



Namibian women

South Africa and Africa

The current crisis in South Africa is partly generated by successes for national liberation elsewhere in Africa.

But the South African state acts upon the fringes of Africa as well as being acted upon by it. Through armed force, through diplomacy, and through economic links it has tried to establish itself as a 'sub-imperial' power.

Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland, desperately poor states on the fringes of South Africa (or in the case of Lesotho surrounded by it), are higher-grade bantustans, dependent on their citizens travelling to work in South Africa.

Malawi under Hastings Banda is scarcely better off.

Mozambique and Angola have been

directly invaded by South Africa since independence, as well as having right-wing guerilla movements funded by the white-supremacist state. In March 1984 Mozambique conceded to this pressure and signed an agreement with South Africa to exclude ANC guerillas from Mozambique. South Africa has also undertaken the management of Maputo harbour, and is repairing power pylons to the Cabora Bassa dam. The right wing guerillas continue their sabotage, with South Africa now disclaiming all responsibility; in many areas of Mozambique there is mass starvation.

In Angola South Africa's immediate military objective is to cut off bases for SWAPO.

Further afield, South Africa's giant Anglo American corporation does business in many black African countries.

The South African black working class could also have a deep effect on the rest of Africa, for the good. The failures of middle class nationalist governments are increasingly clear. In Tanzania Julius Nyerere has admitted the collapse of his 'African-socialist' experiment. In Zimbabwe Mugabe has used laws inherited from British colonialism against the workers, and is planning a one-party state. In much of Africa millions are starving.

The South African working class is by far the most powerful working class in Africa. It has the power, the skills, and (if it can seize it from the hands of the white profiteers) the wealth to tackle many of Africa's problems. It could lead a revolution which would make the old ideal of uniting Africa in a single federation a reality.

A socialist revolution led by the South African black workers can thus unite and merge with several other revolutions: a democratic revolution against apartheid; an agrarian revolution by the landless peasants in the bantustans; a national revolution in Namibia; a workers' revolution spreading through Africa against the present middle-class regimes; and an international democratic revolution, breaking the irrational borders imposed on Africa by colonialism and uniting the continent in a free federation.

This combination is not guaranteed, and none of the other struggles should wait for the socialist revolution. But for certain the revolution in South Africa will be more than just South African.

Namibia

South African capital, and multinational capital allied with the South African state, exploit blacks in Namibia even more than blacks in South Africa.

Namibia (South West Africa) was annexed by Germany in 1884, and subdued in a bloody colonial war in 1904-6. During the First World War South Africa seized it from Germany.

In 1966 the United Nations called on South Africa to withdraw, but despite much diplomacy South African troops remain there.

Namibia is a sparsely populated country of great mineral wealth. It has the world's biggest uranium mine at Rossing, rich diamond mines, and some big white-

owned ranches.

90% of what it produces is exported, and in an average year over half the national income goes to profits and taxes. The 1.2 million blacks have an average income no higher than in Tanzania. (Namibia also has about 150,000 Coloureds and maybe 50,000 whites).

45% of the labour force are migrant contract workers in the mines or ranches.

The diamond mines are owned by De Beers, and Rossing is 46.5% owned by the British-based company Rio Tinto Zinc.

Even the South African government concedes that the liberation movement SWAPO would win a majority in a free election.