

LENIN  
ON SOUTH AFRICA

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LENIN HELD THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO CORRECTLY UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEMS INHERENT TO SOUTH AFRICA AND THE STRUGGLE OF ITS PEOPLES FOR NATIONAL AND SOCIAL EMANCIPATION. HERE IS AN ARTICLE ON THIS SUBJECT.

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LENINISM AND AFRICAN REALITY

Some aspects of Lenin's general theoretical heritage have a direct bearing on the problems being tackled by South African revolutionaries. Particularly valuable is Lenin's analysis of the specific difficulties faced by the working class and all revolutionary forces in multinational and, much more so, in multiracial states. The phenomenon which Lenin defined as estrangement between the working classes of different nations in a great measure hampers consolidation of the South African working people in their struggle against the apartheid regime. Lenin ~~pointed out~~ that uniting the masses in a complicated situation needs painstaking and daily efforts on the part of revolutionaries. Lenin also studied the specific South African realities in all of its aspects, notably, the country's socio-economic structure, the social struggle and the national liberation movement. Investigations of Lenin's legacy provide fresh proof of thi.

AFRICA IN LENIN'S WORKS

Three years ago new materials were discovered confirming that Lenin had paid heed to the South African problems and studied and analysed them thoroughly. In November 1920 Lenin ordered from London Davidson Don Tengo Jabavu's book, "The Black Problem. Papers and Addresses on Various Native Problems" \* just published in South Africa. It was one of the first works to have been published by an African author in South Africa after World War I. That was why Lenin deemed it necessary to

obtain that book even though DDT Jabavu (1885-1959) propounded the views of only a certain part of the country's Black population.

Lenin's close attention to life in South Africa was a tradition going back to the founders of Marxism. Thus commending the victory scored by Zulus at Isandlwana during the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879, Frederick Engels wrote that they "did what no European army can do"

The last words of "Capital" (in the Supplement to Volume III written by Engels after Marx's death) were about South Africa and imperialism's actions in the south of the continent during the scramble for Africa. Incidentally Marx sent three of his articles to the Capetown newspaper, "Zuid Afrikaan". One of them was published in 1854, anonymously.\* \* \*

Lenin's attitude to South African problems can be gleaned from many of his works. Among those written before the October revolution of 1917 mention should be made of "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism", and notes and excerpts he made when working on it. Eventually they were included in his "Collected Works", under the title of "Notebooks on Imperialism". In them, one can find the most diverse information about South Africa - about the way the ruling circles of that country treated the problem of labour force, about inter-imperialist contradictions, colonial propaganda, statistical data on the population; agricultural production, foreign trade, "the gold boom", coal extraction, total length of railways, foreign investments.\* \* \*

In his notebooks Lenin also marked the books and articles on South Africa he wanted to read. Working over the "Essayed

Summary of World History Data after 1870", Lenin included there the major episodes of struggle of the South African peoples and the main actions of the imperialists and colonialists - the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879, the Anglo-Transvaal war of 1877-1881, the creation of the Afrikaner Bond Boer Party, the foundation of



the British South Africa Company by Cecil Rhodes in 1889, the Jameson attack intrusion of the company's troops into Rhodesia, the Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902, the uprising of the peoples of Southwest Africa (Namibia) in 1904-1907 \* \* \* \*  
In the "Table of Colonial Seizures and Wars" Lenin listed among other things, Britain's annexation of the Tswan country (Bechuanaland, now Botswana), the discovery of gold in the Transvaal and Britain's war against the Ndebele people.

South Africa features prominently in "Imperialism..." and the "Notebooks on Imperialism". However, the first mention of it was made not in these works written during World War I, but earlier - in the first issue of "Iskra" in December 1900 (two references). It was the South Africans of European origin that were taking part in the international socialist movement of that time. Lenin, for his part, was interested in the growth of the entire labour movement in South Africa. He pointed to the weak points of the "white" trade unionism in the country.

Lenin gave apt characterizations to the various forces oppressing South Africa - from the monopoly associations to the white rank and file settlers who practised racism in its "philistine" forms.

The extracts Lenin made show the great importance he attached to the position of the non-European population in South Africa and its struggle for its rights. For example, the uprising of the Hereros and the Hottentots.

#### "HUMAN AND NOT SLAVISH EXISTENCE"

In the post-revolutionary years, after the formation of the first communist party on the African continent and the wave of class battles of 1918-1922 that swept the industrial areas of the Transvaal and the Capetown Provinces, Lenin began to show more interest in South Africa. Speaking about the "acceleration" of the worldwide revolutionary process Lenin said in 1922: "Not to

\* K. Marx, F. Engels, Selected Works, Vol. 3, p. 226

\*\* The article is entitled The Declaration of War, on the History of the Eastern Question (See K. Marx, F. Engels, Collected Works, Vol. 13 p.p. 100-108.

\* \* \* See V.I. Lenin Collected Works Vol. 39  
\*\*\*\* Ibid, Vol. 39 p. 670

forget 'South Africa, which recently reminded the world of its claim to human and not slavish existence, and by methods which were not altogether 'parliamentary'. \*

Lenin's telephone message which he dictated on April 18, 1922 in connection with the armed uprising of the Transvaal workers speaks volumes, Lenin suggested the Comintern \*\* Executive Committee to send one or several special correspondents to South Africa to procure detailed information and a complete set of literature, both legal and illegal, referring to the suppressed uprising. \*\*\*

Naturally, books, newspapers and reports were not the only source of information for Lenin in studying the situation in South Africa. He had direct personal contacts with South African revolutionaries.

At the Third Congress of the Comintern (June-July 1921) during the preparations for the Fourth Congress and while taking part in the Comintern activities in 1921-1922 Lenin met and worked with David Ivon Jones, one of the founders of the Communist Party in South Africa.

On November 13, 1922, S.P. Bunting, leader of the Communist Party of South Africa, heard Lenin's report, "Five Years of the Russian Revolution and the Prospects of World Revolution" delivered at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern (November-December 1922) - his last report at the Comintern. Bunting was told that Lenin had read his article "Colonial Labour Front" written for the "Novy Vostok" (New East) magazine, and wanted to meet the author to discuss the article. The meeting did not take place because of Lenin's illness.

#### Africa

It is quite probable that Lenin met some other South African Socialists and Communists who came to Moscow in 1920-1921 -

\* Ibid, Vol 33, p 351

\*\* Comintern (Communist International) was an international association of the Communist parties of the world. Disbanded in 1943 - Ed.

\*\*\* V.I. Lenin Collected Works, vol. 45, p 531



M.Y. Volberg (de Velmont). S. Barlin, and Jacob den Bakker, an Afrikaner, who in 1921 visited Moscow and also Tashkent where he studied the Soviet government's work among the Eastern peoples.

#### AFRICAN REVOLUTIONARIES ON LENIN

The South African revolutionaries who had seen or heard Lenin wrote articles about him. After Lenin's death S.P. Bunting contributed to the Johannesburg communist paper "International" an article entitled "Lenin: Personal Impressions", the only reminiscences of Lenin written by an African.

D.I. Jones, who learnt Russian, also devoted many works to Lenin. His articles, "Lenin's First Book" (about "What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight Social-Democrats?") and "Lenin's First Newspaper" (about "Iskra") were published in four issues of the newspaper "International" and in three issues of the newspaper English "Communist Review" (respectively, in February-August and June-July 1924). Soon after Lenin's death, on March 14 and April 3, 1924, the "International" featured two large articles by Jones, "Lenin Immortal" and "Lenin's Death and After"

Unfortunately, Lenin had the opportunity to meet only white representatives of South Africa. The African T. Gumede, General President of the African National Congress, came to Moscow in 1927. Four years later Albert Nzula, a Zulu Communist, managed to visit Moscow

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