleading inability to pay higher wages, but suddenly finding the money when the workers went on strike.
- \*Relatively few Blacks have been arrested (about 200) out of tens of thousands who have committed the "crime" of going on strike.

\*On or about March 2, 1973, BANNING ORDERS WERE SERVED ON 8 SASO OFFICIALS (THE ENTIRE LEADERSHIP) AND 8 NUSAS (National Union of South African Students -- White), the two organizations being considered at least partly instrumental in the fomentation of labour unrest.

## WRITING ON THE WALL SEEN BY SOME WHITE ORGANIZATIONS: Some examples:

- \*A Johannesburg Black Sash branch has referred to Black migrant labour as "slave labour" denied "everyone of the basic human rights".
- \*The Trade Union Council, previously negative to Black worker unionization, is now advocating this move to its 64 affiliated unions, with a majority of positive responses.
- \*A prophetic statement by Dr. Connie Mulder, Minister of the Interior, on December 16, 1972 to a white audience: "He who does the work will eventually rule the country."
- \*A government-supporting newspaper, Rapport, warned the government editorially that it (the government) must "solve the problems of the urban African and the political future of the Coloured people" in 1973 to avoid "irreparable damage". It suggests that "hard realities" be taken into account, and that "we have taken the wrong path and ... the solution must be sought in another direction."

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1927: Native Administration Act: White Governor-General becomes "Supreme Chief of all the Natives". Black chiefs to be approved or appointed by him.

1936: Natives Trust and Land Act carries further the denial of land rights to rural Africans.

1935: Formation of the All-African Convention to protest the "Hertzog Bills" leading to the above Act, and for general political action.

1943: Formation of the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), to affiliate all non-White people's political organizations to focus on their common oppression.

1948: Afrikaner Nationalist Party comes into power. Segregation becomes apartheid.

1959-60: Formation of Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) by ANC breakaway militants.

MARCH 21, 1960: SHARPEVILLE MASSACRE

THE DEMORALIZATION AND APATHY THAT TOOK HOLD OF THE PEOPLE WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S BRUTALITY AND SHEER TERRORISM OF SHARPEVILLE AND AFTER (the Sabotage Act, the Terrorism Act, the Resettlement Scheme, etc.) HAS BEGUN TO GIVE WAY TO A NEW UPSURGE OF ENERGY AND DETERMINATION THAT ARE CALCULATED TO BRING THE DAY OF LIBERATION ONCE AGAIN WITHIN SIGHT.

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THE MADISON AREA COMMITTEE ON SOUTHERN AFRICA (MACSA)  
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