Fighting and Defeating Racism

A Position Paper of the Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front

Bikisha Media Collective

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"What do we mean by respect for humanity? We mean the recognition of human right and human dignity in every man, of whatever race [or] colour..."

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"... 5. Equal rights for all without distinction of sex or race..."

From the *Pittsburg Manifesto*, 1883, founding charter of the International Working Peoples Association, historic mass U.S. anarcho-syndicalist organisation.

"Your revolutionary duty is to stifle all nationalist persecution by dealing ruthless*ly with the instigators of anti-Semitic pogroms [racist attacks]...*"

Makhnovist Army and Nabat Anarchist Group,
"Workers, Peasants and Insurgents. For the Oppressed, Against the Oppressors – Always!" proclamation issued in 1919 during course of Anarchist-led Ukrainian revolution, 1918–21.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

By racism we refer to either of the following features: Attitudes, beliefs and ideas that denigrate other people on the basis of their supposed physical characteristics (e.g. skin colour); and systematic social, economic and political discrimination against people on the basis of their supposed physical characteristics (e.g. skin colour).

We will use the term "Black" to refer to all people discriminated against on the basis of their supposed racial characteristics. This obviously includes Africans, Coloureds and Indians. We will use the words "African", "Coloured", "Indian" etc. when referring to a specific Black group.

South Africa is characterised by extremely high levels of racial inequality. This racial inequality is intertwined with high levels of class (and gender) inequality.[1]

Race: the following figures released in 1995 give some idea of the racial inequalities in South Africa: whites, who make up 13% of the population, earn 61% of total income, whilst all Black groups (Africans, Coloureds and Indians), who make up 87% of the population, earn only 39% of total income. Africans make up 75% of the population but they receive only 28% of total income. Other indicators of racial inequality are: only 2 out of every 10 African schoolchildren reach metric whilst 8 out of 10 white children do so; 28,3% of African children suffer malnutrition to the extent that their growth is stunted, whilst the figure for Whites is 4,9%; the life expectancy of Africans is 9 years lower than that of Whites . The World Bank/Southern African Labour and Development Research Unit survey of 1993 showed that 47% of African households were living at or below the relevant Household Subsistence Level, compared with 19% of Coloured households,

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[1] Figures in this section are from A. Whiteford , (March 11–17 1994), "The Poor Get Even Poorer" in *The Weekly Mail and Guardian*, p.8; L. Schlemmer, (1996), "The Nemesis of Race: a Case for Redoubled Concern", in *Frontiers of Freedom. South African Institute of Race Relations.* 3rd quarter; B. Turok, (1993), "South Africa's Skyscraper Economy: Growth or Development?", in D. Hallowes (ed.), *Hidden Faces: Environment, Development, Justice: South Africa and the Global Context.* Earthlife Africa. South Africa; J. Pearce, (March 17–23, 1995), "Still a Land of Inequality", in *Weekly Mail and Guardian.*

6% of Indian households and 2% of White households. Before the 1990s, racial inequality was also expressed in terms of civil and political rights: Black people were voteless, subject to the pass system, denied the right of union organisation, and the main Black political organisations were also banned.

Class: however, it is a mistake to say that all inequality in South Africa follows purely racial lines. There are also high levels of inequality on the basis of class and gender (sex). A recent study confirmed the high levels of racial inequality, but found that at the same time "almost three quarters of total inequality can be ascribed to inequality within population groups". For example, the richest 20% of African households (many of whom are entrepreneurs, professionals and managers etc.) increased their real incomes by almost 40% over the period 1975- 1991, while the poorest 40% of African households' incomes decreased by nearly 40% over the same period. A similar decline in real income was reported for the poorest 40% of Whites. The study concluded that "The 1960s saw a huge gap developing between the incomes of whites and blacks; the 1980s has seen a similar gap emerging within the black population group".[2] This is borne out by another estimate, according to which the wealthiest 10% of African households have incomes over 60 times those of the poorest 10% compared to ratios of roughly 30 times amongst Whites, Coloureds and Indians. Overall, the means of production have historically been concentrated amongst a minority of the population. About 80% of the country's wealth is owned by 5% of the population, whilst four large corporations own 81% of share capital.

ANARCHISM VERSUS RACISM

As Anarchists we fight for the creation of a free and equal society, based on grassroots democracy and socio-economic equality. We are for the destruction of all forms of exploitation and domination. We are opposed to coercive authority and hold that the only limit on an individuals' freedom should be that she or he does not infringe on the freedom of anybody else. We believe that only a revolution by the productive, exploited classes of society (the working class and the poor, and the working peasantry) can create a free world, and we recognise that these classes can only be mobilised and united on the basis of opposing all forms of oppression. **For all of these reasons, we Anarchists are the avowed opponents of racism and racists**. Any movement for freedom which does not directly tackle racism is nothing short of a disgraceful fraud.

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[2] These quotes are from A. Whiteford , (March 11–17 1994), "The Poor Get Even Poorer" in *The Weekly Mail and Guardian*, p.8

Anarchism has a vigorous history of fighting racism.[3] From the condemnations and criticisms of racism by the main Anarchist theorists (e.g. Bakunin, Reclus, Makhno, Rocker), to mass organising drives and struggles against racism, capitalism and the State (e.g. the struggles of the *International Working Peoples Association* in the U.S. in the 1880s; the efforts of the Anarcho-Syndicalist *Industrial Workers of the World* in the USA in the 1910s among Black and immigrant workers; the centrality of the battle against anti-Semitism to the Anarchist revolution in the Ukraine of 1918–21, to the struggles against fascism and racism today, Anarchists have consistently combated racism. We are proud to stand in this revolutionary tradition.

Anarchism has historically attracted millions of people of colour and racially oppressed minorities. Many, in fact most, Anarchist movements were based in the Third World, and thus took up issues of anti-imperialism, anti-racism etc. From China, to Cuba, to Nicaragua, to Herzegovina, our influence has been huge. Across the world, our movement consistently combated racism and won to its side people of colour and racially oppressed minorities; these include prominent Anarchist activists, such as Lucy Parsons (an African-American), Frank Little (of Native American and white descent), Ricardo Flores Magon (of Mexican descent), Alexander Berkman (of Jewish descent), Nestor Makhno (from the Ukraine, a Russian dominion), and James Connolly (from the immigrant Irish community in Edinburgh during the time that Ireland was still a British colony). It did this because it was fundamentally opposed to *all* oppression, and championed class struggle. It took note of both class exploitation and special forms of oppression, welding all workers together in an internationalist, anti-racist fight against capitalism, the State and all forms of oppression. *It is therefore obvious that Anarchism was not "Eurocentric", either in the composition of its adherents or in terms of the content of its theories and activities. Nor did it fail to deal either theoretically or practically with racism. Nor was it the property of any one nationality, it was the creation of the toiling masses of the whole world.*

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[3] see, for example, M. Bakunin (1867), "Federalism, socialism and anti- theologism", in Sam Dolgoff (ed.), (1973) *Bakunin On Anarchism* (Allen and Unwin) p146; P.A. Kropotkin, (1887), "Anarchist Communism: its basis and principles," in P.A. Kropotkin, (1987*), Anarchism and Anarchist Communism* (N. Walter (ed.), Freedom Press. London). p39; P.A. Kropotkin, (1882), "Expropriation", in P.A. Kropotkin, (1970), *Selected Writings on Anarchism and Revolution.* (M.Miller (ed.). MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass. and London, England), p194; P. Marshall (1993), *Demanding the Impossible: a History of Anarchism*, chapter 20 (on Elisee Reclus). Fontana: London; also on Reclus: M.Fleming, 1979, *The Anarchist Way to Socialism: Elisee Reclus and Nineteenth-Century European Anarchism.* Crom Helm, London. Rowan and Littlefield, New Jersey, especially chapters 2 and 12; Rudolph Rocker, (1978) "The Nation in the Light of Modern Race Theories", from his book *Nationalism and Culture*, Croixside Press, StillWater, Minnesota; J. Casanovas, (1995), "Slavery, the Labour Movement and Spanish Colonialism in Cuba, 1850–1890", in *International Review of Social History*, no. 40; P. Avrich, 1984, *The Haymarket Tragedy.* Princeton University Press. Princeton, N.J. [on the IWPA]; Philip S. Foner, (1974*), Organised Labour and the Black Worker 1619–1973* (United States), International Pubs, New York; Peter Archinov, (1987), "The Meaning of the National Question in the Maknovshchina". The Jewish Question", from his book *History of the Makhnovist Movement 1918–21*, 1987. Freedom Press, London; M. Malet (1982), *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War* (Macmillan Press: London);also see Anarchist Communist Federation, "From Panther to Anarchist", *Organise! for Class Struggle Anarchism* , Magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation. London. no. 28, October- December 1992.

THERE IS ONLY ONE RACE: THE HUMAN RACE[4]

We reject the argument that humanity can be biologically or scientifically divided into a number of distinct, and unalterable "races" (e.g. Africans, Asians, Europeans etc.). The idea that humankind can be divided into distinct "races" on the basis of physical characteristics like skin colour, hair type, nose and eye shape etc. seems like common sense, but is nonetheless wrong. There is only one "race": the human race.

It is true that people differ by skin colour etc. but it has proven scientifically impossible to rigidly and clearly define people into clear cut "races" because there is no known single physical feature or group of physical features that clearly mark off one race from another. For example, Whites are said to have straight hair: but so do Asians, and some Africans; and many Whites in fact have woolly hair. Similarly, not all Africans have dark skins, while not all Whites have light skins; some Africans are fairly pale, and some Whites are dark. The point if all this is that no hard and fast divisions can be established amongst the different races, which blur into one another in a number of ways.

This is not a coincidence. The fact of the matter is that there is no "race" gene. Only 6% of genetic variations among human groups can be accounted for by "race" differences such as exist between e.g. Asians and Africans. An expert in the field, remarks that "If the holocaust comes and a small tribe deep in the New Guinea forests are the only survivors, almost all the genetic variation now expressed among the innumerable groups of our four billion people will be preserved". The genetic or biological variation between people of any given "race" is as great as the genetic variation between that race and any other given "race".

In practical terms this means that Eugene Terre'Blanche may be genetically closer to an Australian Aboriginal or an American Indian than he is to Paul Kruger. It also means that it is impossible for different "races" to be biologically "inferior" or "superior" to each other. And it means that history cannot be understood in terms of a "race struggle" between so-called "inferior" and "superior" races. Instead, many of the physical differences between people (like skin colour and eye colour) reflect environmental conditions.

This is why what people see as a "race" differs between different times and places, for example books that spoke about "race conflict" in South Africa in the 1920's referred to conflict between white Afrikaners and English-speakers. What "race" you are refers to your own self-definition and the definitions of other people and social forces. "Race" does not have a scientific basis but it is a reality in society.

THE ROOTS OF RACISM

So why has "race" and racism become so central to our society (and many others)? We need to understand the roots of racism if we are to fight this oppression and its effects.

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[4] This is the focus of Rudolph Rocker, (1978) "The Nation in the Light of Modern Race Theories", from his book *Nationalism and Culture*. Croixside Press, StillWater, Minnesota. Recent social scientific arguments that make the same point are Barrett, M., and M. McIntosh, (1985), "Ethnocentrism and Socialist- Feminist Theory," in *Feminist Review* No. 20; Fried, M.H., (1975), "A Four Letter Word that Hurts," in H.Bernard (ed.), *The Human Way: Readings in Anthropology*, New York. pp. 38–45; C. Lewonthin and others, (1984), *Not in our Genes* (Pantheon Publishers).

Racism is not the inevitable result of different people coming into contact with one another, "white culture", or Calvinism. Racism is the product of a society based on exploiting and exploited classes. Racism is a means of organising and justifying the oppression of large masses of people.[5]

Racism may have been present in pre-capitalist forms of class society. For example, in feudal Europe, the aristocracy (lords/ knights) apparently justified their rule over the mass of unfree peasants (serfs) on the basis of their allegedly superior "blue blood".[6] However, anti-Black racism was not a feature of these societies.

Racism has been an integral part of modern capitalist/State society since it emerged in Europe in the 1500s. Capitalism and the State generated racism at every stage of their development.[7]

Merchant capitalism and slavery: This early stage of capitalism dates from the early 1500s to the late 1700s, and was characterised by the accumulation of capital through trade and plunder. This was the period when capitalism began to forcefully expand itself into Africa, the Americas, and Asia. Slave plantations were set up in the Americas and elsewhere, and supplied by an enormous slave trade. ***Slavery generated racism – racism did not generate slavery***. The merchants and the planters initially tried to use White and Native American slaves, but from the second half of the 1600s, slaves from Africa (and Asia) began to provide the labour force of the plantations. These black slaves were substantially cheaper, as well as available in larger numbers, and easier to identify (and thus help police) than the White slaves. The enslavement and sale of human beings was "justified" on the grounds that the slaves were from a sub- normal and savage people, unfit for freedom. This kind of argument was especially necessary with the rise of radical ideas of equality in the English, American and later the French Revolutions.

Colonial conquest: From the 1500s until the 1900s, capitalism and its State were involved in the conquest and colonisation of Africa, the Americas and Asia. This was motivated mainly by the need to obtain cheap (often forced) labour and raw materials (like crops and minerals), and by the need to find new markets. Again, however, racist ideas found fertile ground. It was said that the success of European imperialism reflected the innate superiority of the "White race". In addition, the colonisers argued that they were helping the darker skinned "natives" by bringing "civilisation" to them- teaching them Christianity, the wearing of European clothes and the "dignity of labour". Such ideas obviously aided the exploitation of the indigenous peasants and workers – these groups were paid very low wages or crop prices on the basis that their "uncivilised lifestyle" required less income; they were prevented from building up unions and similar bodies, on the

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[5] Rocker hits the nail on the head when he argues that the real point of racist ideas is to justify the rule of the bosses and to justify counter- revolutionary attacks on the masses of the people, such as Nazism and fascism. Rocker writes that racist ideas are "rooted in the very foundations of all spiritual, political, and social reaction: in the attitudes of masters towards their slaves. Every class that has thus far attained to power has felt the need of stamping their rulership with the mark of the unalterable and the predestined... They regard themselves as the chosen ones and think that they recognise in themselves externally the marks of the men of privilege ... All advocates of the race doctrine [i.e.. racism] have been and are the associates of and defenders of every social and political reaction, advocates of the power principle in its most brutal form ... One comprehends how this doctrine has found such ready acceptance in the ranks of the great industrialists" (Rudolph Rocker, (1978) "The Nation in the Light of Modern Race Theories", from his book *Nationalism and Culture*).

[6] B. Magubane, (1979*) The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa* (Monthly Review Press)

[7] Some key works which discuss these points V.L. Allen, (1992), "The Genesis of Racism on the Mines", in his *The History of Black Mineworkers in South Africa*. The Moor Press. See also "The Origins Of Racism" in L. Callinicos, (1980), *Gold and Workers 1886–1924*, Volume one of *A People's History of South Africa*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg. Chapter 17.

grounds that they were "too immature" to "properly" use such structures; they were subject to harsh and racist forms of labour control on the basis that they were "muscular machines", unable to manage their own work without "White" brains and supervision. (We will discuss these forms of Black working class and peasant exploitation in more detail below).

Genocide: In a number of colonised territories, particularly in the 1800s, there was no pretence of trying to "civilise the natives." Instead, there were widespread and indiscriminate massacres of indigenous people, in what amounted to a campaign of extermination (genocide). Attempts were made to exterminate the Australian Aborigines, the Native Americans, the New Zealand Maoris, as well as the southern African Khoisan. In addition to the killings, the indigenous people were also affected by new diseases such as small pox, and social problems like alcoholism.

Dividing the working class

Racism is also promoted by the bosses and rulers because it helps to divide the working class, particularly in the First World. In particular, it splits the White working class and poor from immigrant and Black working class people. Where the working class is racially divided, it lacks the solidarity necessary to fight and defeat the bosses and rulers. The bosses promote the division of the working class by means of the mass media (which they control), by making racial divisions correspond with job divisions, and by discriminating against Black workers. Racism is great stuff for the bosses: Black workers without political rights, job security or decent wages provide an "excellent" and flexible super-exploitable labour force to be hired and fired for the worst jobs whenever necessary; it provides a ready source of strike-breakers to be used against as a threat against White strikers; and it allows them to shift the anger that the White workers feel at unemployment and low wages to Blacks and immigrants who are said to be "taking our jobs".

So why do many White working class people in these countries accept and support these racist ideas and practices? The first reason has been given above – the media. Secondly, there is economic competition among the workers, who may be desperately fighting over a limited number of jobs. Or the bosses may be trying to replace skilled workers with cheaper and less skilled workers. The workers may, in some (but by no means all) cases, respond to this competition in racial terms, and develop racial antagonisms. Thirdly, the White working class and the poor may get a "public and psychological wage" in that they can are (slightly) better treated than Black and immigrant people, and so can consider themselves part of a "superior race" (no matter how oppressive their lives are).

APARTHEID AND RACIAL CAPITALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA[8]

Racism in South Africa is rooted in a combination of all of the processes mentioned above. It is the child of capitalism and the State. These factors, and not "white culture", Calvinism or Afrikaner nationalism, have been the main driving force behind the various forms of racism in South Africa, up to and including Apartheid.

The South African ruling class did not comprise all the Whites. As in all countries the ruling class was made up of those who held political and economic power: capitalists, top State officials, generals, and professional politicians. Most Whites were and are middle and working class. And clearly the ruling class thus included those Blacks who held important positions, such as many of the chiefs as well as all of the homeland leaders and the upper staff of the homeland states. Nonetheless, the ruling class was fundamentally White-dominated as its leading members were of European descent and were, indeed, often the direct beneficiaries of colonial and apartheid policies (see below). Overall, there were very few large Black capitalists. In addition to these Black allies, the White bosses and rulers also sought to draw in allies from other White groups such as the middle class and working class (see below). This alliance was made possible through the material benefits provided to Whites by racial capitalism, by deliberate government policies and by the strength of racism in the society. Some have referred to this alliance of all White classes and a section of the Black elite as an oligarchy or power bloc.

Racism in South Africa before the 1870s[9]

The Cape Colony and slavery: The establishment of a colony at the Cape by the Dutch East India Company in the 1600s should be seen as part of the general expansion of merchant capitalism in this period. The Colony was initially set up to provide a stop- off point for the trade with Asia, but it was not long before slave plantations were established. The slaves were imported from both Africa and Asia. At the same time, the pastoralist and hunter-gatherer Khoisan people were dispossessed of their lands, cattle and water holes, and subjected to various legal disabilities (e.g. pass laws, various forms of indenture) that reduced them to a condition of unfreedom very close to the slaves. Slavery in the Cape Colony was particularly widespread (at least two thirds of farmers owned at least one slave in 1800). It was also particularly brutal, even in comparison

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[8] The key works which help one to understand these arguments include B. Magubane, (1979) *The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa* (Monthly Review Press); L. Callinicos, (1980), *Gold and Workers 1886–1924*, Volume one of *A People's History Of South Africa*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg. Chapter 17; M. Legassick (1974), "South Africa: capital accumulation and violence", in *Economy and Society* vol. 3 no 3; M. Legassick (1977), "Gold, Agriculture and Secondary Industry in South Africa, 1885–1970" in R. Palmer and N. Parsons (ed.) *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa*; M. Lacey (1981) *Working for Boroko: the Origins of a Coercive Labour System in South Africa*. Ravan.. But see also D. Posel, (1983), "Rethinking the 'Race- Class' Debate in South African Historiography," in *Social Dynamics* vol. 9, no. 1. pp50-66 for a useful critique of the reductionist and functionalist tendencies in much of this literature. An implicit critique of the same points is provided by D. Yudelman , (1983), *The Emergence of Modern South Africa: State, Capital and the Incorporation of Organised Labour on the South African Gold fields 1902–39*. On the same point, also see C. Saunders (1988), "Historians and Apartheid", in J. Lonsdale (ed.), *South Africa in Question*. African Studies Centre, University of Cambridge, in association with James Currey (London) and Heinemann (Portsmouth).

[9] In addition to the works cited above, on the pre-1870s period see also Bundy, C., (1972), "The Emergence and Decline of a South African Peasantry," in *African Affairs* no. 7 (should be read in conjunction with Lewis, J., (1984), "The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry: a critique and reassessment", in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1); Ross, R., (1986), "The Origins of Capitalist Agriculture in the Cape Colony: A Survey", in W. Beinart, P. Delius and S. Trapido (eds.), *Putting A Plough To The Ground: Accumulation And Dispossession In Rural South Africa, 1850–1930*. Ravan. Johannesburg; P. Delius and S. Trapido, "Inboeksellings and Oorlams: the Creation and Transformation of a Servile Class", in B. Bozzoli (ed.), 1983), *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal.* Ravan. Johannesburg.

to other slave colonies, and defined on strict racial lines (unlike some slave colonies, racially "mixed" marriages were very rare, and neither racially "mixed" children nor their Black parent obtained "White" privileges). In addition to the White farmers and slave owners, there was also a substantial "poor white" population.[10]

Colonial conquest and dispossession: By the 1870s, the various White-ruled colonies that were later united as the Republic of South Africa in 1910 (the Cape Colony, the Orange "Free" State, Natal, and the Transvaal) had been established. All of these colonies were based on the conquest of land from African people, although not all whites were landowners – some of them were poor peasants (*bywoners*), or landless workers. In all of the colonies White farmers made a number of attempts to extract labour from African communities, by such means as hut taxes, and demands that amounted to forced labour. Some Africans were able to resist these demands by becoming peasants farming for the market (some, mainly chiefs and headmen, growing rich enough to employ workers); others had no choice but to become workers for at least part of the year. As had happened elsewhere, these colonial processes received a racist justification. For example, in 1835 a leading settler and State official in the Cape Colony wrote of Queen Adelaide Province on the eastern frontier as follows: "the appearance of the country is very fine. It will make excellent sheep farms... far too good for such a race of runaways as the K*****s".[11] This type of racist idea – that Black people could not farm properly and needed to be taught the "dignity of labour" (by Whites) – was a standard feature of colonial ideology.

Racial Capitalism in South Africa after the 1870s[12]

The impact of the diamond and gold discoveries: By the 1870s, what was to become South Africa was a mainly agricultural area. The colonies were all involved in farming for local and overseas markets, but the extent of commercialisation varied greatly, from the highly profit-oriented farms of the Cape to the much weaker links to the market of the Transvaal White farmers (and African peasants). The discovery of diamonds and gold in the 1860s and 1880s at Kimberly and the Witwatersrand drastically changed the situation. The new mining industry led to a rapid development of capitalism because it attracted large amounts of foreign investments, increased the taxation available to the State, promoted the building of roads and railways, and led to the emergence of large cities. These developments helped create a small manufacturing and financial sector, and they greatly accelerated the commercialisation of agriculture.

Super-exploitation of Black labour: Both the White farmers and the mining bosses now needed a large workforce. Some labour was provided by immigrant White workers and poor Afrikaners, but this was often expensive and in any case in short supply. The farmers and miners

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[10] see C. Bundy, "Vagabond Hollanders and Runaway Englishmen" in W. Beinart, P. Delius and S. Trapido (eds.), *Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850–1930.* Ravan. Johannesburg.

[11] quoted in R. Ross, (1986), "The Origins Of Capitalist Agriculture In The Cape Colony: A Survey", in W. Beinart, P. Delius and S. Trapido (eds.), *Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850–1930.* Ravan. Johannesburg. pp74-5.

[12] In addition to the references given in note **8,** see Bundy, C., (1972), "The Emergence and Decline of a South African Peasantry," in *African Affairs* no. 7 (should be read in conjunction with Lewis, J., (1984), "The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry: A Critique And Reassessment", in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1); Keegan, T., (1983), "The Sharecropping Economy. African Class Formation, and the 1913 Natives' Land Act in the Highveld Maize Belt," in S. Marks and R. Rathbone (eds.), *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa.* London.; R. Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberly Diamond Fields*, esp. chapter 2.; L. Callinicos, (1987), *Working Life: Factories, Townships and Popular Culture on the Rand 1886–1940*, volume two of *A People's History of South Africa*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg; L. Callinicos, .(1993), *A Place in the City: the Rand on the Eve of Apartheid*, volume three of *A People's History of South Africa.* Ravan. Maskew Miller. Longmans.

set out to smash the African peasantry and independent African areas to create a mass labour force. This aim was supported all the way by the various colonial states who passed and enforced a long list of laws for this purpose (e.g. hut taxes, land reservations, banning sharecropping). The bosses did not just want a large labour force but an ultra- cheap one as well. This was particularly important for the mines, which not only had a very low grade of ore but also faced a fixed international gold price – the only way to cut costs and become profitable was to minimise labour costs. The bosses also wanted to get rid of competition in the market on the part of Black farmers, peasants, traders and independent diggers (e.g. on the diamond fields).

Once a large Black labour force was created, several methods were used to ensure that it remained **ultra-cheap**. First, African workers were subjected to a host of coercive controls that undermined their bargaining power (e.g. bans on unionisation; pass laws, housing in compounds). Secondly, African workers were often employed as migrants who came to the cities, mines and commercial farms on contract for limited periods, whilst their families remained rural areas. This allowed the bosses to pay very low wages on the grounds that the workers families could supposedly support themselves on their own land, and would assume the responsibility of caring for retired or crippled workers. Finally, on some farms, the bosses made use of labour tenants: these workers were only allowed to live on the farms and have a small garden of their own in return for providing virtually free labour.

Super-exploitation was "justified" by racist arguments: Some examples: in 1892 the editor of the bosses' magazine The South African Mining Journal justified repressive controls and the compound system on the grounds that "The position of k*****s is like children", needing "special control and supervision when exposed to temptations".[13] One mine-owner warned that "We should not over-pamper the native and thus ruin his naturally strong constitution", whilst another insisted that "the natives far prefer those compounds which are not too well-ventilated or airy".[14] According to one farmer in 1947, "All the wages and housing schemes will not change the native... If we want the natives to be law-abiding, let us speak to them in the language they understand: the language of the sjambok, administered frequently and with vigour".[15]

The divided working class: The bosses were also able to use racism to divide the working class: White working class from Black; and the various Black groups from each other. Particular attention was paid to trying to get the White working class to support the racial capitalist system by giving it a privileged and protected position. According to a government report in the early part of this century, "the European minority, occupying... the position of the dominant race, cannot allow a considerable number of its members to sink into [poverty] and to fall below the level of the non-European workers".[16] At the same time, it was illegal for Africans and Whites to be members of the same union. In general these policies were successful, particularly from the 1920s – 1980s, although there were a few instances of integrated worker struggles, and a number of socialists and democrats still emerged from the White working class.

On the mines: The White miners were divided from the Black workers from the start by their skilled work, political rights, freedom from most labour-coercive laws, and permanent residence

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[13] quoted in L. Callinicos, (1980), *Gold and Workers 1886–1924*, Volume one of *A People's History Of South Africa*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg. p.102.

[14] same reference as for **13.**

[15] cited in F. Wilson, "Farming 1886–1966", in *Oxford History of South Africa*. p. 162.

[16] cited in L. Callinicos, (1987), *Working Life: Factories, Townships and Popular Culture on the Rand 1886–1940*, volume two of *A People's History of South Africa*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg. p127.

in the towns. But although they thus benefited from racial capitalism, this system also made them economically insecure as the bosses constantly tried to replace expensive White labour with cheap Black labour. This contributed to militant mass strikes (most famously in 1922). Instead of opposing the system of Black super- exploitation that caused their insecurity in the first place, most White miners demanded job reservations for Whites. The State and the capitalists eventually accepted this demand in the 1920s, partly because of the militancy of the strikes, because the bosses were afraid that the Africans would get ideas, and because it was too destabilising for the racist State to keep shooting White workers. By agreeing to job reservation, the recognition of White trade unions, and the exclusion from registered unions of "pass-bearing Natives", the State ensured the continued racial division of the workers.

The "poor whites": Many White workers were not in the privileged position of the White miners – even before the Great Depression began in the early 1930s, there were at least 300,000 Whites living in dire poverty, often in the same slums as poor Blacks. These unskilled Whites were permanently under-employed, not because they refused to do "native work for native pay" but because the bosses preferred to hire rightless and ultra-exploitable Black workers for low-grade work. While these conditions did create tensions between poor Whites and poor Blacks, they also had the politically explosive potential of creating a united working class. Such conditions challenged the racist social order that the bosses were trying to build. Thus the State, starting mainly in the 1920s: segregated slum areas, promoted White education and training and gave Whites preferential employment in the State sector (the "civilised labour" policy). The "civilised labour" policy had the additional advantage for the ruling class of allowing the bosses to attack the conditions of skilled Whites in sectors like the railways. Aided by the recovery of the economy, these policies largely succeeded in ending the "Poor White Problem".[17]

WHY THE STATE SUPPORTED RACIAL CAPITALISM

As noted above, the State played a central role in building the system of racial capitalism. This was for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the State always defends and supports the ruling class, which in South Africa drew its wealth and power directly from racism. The various colonial states of South Africa since 1652 were racist dictatorships built to exploit and dominate Black workers, peasants and slaves, and to divide these classes from poor Whites. At times they used Black collaborators to aid these purposes (e.g. rich "*amakholwa*" peasants before 1913; homeland leaders and chiefs from the 1950s), at other times not. The leading personnel of the State were drawn from the ranks of the White bourgeoisie, and the State was funded mainly from the taxes and loans derived from Black super-exploitation.[18]

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[17] An excellent analysis of this issue is provided by M. Lacey (1981) *Working for Boroko: the Origins of a Coercive Labour System in South Africa.* Ravan. See also L. Callinicos, (1987), *Working Life: Factories, Townships and Popular Culture on the Rand 1886–1940*, volume two of *A People's History of South Africa*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg. The book, R. Morrel (ed.), (1991), *White But Poor: Essays on the History of Poor Whites in Southern Africa, 1880–1940,* UNISA,. Pretoria. contains interesting material on this issue. See especially the chapters by Freund and Parnell.

[18] D. Yudelman , (1983), *The Emergence of Modern South Africa: State, Capital and the Incorporation of Organised Labour on the South African Gold Fields 1902–39* argues, correctly, that while the State cannot simply be reduced to the instrument of capital, its dependence on the capitalist system for funding ensures that capitalism and the State function in a symbiotic relationship.

The second reason why the State supported racial capitalism was that it aided social control. The migrant labour system made it difficult for stable Black working class communities to develop around the "White" cities and the labour-repressive laws and the compound system made it very difficult to organise resistance. The dangers to the bosses and rulers were recognised by the State. According to the Board of Trade and Industries (1945), "The detribalisation of large numbers of Natives congregated in amorphous masses in large industrial centres is a matter which no government can view with equanimity. Unless handled with great foresight and skill these masses of detribalised Natives can very easily develop into a menace rather than a constructive factor in industry".[19]

To sum up: racism served the following functions for the White-dominated ruling class in South Africa:

1. It justified and strengthened the power and wealth of the bosses and rulers (allegedly members of a "superior" race, representing "European civilisation").

2. It allowed the ruling class to deeply divide the working class.

3. It made possible the super-exploitation of the majority of the South African working class

– **On the mines**: after the institutionalisation of the compound system and migrant labour on the gold mines, African labour costs actually fell between 1911 and 1931, and then, once they had risen back up to the 1911 level, remained constant right up to 1969 despite a doubling of African employment levels over this period. African miners real wages remained virtually unchanged over the whole period 1915–70.[20]

– **On the farms**: Although figures are much less complete for this sector, it seems clear that between 1860s-1960s that the very poor living conditions and amenities for Black workers remained unchanged; cash incomes remained largely static in monetary terms, while incomes in cash and kind may actually have declined in real terms over this period.[21]

THE CRISIS OF RACIAL CAPITALISM AND THE MOVE TO A CAPITALIST DEMOCRACY

By the mid-twentieth century, these various processes had resulted in a country with the following type of social structure: a mainly White ruling class, aided by Black collaborators like homeland leaders and chiefs; a middle class drawn from all races, but disproportionately so from Whites, who also held the most prestigious positions here; a White labour aristocracy; and a desperately impoverished and rightless Black working class made up of Indian, Coloured and African people, with the Africans concentrated in the lower grade jobs and receiving the least social benefits.

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[19] quoted in M. Legassick (1974), "South Africa: Capital Accumulation and Violence", in *Economy and Society* vol. 3 no 3, p275.

[20] cited in J.Natrass, 1988, *The South African Economy: Its Growth and Change.* Oxford University Press. Cape Town. Second edition. pp. 139–40.

[21] cited in F. Wilson, "Farming 1886–1966", in *Oxford History of South Africa.* pp 158–163.

The system of racial capitalism entered a crisis in the 1970s due to a combination of factors. Together these factors laid the basis for the move towards some sort of bourgeois democracy in South Africa.

Economic factors that led to the crisis: All sections of capital (farms, mines, manufacturing, services) have clearly showed their overall compatibility with Apartheid policies and institutions. However, the racial capitalist system also carried an increasing number of costs for large manufacturing concerns, as well as parts of the service sector. These costs were increased in importance by the fact that South Africa followed the world capitalist economy into an economic slump from the early 1970s.[22]

Firstly, the migrant labour system and the job colour bar (not to mention the "Bantu Education" system) all resulted in low worker productivity and skills shortages. These shortages were evident from the 1950s, and by 1971 had reached a figure of 95,655.[23]

Secondly, very low Black wages led to a very small domestic consumer market, with only 1 out of 6 people having any disposable income. Obviously, the bosses could have dealt with this issue by exporting consumer goods, but they failed to do so because of their own short- sighted policies and because of the international sanctions campaign. As a leading spokesperson for the bosses, Raymond Parsons, executive director of the Associated Chambers of Commerce (ASSOCOM), put it in 1979, "increasing Black purchasing power is the only real answer to growth".[24]

Political factors that led to the crisis (mass struggle): More important than economic problems in plunging the racial capitalist system into crisis was mass Black struggle. This kind of resistance was inevitable given the brutality and injustice of racial capitalism. In all of these struggles the Black working class and poor played an absolutely central role.[25]

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[22] On the economic contradictions that underlay the crisis of racial-capitalism, see Morris, M. and V. Padayachee, (1988), "State Reform Policy in South Africa", in *Transformation* v7; J.S. Saul and S. Gelb, (1986), *The Crisis in South Africa*. Zed. London. (revised edition); T.C. Moll, (1989), "'Probably the Best Laager in the World': The Record and Prospects of the South African Economy," in J.D. Brewer (ed.), *Can South Africa Survive? Five Minutes to Midnight*. Southern Book Publishers. South Africa; T.C. Moll, (1991), "Did the Apartheid Economy 'Fail'?", in *Journal of Southern African Studies*. vol. 17. no. 4; T. Kemp, (1991), "South Africa: Gold, Industrialisation and White Supremacy", in his *Historical Patterns of Industrialisation*. Longmans.

[23] cited in J.S. Saul and S. Gelb, (1986), *The Crisis in South Africa*. Zed. London. (revised edition) p. 72, also see 84.

[24] cited in J.S. Saul and S. Gelb, (1986), *The Crisis in South Africa*. Zed. London. (revised edition) p. 80.

[25] For an excellent discussion of the political resistance of the 1980s see Lodge, T., (1991), "Rebellion: the Turning of the Tide," in Lodge, T. and B. Nasson. *All, Here, and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s*. South Africa Update Series. Ford Foundation. Foreign Policy Association. Good accounts of trade union history in this period are provided by J. Baskin, (1991), *Striking Back: A History of COSATU*. Ravan Press. Johannesburg , and S. Friedman ., (1987), *Building Tomorrow Today: African Workers in Trade Unions, 1970–84*. Ravan. Johannesburg. Also see J. Hyslop (1988), "School Student Movements and State Education Policy: 1972–87," in R. Cohen and W. Cobbett (eds.), (1988), *Popular Struggles in South Africa*. Regency House. James Currey. Africa World Press ; R. Lambert and E. Webster, (1988), "The Re- emergence of Political Unionism in Contemporary South Africa?," in R. Cohen and W. Cobbett (eds.), (1988), *Popular Struggles ....;* J. Seekings , (1988), "The Origins of Popular Mobilisation in the PWV Townships, 1980–4," in Cohen, R. and W. Cobbett (eds.), (1988), *Popular Struggles ...*; Swilling, M., (1988), "The United Democratic Front and Township Revolt," in Cohen, R. and W. Cobbett (eds.), (1988), *Popular Struggles ...* ; K. Jochelson (1990), "Reform, Repression and Resistance in South Africa: A Case Study of Alexandra Township, 1979–89," in *Journal of Southern African Studies*. vol. 16. no. 1; T. Lodge, (1981), *Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945*. Ravan Press. Johannesburg; T. Lodge , (1989), "The United Democratic Front: Leadership and Ideology," in J.D. Brewer (ed.), *Can South Africa Survive? Five Minutes to Midnight*. Southern Book Publishers. South Africa; T. Lodge, (1989), "People's War or Negotiation? African National Congress Strategies in the 1980s," in G. Moss and I. Obery (eds.), *South African Review 5*. Ravan Press and SARS; D. Macshane, Plaut M. and D. Ward, (1984), *Power! Black Workers, their Unions and the Struggle for Freedom in South Africa*. South End Press. Boston;

There was a large-scale Defiance Campaign in the 1950s, but this was brought to an end in the early 1960s by the Sharpeville Massacre of anti-pass law protesters, and the subsequent banning of legal Black political organisations and unofficial trade unions. (Socialist organisations had already been effectively banned since 1950 by the Suppression of Communism Act).

The false calm created by the repression was ended in 1973, when a massive wave of wildcat strikes gave birth to the modern Black trade union movement. Three years later, in 1976, the June 16 shooting of African schoolchildren protesting the introduction of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in schools sparked off months of rioting and insurrectionary activity. The late 1970s and early 1980s saw the consolidation of the Black trade union movement, with the formation of bodies such as FOSATU (Federation of South African Trade unions) and CUSA (Council of Unions of SA). It also saw the emergence of the first civic associations (the Soweto Civic Association was launched in 1979, the Port Elizabeth Black Civics Organisation was launched in 1980). Resistance escalated following the State's attempt in 1983 to set up segregated Indian and Coloured "parliaments", and to drastically raise township rent and service charges as part of its program of local government restructuring. The United Democratic Front (a massive coalition of unions, civics, youth and women organisations, churches and other bodies) was launched in 1983; a smaller, more radical National Forum grouping was established at round about the same time. In 1985, the main Black trade unions and federations came together to form COSATU (the Congress of South African Trade Unions), which was the biggest union federation in South Africa's history. A second federation, NACTU (NationaI Council of Trade Unions) was formed in 1987.

The response of the State to the crisis

Because of the mass resistance, the State was forced to concede a number of reforms (e.g. the removal of restrictions of African trade unions in 1979, the abolition of job reservation in 1979, the abolition of petty apartheid (such as racial segregation of public facilities), limited informal desegregation of the cities (i.e. turning a blind eye to "grey areas"), and the abolition of the pass laws in 1987. These reforms were unconditional victories for the mass struggles of the workers and the poor.

But at the same time, the State launched a two- pronged strategy to secure its continued rule and to try to save the system of racial capitalism:[26]

On the one hand, it made token reforms such as the tri-cameral parliament, replacing White township administrators with pseudo-democratic Black Local Authorities, military-administered model township development projects, and removal of the restrictions on Black traders in the city centres. These had a clear aim of trying to secure collaborators in the Black middle class.

On the other hand, it engaged in a strategy of repression and destabilisation against mass organisations. Funds and other forms of assistance were channelled to reactionary Black organisations such as the "Witdoeke" who destroyed four squatter camps at Crossroads in 1986, Ama-Afrika in the Eastern Cape, and various vigilante groups that targeted activists. Inkatha, the reactionary and authoritarian Zulu nationalist organisation, also benefited from this kind of help (e.g. military training of 125 Inkatha activists in the Caprivi strip in 1986; funding for Inkatha rallies). Death squads also operated (e.g. the murder of Matthew Goniwe and other leaders of the Cradock civic in the Eastern Cape in 1985). This repression took an open form with the

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[26] The background to, and content of, these reforms is outlined in Morris, M. and V. Padayachee, (1988), "State Reform Policy in South Africa", in *Transformation* v7; J.S. Saul and S. Gelb, (1986), *The Crisis in South Africa.* Zed. London. (revised edition); P. Frankel , (1984), *Pretoria's Praetorians* . Cambridge University Press; D. O'Meara, (1983), "Muldergate and the Politics of Afrikaner Nationalism," in *Work in Progress* no. 22

States of emergency of 1985 and 1987, characterised by mass arrests (26,000 by June 1987), and the crushing of activist groups like youth congresses.

The revolutionary potential of the 1980s

Mass resistance had a reached a potentially revolutionary level in the mid- 1980s. In this period, a number of townships were made "ungovernable" to the State, by means of mass rent and service charge boycotts, mass pressure resulting in the collapse of many local authorities, and the creation of large no- go areas for forces of the State like police. In some areas, there was a move from "ungovernability" to "people's power", as local civic and other relatively democratic community structures began to self- administer the townships. One of the best-known cases of "people's power" was the 1986 Alexandra uprising. At the same time, there was a massive and militant strike wave (e.g. the huge general strike (stay-away) of 1984 which attracted 4 million people; the 1986 mineworkers strike – the biggest strike in South African history).

This resistance had the potential of smashing racial capitalism and the State and building a free society. But in order for this potential to become reality, it was vital that the masses were won to, and acted to implement for themselves, the Anarchist idea (i.e. working class revolution against the State, capitalism and all forms of oppression, and the creation of a free federation of worker and community councils defended by a democratic workers militia.

However, the dominant political current of the 1970s was left-wing Black Nationalism. This called on Black working class and poor people, to form a class alliance with the "progressive" Black middle class and capitalists in order to replace the Apartheid regime with some sort of "peoples government" or "national democracy". In some versions of nationalism, it was claimed that this "national democratic revolution" was a necessary first "stage" of change that had to be completed before socialism could (inevitably) follow. Despite its sometimes-militant rhetoric, this political stance could not, and in fact never set out to, consistently battle in a revolutionary manner the deep roots of racism – that is, capitalism and the State. The ANC and the other nationalist organisations have always been pro-capitalist, even if they did sometimes use socialist-sounding slogans or talk of socialism in the long run their immediate aim was a capitalist society and a "people's government". As *Nelson Mandela* stated in the late 1950s in reply to "Africanist" criticisms that the *Freedom Charter* was a socialist document and thus foreign to African nationalism, the document is *not "a blue-print for a socialist State" but instead a programme that would "open up fresh fields for the development of a prosperous non-European bourgeois class" who would "have the opportunity to own in their own name and right mills and factories, and trade and private enterprise will boom and flourish as never before".*[27] Steve Biko himself suggested in his book *I Write What I Like* that "We should think along such lines as the 'buy black' campaign once suggested in Johannesburg and establish our own banks for the benefit of the community".

There were also various socialist, class-conscious and libertarian tendencies in the struggle. For example, there was a powerful socialist "workerist" current in the trade unions, large segments of which developed in a quasi-Syndicalist direction.[28] The civic movement in some townships

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[27] N. Mandela, "In our Lifetime" in *Liberator*, reproduced in T. Karis and G. Carter (eds.) *From Protest To Challenge: A Documentary History Of African Politics In South Africa*, vol. 3, also quoted in P. Hudson, (1986), "The Freedom Charter And The Theory of the National Democratic Revolution" in *Transformation* no.1. pp8-9. At the Rivonia trial in 1964, Mandela said the same thing: "The ANC has never at any period of its history advocated revolutionary change in the economic structure of country, nor has it, to the best of my recollection, ever condemned capitalist society".

[28] see J. Baskin, (1991), "Workerists and Populists" in his *Striking Back: A History of COSATU*. Ravan Press. Johannesburg .

developed in a distinctly libertarian dimension: for example the Alexandra and Cradock civics were grassroots structures based on yard, block, street and zone committees.[29] Overall, however, the politics of nationalism remained dominant although the contest was often very close (e.g. in the unions).

1994 ELECTIONS: A MASSIVE VICTORY FOR THE STRUGGLE IN SOUTH AFRICA

By means of repression, the State was able to regain some control over the situation. However, **it could not stop the tide of mass struggle**. This continued in the latter part of the 1980s, with the rebuilding of the United Democratic Front, the continued rise of the Black unions, student protests etc. By the end of the 1980s, the State had been fought to a standstill (although not defeated – there was more of a stalemate). The ruling class was forced to enter negotiations to replace the racially exclusive *"herrenvolk"* democracy with a full bourgeois democracy. In April 1994, the first non-racial elections in South Africa's history were held.

As Anarchist's we recognise that the holding of these elections, and the constitutional changes which they represent, are a **massive victory** for the Black working class and the poor. For the first time in 350 years, Black South Africans are not ruled by a racist dictatorship but by a parliamentary system. Along with this capitalist democracy come a whole series of rights that we never had before. We have guaranteed freedom of speech and association. We have the right to strike and to protest. We have some protection from racist and sexist practices. These new political rights did not come from the benevolent hand of the racist National Party. They were won from struggle. If they come under attack from whatever quarter, we must use mass action to defend them.[30]

STATE, CAPITALISM, RACISM: ONE ENEMY, ONE FIGHT

THE WAY FORWARD

WHY THE STATE WILL NEVER DELIVER FREEDOM

Although we recognise the 1994 elections represent an important advance in the struggle in South Africa, and while we defend people's political rights (e.g. the vote), this does not mean that we think that elections are the way forward to the liberation of the Black working class and poor. We don't. The State will always serve the bosses, will always place "stability", capitalism and its own power ahead of the needs of the masses. This is why the new government continues to attack struggles, arrest strikers, evict squatters, and says that strikers "harm the economy". It

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[29] see T. Lodge, (1991), "Rebellion: the Turning of the Tide," in Lodge, T. and B. Nasson. *All, Here, and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s.* South Africa Update Series. Ford Foundation. Foreign Policy Association.

[30] As Rocker points out, all political rights are wrested from the ruling class through popular struggle. See Rocker, R., (1948), *Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism.*

will not willingly address the needs of the Black working class majority, instead it will defend the powerful and rich.

The State is not some neutral tool at the disposal of voters. The State is an organ of coercion that exists to defend the power and the wealth of the ruling class. This was why the State was built. Besides this, the State is funded by taxes and loans capital from business, and business by definition raises these resources by exploiting the working class and the poor. The State will not challenge the processes of capitalist accumulation which are so necessary for its very funding.

In addition, most of the top positions in the State apparatus (e.g. top civil servants, top military officials) are staffed by people drawn from the ranks of the ruling class. In South Africa, this has historically meant individuals from the ranks of big business or the leadership of the Afrikaner nationalist establishment. However, we do not think that it will make all that much difference if these people are replaced by progressive Black professionals and politicians. Firstly, the State is a large organisation, made up of many officials and built to defend the ruling class. Changing a few faces at the top will not do much to alter the way that the State operates in practice. Secondly, as is well known, top State officials get huge salaries, and most of them soon get a taste for the power and privilege that their position brings them. This "gravy train" gives them a vested interest in not "rocking the boat" too much.

Elections will not make the State accountable to the majority, or give it a mandate to act in their interests. Real power does not lie with the 400 people who get elected to parliament. It lies in the large (and unelected government bureaucracy/civil service), it lies in the military, and it lies in the boardrooms of the companies. If an elected government were genuinely a threat to the bosses and the rulers, they would sabotage and undermine it through the civil service and through their control of the media and the economy. If necessary, they would remove it by means of the army. In all these actions, other ruling classes and capitalist structures often support them, because these also support the power of the bosses and rulers.

The State is a hierarchical top-down structure, specifically designed to concentrate power in the hands of a small exploiting minority. It is built to be controlled by a small group, and because of its structure it cannot involve the majority of people in decision-making. The State can therefore never liberate the masses; at most it can only help to create a new elite ruling over everybody else (e.g. as happened in the Russian Revolution.

As Anarchists we also disagree with parliamentary democracy and elections because we disagree with the idea that 400 people, elected or otherwise, have the right to make decisions on behalf of another 40 million. We want a society where people control their everyday lives through grassroots worker and community councils, and not only every five years by putting a piece of paper in a ballot box.

Because of the nature of the State, as an organisation that concentrates decision-making in the hands of an extremely well paid minority, and because the new State has promised to help promote Black business, it is clear that one of the main effects of the new political set-up will be to create a new Black middle and upper class. This **Black elite** (drawn mainly from political leaders, educated professionals and Black business) will, because of its position of wealth and power, act to defend and manage capitalism, and will in real, objective terms be the **ally** of the old White ruling class. This is not to say that conflicts will not arise between the Black and White bosses and rulers, as they obviously will (e.g. because of the continued racism of many White capitalists, because of the reluctance of White capital to appoint more Black people to management and

executive positions. However, these conflicts will be about how to run capitalism and the State, not over whether or not to destroy these structures of oppression.

– Nationalisation does not equal socialism.

All that nationalisation means is that a company is transferred from the hands of the small elite that runs the economy to the hands of the small elite that run the State. It has got nothing to do with real workers control of industry. In addition, the bosses (because they control the State and the economy) are generally able to block the nationalisation of any company that they wish to keep private. Generally speaking, States only nationalise crisis-ridden companies, or those that they can buy by paying compensation. Finally, any nationalised company still has to operate inside the larger capitalist economy and will thus be forced to operate in a similar way to private companies. The only State assets which form a partial exception to this rule are social services (e.g. education), and "strategic" industries (e.g. the military), which the State feels are vital, but which cannot be provided on a commercial basis or by the market because they are not profitable enough.

However, while we recognise that nationalisation does not equal socialism, we are opposed to schemes for the privatisation of State assets in the current period. This is because we are opposed to the massive job losses that privatisation of State companies almost always entails, and because we are opposed to any attempt to run essential social services (e.g. hospitals) on a fully commercial basis as this will put them outside of the reach of the poor who cannot afford to pay the price set by the market. We reject the idea that privatisation is a route to "Black economic empowerment" because only a small elite of rich Blacks will be able to buy up these assets, and because that elite will obviously use their property to make profits. For us, Black economic empowerment means the freedom of the Black working class from poverty and from bosses of any kind.

We are not suggesting that there is no difference between the aims, policies etc. of the different political parties that try to get into Parliament. Obviously there are. Our point is that all political parties, no matter what their aims etc. are, are forced to behave in broadly similar ways by the nature of the State organisation.

For all of the reasons above, we will never participate in elections (even to "make propaganda") because this is a totally futile strategy that teaches people to identify with the State and to rely on so-called "leaders" to liberate them from above. For the same reasons, we will not work inside any parliamentary political party. It is clear that socialism can never come through Parliament. In fact, all socialist parties that get involved in Parliament inevitably develop in a reformist direction. This is because their leaders who get elected to parliament develop a vested interest in working within the system (because of their salaries etc.), because these elected leaders tend to get into the habit of viewing things from the perspective of the other politicians, top civil servants etc. and because, in the rush to win a majority in the elections, these parties make their programmes as moderate as possible in order not to alienate possible voters (i.e. they dump their radical programmes rather than educate the people on socialism).

We also reject the argument that we must vote for progressive parties in order to defend the gains of the transition. Our rights do not originate in parliament. They were forced on parliament through struggle and sacrifice and they will be defended in the same way. Only mass struggle against the capitalists and against the State will win gains.

We reject the argument that what is wrong with the South African State in the current period is that its constitution places too many constraints on Black political parties. (The Interim

Constitution says that any party with more than 5% of the vote must be included in a governing coalition with majority party (this is what is meant by "Government of National Unity". It also protects private property). While we recognise that many unnecessary compromises were made to the racist National Party at the CODESA negotiations, we insist that the nature of the State will not change just because one official document, the Constitution, is worded differently.

WHY CAPITALISM MUST BE DESTROYED IN ORDER TO END RACISM

Racism cannot be decisively defeated whilst the capitalist system continues to exist. As we pointed out above, **racism has been central to capitalism and the State in all phases of their development since their emergence in the 1500s. This system is inherently racist and will always generate racism in one form or another.** Although legal Apartheid has been defeated in South Africa, we can already see the outlines of a **new racism** emerging in the form of attacks on so-called "illegal immigrants" from other African countries. The immigrants have been blamed for everything from unemployment to housing shortages to the crime rate. They lack the most basic legal and democratic rights, they face arbitrary brutality, detention, and deportation at the hands of the police, they are super-exploited by bosses who like nothing better than a labour force without basic worker and union rights, and they face violent assaults by reactionary vigilantes looking for a vulnerable target on whom to blame their own poverty and powerlessness. We defend the immigrants, and fight for the abolition of all the racist anti-immigrant laws. We know that it is the greedy bosses who are responsible for the problems of unemployment, crime and poverty and not our fellow-workers from Africa.

Although legal Apartheid is dead, Black working class and poor people still suffer its legacy: poverty, rotten schools, landlessness, unemployment etc. These problems will not be solved by capitalism ("the market") or by the State, because these forces are based on the exploitation and domination of the masses by the ruling class. They will always prioritise the profits and the power of the bosses and rulers over the needs of the masses of workers and poor. **Dealing with these problems will require a massive redistribution of resources from the ruling class to the masses. It will also need a massive re-organisation of the economy.** The means of production (mines, factories etc.) must be controlled by the working class and the poor and used to produce for people's needs rather than for profit. Production must be planned from below by worker and community councils, and goods distributed in the basis of need, rather than ability to pay. This is Anarchism or Stateless Socialism.

CLASS STRUGGLE, NOT BLACK NATIONALISM

If the State and capitalism have the key role in creating and sustaining racism, it follows that **the fight against racism must be a fight against the State and capitalism**. Business and government are not part of the solution – they are part of the problem.

We thus disagree with Black Nationalism because its strategy is to take control of the State, because it believes that the State can represent and implement the "will of the people". As we showed above, this is an incorrect idea.

The fact that the fight against racism must also be a fight against capitalism and the State means that the fight against racism must be a class struggle. Only the working class and the poor have the ability to defeat capitalism and the State and create a free Anarchist (stateless socialist) society (i.e. a society based on individual freedom, worker and community councils, production and distribution according to need, defended by a democratic workers militia). Only in such a society will the legacy and reality of racism and apartheid be finally destroyed by the creation of a human community, by redistribution and development, and by the removal of the structural basis for racism in its all its various forms under the State and capitalism.

Why is only class struggle capable of fighting capitalism and the State and creating a free society?

Briefly put:

Only the workers and the poor have the power to fight the bosses and rulers because our position as the creators of all social wealth gives us immense power at the point of production.

The bosses and rulers benefit from capitalism, the State and the exploitation of the labour of the working class, working peasantry and poor. This means, firstly, that these classes have a vested interest in the current system and will thus defend it against the struggle of the masses. Secondly, it means that these classes are incapable of creating an anti-authoritarian and socialistic society as they are by definition exploiters. Only the working people can create a free society because only we do not exploit.

This includes the Black elite – their privileges under this system mean that they will defend capitalism and the State even though by doing so they defend the roots of racism. The Black elite's privileged lifestyle shields them from the worst effects of racism (they live in the suburbs, go to fancy schools, have lawyers, money etc). It is rubbish to say that all Black people have a common experience that unites them. There is a world of difference between the life of Tokyo Sexwale and a Black farm worker: they do not share the same experience of life just because they are both Black. The aims of the Black elite in fighting racism are not to destroy its effects such as poverty, but just to improve their access to the spoils of capitalism by getting more economic and political power so that they can, in turn, exploit the mainly Black South African working class. In objective terms this makes the Black elite, no matter what their rhetoric, the objective allies of the old racist White ruling class in South Africa – when push comes to shove, they will join together against those of us at the bottom – the working class and the poor.

This is another point where we disagree with Black nationalism – it calls for an alliance of all Black classes as the basis for the struggle against White racism. But we recognise that the Black upper class is pro-capitalist and pro-State and cannot therefore consistently fight racism. In fact, it is part of the enemy – the ruling class that benefits from capitalism, the State and the super-exploitation of Black labour.

In order to make an alliance possible between Black people of different classes, one would have to adopt a pro-capitalist, pro-State line in order to attract the Black elite. This gives these classes an effective veto on workers demands (because anything seen as too threatening will scare off the elite, meaning that workers demands will have to be sacrificed in the quest for "unity"). This means that an alliance of all classes cannot fight racism at its roots or to create a society that will meet the needs of all its people. This capitalist dominance will be reinforced by the education

and wealth of the elite, who will be in a position to dominate these alliances. These elite classes will hijack any class alliance to secure their own class agenda. In fact, this is the drive that lies behind nationalism – it is an attempt by frustrated Black elites under colonialism or apartheid to build allies with the lower classes in order to strengthen their own position and demands for a bigger slice of the capitalist cake; meanwhile the workers are stuck with the crumbs

As Anarchists, we oppose on principle every form of oppression (e.g. racism) wherever it exists, no matter which class is affected. That is why we will fight against racism in business or for that matter the State. But this does not mean that we work with capitalists, politicians or other working class enemies – *they are part of the problem, not the solution.* **We reject all class alliances other than unity between the oppressed peasants, poor and workers.** We fight on a class struggle basis against capitalism, the State and all oppression.

Not only is the fight against racism only possible through class struggle, but the class struggle itself can only be successful if it is also a fight against racism. Class struggle does not ignore sexism, racism etc., insofar as the majority of people who are affected by these oppressions (and who are also affected the worst by these oppressions) are working class, insofar as these oppressions are rooted in the capitalist system, and insofar as the working class can only be united and mobilised on the basis of opposing all oppression, these issues are all class issues. It is impossible to mobilise the working class without dealing with all the issues that affect the working class. *That is to say, the class struggle can only succeed if it is anti-racist, anti-sexist etc.* We therefore stand for the destruction of all special oppressions that divide the working class

We also stand for a united, integrated, internationalist class struggle. No one section of the working class can win freedom on its own, the struggle must be united (this is where our strength lies, and because we have common interests) and internationalist (because no revolution can succeed in one country alone).

We always stand in solidarity with the struggles of the working class and the poor, even if they fight under the banner of nationalism. We support all progressive struggles for their own aims and for the confidence that campaigning gives to people. We recognise that in a struggle against racism Black Nationalism is on the side of the progressive forces and we thus defend it from attack by reactionaries. We recognise that in the present period that this means that we often have to fight alongside various nationalist currents who represent class alliances. However, we do not hide our politics. We will argue for class politics, direct action, anti-statism, anti-capitalism and the need for revolution. Where nationalists get into power, our role is not to defend them but to organise against them on a class struggle basis as they are now part of the system of oppression. Our role as Anarchists is to take up the battle of ideas and we know that this is most effectively done in struggle.

DO WHITE WORKERS BENEFIT FROM RACISM?

The argument for integrated workers struggle and unity made above, of course assumes that workers have common interests. Black nationalists on the left, and white racists on the right deny this, arguing that White working class people benefit from Black oppression. This is a key issue, requiring a nuanced analysis. In answering this we need to distinguish between the situation in South African and in other countries where racism exists.

In South Africa

Apartheid era

For South Africa, the short answer for the Apartheid era must be "yes". Apartheid guaranteed job security, high wages, a good pension etc. In South Africa, which was historically a colony of white settlement, the small White working class received massive and real gains from the racist system because of the bosses need to strengthen racial capitalism.

These privileges were only possible as the White workers were a small part of the working class, and because the economy was booming. However, we recognise that White working class people were not the primary cause of racism and Apartheid. The main blame lies at the door of capitalism and the State. We also recognise that the high levels of racial privilege for White workers were made possible by the fact that they were a small minority of the working class who the bosses wanted to buy off.

After Apartheid

Now that legal Apartheid is gone, White workers must realise that no real benefits will be derived from racism (except in unusual circumstances). Racial privileges in the form of job reservation etc. have gone, and are being replaced by affirmative action, laws against discrimination etc. Therefore, to tie their future to a racist politics that will deliver nothing but isolation from the majority of the South African working class is a useless recipe for failure. On the contrary, they must stand alongside their Black class brothers and sisters if they want to survive the capitalists assault. With the fall of Apartheid, the rapid erosion of racist privileges opens up the possibility of sections of the White workers joining with Black in large numbers as reliable allies. This is not an abstract claim: we have already seen this when the mainly White 70,000 SASBO (SA Society of Bank Officials) union left FEDSAL (Federation of SA Labour) to join COSATU; and in the increased recruitment of White workers to NUMSA (National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa), CWU (Communication Workers union), and SAHRWU (Harbours and Railways). None of this is inevitable, and the continuing racism of large sections of the White working class may well mean that many will never see beyond their prejudices in favour of their true interests, or that progressive White workers will be under strong pressure to disaffiliate from the non-racial unions like COSATU and its affiliates. Unity will have to be fought for, but we stress that this can only come on an anti-racist platform and that activist positions in the unions should remain broadly representative of the composition of the rank and file.

We reject the economically determinist Black Consciousness argument that White people's racial privileges make them unable to consistently fight racism. Even at the very height of Apartheid, a small number of communists and democrats emerged from the White working class (e.g. Joe Slovo; Solly Sachs; Bill Andrews). However, we do recognise that the racial privilege made it almost certain that this group would be a minority among Whites.

We reject the argument that the small number of White leaders present in the African National Congress are responsible for the reformist and pro-capitalist policies of that organisation. The moderate policies of the ANC reflect the fact that it is a class alliance of Black people (and must thus pander to the Black middle class and business class), as well as the fact that the ANC accepts and operates within the limits set by capitalism and the State. As for COSATU's reformist

direction, this reflects the dominance of ANC ideology amongst the membership, as well as the interests of the union bureaucracy.

We also reject the Black Consciousness argument that all Black people have the same material interests and conditions. This is patently untrue. The interests of the Black middle class and business strata are to take down the barriers to their own pursuit of power and profit. Even under Apartheid, the Black middle class and business-people enjoyed a better standard of living than working class and poor people, and these class divisions have been rapidly widening since the 1980s.

Europe and the United States

In countries like Britain and Europe, where the white working class forms the majority of the population, the situation is more complex. However, **we argue that these workers do not benefit from racism in their own countries, or from imperialist exploitation in other countries**, contrary to petty bourgeois nationalists in both contexts.

While White workers in these countries may receive some benefits from racism, such as slightly lower rates of unemployment, these benefits are limited. At the same time, however, most White working class people in these countries also receive low wages, face unemployment, bad schools and so on. We should not make the mistake of assuming that they are as prosperous as White workers under Apartheid. Whites make up the majority of the poor and unemployed there.

These benefits are outweighed by the serious negative consequences of racism. Racism divides and weakens working class struggles. It thus worsens conditions for *all* workers. Racism is *not* therefore in the real interests of the White workers in these countries. It is no accident that the US working class, long divided and ruled by the bosses manipulation of "race", has the weakest traditions of worker solidarity and union organising, and the worst welfare system of any major western country.

We reject the argument that these White workers receive part of the surplus extracted by super-exploitation from Black minorities in these countries. This argument is absurd. Black people form a tiny minority in these countries and in addition, face high levels of unemployment, and thus do not generate enough surplus to "subsidise" the other 70% of the population (the White working class). We argue that whatever benefits White workers receive from racism is insignificant in comparison with the gains that can be achieved through united class struggle (e.g. unions, mass actions against welfare cuts, Anarchist revolution).

At the same time, workers unity is in the direct interest of the specially oppressed Black minorities in the West. As noted above, unity of all classes in "the Black community" is a recipe for futility in the fight against racism because of the compromises it requires. At the same time, these minorities are, at the end of the day, too isolated and small to beat capitalism and racism on their own. They need allies from people who do share their same basic interests, and who have an objective interest in genuinely opposing racism – the White working class.

Therefore, we fight for workers unity on an anti-racist basis as an **immediate** and necessary step towards the revolution in these countries. It is in the interests of all western workers – White and Black – that specially oppressed sections of the working class and poor are drawn into the unions and other working class bodies, and that the unions take up the fight against racism. *The fight against racism must be a class struggle; and the class struggle must be a fight against*

racism. It is essential that the support of the working class as a whole is won to anti-racism. White workers are not inherently racist, as is shown by large-scale participation in anti-racist riots such as Los Angeles (1992) and Brixton, London (1995), and in demonstrations against the oppression of immigrants (France 1996).

BLACK WORKING CLASS: THE AGENT OF REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Black working class and poor will make the South African revolution. The Black working class and poor forms by far the majority of the South African population. It also makes up the vast bulk of the country's working class. As the victim of the super-exploitation on which the South African ruling class built its wealth and power, the Black working class and poor harbour the deepest grievances against the bosses and rulers, as well as being strategically located at the heart of South African capitalism. Finally, it is evident that, particularly since the 1920s, the Black working class and poor have been the most militant, combative and well-organised section of the working class. It is quite obvious that there is no large White working class or left-wing movement that is capable of marginalising Black concerns and demands. Instead, although there are growing prospects for White-Black worker unity, it is almost certain that the activist layers and most militant workers and poor people will be drawn from the Black working class. While there have been a number of working class fighters from the White working class committed to an anti-racist, anti-capitalist struggle (e.g. Andrew Dunbar, the anarcho-syndicalist who helped form the first militant Black trade union in South Africa, the Industrial Workers of Africa in 1917; Joe Slovo and Ray Alexander of the Communist Party), we know that the White working class remains on the whole conservative.

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A ONE-STAGE REVOLUTION

We reject the argument that change in South Africa (and other quasi-colonial situations) must take place in two stages. This argument is made by the South African Communist Party (SACP) as well as other groups such as the Zimbabwean African National Union (ZANU – ruling party in Zimbabwe), and Sinn Fein/Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Ireland. According to this theory, there must first be a "national-democratic revolution" which will do away with racist/colonialist oppression and set up a parliamentary democracy; only when this stage is complete can there be a "pure" class struggle (uncomplicated by issues of fighting racism and colonialism) towards a "socialist revolution".

This argument assumes that capitalism and the State can be de-racialised in a meaningful way. This is patently false: capitalism and the State are inherently racist institutions and will always generate new forms of racism and the legacy of racism (in the South African case) cannot be addressed under capitalism, or through the State.

Secondly, precisely because it incorporates exploiting classes, a class alliance necessarily implies an acceptance of capitalism and the State in the medium and long-term. How else can Black

capitalists be kept in an alliance with Black workers other than to promise to preserve capitalism and the State? The price of an alliance is thus a renunciation of the principles of socialism; the small elites have an effective veto on the programme of the alliance despite their inability to provide much of value to the struggle. It is thus wrong to see a class alliance as the first step towards socialism – it is a step backwards. It is thus also incorrect to claim that the working class will "lead" the class alliance – the class allliance can only survive if workers real interests are sidelined.

Where movements making such arguments get into power (through a massive struggle, or even a compromise like in South Africa), there is a strong tendency for the beginning of the second stage to postponed forever. This is because the leadership of these movements get a vested interest in preserving the existing society, since, after all, it gives them high salaries and a lot of power. As a result excuses such as "the objective conditions are not right" are constantly found in order to say that socialism is not on the agenda.

We argue that your means and your ends must be consistent. You cannot get to socialism by means a long detour. We cannot build for a working class revolution against the State, capitalism and all forms of oppression to create a stateless socialist society by first teaching the people to unite with the "national" or "progressive" middle class and capitalists, and to support the State and to aim to "humanise" capitalism etc. We need to build tomorrow today, by spreading revolutionary ideas in the here and now, by calling for mass actions and by restructuring the union movement in a revolutionary direction. *Local elites are part of the problem, they are not part of the solution.*

ANARCHIST ACTIVITY AGAINST RACISM

General Perspectives

As Anarchists, we are avowed opponents of racism. This means a fight against racism in all forms: economic impoverishment, social disempowerment, racist myths (e.g. racist versions of history), and cultural suppression.

We believe that racism must be fought through mass action. We get involved in struggles against racism for their own aims, for the confidence that campaigning gives people, and because we stand in solidarity with our class. We recognise that it is in struggle that people are won to revolutionary ideas.

We always try to link daily struggles against racism to our vision of a free society, and we argue that only a working class revolution can finally uproot and defeat racism.

The struggle against racism must be linked to the struggle for a libertarian socialist revolution by the working class and working peasantry.

We are internationalists. We fight to unite all sections of the working class and working peasantry in the fight against racism.

Guidelines for day-to-day activities

Struggle for land redistribution. Argue against the notion that land should be redistributed through the market. Oppose compensation payments for land that was seized under colonialism

and Apartheid. Call for land to be redistributed to working class and poor people, as opposed to rich Black peasants, small commercial farmers, businessmen or chiefs. Argue for land to be self-managed by collectives of working class and poor people, including non-racist White workers.

Call for the upgrading of Black schools and an improved teacher/pupil ratio. Argue for democratic teaching methods and school administration. Oppose policies that exclude pupils who cannot pay from education or exams. Support the struggle to correct the historic racial imbalances that exist in tertiary education. Support equal access of all people to higher education. Call for dismissal of old "Apartheid" management boards of universities, but argue that we need to work out ways of genuinely empowering workers, faculty and students rather than just changing a few faces at the top. Argue for the use of intellectual resources of universities to aid the Black working class as opposed to training managers and technocrats.

Defend affirmative action. Recognise need to de-racialise the skilled trades and professions. Fight for end to wage disparities between White and Black workers in the same occupation. Oppose large wage gap between artisans and semi-skilled and unskilled workers. Equal wages for white-collar and blue-collar workers. Support skills upgrading of Black workers. However, oppose attempts to use affirmative action to build networks of political patronage or to break strikes or bash unions.

Call for a programme of township development. Argue that development can only proceed if undertaken in meaningful consultation with democratic community organisations. Argue for leading role of local communities in determining development priorities. Call for large-scale programme of house-building, electrification and road building. Link this to question of fighting unemployment. Call for upgrading of squatter camps.

While recognising the limits of the penal system, defend call for prosecution of Apartheid generals and politicians. Oppose amnesty schemes and "golden handshake" deals for these people. But also link issue of Apartheid and its crimes to capitalism and the bosses (rather than just political figures).

Oppose all attacks on immigrants and attempts to set up tensions between immigrant and South African people. Point out that it is the bosses and rulers who are responsible for unemployment, housing shortages and the crime rate. Oppose attempts to justify attacks on immigrants on the grounds that "their" governments supported Apartheid. Oppose deportations, detentions and police and vigilante attacks on immigrants. Call for full legal, civil, and union rights for immigrants. Call on unions to defend immigrant workers.

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