

In Defense of Marxism

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Africa: the Suffering Continues

A child collapses along the trail to a feeding center in southern Sudan, as a vulture waits nearby.

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The Manifesto of the Fourth International

Socialism or Barbarism on the Eve of the Twenty-First Century

This document was adopted by a meeting of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (FI) in 1992. It is the product of months of discussion within that world organization and an extensive process of rewriting and revision from an original draft proposed before the FI's World Congress in 1991.

The FI is an international organization of revolutionary Marxist parties and groups from dozens of countries throughout the world. It was founded in 1938 under the leadership of Leon Trotsky, dedicated to a consistent and forthright struggle for the common interests of working people and the oppressed in all nations — to their mobilization in struggle against capitalist exploitation, colonialism, and bureaucratic dictatorship, and against all forms of racial and sexual discrimination.

It should be clear, from the perspectives presented here, that the FI remains true to that purpose today. This, in itself, stands as a major accomplishment in a world where many former leftists and radical activists are rushing to embrace the "new realism" of a capitalism that has supposedly "triumphed over socialism" during the cold war.

But reality is a far cry from the "new world order" proclaimed by U.S. President George Bush after his victory against Iraq in 1991. It is, as the Manifesto points out, a world of increasing disorder — of insecurity, crisis, preventable hunger, poverty, and disease. These things are more the rule than the exception for most of the billions of people on this planet.

In short, we are living in a world that cries out for a renewed commitment to the fight for social change, for a more just and humane political and economic system. Just such a commitment, and a perspective on how those needed changes can be brought about, will be found in the pages of this pamphlet.

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In Defense of American Trotskyism

Volume One:

The Struggle Inside the Socialist Workers Party 1979-1983

edited by Sarah Lovell, 328 pages (1992) — \$10.00

This book consists of selected documents mostly produced by a political tendency that was organized in the Socialist Workers Party to defend and advance the revolutionary perspectives of Trotskyism. This tendency, which began to develop in the party in 1979, waged a struggle inside the Socialist Workers Party until the expulsion of its adherents in 1984, when they established a new group called the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. Also represented here are oppositionists who became prominent in other groups — Socialist Action and the Fourth International Caucus of Solidarity. Included are materials produced by two of the oldest and most prestigious veterans in the SWP, Tom Kerry and George Breitman. A substantial introductory essay by Frank Lovell, "The Meaning of the Struggle Inside the Socialist Workers Party," provides valuable back-

ground information and places the volume in a larger historical perspective.

Volume Two:

Revolutionary Principles and Working-Class Democracy

edited by Paul Le Blanc, 412 pages (1992) — \$12.00

This book focuses on the waves of expulsions which hit the Socialist Workers Party from 1981 through 1984. It provides an inspiring record — and reaffirmation — of the revolutionary ideas and commitments of those who were being forced out of the organization to which many had given "the whole of their lives." also included are: substantial pieces by SWP leaders Jack Barnes and Larry Seigle defending the expulsions; a critique by representatives of the Fourth International; letters and a talk by pioneer Trotskyist James P. Cannon, originally published under the title *Don't Strangle the Party*. A substantial introductory essay by Paul Le Blanc, "Leninism in the United States and the Decline of the Socialist Workers Party," relates the 1981-84 experience to

broader questions of "the vanguard party" and Leninism, the history and character of American Trotskyism, the development of the U.S. working class, and the realities of world politics in the 20th century.

Volume Three:

Rebuilding the Revolutionary Party

edited by Paul Le Blanc, 148 pages (1990) — \$9.00

This book consists of eight documents. The longest, written in 1983 by Paul Le Blanc and Dianne Feeley, is entitled "In Defense of Revolutionary Continuity" — a response to SWP leader Jack Barnes's attack on Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. Also included is the founding platform of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, a lengthy 1988 analysis of the SWP by Frank Lovell and Paul Le Blanc, and two major documents produced by the FIT when the Socialist Workers Party formally broke from the Fourth International in 1990. The volume concludes with three documents dealing with the need for unity among revolutionary socialists in the United States.

Taiwanese Opposition Party Delegation Visits South Africa

by Linda Gail Arrigo

Linda Gail Arrigo is the American-born wife of Shih Ming-teh, who served 25 years in prison for his work for Taiwanese independence; he is currently the chairman of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), the opposition party to the ruling Guomindang. Arrigo, who has been working for human rights and economic justice in Taiwan since the late 1970s, currently works with the DPP's department of foreign affairs.

The May 1994 formation of a new interim government in the Republic of South Africa (RSA), with former political prisoner Nelson Mandela as president, followed on elections in which the African National Congress (ANC) and its allies, the South Africa Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), took 63 percent of the national popular vote. This sea change also promises massive changes in the foreign relations of the RSA, previously ostracized by world opinion due to the apartheid policies of its white minority regime, and thus one of the "pariah" states that have long stood together in mutual consolation and military assistance — South Africa, Israel, South Korea, and the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan.

In 1991 the Taiwan Embassy in South Africa, finally perceiving this change approaching, began desperately wooing important figures of the African National Congress with fully-paid trips to Taiwan, in hopes of maintaining this last important contact in its dwindling official international relations. Most recently, Taiwan television made much of a ten-minute visit of Taiwan's president, Lee Teng-hui, with President Mandela at the inauguration in May 1994. In June 1990 the ROC Foreign Ministry blocked a visa for the ANC's Japan representative, Jerry Matsila, who had been invited to Taiwan by the Democratic Progressive Party. The pretext was that Jerry was a "terrorist." Since then the ROC Foreign Ministry has encouraged trips to South Africa by the DPP, Taiwan's major opposition party (recently polling 41 percent of the popular vote), as if to demonstrate Taiwan's own democratic progress.

The first delegation of the DPP to South Africa, in January 1991, followed an itinerary of sightseeing designed by the ROC Embassy and the RSA, and failed to make contact with the ANC. Later the DPP sent a special representative to the ANC's first national convention, June 1992. The second major DPP delegation was planned for July 20–27, 1994, with hopes that the new chairman of the DPP, Shih Ming-teh — with over 25 years imprisonment behind him, often known as "Taiwan's

Mandela" — would likewise meet with President Mandela.

The following is a report on that trip and related preparations for it, after occasional contacts with the ANC from 1989 on. I have participated as a long-time activist and English/Chinese translator in opposition party foreign public relations and as titular wife of the present DPP chairman.

Conflicts Faced by New South Africa Government

Although the interactions between Taiwan and South Africa may seem to be a narrow topic, they illustrate the central contradictions that must be faced by the new mass-based government — seeking both to chart a path toward greater economic equality and to maintain economic stability. Taiwan is a major investor in labor-intensive industry, and it is South Africa's fifth-largest trading partner.

The six-member National Legislators of the Democratic Progressive Party delegation, all except one elected in the first full popular election of that body in December 1992, included:

- Shih Ming-teh, two-term political prisoner for 25 years total, famous for 1980 trial statement, "Taiwan has been independent for thirty years"; chairman of the DPP since December 1993, current term until May 1996.
- Hsieh Tsung-ming (Roger), two-term political prisoner for a total of 12 years, imprisoned due to 1964 "statement of Taiwan independence" case. Currently concerned with restitution for political victims, including return of confiscated property and reparations.
- Chang Hsu-cheng (Parris), National Legislator representing overseas populations, also Professor of Political Science at Pennsylvania State University. Currently a member of National Legislature Foreign Affairs Committee.

The Hope for Transformation in South Africa

At this point the interim Government of National Unity dominated by the ANC but com-

mitted to governing in consensus with the Nationalist Party (previously white supremacist) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (Zulu autonomist), is faced mainly with the task of stabilizing the economy while showing real commitment to the moderate but still difficult-to-attain goals on which it campaigned, basic social and economic uplifting for the Black majority. This includes predominantly jobs, schools, health, and in particular housing. In principle, land "restitution" is to restore to Blacks the lands and homes they occupied in 1913 — which still leaves whites with the lion's share of land.

Following the peaceful conclusion of the elections, white flight has been stemmed (the government seems quite concerned not to scare away white and Asian professionals), but a series of strikes in June and July have put in question the stability of jobs and future foreign investment. Not surprisingly, the union representatives of Black workers seem determined to affirm their political gains from the election, and to respond to the expectations of their constituencies. In particular, labor disturbances in the Taiwanese-owned knitting and garment factories endanger a great many jobs, given that the owners claim they are quite capable of moving out to low-wage Southeast Asian countries like Burma.

South Africa has the look of Los Angeles laid on top of a primitive nomadic society. Women carrying eight-foot-long bundles of firewood on their heads may be seen walking parallel to the approaches of a freeway cloverleaf. Ten years ago it was probably possible to fly through all the airports of the country, drive on the freeways and through palm-fringed white suburbs, watch television, stay at the five-star tourist hotels, swim at the garden-lined beach front in Durban, drink South African wine and eat wild game at a restaurant, and leave the country without realizing that the majority of the populace is Black, lives in tin shacks on rocky ground or in small stucco houses, eats a monotonous diet of maize meal, and is 70 percent functionally illiterate.

As a white or a Taiwanese, it is still difficult to see that other side close up, because of pervasive fear of being the object of attack and because the settlements of squatter shacks that have grown up around cities in the last five years, often without piped water or electricity, are shielded from the highways by high concrete walls. Even though the downtown of Johannesburg has now been taken over by well-dressed Black office workers, there seems to be little casual mixing of the races. Although shabeens, pubs set up in homes, are scattered among Black housing, it seems nearly impossible to find Black restaurants or other establishments of Black middle-class entertainment and consumption.

This condition of polarization is the legacy of apartheid. Decades of institutionalized racial inequality — in infrastructure and human services as well as in personal civil rights — have created the greatest economic disparity in the world: an average standard of living compara-

ble about to Spain for whites, and comparable to the Congo for Blacks.

The white standard of living would be considered moderate in cost in U.S. dollars, but it is far beyond the means of most Blacks. Only in recent years have a few of the white population begun to experience unemployment, and to take to the streets vending newspapers, oranges, or handicrafts. But previously white wages were about three times those of Blacks, in general. A Black live-in maid makes 300 Rand (US\$82) a month plus room and board. A Black office worker, perhaps US\$200. More seriously, up to half of the Black population is unemployed, and lives off pittances spread around from relatives. What amazed a visiting Taiwanese legislator was that at noontime in a squatter camp no sign of cooking or eating could be seen; in the evening knots of people clustered around smoky braziers in front of the tin shacks, and ate with their fingers.

Given this obvious disparity, the ebullient cheer and optimism of the ANC officials who have newly taken office — men who have suffered long exile, imprisonment, and torture — was amazing. It was clear in this visit that the new government is still in the honeymoon phase. Although scattered violence, in particular crimes of Black gangs brutally plundering and murdering white households, has been featured in the news, in general political peace followed the elections.

To the obvious question of how the new government could meet the rising expectations of the majority, an ANC official replied, "Our people are very patient. They have lived through decades of apartheid and years of negotiation that brought the current advance. They will be patient for gradual improvement." Consonant with this, the Reconstruction and Development Plan on which the ANC campaigned is a very moderate and gradualist one, except for the goal of accelerated construction of low-cost housing. According to an officer of the South African Development Bank, long a white institution, the Plan can be financed merely by redirecting subsidies from the white to the Black sectors. Only an increase in business taxation is planned at present. The intent is to raise the living of the Black majority without pulling down the white minority.

The historical question is of course why the ANC was able to negotiate its way to elections at all, and I asked it several times of different people. The detailed account in the April ?? 1994 *New Yorker* of Nelson Mandela's contacts and negotiations with Botha and de Klerk from 1988 on suggest a purposeful grooming of a moderate, although heroic leader. This is not to suggest, however, that the then-ruling Nationalist Party was able to control the outcome to its satisfaction. In the larger picture, obviously the various armed groups and popular mobilizations of the Black majority held the specter of continued revolutionary violence, even a holocaust; in addition, the random diffusion of weapons, even automatic assault rifles, led to an

increase in economic marauding that is now still difficult to control.

Perhaps of equal importance, the international sanctions were taking an increasing toll on the South African economy. For example, although gasoline was never in shortage, South Africa had to pay three times the world market price, I was told, to buy it through intermediaries. Finally, it was obvious that there was a barrier to industrial development in a shortage of skilled and educated labor, and a surfeit of uneducated and restive Black labor. And true to Marxist theory, it was Soweto, with a population of two million just outside Johannesburg and a concentration of the oldest Black proletariat largely removed from the tribal past, that was the cradle of Black resistance.

Overall the answers I received were consonant with Martin Murray's 1987 book, that the largest English- and international-invested capital in South Africa found apartheid an impediment to further capitalist development. However, this relatively peaceful transition should also be seen in the context of the current world conjuncture, that "socialism" has fallen in the Soviet Union and elsewhere, and so that revolutionary option was no longer available to the Black majority; and that, as analyzed from the world systems perspective, in the phase of transfer of hegemony from the United States to Europe and Japan, there is a concomitant transfer of neo-colonial economic ties. According to a 1990 analysis by Tebogo Mafole, then head of the ANC Observer Mission in the UN, the European Community championed anti-apartheid sanctions in the early 1980s, while Washington continued to ban the ANC as a terrorist organization until early 1990; and now large European and Japanese development loans are pending.

One aspect of the transition has been somewhat contentious. In mid-July a Truth Commission was being convened to investigate all political crimes, both state terrorism and revolutionary terrorism, since the 1960s. While the ANC and Lawyers for Human Rights, a 160-member human rights organization active since the early 1980s, insisted that the past could not be laid to rest and reconciliation achieved until all was laid open to the light of day, other parties, and in particular the Inkatha Freedom Party, insisted that this process would show the ugly side of the ANC as much as anyone else's, and could tear apart the government of national unity. Amnesty for political crimes, and whether those found to have committed or directed atrocities would be allowed to serve in public office, were related issues. Brian Currin, national director of Lawyers for Human Rights, was slated to advise the Commission, whose mandate passed the parliament in August.

The issue of political violence is not entirely past, although the results of the election showed very few of the electorate supporting either Black extremists (Pan-African Congress, which previously did not accept the right of whites to live in South Africa) or white extremists (e.g. those insisting on a white homeland, by force if necessary). As laid out in a briefing by ANC

Secretary for International Affairs Welile Nhlapo, the former ministries of defense, police, etc., were riddled with renegades who had no accountability to civilian authorities, and who operated state terrorism with impunity.

Given recent bomb attacks by white extremists, the inordinate amount of security precautions at both ANC and COSATU headquarters is understandable. There are double systems of controlled doors, metal detectors, briefcase inspections, etc. All visitors have to be accompanied to their destinations by an escort, and all visitors' cars parked in the adjacent parking lot. ANC employees are likewise subject to discipline. Though some are provided with vehicles, the vehicles are inspected before departure from the basement garage, to make sure no equipment is removed from the premises.

The issue of political crimes was very much alive in Natal Province. The DPP delegation had an official dinner there on July 26 with Chief Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi, president of the Inkatha Freedom Party and now minister of home affairs in the Government of National Unity. This was a colorful event that merits some recounting. I sat next to Chief Buthelezi so as to translate for the DPP chairman and others; his short scepter in modern shining Lucite striped with the colors of his party lay on the table beside his hand. In a specially prepared speech, also printed for distribution, Buthelezi praised Taiwan for helping to develop rural industry and for being a friend of South Africa while the rest of the world shunned it.

Buthelezi emphasized that Inkatha had received a significant part of the vote (50.3 percent in Natal, 10.5 percent nationwide) even without campaign canvassing, and predicted that they would achieve much more in the future. He presented the chairman of the DPP with an intricate cast statue of his great-grandfather, sitting on an ox-horn throne, presiding over a struggling mass of heroic Zulu warriors and British soldiers, commemorating the Zulu victory of 1877. (Buthelezi played his great-grandfather in the 1970s movie "Zulu" based on these events.) The chief bristled when I inquired as to whether Inkatha intended to become a national organization; however, he also denied that the Zulus intended separatism.

The issue of political crimes was elucidated later in a long discussion with one of Buthelezi's associates, a middle-aged lawyer. He suspected the ANC of continuing assassinations of Inkatha activists in Natal. Only a week or so before a family of eight had been murdered, and a minivan had been ambushed. However, he opposed the Truth Commission project, saying the ANC would investigate selectively. He said the ANC had successfully marshalled public opinion and even church sentiment to justify "revolutionary" violence on its own part, while condemning any persons suspected of opposing the ANC. He claimed he had once personally heard a high-ranking church official justify "necklacing," burning suspected informers alive with tires over their shoulders, in terms of

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God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son, and the burning bush.

This view of ANC influence over public opinion was more or less confirmed in a book published in 1993 by the South Africa Institute of Race Relations, *Political Violence in South Africa* by John Kane-Berman, which dealt in detail with events in 1992–93. While not exonerating possible collusion between Inkatha and security agency-directed terrorism, the book stated that the ANC had also been implicated in acts of violence against Inkatha, but had finally acknowledged some excesses, and the ANC leadership had called for an end to violence on all fronts. All the same, Inkatha and its affiliated organizations did not look good in events occurring about the end of this trip. A TV dramatization of massacres, machine-gunnings of commuters on trains in 1993, was aired for three consecutive nights on the weekend of July 29–31. Inkatha disclaimed this as calumny, and the head of the association of hostel dwellers (usually Inkatha strongholds) was even filmed stating to reporters that if the rest of the movie were aired, the producer and the actors would be “wiped from the face of the earth.”

Despite these elements of tension, the mood of the populace seemed conciliatory. In one long stretch sitting late at night in the lobby of the Cape Sun Hotel where the DPP delegation was staying, I chanced upon two remarkable discussions. The first was with a light-skinned mixed-race lobby attendant, about 24 years old, named Ricky Van der Burg. He had participated in Cape Town township uprisings in 1985–86, and rebutted accusations that the Cape Town coloreds were complacent under apartheid. On one occasion Ricky threw stones at a government patrol. The soldier told him and the other teenage boys to be out of the area by the count of 10. They ran, but the soldier started firing rubber bullets at count 3. His friend looked back, caught a bullet in the eye, and died instantly. Ricky was knocked cold by a ricocheted rubber bullet that caught him at the base of the skull. When he came to he pulled out the bullet embedded in his skin and fled.

The second discussion was with a dark-haired Afrikaner/German security guard in his late twenties, named Neil Muller, he was part of a professional security contingent hired to guard a Jewish function going on in the ballroom. “Yes, it's been a big change. But we have to accept it; the past was wrong. Look at me, I grew up with a Black mammy and the Blacks at my daddy's factory called me ‘baas’ (boss).... When I was eighteen I had to go to the home guard; it was that or go to jail. What could I do? So we got all trained....”

Then he gave a chilling description:

What do you do when you have a few hundred Blacks coming at you, and supposedly they're unarmed, but they have traditional weapons like machetes, and there are so many of them? You can't blame the boys if they shoot.... We had to go patrol the townships during the disturbances. Once we were ambushed by snipers, and they got five of us, including the chap who was always arguing for the ANC. Killed them. I

chased one sniper, and he ran through the shacks and I ran after him, not knowing whether I would be surrounded at any moment. I was almost on him, and he flopped to the ground and started to swing around his weapon to aim. In that second I had to decide. I blasted him with automatic fire until he was a bloody pulp and I couldn't recognize him. I could see he was small, but I didn't know till I saw the picture in the paper that he was fourteen years old.... And now I have to live with that image that I killed him, sometimes in my dreams, for the rest of my life.”

Ironically, this bodyguard is now often contracted to protect ANC officials, because the ANC does not yet have enough personnel with professional training. Stories like both of these were no doubt common in the past decade. Both speakers had Afrikaner accents. But what impressed me was that when both Ricky and Neil were talking, one on my right and one on my left, looking across at each other, they still spoke with such gentle earnestness, and no rancor, that I could hardly imagine the scene in an analogous American context. Perhaps there really is hope for a transformation.

Labor Disputes in Taiwanese-Owned Factories

The significant presence of Taiwanese investment in South Africa has a particular geopolitical origin. The Republic of China on Taiwan lost the China seat in the United Nations to the People's Republic of China in 1971. Although previously in the UN it voted to censure apartheid, in 1976 it established diplomatic relations with the Republic of South Africa. In the early 1980s, as both nations were increasingly isolated in world relations, they engaged in a more intense exchange of visits of ranking officials as a means of bolstering internal appearances.

In particular, while international sanctions against South Africa tightened, Taiwan cooperated with the homelands industrial development program of the South Africa regime. This was a strategy to stave off burgeoning Black migration to the cities and to give some content to the fiction of separate racial and national development by creating employment in homelands industrial parks. This program provided generous subsidies and infrastructure for companies that would set up production in designated homelands locations, paying as much as 90 percent of wage costs and providing ready-made factory buildings for rental. A much more advantageous exchange rate was provided for capital investment. By 1990 there were about 250 Taiwan-invested companies in RSA, according to the ROC ambassador; a rough guess at their number of employees might be 50,000. These were mainly labor-intensive export industries like shoe and garment factories, and part of the motivation by Taiwanese investors was to get around U.S. import quotas according to country of origin.

South Africa soon dropped the homelands subsidies in favor of an income tax credit applicable throughout South Africa, and the U.S. put other caps on import quotas (Jeff Woods, per-

sonal communications, August 1994). Nevertheless, Taiwanese factories seem to have continued to set up shop in South Africa, and there has been further migration of Taiwanese who provide services to the Taiwanese community (Chinese food and medicine) and even retirees who find the price of housing and servants amenable. Taiwan's new civilian airlines, EVA, flies to Johannesburg. Since the mid-1980s about 10,000 Taiwanese — who had also been designated honorary whites — have taken up residence in South Africa. Taiwan is now South Africa's fifth largest trading partner, with the balance of payments in favor of South Africa.

This discussion leads to the matter of the strike against the Taiwanese knitting and garment factories in Kimberly. Before leaving for South Africa, I had addressed letters to many organizations, among them COSATU, requesting briefings for the DPP delegation. COSATU responded to a call from my advance man by a decided rejection, that it was “unnecessary to meet with Taiwan.” I did not know then that a strike was in progress and that the South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union (SAC-TWU) would on July 19 lodge a strong protest against a statement by the ROC consul for the Cape region that the workers' demands were “unreasonable.”

Upon arrival, I explained clearly that the DPP delegation represented the opposition party in Taiwan, a party which included political prisoners and a strong labor component, the international relations officer of COSATU, Mr. Bangumzi Sifingo, reluctantly agreed to a meeting. On Tuesday July 19, his first statement to me and the local Taiwanese (Dr. & Mrs. Liao Chang-li) who accompanied me was that he had been jailed three times for his labor activism at Mdantsang Prison in the Ciskei, a few miles northeast from New London, that had been built with the assistance of the Taiwan government. Although during this trip we were not able to verify this ROC role in prisons, and it was vehemently denied by the ROC Ambassador, we found this same impression among ANC and COSATU activists three or four more times (the location was also cited as next to Fort Hare University in Dimbaza).

Mr. Sifingo, one of the vice presidents of COSATU, and four other of their officers attended a lunch sponsored by the DPP on Friday, July 22, and there met with Mr. Hou Chuan-jung, owner of Kimberly Diamond Knitting Factory, who had especially driven to Johannesburg, six hours' drive, for the meeting. The COSATU officers' attitude seemed to be part conciliatory, part dismissive, and part wheedling. The Taiwanese poured wine freely; the COSATU people dumped it and called for varieties more to their taste. But the issues were serious. Legal action by the unions against seven factory owners, for firing union organizers and locking out the workers, as well as miscellaneous accusations of mistreatment, was pending on July 28. While the dispute remained unresolved, hundreds of workers were unem-

played; and the longer it continued the more likely the factories would close up and pull out.

As scheduled, during the luncheon on July 26 Mr. Hou and other factory owners met especially with COSATU, and four owners signed a contract assuring the right of the workers to union representation, with further wage increases over the current minimum wage (about US\$22/week, which the owners had already met) to be negotiated in January 1995. It seems likely that the COSATU headquarters had to calm the tempers of local SACTWU organizers to reach this agreement.

Meanwhile, tempers on the side of Kimberly Taiwanese factory owners still flared. During my visit to Kimberly on Saturday, July 30, several of the factory owners who had refused to settle shouted in my face even while they accompanied me to an elegant dinner. Why did they have to get entangled with the opposition party in order to settle their internal affairs? (They seemed to fear offending the ROC Consul; Mr. Hou asserted that the DPP involvement was incidental and took responsibility for the content of the contract.) Why should they agree to take back workers who had caused trouble? Some tried to get common agreement among those present on delaying reopening the factories for a week or two, as if to teach the workers a lesson. (It should be noted here that workers require a month or two of training to operate the knitting machines skillfully, and the owners would also lose out if their trained workers dispersed back to their homelands.) Although the owners wept crocodile tears over rising wages and losses due to work stoppages, they also asserted that if wages rose they would "use a few months' profits" to invest in further capital equipment, rather than hire more workers for expansion. The major issue here and in other Taiwanese-owned factories at this time seemed to be rights of control over the workers, rather than wages specifically. But after venting a great deal of steam those who had not yet signed seemed to relent and agree to do so.

The next morning Mr. Hou visited a dozen of his skilled women workers, not from the area, who lived in a house he had bought for their use in a multiracial area a few blocks from the factory, and told them in his broken English that work would resume in a few days. The house seemed rather bare but decent, with several women per room, and with running water, kitchen, toilet, and yard, much better than the tin shacks so much of the population lived in. Only the fumes of kerosene heaters made the interior oppressive, even while they took the edge off the winter morning chill. Likewise lacking all but a few words of English, the women rubbed their stomachs angrily as if complaining of hunger, but otherwise seemed relieved. Mr. Hou said he had just the week before given them two weeks' severance pay, 200 Rand (US\$75), and was also providing 5 Rand (US\$1.40) a day to them each for basic subsistence while the work stoppage continued. But he seemed to be the more generous of the own-

ers, believing that higher wages would also result in a better internal market in South Africa.

Producing for the internal market of South Africa does seem to be quite profitable for the Taiwanese factories, as I understood more clearly after factory visits. The owners and their managers, a few of whom originate from mainland China, live in prosperous white neighborhoods with their walled gardens and dogs, like the whites, and many drive Mercedes Benz cars. They must, however, maintain vigilant oversight of the business and the workers. This seems to have been successful.

Due to their more efficient management and links with Taiwanese factories in acrylic yarn and other production, the previous largest producers of knit products, owned by South African Jewish families, were close to going under, a Taiwanese owner said. The manual knitting machines for the factories (small hand-powered units, without electric motors) could be bought for about US\$100 each, plus import taxes, since they were being retired after five or six years' use in Taiwan. But Taiwanese owners uniformly complained that the African workers had low productivity and attention to work, only about a fifth of the productivity of Taiwanese workers. Moreover, up to 20 percent of production was irregular or was pilfered by the workers. The Taiwanese factories generally had small retail counters for sale to workers and neighborhood residents, with prices in the range of US\$10-20 for an acrylic or artificial-mohair sweater.

The issue of low labor productivity in South Africa was recognized by ANC officials who had visited Taiwan and had been much impressed by the tremendous work intensity and attention to economy in small enterprises there. They hoped that Taiwanese factories would both impart the work ethic and a spirit of entrepreneurship, so that South Africa could develop a thriving Black-owned small business sector like Taiwan's.

On the side of labor, a former COSATU activist who is now a provincial minister of the Orange Free State accused the Taiwanese factory owners of "fascist" methods of control that were more stringent than those of white bosses, and of paying wages that put the products entirely out of reach of the workers themselves. At a settlement about 30 km. from Bloemfontein, Botshabelo, where the previous white government had forcibly resettled a population of about 300,000 in the last decade (some removed from squatter townships around the city, others seemingly migrant from homelands), nearby Taiwanese factories used to hire this captive labor force for 40 Rand a week (US\$11), a very low wage even if the workers did not have to pay the usual US\$5 or so a week for transportation in private minivans. In fact, about half of the employment in Botshabelo is in Taiwanese-owned factories. Residents of a shantytown in Bloemfontein told us that 120 Rand a week (US\$33) was an acceptable wage.

An hour's drive east of Bloemfontein is Ladybrand, on the border with Lesotho, where a community of Taiwanese industrialists live. They reportedly employ as many as 30,000 workers at factories within Lesotho — the labor there was said to be cheaper and also superior in work discipline and skill — but after labor riots a few years previous in which lives had been lost, the owners retreated to their residences across the border each evening.

Overall, the Taiwanese industrialists seemed rather innocent of understanding in regard to the major political and social juncture at which South Africa stands; in lifestyle and mentality they remain within the orbit of Taiwan society. Profits and personal security were their immediate focus. They did show some concern, however, to improve the image of Taiwanese within South Africa, with a sense that this was best for their own long-term preservation. □



Initial meeting of Taiwanese factory owner and COSATU officials, July 22, 1994, at a Taiwanese-owned restaurant in Johannesburg. The author is standing at left.