

U.N. and the South African struggle

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a post-Brasilia assessment
of the relevance of the
world body to a revolution
that must be made by the
people themselves

THE NATURE OF OPPRESSIVE REGIMES is such that as they grow more and more oppressive they employ wide censorship on news and information reaching the country they control. Since the advent of the Afrikaner Nationalist party to power, more and more laws have been passed to restrict publications. One reason for this is the belief that oppressed people will revolt not only because of the harshness of the laws but also because there is a collective sense inspiring such revolt. In a way this assessment is correct. All revolutions must by their very nature be a collective rejection of the oppressive regime. This sense of collectivity is achieved not only through a sophisticated underground communication system, but also through a sense of solidarity expressed by the outside world.

For South Africa, this sense of solidarity has assumed an even greater importance since the emergence of Africa as a force in international affairs. This is one of the reasons for the militancy of the resolutions on colonial affairs passed by international bodies. The creation of Decolonisation Committees, Trusteeship committees and others, is a direct result of Africa's participation in UN affairs. Yet throughout the history of the UN, it is the big powers that have played the decisive role. Indeed the very conception of UNO was, as it were, an attempt at finding a formula by which big powers should avoid having to make war in their marauding through the world. Of course this was dressed up in sweet language as representing the high ideals of a united world. That the world and unity meant the world of big powers is clearly illustrated by the initial participation of such countries as South Africa. These countries, whilst paying lipservice to the ideals of humanity, were in their own countries maintaining vicious and barbaric systems. A formula was found to reconcile these contradictions.

Article 2 Section 7 of the UN Charter states that there shall be no interference in internal affairs. At the same time a provision was made in Article 39 of the UN Charter that if any situation threatens world peace the UN is entitled to intervene. Of course the definition of a threat to peace was left to the Security Council, which was and is still controlled by big powers.

IN RECENT YEARS THE BIG POWERS have had to evolve new devices to meet the increasing pressure from the Afro-Asian bloc. Thus the volume of words condemning apartheid has increased by leaps and bounds, sometimes reaching such virulent proportions that one would assume a threat to peace was finally defined by the very intensity of the condemnation. But alas, the hypocrisy of nations knows no bounds. The very countries that viciously condemn South Africa continue supporting her with economic, military, and diplomatic support. In fact there is evidence that some of these speeches of condemnation are discussed with South Africa before hand. Small wonder then that she does not take them seriously.

A large number of resolutions have been passed against South Africa's apartheid and against her colonisation of South West Africa. Only a few however have been half-heartedly implemented.

Of these the most relevant is the resolution against the supply of arms to South Africa. Britain, whilst giving the impression that she is implementing the resolution, continues in fact to provide military cover to South Africa, and to supply spare parts. The resolution itself has lost its meaning since South Africa has, with the help of big powers, built her own industries for military equipment. This is often achieved through the granting of a licence or with the co-operation of a third country which is not implementing the resolution. The building of the engines for the Macchi 11 in Italy by a joint Anglo-Italian firm is a case in point. France, Germany and Italy continue their military dealings with South Africa uncensored by the very UN that pressed the resolution.

There are other resolutions, of course, which have been carried out, but on the whole they are of an innocuous character. The UN assembly resolutions present no serious threat to the powers violating UN rules so long as those powers have the support of the big powers. This has been very clearly demonstrated in the resolutions concerning South Africa's violations. How can a small state of this size defy the UN without the support of those powers with a stake in the maintenance of the status quo? Britain, France and the USA are the most violent opponents of sanctions and yet they never cease to condemn apartheid. We can reach only one conclusion, that no UN action is possible with a charter open to so many interpretations and a structure so heavily loaded in favour of big powers.

SMALL WONDER THAT OTHER NATIONS find their roles are no more than the exerting of pressure. The effectiveness of this pressure depends entirely on whether the big powers can afford to shift their position or whether the shifting of position is politically beneficial to their international position. Furthermore in times of great crisis true alignments emerge *outside* the UN. The Congo UN operation was bungled by big powers: not only did they carry on round-table conferences outside the UN but also used the UN force as an instrument of their own policies.

It is clear also that the South African government is no exception in the operations of these manoeuvres. It may well be asked, therefore, whether the South African liberation movement, which by its very nature is acting contrary to the interests of the big powers, can possibly expect to appeal to the UN?

To answer this question one must look carefully at the meaning of revolutionary action. It can only be so called if it takes into consideration *all* factors favourable to its goals. The present-day political alignments are such that no serious revolutionary organisation can ignore their relationship to the purpose of its operations.

SINCE THE UN IS THE GREATEST single assemblage of nations, it is urgent and necessary for a revolutionary movement to make its demands within the available facilities of this body. But it errs if it puts all its hopes on such intervention. In fact it is doubtful if UN intervention can ever be the solution of the problems besetting the oppressed. In some cases UN intervention has deprived the oppressed of their victory, as in the Congo. At the same time,

to ignore this assemblage would be utter folly. The UN in taking up issues presented by the liberation movement crystallises the alignments and isolates those powers whose intentions are sinister. This is exactly what has happened in the debates about sanctions against southern Africa, be they military or economic.

It is also within the UN that sympathetic countries get their briefing about the dimensions of the problem. It is clear that nations act only when they are confronted with the full reality of the problem facing other countries. Yet it is wrong for any liberation movement to put all its trust in an amorphous body such as the UN. Its importance is only in so far as it is part of a whole series of international drives to swing world opinion to its side. For world opinion has two most important effects on the liberatory forces. First it isolates the enemy politically and puts supporting powers in an identical position with the policies and practices of the enemy country. Secondly its effect is to boost the morale of those seriously fighting the enemy, thus creating for the liberation forces a worldwide context for their actions.

Many a revolution has slowed up almost to a halt by its isolation. If a revolution is in essence an action carried out by a whole people, it is necessary to recognise that the dictates of

revolutionary organisation involve revolutionary zeal, realities of disillusionment, realities of mental isolation, etc. For these reasons also, the UN, in spite of its feeble position, can be used to benefit the South African revolutionary effort. This does not mean that the country must be sold to the UN or to South African liberals, who will be only too happy to see a partial victory.

The battlefield for the South African revolution is neither in Britain, France nor the UN, but in South Africa itself. The fact that the UN has failed to carry out the terms of its resolution on South Africa constitutes no great catastrophe. The only catastrophe will be the failure of our revolution in South Africa and it can never fail if we ourselves resolutely take up arms to effect our own victory.

Needless to say, no revolution is true revolution that depends for its success on intervention from outside. Ideologically and otherwise it must reflect the history of the South African struggle. Nor can non-violence, an ideology of the weak, and strongly favoured by those with a stake in the country, be the answer. In this sense then, UN is irrelevant to our struggle for it can neither provide arms with which we must fight nor can it truly reflect our ultimate goal. ●



loyalty to principles is touching. But, one might ask, is not the more balanced part of the PAC programme taken (with precious little thanks) from the earlier programmes of the ANC, from which the PAC hastily, petulantly and impatiently broke away?

I am glad, sir, that I didn't meet Nkoana by chance, for perhaps if I had he might have accused me of writing the articles that Nkoana thinks are so wicked. Why should Michael Harmel — or anyone else — have to account to Nkoana? Why should Nkoana think it so sinister that Michael Harmel meets the attacks with a silence that many of us would call restrained and dignified?

South Africa does tend to encourage paranoia. Exile also encourages it. I wish that *The New African* would do something to discourage it by giving the noisy Nkoana a rest. — L. BLOOM
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Under slavery

SIR,—I would like to thank you and your company for mailing *Frontier* to me. I am very grateful because *Frontier* gives me more knowledge about the development of other countries, and very glad of your support in our great struggle for the liberation of African people who are under slavery. Hoping for your support until we achieve freedom. (Name and address withheld)
Johannesburg

SIR,—I most sincerely thank you and your organisation for your kindness. I hope you will convey my thanks to the well-wisher who so kindly came to my aid. Since I was banned I have had no other book or letter sent to me. I will be only too happy to know who the well-wisher is but please do not force the issue if it has to be that way. I now need the previous issues of *Frontier* and if possible a sample issue of *The New African*. Is it possible to obtain them through you? Wishing you and your organisation a bright future for the work you are doing. (Name and address withheld)
Durban North

[The well-wisher's name has been sent, with his permission. *The New African* is banned in South Africa so will not be sent. — EDITOR]

SIR,—While we appreciate the kindness of the unknown well-wisher who has been sending us the magazine *Frontier*, and find some of the articles very interesting, there are others which seem likely to attract the unfavourable attention of the South African authorities; and having already had to face one charge of being in illegal possession of a banned book, I do not wish to run any further risks in this direction and should therefore prefer not to receive this magazine. (Name and address withheld)
Port Elizabeth

[Possession of *Frontier* does not constitute an offence though for the recipient to distribute it might do so if the particular issue contained articles by banned persons. — EDITOR]

Future of KPU

SIR,—While agreeing with M. D. Odinga's democratic sentiments, I must protest at his unwarranted assertion that "his present policies could safely carry Jaramogi Oginga Odinga into State House". Throughout the "little general election", KANU had easy or resounding victories on a provincial basis except in Central Nyanza and Machakos districts. Yet even in KPU's Central Nyanza stronghold, out of 244,027 registered voters only 55,014 supported KPU — and all this at a time when KPU was a "nine-days' wonder". It is now a spent force, whose offer of "free things" to the people of Kenya has been dismissed by them. — P.O. Kisumu L. MATHENGE

[Mr. Nkoana writes: "The so-called South African 'left' ought to be quite pleased with me for exploding the myth of a 'left' in White South Africa, a myth which has been assiduously built up by Vorster. Will Mr. Bloom perhaps care to explain why anyone who writes such 'sensible and accurate' articles should so obviously lack the courage of his convictions, and write under a pseudonym? Mr Bloom's ignorance about political trends in South Africa is pathetic. His allegation that the PAC lifted ANC policies is without foundation. But let an entry in Mandella's diary written during the last stages of his visit abroad, shortly before he was betrayed and arrested, give the lie to Mr Bloom's claims and also substantiate the main basis of my argument in the article in question: 'The PAC has started off with tremendous advantages ideologically, and has skilfully exploited opposition to Whites and partnership. Sharpeville boosted them up and nthen stand of their leaders, imprisonment of Sobukwe, fostered the belief that they were more militant than the ANC. In the PAFMECSA area the Nobel Peace Award to Chief Luthuli has created the impression that Luthuli has been bought by the West. . . . Luthuli's book and some of his statements have created an impression of a man who is a stooge of the Whites.'" — EDITOR]

The African Communist

SIR,—Really one wonders where one is. Vorster and Nkoana both industriously ferreting out the Reds from beneath the Beds. And *The New African* again embarking on its highly-equivocal anti-left line.

Unlike Nkoana I found the articles in *The African Communist* about the origins and policies of PAC sober, remarkably balanced (considering the intemperate attacks by PAC upon practically everyone), sensible and accurate. Nkoana's concern about Nelson Mandela's