

Labor Against Apartheid

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Union Leaders Face Treason Charges As South Africa Protests Grow

The struggle to free South Africa from the racist apartheid system has gained new intensity in recent months. In the US and abroad, thousands of people have joined the divestment movement to cut economic lifelines to the South African government. Inside South Africa, resistance is growing from many quarters, in direct confrontation with apartheid's rulers.

The newly formed Black unions are leading workplace actions against the apartheid labor system, spurred by a rising economic crisis and spreading unemployment. A new generation of urban youth are defying government authority in the townships, acting on a multitude of grievances over services, tax and rent hikes, and the installation of puppet officials. Black farmers are protesting the seizure of their lands and forced removal to the barren 'homelands'. Throughout the country, religious, labor and community leaders are challenging the 're-

form' Constitution of 1984, which denies any representation to the Black majority.

The price of this struggle is tragically high: over 350 people have been killed by the South African government since August 1984, and nearly 6,000 have been arrested. State violence against all forms of popular protest has fed further protest and further repression.

On March 21, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre, the world witnessed this grim cycle play itself out in Lange Township near Uitenhage. There, police opened fire on an unarmed procession of Black men, women and children, en route to a funeral for recent strike victims. Twenty people were killed, nearly all shot in the back. Although a government judge has found that the funeral procession was entirely peaceful, and that the police had planted evidence of provocation, he nonetheless absolved the police of all responsibility for their actions.

In June, the struggle against repression entered a new arena with the opening of a treason trial against 16 national Black leaders, including four officers of the South African Allied Workers Union. The charges of high treason, which could carry the death penalty, are aimed at suppressing all open and organized opposition to apartheid, particularly trade union activity.

This edition of *Labor Against Apartheid* is dedicated to the four unionists accused of high treason and focuses on how American union members can work for their release in the months ahead. Join us in the call for union solidarity to protest the treason charges and the continuing violence against our brothers and sisters in the South African labor movement.

Labor in South Africa

Strike Wave Continues.

Despite government and employer reprisals, strikes by Black workers for union recognition and better conditions continue to spread across South Africa. A major struggle erupted on April 27, when the Anglo-American Mining Corp. fired 15,000 Black mineworkers at the Vaal Reefs mine for participating in a strike for higher wages. The workers, members of the National Union of Mineworkers, were demanding a 10% increase in their \$160 monthly pay—white mineworkers in South Africa earn nine times that amount. Apparently, the mine will rehire many of the strikers, while sending union activists back to the 'homelands.'

Union activity remains strong at multinational corporations operating in South Africa. Recent strikes and job actions have been held at five plants owned by the German Siemens Corp., at the Volkswagen plant in Uitenhage, and also at GM, Ford, and Firestone plants.

Unions Advocate Disinvestment.

A growing number of Black trade unions—including the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) and the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA)—have called on US companies to stop all new investments which support the apartheid system. In several public statements, the unions



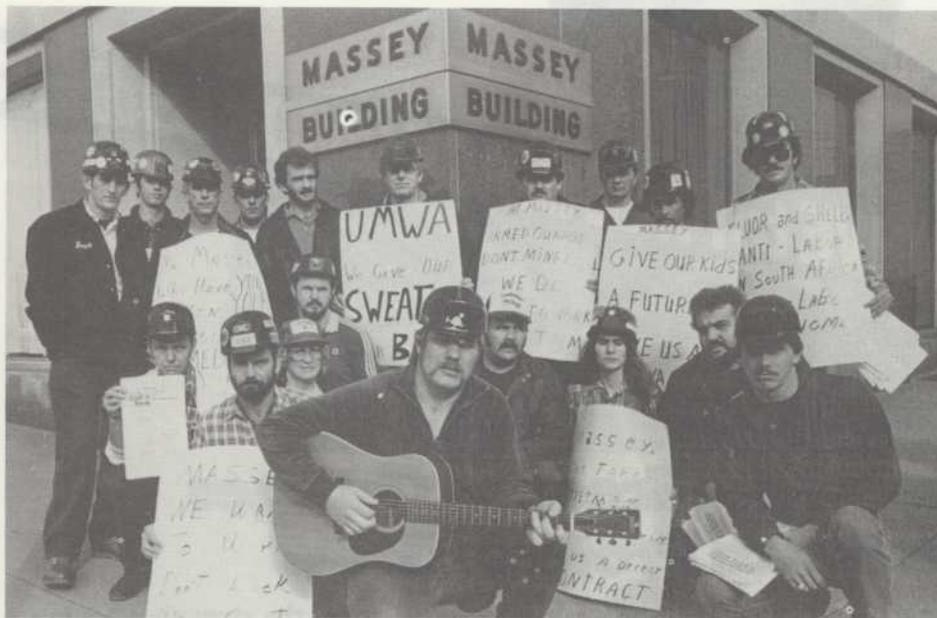
have criticized the 'exploitative' practices of foreign firms, particularly those which have signed various codes of conduct (such as the US Sullivan Principles). Last year, FOSATU stated "the pressure for disinvestment has had a positive effect and should therefore not be lessened. FOSATU is definitely opposed to foreign investment that accepts the conditions of oppression maintained by this regime."

On April 2, members of the United Democratic Front (UDF) demonstrated at the Johannesburg offices of Citibank, urging multinational corporations to leave South Africa. On May Day, 14 Black South Africans were arrested outside the US consulate in Johannesburg demanding that US businesses withdraw investments. These activities are all the more significant since support for sanctions and disinvestment is considered an act of treason by the South African government.

International Solidarity

Boston: On May 1, representatives from six unions conducted an 18-hour occupation of the offices of Deak-Perera, which sells the Krugerrand gold coin for the South African government. The sit-in was bolstered by a picket line and rally outside that drew 350 union members from over 30 unions, organized by the Massachusetts Labor Support Project. The protest lasted well into the night. When a labor contingent returned the following morning to resume the occupation, they were arrested, thwarting Deak-Perera's attempt to avoid a public trial.

Dublin: Workers at the Dunnes Stores in Dublin have been on the picket line for 11 months in protest against the company's purchase and sale of South African and Namibian products. The walk-out began when a shop steward refused to sell a South African grapefruit.



Members of the United Mine Workers (UMWA), on strike for nearly a year against A.T. Massey, are also fighting the 'South Africa connection' of its major owner, the Fluor Corporation. Fluor has lucrative construction contracts with South Africa's SASOL fuel corporation, which last year fired 6,500 Black workers for participating in the national 'stay-way' protests.

The Death of Brother Andries Raditsela

Andries Raditsela, 29, died of severe head injuries on May 6, 1985, a few hours after his release from police detention. Brother Raditsela was the vice-chairman of the Transvaal Region of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), an executive member of the Chemical Workers Industrial Union, and national chairman of the shop stewards council at Dunlop. He was arrested on May 4, while standing near his car, rented by the union, in Tsakane Township near

Johannesburg. Originally, he was accused of stealing the car; when taken into police custody, he was charged under the Internal Security Act. After he died, all charges were dropped.

The death of Brother Raditsela follows a clear pattern of police harassment and intimidation aimed at union organizers. Over 30,000 people attended his funeral, 100,000 joined a memorial work stoppage, and unionists around the world condemned his murder.