

WORKERS OF THE WORLD



British NUM celebrates 100 years

BRITAIN: - The British NUM celebrated its centenary from 16 - 18 June.

ITALY: - Over 14 million Italian workers took part in a four hour general strike in May in a protest against a government decision to charge for hospitals and medical prescriptions.

Unions saw the new charges as an attack on the "right to health". Signatures are also being collected across Italy in support of a bill which will make mandatory sanctions against South Africa law in Italy.

HOLLAND: - The largest transport union in the country is to call for a wild-cat strike to boycott all South African coal.

The Dutch unionists want their sister unions in Belgium, West Germany, Great Britain, Ireland and France to put pressure on their own harbour authorities for such an immediate boycott.

MOROCCO: - Coal miners in Jerada, Morocco, recently won an eight week strike for a 20 percent wage increase, minimum wage, and general improvements.

The Democratic Worker's Federation (CDT) says that, despite the victory, conditions on the government owned mine are a violation of trade union and human rights, as well as extremely dangerous.

Belgian miners battle police

TWO thousand miners are fiercely resisting the closing down of Belgium's last two remaining coal mines at Beringer and Zolder in Limburg.

Dozens of miners have been injured in several pitched battles with police who use teargas, batons and have fired warning shots. Belgian miners have been armed with iron bars, stones and chains.

Earlier government plans had said coal production would cease in 1996. However, it was then announced the mines would close in to 1992 - four years early.

The mineworkers are angry because no consultation took place over the decision to close. The early closure date will mean many miners will lose part of their pen-

sions.

Mineworkers are demanding that their pensions be paid in 1992 as if they had worked until 1996 - a demand refused by the mineowners.

The Miners International Federation (MIF) said miners worldwide supported the Belgian mineworker comrades in "their struggles for their legitimate right to a decent standard of living for themselves and their families, by obtaining a guarantee of adequate and stable economic resources, which they deserve a thousand times over, considering their difficult working conditions and the wealth they have contributed to their country, ensuring its development and independence".



A policeman falls to the ground while trying to escape stick-wielding miners from Belgium. The miners want to keep Belgium's last two coal mines open while management and the government are pushing to close them down early.



Victory waves from SWAPO fighters as Namibia moves to independence

Free to vote for SWAPO

ON November 1, all Namibian people will for the first time be able to vote in a general election for their organisation - the South West People's Organisation (SWAPO).

Namibians will be voting for delegates to the Constituent Assembly, which will be drawing up the constitution which will make laws for the governing of the country.

And if SWAPO wins a two thirds majority in the election, it will be able to draft the constitution itself.

But if it wins less than two thirds, it will be forced to draft the constitution with other parties.

Unlike in South Africa where the African National Congress (ANC) is totally banned, SWAPO's internal non-violent wing has been able to operate above the ground in Namibia.

Mass struggles

It has been at the forefront of the mass struggles in the country for many years and most of the country's progressive organisations are either SWAPO affiliates, like the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW) or work very closely with SWAPO like the Namibian National Students Organisation (NANSO).

SWAPO's military wing, the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), has been banned for 23 years since its guerrillas took up arms against the South African occupation of their country in 1966.

The PLAN guerrillas will also be returning to their country to help build a future without the SADF.

SWAPO is deeply suspicious of

Namibians look forward to independence but the shadow of the South African army has not been banished yet. Here in South Africa COSATU has decided to send volunteers to aid the Namibian struggle.

the role that it expects South Africa to play in the election process.

As SWAPO information officer Peter Manning said: "The (South African government) was forced to implement Resolution 435 but it does not enter the process with any regard for the concept of fairness in the election, nor it being a vehicle for Namibia to gain genuine independence."

South Africa is keeping the entire 30 000 SWATF force on full pay during the implementation of 435.

And SWAPO says that while Pretoria claims that the notorious Koevoet has been demobilised, in actual fact members have been incorporated into the existing police force.

At the moment, Namibia is very like South Africa, with white Namibians earning 25 times more than poverty-stricken black Namibians.

Mixed economy

SWAPO has dedicated itself to destroying this inequality. If it comes to power, SWAPO has promised to introduce a mixed economy.

At present, SWAPO does not plan to nationalise the mines. But according to the SWAPO leadership, taxes will be introduced to ensure that the country

as a whole benefits from the profits made from the country's minerals.

Much of the money from these taxes will be channelled into other sectors of the economy to make sure that they also grow.

Watch on companies

Foreign companies will also be regulated to make sure that they do not take all of the profits out of the country. At the moment, over 35% of the wealth produced in Namibia ends up overseas.

SWAPO also says foreign investor's labour policies will be watched carefully to make sure that they do not exploit their workers.

Land shared

SWAPO will also see to it that there is a fairer distribution of land among the country's people. At present, wealthy white farmers and privately owned small holdings will be allowed though, says SWAPO.

But it also plans to introduce co-operative farms, run by the people with the help of the state, and state farms.

People living in the more rural part of Namibia near Angola, suffered most in the war against the SADF, and redeveloping this war-torn area will be a priority for SWAPO.