

## I.- BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SOUTH AFRICA

(Devine)

A few important facts: SA is industrial, modern, wealthy,  
mineral-rich, beautiful, trying to be self-sufficient

Apartheid control: how does it keep 85% of population down?

Through the point of a gun, segregation of everything is enforced.

Movement of people greatly restricted.

Reign of terror (bannings, detentions, political trials, etc.).

State control of schools, housing, health, economy.

Homelands /bantustans (like reservations).

Majority has no political rights.

4-year State of Emergency: suspends all normal legal  
procedures; security forces occupy black townships.

Apartheid's effect on the region: millions have died; Namibia  
illegally occupied by SA; its independence next month is  
critical to freedom fight in SA.

Economic & political ties to USA: military; computers/technology;  
investments; bank loans; petroleum & chemicals; international  
corporations & trade; diplomatic relations; United Nations;  
U.S. allies; cultural ties of whites.

Today in South Africa: Mass Democratic Movement (new name  
for the resistance); Defiance Campaign (new tactics);  
forcing President DeKlerk's hand.

II. SOUTH AFRICAN UNION MOVEMENT

(Daylie)

A. "CHANGING THIS COUNTRY" - 45 minute video

B. LABOR'S GROWING ROLE IN SA

Unions are a major force in the struggle to overthrow apartheid and have organized resistance to apartheid on a massive scale.

Unions have built highly disciplined alliances with progressive political, religious and student organizations. They are deeply involved in the black townships, in school and rent boycotts, etc.

Led by the mine, metal and clothing workers unions, the labor movement is fighting for labor and political rights at the same time. Through strikes and other actions, they have sought and won significant wage increases and other concessions in recent years.

And, because of international labor solidarity, unions have been able to communicate what is going on inside SA throughout the world and get action, such as during the Mayekiso trial.

To understand labor's growing role in SA, a few comments about SA's labor federations need to be said.

C. SOUTH AFRICA'S LABOR FEDERATIONS

There are 2 labor federations in SA today: COSATU & NACTU. They represent different political views within the black majority, but stand united against apartheid.

COSATU (the Congress of South African Trade Unions) is the largest and most militant. With 1.1 million members in KEY industries, COSATU is the dominant federation and growing fast.

Begun only 4 years ago, it has solidified its base in the 14 major industries in SA and built 14 industry-wide unions through organizing and mergers of previous smaller unions.

Its dominance on the political scene has come in part as a result of calling the massive stayaways - up to several million people at a time - to protest apartheid crackdowns.

COSATU is as militant about labor rights as political rights. It has staged massive actions against labor law restrictions. It believes that to let the government take away its rights to organize would be in the end its death.

COSATU's Living Wage Campaign has sought to win jobs for all at a living wage. Through this campaign, including many strikes, it has won significant, sometimes huge, wage increases.

COSATU and its closest ally, the United Democratic Front, are the driving force behind the Mass Democratic Movement and the current Defiance Campaign.

COSATU is based upon 3 principles: worker control, non-racialism and one industry/one union (now expanded to one industry/one union - one country/one federation).

The second labor federation is NACTU (the National Council of Trade Unions). It has several hundred thousand members in 28 unions and is an outgrowth of the black consciousness movement in SA.

NACTU has joined with COSATU in many political actions since it was founded only 2 years ago. But it is not as much the instigator of such actions as is COSATU.

Both federations support withdrawal of international corporations from SA and sanctions.

There are signs that the two federations may merge eventually, and some limited talks have been held. There are several distinct differences between them.

COSATU adopted the Freedom Charter as the guiding document for building a democratic society in SA. NACTU has not.

NACTU rejects the principle of non-racialism, a principle first inspired by the African National Congress, included in the Freedom Charter, and adopted by COSATU.

NACTU is an outgrowth of the black consciousness movement, whose most prominent leader Steven Biko died in 1977 in the hands of the security forces. <sup>The</sup> Black consciousness movement is based on the premise that blacks need to develop their own perspective, their own organizations and their own opposition. Although NACTU is not exclusively black, only blacks can hold office.

COSATU, on the other hand, is based on working class solidarity; that is the unity of all workers regardless of race against the government and the bosses. COSATU is overwhelmingly black, but non-racial in principle and organizing tactics.

The drive for "one country/one federation" is growing, but if COSATU and NACTU are to merge into one federation, they must come to terms with the issue of non-racialism.

D. SIMILARITIES & DIFFERENCES BETWEEN UNIONS HERE & THERE

Public employees face privatization in both countries; some U.S.

public employees have won the right to strike; in SA they have no right to strike in the public sector.

Domestics and farmworkers are the most oppressed in both countries.

In SA workers face the additional problems connected to apartheid :  
male-only hostels, bantustans, occupation of townships, etc.

In SA there are drives to organize the unemployed, much like the  
CIO did in the U.S. during the 1930s and 40s.

In SA the unions are dominated by the shop floor; all stewards  
must work in the plant; i.e., there are no paid business  
agents. In SA the staff is at times not allowed to speak or  
even to attend meetings.

Culturally, SA unions make greater use of song, drama and art.

Unions in the U.S. grew up under a democratic form of government,  
but flourished especially during the Great Depression. In  
SA unions ironically have flourished under apartheid and  
will help to create a democratic system in SA.

U.S. unions are primarily in the mainstream which they helped  
to create; they do not face an economic or political revolution.  
In SA unions are trying to totally overthrow both the political  
and economic system of apartheid.

Unions in the U.S. and SA are basically in different stages of  
development because their countries are in totally different  
political systems. But in both countries, the international  
corporations, their governmental allies and capitalism are  
the dominant feature affecting workers lives.

In SA, the unions have the benefit of hindsight; they can see  
what we have done, good and bad; and they have benefitted  
greatly from their historical perspective of unions in the  
world.

III. DISCUSSION POINTS

- (1) Is the fight for freedom in SA the same as in Poland?
- (2) Does it make any difference what we do?
- (3) What will it take to make apartheid fall?
- (4) What does labor solidarity mean for unions here and there?