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# The undeclared and ongoing civil war in South Africa

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The undeclared civil war in South Africa, pitting unarmed African masses against the fully armed, hated, totalitarian apartheid regime, hasn't stopped all this year. By now, 1,000 Blacks lie dead and thousands more lie injured and arrested.

Nelson Mandela, who has been kept in prison for nearly a quarter of a century, remains the symbol of this continuous war, both for his undiminished bravery and his multitudinous thought ever since he organized Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), which expressed itself best in the latest demonstration when a leader said: "If the system does not free him, the people's revolution will."

This ongoing civil war is constantly revealing new forms of struggle, intensified since the 1976 uprising which gave birth to the Black Consciousness Movement. It did not stop with the savage murder of its leader, Steve Biko. That new form of struggle and thought created a two-way international movement—a revolutionary nationalism that was international, expressing its affinity with the American and Caribbean movements, and especially with Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, which had raised a banner for what he called "a new humanism."

Non-Africans, like us, have become "insiders" by actually, instead of just rhetorically, engaging in the South African freedom struggle. Such seemingly minor contributions directed against the corporations which have compelled some capitalists here to divest have become important because they have helped bring about what has always been the unmistakable manifestation of civil war—the breakup of the monolithic unity of the capitalist class. This was clearly seen in the fact that a few Afrikaner capitalists themselves travelled to Zambia to meet with leaders of the banned African National Congress (ANC), and were not deterred by Botha's calling it a traitorous act.

What the rulers have tried to play up as a total defeat—the called-for general strike of miners—was, in fact, a great deal more successful than the media made it appear. First, it was a fact that the monolithic unity of the mine owners was dented when three signed with the union. Second, as we

saw, they went to meet with the leaders of the ANC in their home-in-exile in Zambia. Third, the strike did occur and the mine owners had to use violence at the point of their guns to break it.

What is the most dramatic new event is precisely that, as against the 1976 uprising which was mainly initiated by students, this 1985 struggle shows a new power—the Black trade union movement.

Along with this new force is the intense activity of the Nobel Prize winner, Bishop Desmond Tutu, who expressed his hatred of apartheid to the point of supporting the idea of a one-day general strike of the masses as a whole. At the same time, he showed his courage and international influence by correctly identifying President Reagan, who has continuously whitewashed Botha as a "reformer," as a "racist."

Another new form of struggle this year is the Eastern Cape boycott of white stores, as well as the rage against Black informers, which has reached such a stage that the savage white rulers no longer have their Black shield. What is new, as well, is the appearance both of a substantial number of white youth, willing to defy the whips and batons of the savage regime and to march in support of the Black freedom struggles, and of the growth of a non-parliamentary opposition movement, the United Democratic Front.

There is no doubt that this is not yet full social revolution. There is no doubt that unarmed masses cannot win power against a fully-armed, savage, exploitative regime through these demon-

strations alone. But there is also no doubt that the so-called invincibility of white power has been seriously cracked at its foundations. That, "dear comrades" (the term that Azanian youth are now using openly), is one of the fundamental conditions for a successful revolution.

The theoretic preparation for that can, in this nuclear world, in no way be disregarded. Nor can the struggles be left for one country alone. American revolutionaries, especially, cannot separate their struggles against Reaganism from their support of the South African freedom fighters. That is why, in my 1985-86 Perspectives Report to this year's National Conference of News and Letters Committees, I put the ongoing events in South Africa in a world context, both historically and philosophically. What follows are brief excerpts from the three parts of that report: \*

## I. Hitler's Visage in Apartheid South Africa Shows the Future the Rulers Hold in Store for All of Us

It is not only the South African rulers, but our own as well, who are trying to foist their barbaric ideology on us. That ideology is not just rhetoric, but the depth of the barbarism that began with the rise of Hitler, and which was by no means destroyed by the Allies' victory in World War II. It was Hitler's defeat that scared the Afrikaners, whose dream today is still expressed by those bigoted, savage whites in these terms: "There should have been a Hitler in every country, but unfortunately this was no longer possible in a sophisticated world that has even abolished the cane in prison."<sup>1</sup> It was only in 1950—and not, as most people think, from the beginning of the cutting up of Africa—that apartheid first became law...

TODAY, THE UNDECLARED CIVIL WAR in South Africa is still thought of only as protest. This makes it easy to "sympathize" with the marchers who are unarmed, facing the barbaric might of the South African rulers—not only armed to the teeth, but not satisfied unless they also show their savagery with horse-whips and murder. Every revolt for the past 30 years in apartheid South Africa has faced genocide, and yet the revolts, far from stopping, are reborn in ever more intense forms. It was Soweto that finally made the world conscious not alone of revolt but of the philosophy of revolt.

The Idea—Black Consciousness—was born out of Pan-Africanism, whose ground had been laid by the new, independent countries of West, East, North and Central Africa, whose revolutions were reshaping the map of the whole world...

The new epoch of struggles that emerged in the 1960s when a new stage of production—Automation—was born and was met by the Miners' General Strike in this country, could be seen in East Germany in the 1953 Revolt for "Bread and Freedom," and was not limited to Europe and America. It emerged in South Africa. Listen to I. B. Tabata, one of the leaders and main theoreticians.

\* For copies of the full report, delivered Aug. 31, 1985, see ad on page 4.

See "The Fire This Time," by Neal Ascherson, a review of *Waiting for the Whites of South Africa*, by Vincent Carpanzano, *New York Review of Books*, July 17, 1985.

...ians of the Society of Young Africa, in his opening address to that Conference, on Dec. 21 1951: "The ideas are the weapons with which you cut your path in the barbaric jungle of South African society today...We go into the struggle not simply to save the youth, not only to save the non-Europeans. It is a question of the preservation of all society. Our struggle here in South Africa is part and parcel of the struggle of humanity as a whole."

**JUST AS THE STRUGGLES** in East Europe developed throughout the 1950s, so they did in South Africa, whether that was against the introduction of Bantu education in 1953, or the strikes in 1954 and 1955. They reached a climax especially in 1956, when 20,000 women converged on Pretoria. Aug. 9, 1956 has ever since been known in South Africa as "Women's Day." The two-way road between U.S. Black revolts and those in Africa reached a climax in 1957 when, inspired by the Montgomery Bus Boycott, walking 20 miles to work and trudging another 20 miles back to their townships for three solid months, they won their strike against the rise in bus fares.

But it took the bloody Sharpeville Massacre of 1960—when thousands of Africans shouted "Iwe Lethu" (Our Land), burned their passes and demanded to be arrested for having violated the apartheid laws—to make the world conscious of this ongoing struggle. That, too, didn't stop in the 1960s. Everyone knows Soweto, 1976, because it was this that was not just a stage of struggle but a quantum leap into revolutionary method and ideas that inspired a Soweto youth to proclaim: "Go and tell the world that the process of Black Liberation, which nobody can reverse, has begun in South Africa." It was the birth of the Black Consciousness Movement.

The struggle didn't end in the 1970s, either. What the 1970s were great in was the birth of a great new Black trade union movement, which has just threatened a general strike in gold, coal and diamond mines.

It is in this context that we need not only to look again at the barbarism and massacre that is being perpetrated by the apartheid rulers, but to face that this is the "new" stage of Hitlerian barbarism. Both-style, that will be our reality if we survive at all the nuclear war our rulers are fashioning for us. Theoretically as well as practically it is that which must fashion the framework for a second look at the global struggle, and only then plunge into our tasks, unseparated from those struggles.

## II. The Two Worlds in Each Country — West, East, South, North — vs. Ronald Reagan's Creation of Hunger and Star Wars

Ronald Reagan, in refusing to endorse the UN resolution on sanctions against South Africa, manifests the close affinity he has to that apartheid land, as he moves against the masses, be they in the U.S., in Nicaragua, or in South Africa. This does not mean that Russia is any

different. What we have established ever since World War II, when we analyzed Russian society as a state-capitalist society, was that state-capitalism was a world stage, the latest retrogressionism of capitalism itself...

1944 was the year when the Red Army stood outside the gates of Warsaw as Poland rose up against the Nazi invasion for the second time. The first was the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943. Because we were always watching and solidarizing with the second world in each country, we hailed those revolts and, at the same time, raised the slogan "All Roads Lead to Warsaw." This did

not in any way affect our opposition to the imperialist war, in which we opposed all rulers. Instead, we developed what was emerging from the revolutionary practice of the masses. Because that was and is our Marxist-Humanist ground, as American revolutionaries our immediate enemy is Reaganism — both in its imperialist tentacles abroad, and in retrogressionism at home...

**WHAT EVERY RULER**—especially U.S. imperialism with its tentacles in Latin America—refuses to face is the simple truth and plain fact that the counter-revolutionary outreach into foreign lands is precisely what produces revolutionaries. It is that struggle against imperialism that forges revolutionary leadership.

In the case of Nicaragua, the U.S. never stopped invading until the one the Nicaraguan masses have rightly called "the last Marine"—Somoza—succeeded in murdering the rebel leader, Sandino. Somoza was then the Commandant of the Guardia Nacional, the paramilitary police force which the U.S. Marines created to help murder Sandino, who had been fighting them for six long years. Sandino was at that point invited to an alleged "peace conference," which was actually the plot that trapped him. That year, 1933, was when U.S. imperialism finally felt confident that Somoza would take care of their interests. Somoza did precisely that as he built his murderous, exploitative, counter-revolutionary, corrupt, greedy Somoza dynasty. The U.S. continued its strong support for this dictatorship for 46 long years, until it was finally overthrown by the present-day Sandinistas in 1979.

The year 1985 will go down in history as the year of infamy. It is the year when Ronald Reagan succeeded in brainwashing Congress—which had the year before stopped funding the contras, who had openly declared they were out to overthrow the duly-elected Nicaraguan government—to OK \$27 million for so-called "humanitarian" aid...

That does not mean that there is nothing to criticize in the present-day Sandinistas, or that they are not forced by the imperialist policies of the U.S. to seek the

support of Russia or any other country that will help their struggle for independence. But the unvarnished fact is that there was an indigenous, genuine, revolutionary mass movement which succeeded in overthrowing the Somoza dictatorship, which has introduced the beginnings of truly independent life, in its land reform, in better conditions for the workers, and in its successful fight against illiteracy, and which is continuing the opposition to any U.S. domination over their land...

## III. Marxist-Humanist Tasks as We Keep an Eye on the World Objective Situation

...The preparation for our most important proposal this year—the transformation of *News & Letters* into a biweekly—is hard and demanding and so crucial that we need a whole year to prepare the ground for that decision at our next year's convention. We are asking for the establishment of a special fund for that. Here I wish: 1) to develop further the motivating principle which will help us become practicing dialecticians, both in theory and in practice, in the projection of Marxist-Humanism; and 2) to develop the expansion of our activity with others, both nationally and internationally...

The all-important first point, regarding our becoming practicing dialecticians, has to be related to the new kind of classes we are projecting as a combination of workshops and theory and for organizational growth. For these classes, there can be no separation between Marx's Marxism and Marxist-Humanism. The ground for that is deeper digging into the whole period since the Marx Centenary, focusing on this year, 1985-86.

**THE NEWNESS OF the classes as workshops** is not to merely imitate a N&L editing session, and yet both practically and theoretically, it has an affinity to that editing session in the sense that it must relate to a current event, preferably one that happened that very week and yet, at the same time, also be steeped in history and philosophy...

The missing link of philosophy has plagued post-Marx Marxism ever since the death of Marx in 1883 until Lenin's rediscovery, at the outbreak of World War I, of Marx's roots in the Hegelian dialectic, which produced the Great Divide in post-Marx Marxism. Lenin, however, did not show the process of arriving at those great revolutionary conclusions, did not make public his *Philosophic Notebooks*. After Marxism and Freedom, which first disclosed the Great Divide, and after *Philosophy and Revolution*, which spelled out Absolute Idea as New Beginning, came the latest grappling with the dialectic in Chapter 11 of Rosa Luxemburg, *Women's Liberation*, and Marx's *Philosophy of Revolution*, "The Philosopher of Permanent Revolution Creates New Ground for Organization," which end-

\*\*\* This "Opening Address" by Tabata is printed in Vol. II of *From Protest to Challenge* (Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, Cal. 1972). It is included in our pamphlet *Frantz Fanon, Soweto, and American Black Thought*, p. 16.

It is this which determined the presentation of our Archives as the Marxist-Humanist body of ideas at the March 21 meeting organized by the Archives Library at Wayne State University, as well as the actions that we then continued until the present Perspectives which found their concrete highpoint in the proposal for the transformation of News & Letters into a bi-weekly to be decided upon at the next Convention, and our proposal today the ground for extending Black relations with a new edition of Frantz Fanon, Soweto and American Black Thought with a new Introduction by January first.

Thus we express the urgent need to uproot the counter-revolution, whether in the form of Botha or Reagan, so thoroughly, theoretically and practically, that it will create the basis for actual revolution, toward which the American Revolution is most crucial.