

David Kitson, Billy Nair, Curnick Ndlovu and many others were given long sentences of imprisonment on Robben Island.

The record of TUCSA collaboration with the employers and the white state is sordid indeed. So this pious declaration by TUCSA on the extension of trade union rights is an attempt to control the black workers and emasculate their militancy. TUCSA would like the black workers to come under its tutelage so as to misdirect their orientation in the struggle.

The strikes in South Africa must be seen in their proper perspective as part of the mass revolt against the regime of terror. This mass revolt is taking many forms and shapes. It embraces legal and illegal forms of struggle. It embraces distribution of clandestine material and the establishment of clandestine groups. The African National Congress and its allies are part of this mass revolt and represent its advanced and properly equipped detachment.

Foreign investment

In the present period, the investment issue has become one of the battle grounds of two distinct and opposed perspectives. These run to the heart of the problem of support of apartheid by the west or its undermining.

On the one hand there is the thesis, advocated with growing insistence by business lobbies facing criticism for their involvement in South Africa, that the presence of foreign investments can be used to mitigate the rigours of apartheid (i.e. to "civilize apartheid", and allegedly to move South African policy towards peaceful change"). Proponents of this approach argue that foreign investors should use the leverage of their presence in the country's economy to push African wages up and that a policy of disinvestment would mean the surrender of this leverage for reform. By this perspective, the widespread and very welcome exposure of starvation wages paid to black workers runs the danger of being used to legitimize both the investments and the status quo in South Africa. In fact this approach not only legitimizes existing investments but encourages even deeper involvement on the grounds that the greater the capital share, the greater the influence of external interests for enlightened policies.

The reform-through-investment argument is, however, blatantly contradicted by the stark realities of apartheid, notably the fact that the period of the most extensive foreign investments is precisely the period of the most intensive application of apartheid and its cheap and migrant labour policy, together with the every-widening disparity between black and white wages, the creation of a pool of unemployed, and the maintenance of an unorganized black work force, totally excluded from power. Such isolated attempts at reforms through business as have taken place, the Polaroid experiment for instance, have had the most marginal results and have not touched the rest of the problem. Given the control of labour in the overall context of the labour system of apartheid, piecemeal reforms could lead to a decrease of African employment in urban industry and the further acceleration of a capital-intensive strategy by industry.

and strikes illegal and denied black workers the right to form trade unions, more and more workers are taking matters into their own hands. The past three years, in particular, have witnessed several strikes in the major industrial areas of our country.

The strikes of black workers

Recently in the Durban industrial complex alone, 100,000 black workers participated in strike action. The strikes have been spreading to all the parts of South Africa. They are following an organized pattern and have demonstrated very high discipline and leadership. The black working class is challenging the system that denies them political and economic rights, a system that condemns them to squalor and poverty, that dumps them into resettlement areas and barren reserves, a system that afflicts them with lethal diseases like tuberculosis and causes numerous cases of maiming accidents.

The white State of the oppressor groups and the employers was thrown into a panic by the strike wave. The political and economic fabric of the apartheid system was shaken. The various sections of the white establishment reacted in different ways but their aims were the same - to crush the militant actions by force, victimization and "hypocritical concessions". The South African regime, in typical reaction, amassed a huge army (some airlifted from Pretoria) to protect the interests of the "South African way of life" (racism under the guise of the maintenance of law and order".) In some factories the army has been called upon to maintain production. Strikers have been tear-gassed, baton charged, arrested and persecuted. The employers are making gestures to meet the workers' demands by contemptuous token offers of wage increases.

The extent of their gestures is evidenced by the fact that after the increases, the wages are still very meagre and remain a pittance. What is more, despite the increases, the average wage is still below that paid to African workers in Zambia - a country that has been independent for less than ten years and does not have South Africa's vast natural resources. The mining industry, in a blaze of publicity, increased African wages in the mining sector to less than one-quarter of those paid in Zambia.

The attitude of the Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUSCA), which is mostly white in leadership and composition, was absolutely treacherous. Instead of organizing solidarity with the striking black workers, it mounted pious statements about the extension of trade union rights to the African workers. Its attitude on this matter is both hypocritical and farcical. TUSCA has consistently championed the interests of the white monopolists and the labour aristocracy by ignoring the interests of the black workers. It has supported the repressive measures of the regime of terror against the national liberation movement and the African trade unions. Not a whisper was heard from TUSCA when the terrorist dictatorship in our country executed the trade union leaders Mini, Mkhaba, Khayinga. TUSCA was very conspicuous by its silence when trade union leaders like Stephen Dlamini, Elias Motsoaledi,

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Strikes as Mass Revolt

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