

THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN WORKING CLASS: PRODUCTION, REPRODUCTION AND POLITICS

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Southern Africa is probably the world's most extreme site of uneven capitalist development.¹ Inequality within and between the region's countries is severe, with race and gender domination largely undisturbed by the post-colonial experience, with the environment taking enormous strain, and with South Africa—and its 40 million of the region's 102 million citizens—responsible for \$130 billion of Southern Africa's \$160 billion in 1998 output. Yet, while it is logical to anticipate an uneven, fragmented evolution of working-class power and political strategy, given the area's different modes of class struggle, levels of consciousness, organizational capacity, militancy, and relations with political parties and other social forces, developments in one country do act as major reference points for others. Southern Africa's rich radical traditions—including once-avowed 'Marxist-Leninist' governments in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Angola, and mass-movements and powerful unions—owe much to revolutionary socialism and nationalism, yet this never gave rise to an explicit regional class project.

Drawing upon a legacy of regional class formation that goes back to the nineteenth century, can a coherent, cross-border vision emerge to counteract the unevenness? Will 'globalization' provide this opportunity, given the 1999 upsurge in international working-class consciousness in reaction to the multinational corporate agenda, and a new round of parasitic South African corporate investment in the region? Or will fragmentation prevail, as already reflected in a late 1990s upsurge in South African working-class xenophobia?

Certain aspects of working-class experience are, of course, regionally universal or at least comparable, in part reflecting the importance and homogenizing effect of migrant labour. The counterpart of the current regeneration of urban-rural linkages caused by the desperation of many unemployed workers—including more than a million laid off during the 1990s—is the rural-urban drift to the region's rapidly-growing urban slums. Also common to all these countries are issues of perpetual concern to workers: the HIV/AIDS pandemic; the prevalence of child labour; ongoing farm labour-tenant exploitation; low skills levels and inadequate training; rising privatization pressures and controversies over other public sector restructuring measures; periodic refugee inflows and debates over immigration policy; the emerging Export-Processing Zone threat (based on prototypes in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland) to occupational safety/health and wages; and mass poverty. These broader social concerns, and other reflections of daily struggle, benefit little from the traditional corporatist (big government + big business + big labour) relationships still favoured by some of the region's union leaders.

Yet the concentration and centralization of Southern African capital—from a geographical anchorage in Johannesburg—is providing the whole region's workers with opportunities to challenge the same employers through cross-border solidarity. If a free trade agreement aiming to reduce interregional barriers is brought to fruition, a gradual homogenization of regional economic conditions has been predicted. But it could just as easily intensify the region's polarizing tendencies, given the parallel process of South African capital's expansion and the linkage of the region to Europe and North America through unfavourable free-trade deals. A variety of other compelling reasons have also emerged, since the end of apartheid, for action on a regional scale to be taken up more enthusiastically by workers and their allies. Cross-border social and cultural connections have intensified; long-term migration patterns have begun to solidify (since permanent residence was granted to long-term guest workers by the South African government in 1995); controlling arms, drugs and other illicit traffic needs regional co-operation, as does the management of regional resources (such as water); the artificiality of nation-states sired at Berlin's colonial Africa carve-up conference in 1885 is more readily questioned as post-colonial nationalism fades. There is wider recognition of the worsening unevenness of development (and related ethnic tensions) between the rich and poor areas of the region.

Our scan of regional prospects driven not by Washington and its proxies, but by popular forces in the region, necessarily begins in the core industrial sites (mainly South Africa's and Zimbabwe's large cities, as well as their now-declining mining regions) where black workers established the first organizational roots of class power already in the 1920s, often in the face of opposition from higher-skilled white workers and artisans. The ebb and flow of black working-class power was heightened by impressive industrial unrest during the 1940s, followed by a downturn associated with intensified state

repression, the formal establishment of apartheid in 1948, and the banning of trade unions or their leaders in many of the colonial regimes. Later, from the 1950s, working-class power was overlaid by the rise of nationalist political movements. As these movements gained progressively greater access to state power across Southern Africa—and yet soon proved themselves hostile to working-class interests and ambitions—workers had to decide whether and how to strive for a post-colonial, post-nationalist and post-neoliberal future.

In the immediate future, as Southern Africa remains mired in sustained economic crisis, the logic of neoliberalism will have to be contested not only through defensive protest but through a new regionalism and by forging more effective international solidarity, to serve working-class and poor people's interests. There exists a broad and not necessarily socialist framework for this line of argument, namely a United Nations World Institute for Development Economics Research project whose leading African proponent, Samir Amin, advocates 'regionalization aiming at the building of a polycentric world', in part grounded in 'grassroots labour-popular social hegemonies'.² It is with this potential project in mind that we attempt to document lines of cleavage between and within the region's working classes and state/capital alliances.

Hence the five main sections of this essay interrelate: (1) the historical colonial-capitalist origins of the region and its working classes; (2) the contemporary economic crisis; (3) the strength and organizational state of the Southern African working class today; (4) the potential contestation of regionalism, between workers and the region's states/capitals (dominated as they tend to be by South African bureaucrats and corporations); and (5) divergent perspectives on major international economic issues. With this information, existing regional and even global strategies and tactics can be assessed and new ones proposed.

1. ORIGINS OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN PROLETARIAT

To understand the region's working class in the twenty-first century requires considering, however briefly, its formation in the late-nineteenth. There we find durable aspects of class-race-gender-environmental power serving a process of capital accumulation in more than a dozen major urban centres, with capital ultimately flowing to London, New York and Lisbon. Over the course of the past century or so, diverse international and intraregional connections were forged through trade, transport and communications links, customs unions, South African corporations' regional investment strategies, conflict over natural resources (especially water), and labour migration. Early commercial imperialism was codified by the 'Scramble for Africa', the Berlin conference of 1885 at which national boundaries were demarcated by Britain, Portugal, France, Germany and Belgium.

The region's partial, disarticulated proletarianization occurred initially through mining and related industries, not only on the Johannesburg reef, but

also in patches of Zimbabwe (termed ‘Southern Rhodesia’ until 1965 and then ‘Rhodesia’ until 1979) and the copper-fields of Zambia (‘Northern Rhodesia’ until independence in 1964). Of greatest interest, of course, is the fate of indigenous black African people under the compulsion of new wage-labour disciplines. Yet even earlier, many white workers in and around the Kimberley diamond mines, the Johannesburg gold fields and the railways imported European traditions of trade unionism and mutual aid (e.g., building societies) as early as the 1880s; and by the 1910s a brand of imported ‘communism’ (racist and sexist) flared brightly prior to the famous 1922 white mineworkers’ strike (with the egregious slogan ‘Workers of the world, unite for a white South Africa!’). In the wake of effective state repression, a co-opted white Labour Party then allied with other disaffected social layers within the South African government, as did a similar group of unionized white artisanal populists in Southern Rhodesia just to the north. A ‘whites-only’ welfare state—providing job-creation programmes, pension schemes, health benefits, housing and the like, especially to Afrikaners who represented ‘the poor white problem’—emerged in both these rapidly-industrializing countries during the 1930s. With the impressive rise of inward-oriented manufacturing and development-finance systems, many white workers evolved into middle-class managerialism, while black workers found labour markets increasingly attractive as local growth raised black wages in relation to white wages by an unprecedented (before or since) 50% during the 1930s–40s.

How, in the process, were indigenous African people disenfranchised and (partially) proletarianized? Once the colonial spoils were divided at Berlin, the British government mandated the Cape governor Cecil John Rhodes and his British South Africa Company to seize a vast area stretching north from Lesotho. The British military beat back resistance from the region’s Africans (most decisively in Southern Rhodesia during the 1890s) and from Afrikaners (in the South African Anglo–Boer War of 1899–1902). British settlers thereby gave birth to the socio-political construct of Southern Africa. Using traditional techniques to strip land from indigenous peoples—‘hut taxes’, debt peonage systems and fees for cattle-dipping and grazing, as well as other more direct forms of compulsion—the settlers drew African men from the fields, into the mines and emerging factories.³

But it took more than geopolitical influence and investment to form a regional working class. Radicalized capitalism throughout Southern Africa also came to depend heavily upon extraordinarily ‘cheap’ migrant labour and various forms of extra-economic coercion. The Johannesburg mining houses soon organized a Chamber of Mines in order to establish recruitment offices in far-flung parts of the region. Northern Rhodesia’s transnational-controlled copper-mines and various Southern Rhodesian enterprises also followed the migrant labour model. The system’s profitability and durability relied quite simply on a subsidy—from household production by the migrant workers’ families back home on the land—that allowed wages to be set well below the

cost of reproduction of labour power. In short, white capital and states in the region spent next to nothing on black education in rural areas, on black workers' and their families' health care, or on black workers' pensions. The subsidy came partly from exhausting the ecology of the 'bantustan' (homeland) labour reserves, where land and water were degraded over time due to overpopulation pressure (millions of people having been forcibly removed from 'white' parts of South Africa and Rhodesia). But the subsidy was mainly provided by the household production of rural women; without jobs they were denied pass-books, and without pass-books they were denied access to the white settlers' major cities, even for conjugal visits to their partners working there. To find male workers at home in the rural areas for only a couple of weeks a year was not uncommon.

Migrant labour remains a core element of the surplus extraction process today, but with cash remittances from the cities now balancing the rural-urban subsidy. One indication of how badly South African capital required cheap immigrant workers is the way the 1986 decision of the South African apartheid ruler P. W. Botha to expel several hundred thousand Mozambican workers (as part of his regional destabilization initiative) was reversed after pressure from the Chamber of Mines, whose members still require 200,000 foreign workers for gold production alone.⁴

Over the course of a century, resistance by black workers to this diabolical system has been often violent and decisive, but sporadic. Sometimes, everyday-life survival strategies generated defensive mutual aid societies, such as the 'burial' societies and social clubs (especially based on dancing, and oriented to 'homeboy' networks) which emerged at the turn of the century. Yet militancy was not far away, and under the difficult conditions of the 1920s—inflation, stagnant incomes, tightening racial restrictions and increasing hardship—the Industrial and Commercial Workers of Africa (ICU) flourished as a general-workers' union straddling urban and rural workers across the region, drawing members from as far as Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The ICU called for defiance of the pass laws, negotiated with municipalities over worker grievances, and campaigned for minimum wages. But ultimately the movement failed to match its fiery rhetoric with action. Formed during a 1919–1920 dock-workers' strike, over time the ICU's 250,000 members became demoralized as internal strategic differences widened. White communists were expelled in 1926, and due to leadership conservatism—exemplified in the slogan 'hamba kahle' (go carefully)—various provincial branches seceded, until during the early 1930s the ICU faced demise.⁵ Likewise the Communist Party of South Africa fell into a deep internal ideological crisis during the 1930s over the race/class debate, and even vibrant new 'red unions' could not sustain strikes. Revolutionary socialists led by Max Gordon (a close associate of Leon Trotsky) were somewhat more successful, grouping six unions with a combined membership of 15,700 into a joint committee. But the black political field was left mainly to the African National Congress (ANC), which from its founding in 1912 until the

mid-1950s was dominated by petit-bourgeois leaders championing extremely moderate strategies.⁶

During the high-growth period of the late 1930s and early 1940s, black worker militancy increased (in 1942, for example, 58 strikes involved over 13,000 workers). Communists helped launch the Congress of Non-European Trade Unions, yet neither they nor the ANC gave effective support to the crucial African mineworkers' strike of 1946. Though nearly 100,000 black miners struck for five days, it ended in bitter defeat, with thirteen of their number killed and 1,000 arrested. Black workers would struggle another thirty years before basic trade union and negotiating rights would be won, because the whites-only election of 1948 introduced formal apartheid. During the same year a general strike in Bulawayo and Salisbury also surprised the nationalist and communist movements, but was likewise severely repressed by a powerful white state.

In the 1940s and 1950s, even the region's poorest white families had graduated from 'poor white' status to being masters of a 'house girl' or 'boy'. But even with over half a million African women servants by the 1940s, all attempts to organize domestic workers failed, even in South Africa. Women were associated in the white media with illegal beer brewing, hawking and prostitution. 'Surplus' women in urban areas were hounded by the state, and whether 'illegal', deserted, widowed or unmarried, found security only in squatter communities on the periphery of towns. Township social movements like Soweto's Sofasonke and Alexandra's bus-boycotts grew strong and gave rise to successful land invasions thanks to the solidarity and desperation of women activists.

Yet labour and community struggles seldom overlapped during the 1950s and 1960s, for South Africa's shanty town struggles were abandoned or diffused by middle-class leaders. However, the ANC became progressively radicalized by the youth wing, led by Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu. ANC leaders encouraged workers to join the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), but moulded the unions to fit the nationalist agenda. Banned along with black liberation movements during the early 1960s, SACTU lost most of its leading activists to ANC underground work, demoralization or exile. Moreover, the rapid growth of mass production industry changed the relative weight, numerical power and locations of black workers.⁷ A similar process unfolded in Southern Rhodesia, with numerous bannings of parties interspersed by the rise of important links between trade unions and nationalists, illustrated by the railroad union organizer Joshua Nkomo's rapid ascent to the status of 'father of the nation'.⁸

The deepening of proletarian class formation relations changed the character of politics, but only once a new round of more general anti-apartheid protest was kick-started across the region during the 1970s. Between 1950 and 1980 the number of black workers in South Africa's manufacturing sector rose from 360,000 to 1,103,000 and in mining from 450,000 to 768,000. Increasingly strident forms of worker organization were catalysed by the 1973 dockworker

strikes in Durban. By 1976, trade unionism paralleled Steve Biko's Black Consciousness Movement and the student-led revolts that began in Soweto. At the time of the launch of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) in 1985, some 12,000 black shop stewards represented an advanced guard of self-sacrificing militants, combining action within work-places, schools, townships and cities. In contrast to the sterile organizing of the 1950s, the mid-1980s witnessed trade unions' metamorphosis into nerve centres of informal resistance across the political spectrum. At the height of P. W. Botha's 1985–1989 state of emergency, for example, commuter trains in Johannesburg's industrial heartland became transmission belts of political mobilization and education. Industrial area committees sprouted up and workers occupied factories in a rash of sleep-in strikes. Anti-apartheid political mobilization found new channels of expression.⁹

The unprecedented growth in Cosatu's membership and power in the 1980s was not an isolated phenomenon. Similar processes were evident across the whole semi-periphery, from Brazil and the Philippines to Poland and South Korea, besides other Southern African countries. Cosatu served as a regional role model and gave direct assistance to unions in Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Swaziland. In Namibia, a decade after the severe repression of the 1970s, unionism made a comeback when mass stayaways won support of 70 percent of workers (in sympathy with school boycotts and opposition to South Africa's role in Namibia). But relations between nationalists and the unions were often tense, as the former feared that too successful a union movement would displace the national liberation movement. Namibian mineworkers leader Ben Ulenga faced bruising encounters with the South West Africa People's Organization, which summoned him to Europe during a strike at Rossing Uranium mine to tell him that workers had no right to decide when strikes should be called.¹⁰

Across the region during the 1960s–90s, nationalist politics dictated that workers tone down or repress class demands, in the process undermining internal democracy.¹¹ During the early 1980s, 'workerists' within the South African labour left—the Federation of South African Trade Unions (Fosatu, later to become Cosatu)—saw their movement not only in terms of trade unionism but also as a potential political alternative to the ANC's 'populism'. According to the Fosatu general secretary, Joe Foster, nationalists 'would destroy the unity of worker organization. Our concern is with the very essence of politics and that is the relation between the major classes in South Africa, being capital and labour. We should not hesitate to attack those who are impeding the development of a working-class movement'.¹² The ANC/SACP writer Mzala had other priorities and contended: 'It is impossible for South Africa to advance to a socialist future without the elimination of national inequality'.¹³ Under pressure by the mid-1980s, key workerists quietly made peace with nationalists, whose township and rural prestige was immensely greater. Yet throughout the region, powerful tensions between nationalism and socialism remained. When occasionally, as in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Angola, the unified Marxist-Leninist-nationalist project graduated from oppo-

sitional discourse to state power, the working classes were inevitably disappointed.

Nationalism was not the only political mobilizing challenge to working-class politics. The sensibility of Southern African labour transcends the boundaries of factories, fields and mines, merging with broader social movements to spawn a host of popular protest activities. Another challenge faced by workers in South Africa comes from market ideologues who regularly blame labour militancy for the stagnation of the country's economy. Yet as we discuss next, working-class organization and political orientation are hardly responsible for the region's structural decline.

2. SOUTHERN AFRICA'S STRUCTURAL DECLINE

The systemic class exploitation and race-gender domination outlined above continued until the last quarter of the twentieth century. Then a long-term crisis began. During the two decades from 1960 to 1980, black nationalist movements north of South Africa intensified the momentum of liberation, but then presided over a degeneration into debt, dependency and neo-colonial subjugation. The terms of trade moved decisively against mineral and agriculture exports after 1973; real international interest rates on borrowed money soared from -4% in the 1970s to $+4\%$ in the 1980s; and 'globalization' revealed most of the region's manufacturing to be uncompetitive, particularly after 1990. From economic crisis and material desperation follow many of the geopolitical dilemmas of the 1980s–90s, seriously aggravating violent regional conflicts (civil war and strife in Angola, the DRC, Lesotho, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, which killed as many as two million people and set nationalist rulers against each other), and growing arms traffic.

With a few exceptions—namely Mauritius and Botswana, for very specific, non-reproducible reasons—Southern African economic conditions have been depressed since the mid-1970s, especially since the early 1980s in gold-producing countries (the price of an ounce fell from a high of \$850 in 1981 to just above \$250 in mid-1999). Dividing the most recent periods for which reliable data are available into an immediate post-colonial 'developmental' era (1965–80) followed by generalized 'structural adjustment' (1980–95), even official statistics reveal the decay. If we add to the ten core Southern African countries (see Table 1) high-growth Mauritius and Seychelles on the one hand, but also (declining) Tanzania and the DRC on the other (the two pairs effectively offsetting each other), we find that the SADC 14-country average annual per capita GDP growth—corrected for currency fluctuations through the 'Purchasing Power Parity' measure¹⁴—was 3.0% from 1965 to 1980 and -0.7% from 1980 to 1995. The latter period saw foreign debt servicing double from 5 to 10% of export earnings, with Zambia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi paying more than 20% by 1995. The largest economy, South Africa, declined from 3.2% per capita annual GDP growth in the first period to -1.0% in the second.

Table 1: Southern African Socio-Economic and Labour Market Conditions (mid-late 1990s).

Country	GDP per capita	Agric as % of	Industry as % of	Gini coefficient	Human Devel.	Population 000s	Labour force 000s [% female]	Formal jobs 000s [%civil service]	Union members	Union density
ANGOLA	1,839	12	59	n.a.	.344	11,099	5,103 [46]	n.a. [138]	n.a.	n.a.
BOTSWANA	5,611	5	56	53.7	.678	1,533	528 [46]	288 [98]	59	20
LESOTHO	1,290	10	46	56.0	.469	2,023	825 [37]	250 [n.a.]	36	14
MALAWI	773	42	27	62.0	.334	10,016	4,848 [49]	558 [48]	75	14
MOZAMBIQUE	959	33	12	n.a.	.281	18,028	9,145 [49]	450 [63]	190	42
NAMIBIA	4,054	14	30	70.0	.644	1,584	435 [41]	260 [67]	106	41
S. AFRICA	4,334	5	31	58.4	.717	37,859	9,787 [37]	5,708 [1,562]	3,202	56
SWAZILAND	2,954	14	45	n.a.	.597	926	327 [37]	57 [na]	21	44
ZAMBIA	986	22	40	46.2	.378	8,275	3,854 [45]	469 [151]	280	60
ZIMBABWE	2,135	15	36	56.8	.507	11,247	4,948 [45]	1,497 [175]	350	23

Most years 1995 (consistency throughout ensured in SADC Regional Human Development Report).

PPP = Purchasing Power Parity.

Industry includes mining and manufacturing.

Union density = union members as a % of formal sector jobs.

Sources: UNDP *Human Development Report 1998*, SADC *Regional Human Development Report 1998*, Torres 1998, *World Labour Report*, 1997/98, *Trade Unions of the World 1996*, *Africa Competitiveness Report 1998*.

Southern African economic prospects were perhaps most adversely affected by South Africa's skewed historical industrialization process and recent de-industrialization. South Africa's economy is itself characterized by severe disarticulations. A 'minerals-energy complex' still comprises the core quarter of the economy,

encompassing gold, coal, petrochemicals, electricity generation, processed metals products, mining machinery and some other, closely-related manufactured outputs.¹⁵ Intermediate capital goods (especially machines that make other machines) remain underdeveloped, while luxury goods are produced locally at close to world standards (if not prices), thanks to high relative levels of (traditionally white) consumer demand based on extreme income inequality, decades of protective tariffs and the presence of major multinational corporate branch plants. Meanwhile, basic needs industries are extremely sparse, as witnessed by the grossly inadequate output of low-cost housing, dangerous and relatively costly transport, and the underproduction of cheap, simple appliances and clothing (which are increasingly imported), at the same time that social services and the social wage have been set at extremely low levels for the country's majority.¹⁶

Reflecting the local over-accumulation crisis, South African manufacturing average profit rates fell steadily from 40 percent during the 1950s to less than 15 percent during the 1980s, and reinvestment dropped by 2 percent each year during the 1980s. By the trough of the 1989–93 depression, net fixed capital investment was down to just 1 percent of GDP, compared with 16 percent during the 1970s. From 1994–96, fixed investment picked up but then settled back into malaise, and the country consistently recorded bottom-tenth rankings in World Economic Forum competitiveness surveys. Post-apartheid trade liberalization all but demolished several key South African industries, including electronics, appliances, footwear, clothing, and textiles.¹⁷

The regional situation was even worse. Between 1992 and 1994 alone, Zimbabwe's largest textile firm and more than 60 clothing firms collapsed.¹⁸ The country became little more than a re-export platform for (technically 'dumped') South and East Asian textiles and second-hand clothes from European aid agencies. Zambia's clothing and textile industries likewise suffered dramatically during the early 1990s trade liberalization, with 90% of garment and more than a quarter of weaving jobs lost.

Accompanying and contributing to the structural decline in the regional economy was the simultaneous failure of orthodox structural adjustment policies. Notwithstanding vocal labour protest, South Africa adopted its *Growth, Employment and Redistribution (Gear)* strategy in 1996. But over the period 1996 to 1999, virtually all *Gear's* targets were missed; to illustrate, formal sector (non-agricultural) net job losses from 1996–99 amounted to 500,000 instead of anticipated net employment gains of 950,000 new jobs. Zimbabwe suffered similarly at the hands of a 1991–95 'Economic Structural Adjustment Programme' (ESAP) which, against all evidence to the contrary, the World Bank's Project Completion Report gave the best possible final grade: 'highly satisfactory'.¹⁹ Zimbabwe failed to achieve its macroeconomic objectives. Over the years 1991 to 1995 manufacturing output fell in absolute terms by 40% while the share of manufacturing in GDP dropped from a peak of 32% in 1992 to 17% in 1998. The same was true of virtually every adjustment programme in the region. Subsequently, at the end of the 1990s, there was somewhat

higher growth, from a very low base, in some countries (notably Mozambique and Malawi). Yet such growth self-evidently failed to trickle down to most people, as poverty worsened and inequality rose sharply. In 1999 real wages in many African countries were at levels similar to many decades ago, particularly when changing consumption norms following currency crashes, the lifting of subsidies and price controls, and the destruction of local manufacturing by import liberalization are taken into account. Officially-set minimum wages dropped far below the starvation line in most countries in the region.

Even if a small group of state elites, merchants, financiers, compradors and other rentier-types have benefitted from regional economic restructuring, the vulnerable in Southern African societies have paid most for the stagnation and decline of the past quarter-century. To illustrate, the daily per capita supply of calories across the region fell from 2,122 in 1970 to 2,108 in 1995 (with Malawians, Zambians and Zimbabweans all suffering additional 20–25% per capita declines in daily protein consumption during the 1970–95 period). In the health sector—with its particularly important impact on women, children, the elderly and disabled—SADC-wide conditions deteriorated during the mid-1990s to levels among the world’s worst for under-five mortality (140 per 1,000 children); maternal mortality (888 per 100,000 live births); life expectancy (52); malnutrition (20% of children under five under weight, and 36% suffering stunting); measles immunization (just 68% of 1-year olds); contraceptive use (just 28% of women from 15–45 years); and incidence of the deadly diseases malaria (5,550 per 100,000 people), tuberculosis (149 per 100,000 people), and HIV-AIDS (30 AIDS cases per 100,000 people and a 12% prevalence for adults under 49 years in 1995, worsening dramatically by decade’s end as the pandemic spread through South Africa).²⁰

State services could not keep up, even in a country as wealthy as South Africa (the site of the world’s first-ever heart transplant, but where most rural black people still have no primary health care) let alone one as poor as Mozambique (where World Bank conditionality for meagre debt relief in 1998 included a fivefold increase in user-charges for public health services). The health crisis was just one of the features contributing to regional workers’ growing sense of desperation—and in some cases to their willingness to organize not only for immediate economic demands but also to change society, or at the very least, the government.

3. SOUTHERN AFRICAN WORKERS, ORGANIZATIONS AND CLASS POLITICS

In what condition have these multiple and interlocking economic and social crises left Southern African workers? For brevity’s sake, we focus upon the concentrated sites of commodity production—formal and informal—in which workers come into contact with each other, and with the direct surplus extraction system. Across Africa, organized labour’s reactions have in part flowed directly from the crisis conditions noted above.²¹ Yet even in the advanced

South African economy, work-place trends incorporating flexibilization, labour-outsourcing and the subcontracting of union jobs have together made the documentation of class relations very difficult. In general, conflict and consent do not correspond directly and easily with the contours of core and periphery. Permanent work-forces are not necessarily more militant or co-opted than contingent work-forces, despite these inequalities in material conditions.

The numbers tell at least some of this story. Of around one hundred million people living in the ten core countries of Southern Africa, the potential 'labour force' is estimated at less than one-third (32 million); but more importantly, only about one in ten people is 'formally' employed. Approximately 40% of these are now organized, however. Although employment in non-agricultural sectors has been declining since the mid-1980s, Southern African trade unions have claimed growing membership over the past decade (contrary to waning unionization rates in most parts of the world); in some sectors organizing of workers only became legal over the past two decades, so that for example domestic and commercial agricultural workers are having some success with nascent unions. Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland and Zimbabwe are recording impressive increases in union membership, although extensive privatization in Zambia has led to a contraction. Continuous organizing drives by the region's stronger unions maintain membership at high levels, withstanding the effects of even mass retrenchments. These figures show substantial union power.

Over time, working classes across the region began to adopt progressive positions in opposition to their governments. As Herbert Jauch puts it, 'With the SADC divided along political lines, trade unions have achieved a higher degree of unity than ruling nationalist parties'.²² A regional perspective and discourse may, indeed, override a variety of national limitations. Fred Cooper argues, 'The tension between workers' claims to globally defined entitlements and Africans' assertions of political rights as Africans was, during the 1940s and early 1950s, a creative and empowering one'.²³ In contemporary struggles, though, a regional and more universalist paradigm potentially allows workers to raise demands for higher standards of socio-economic rights more forcefully. In contrast, the trap of nationalist-corporatism, and the national competitiveness framework, have generated only slim gains for workers as liberation movements have moved sharply right.²⁴

Politically, Southern African unions spent some hard years in the post-independence era breaking away from ruling party tutelage and explicit state repression (although Mozambican and Malawian unions are still heavily influenced by their governments). In countries with relatively robust political-party divisions that take place in the electoral sphere (or, as in Angola, on the battleground), the political alliances of trade unions become an issue (e.g., in Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe). But party politics and union politics are uneasy bedfellows. In Zambia, a trade unionist (Frederick Chiluba) was elected president as leader of a multi-class Movement

for Multiparty Democracy in 1991 following 27 years of (Kenneth Kaunda's) nationalist misrule—and then even more forcefully implemented structural adjustment during the 1990s. In contrast, in Zimbabwe, the ruling ZANU regime (led interminably by the autocratic Robert Mugabe) continued to give lip service to socialism while carrying out unrelenting neoliberal policies; political opposition rallied around left-leaning trade union leaders (Morgan Tsvangirai and Gibson Sibanda) whose Movement for Democratic Change became the main (or at least second biggest) party in parliament in the June 2000 elections. Likewise in Namibia, where rampant presidentialism prevents serious internal party debate, the SWAPO-affiliated National Union of Namibian Workers charged that the ruling party had scant regard for workers: 'if reconciliation is understood as the perpetuation of apartheid and is equated with exploitation, then workers will no longer tolerate this'.²⁵ A similar post-nationalist movement—the Congress of Democrats—led by a former trade unionist (Ulenga) became the official opposition after 1999 elections, while several individual unions expressed a desire to end their affiliation with Swapo.²⁶

In South Africa, more durable left-leaning politics were generally associated with trade unions, but by the late 1990s debates raged about whether an alliance with the ruling ANC liberation movement (decidedly neoliberal in economic policy terms) was helping workers, or stunting their further mobilization and development. In practice, however, the union movement has increasingly lost internal vibrancy and has become more of an appendage of the ANC. Public sector strikes against job cuts and inadequate pay rises and large-scale anti-privatization demonstrations by municipal workers reflect widespread grassroots antipathy to ANC policies. But in the absence of alternative political parties or a credible set of options, workers still place pragmatic value on the alliance as a means of pressuring the ANC, even if so far, according to Glenn Adler and Eddie Webster, such 'pressure has objectively eroded the position of workers'.²⁷ Cosatu leaders condemned the ANC government—specifically, the Minister of Public Administration Geraldine Moleki-Fraser (who was also deputy SA Communist Party chairperson)—for

trying to isolate and undermine workers demands by posing the dispute as being about 'general' interest versus 'sectoral' ('selfish', 'economist') interests of public sector workers. The 'dirty tricks' campaign [entailed] disinformation, and statements released to the press without consulting with the unions, and conducting the dispute in the media. The actions of the government are not in accord with spirit of the Tripartite Alliance, and indicate a greater concern to appease international capital than to enhance workers' rights and speed up delivery.²⁸

Cosatu is also a part of the National Economic Development and Labour Council, a corporatist arrangement in which business, state and labour jointly formulate policy on labour and economic issues. But nearly two-thirds of

workers surveyed had no knowledge of the council.²⁹ Cosatu is increasingly vulnerable to both bureaucracy and careerism, as leaders successfully seek paths to more lucrative government jobs. On the other hand, this is a process reserved for a few, as many local-level corporatist efforts in the same vein—‘work-place forums’ mandated under the post-apartheid Labour Relations Act to edge unions into local co-determination of productivity issues—have failed to take off.

Elsewhere the story has not advanced so far. In Botswana and especially Swaziland, labour has become the basis for a progressive political-party and pro-democracy activism which may pose substantial challenges for neocolonial governments, while in Malawi trade unions played a role in unseating a neocolonial dictator (President Banda) during the 1990s but did not replace him with a leader of their own. In Mozambique, nascent unions were by the late 1990s showing a capacity for militancy. Working-class movements in Lesotho (drawing on traditions of mine labour) and Angola (still bedevilled by war) were slow to gather pace. The point, perhaps, is that a major breakthrough for workers cannot occur in one country without the rest of the regional working class seeing some possibility of also gaining power in their own respective states, and also simultaneously developing a regional perspective that transcends the artificial boundaries drawn up by colonialists. That possibility we return to shortly.

However, simply counting union membership and estimating labour influence over local politics is only the beginning. The ability of federations and individual unions to embark upon major strike action is just as vital an indicator of strength. In Zimbabwe, autonomous, shopfloor-based actions outran the ability of national union bureaucrats to control or direct the membership and the corporatist strategy mistakenly pursued by the ZCTU during the mid-1990s quickly became irrelevant. And in South Africa, despite the country’s deep economic woes, union militancy increased as the state’s attack on public sector workers intensified.

Regionally-co-ordinated actions and growing class consciousness also reflect progress. In Swaziland, for example, an eleven-day general strike in 1996 and further strikes in 1997 led to solidarity in the form of a border blockade organized by sister unions in South Africa and Mozambique, which forced the anachronistic monarchy to concede worker rights. Indeed, new sections of workers across the region are demanding similar rights to those won by South African unions.

International and regional solidarity is probably the only real hope for many of the less-resourced union movements, as well as the relatively weak Southern African Trade Union Co-ordinating Council (SATUCC) itself. But given the difficult material conditions faced by regional unions and enormous tactical and strategic differences over international economic policy (see Section 5), it may be more realistic to begin by enquiring whether there exists a basis for a regional working-class consciousness as opposed to giving priority—as South African workers have so far been under heavy pressure to do—to retaining ties with nationalist allies.

4. REGIONAL CAPITAL ACCUMULATION, RESISTANCE AND GEOGRAPHICAL VISION

Can workers establish a regional class consciousness in coming years? Notwithstanding cross-border solidarities associated with three decades of anti-colonial and nationalist liberation struggles (1960–90), notions of Southern Africa remain for the most part contained within dominant global conceptions of regionalism: namely a sub-imperial South Africa as the gateway for capital accumulation in Africa as a whole, but organized on a regional scale between Pretoria and the global institutions (using Thabo Mbeki's notion of an 'African Renaissance' as cover). This has required new, post-apartheid institutional processes that take for granted a conception of the Southern African region as a 'capital-catchment' area undergoing ever-amplifying uneven development. It remains to be seen whether there can be an alternative, working-class regional vision, and whether class practices may emerge to turn Southern African workers into agents for historical change.

What would a potential working-class regional solidarity have to contend with? We see two aspects of contemporary politics and economics that threaten the universal class interests of Southern African workers. The first is the power of the multinational corporate/banking free-trade/finance agenda. But as discussed below, events in 1999 proved that the apparent power of US-centred neoliberalism is also pock-marked with vulnerabilities, even if the international working class remains confused over whether to try 'fixing' or 'nixing' neoliberalism's core institutions.

Second, elite-nationalists are contemplating an interlocking of South–South interests, with workers left out of the equation. This is not merely a matter of Robert Mugabe's oft-stated envy of the Malaysian exit-option from volatile international currency speculation (late 1999 saw Mahathir Mohamad giving seminars to Southern African leaders not only in a resort near Kuala Lumpur, but also, at Mugabe's insistence, at Victoria Falls). More to the point, a recent ANC/Alliance discussion document, 'Global Economic Crisis and its Implications for South Africa', explicitly asked, 'Can we forge a Brasilia-Pretoria-Delhi-Beijing Consensus in the absence of any Washington Consensus?'³⁰ Likewise in the wake of breakdown of the Seattle World Trade Organization (WTO) talks in November 1999, South Africa's trade and industry minister Alec Erwin regularly proposed restarting negotiations on the basis of an alliance between Mexico, Brazil, Nigeria, Egypt, India and South Korea.

But looking beyond occasional statements of Southern African and South–South interstate solidarity, to where capital is actually flowing, we may see a hint of a more realistic regionalism, and also of worker resistance. Sub-Saharan Africa has witnessed a renewed ebb and flow of South African corporate penetration since around 1993. Privatization and liberalization of African parastatal firms were critical points of contact, as were banking, services, retail activity and mining firms.³¹

What are the implications? To consider one example hyped loudly and regularly by Pretoria, it now transpires that ‘public-private partnerships’ in geographically-concentrated (‘corridor’-aligned) infrastructure projects between South African investors and the region’s states are unprofitable, for the primary reason that affordable state finance is virtually unavailable, given Southern Africa’s huge residual liabilities to northern creditors. Thus Erwin castigated the North for its ‘criminal, just criminal’ lack of substantive debt relief shortly after the 1999 G-8 Summit in Cologne. (That this public outburst against a US official occurred at the primary site of regional elite-pacting, the Davos-based World Economic Forum’s Southern Africa conference, was all the more telling.)

Under Erwin, after all, South Africa’s Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) had taken practical responsibility for the regional restructuring required for a particularly neoliberal, export-oriented, accumulation process. Behind the DTI strategy is faith that ‘Spatial Development Initiatives’ (SDIs) will add a rich fabric of ‘development’ along and within a corridor linking key nodes of accumulation (especially Johannesburg–Maputo) which embody features of ‘Export Processing Zones’ (EPZs).³² The DTI project methodology seeks first to identify potential port/rail/EPZ complexes in an underdeveloped target area that might be of interest to investors, and then help local stakeholders plan and promote infrastructural investments which improve access.³³ By the end of 1999, only two of the fourteen proposed SDIs were operative. But the official consensus around the SDI strategy—spatially-fetishized, environmentally-destructive, capital-intensive and lacking appropriate backward-forward linkages as it surely is³⁴—shows how far a regional version of the Washington conception of globalization enjoys hegemony amongst Southern African policy-makers.

Such a regional strategy requires institutional frameworks, such as SADC, an institution initiated by northern donor governments during the 1980s to help combat apartheid which morphed uneasily—with a major 1999 hiccup due to staff corruption, requiring an entirely new secretariat—into an organization for free-trade deals under the rubric of regional integration, co-operation and harmonization. As early as 1989, SADC committed the region to becoming a free-trade area by 2006, but progress has been slow, including steps backward when during the mid-1990s Zimbabwe and Zambia imposed tariffs on imported South African manufactures that were threatening entire domestic industries.

Aside from SADC, other parallel and occasionally competing institutional arrangements for the region (most of which will probably be merged or fade over time) include the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa, the South African Customs Union (a long-standing free trade deal between SA, Lesotho, Botswana, Swaziland and Namibia) and the Common Monetary Union, while WTO membership will open up other regional and bilateral relationships (e.g., bringing in Angola and Mozambique, which otherwise are not involved in non-SADC free-trade arrangements). All such bilateral and multi-

lateral deals are premised, it is clear, upon export-orientation not inward industrialization, and upon increasingly ‘flexible’ and competitive labour markets. Southern African labour understands this, implicitly, even if SATUCC and the federations of each country have not yet established an alternative vision. To this end, SATUCC advisor Dot Keet has proposed that to ‘deglobalize’ from neoliberal, multinational corporate and financial influence, requires not only alliances with those in the North seeking ‘innovative alternatives to over-producing/consuming capitalism’, but also a proactive, internally-oriented regionalism.³⁵

If the elaboration of such an alternative regional-global strategy—based not only upon regional delinking from neoliberal imperialism in alliance with Northern social and labour movements, but also relinking along South–South axes—is in the interests of poor and working people in Southern Africa, it could also be the basis for a global working-class strategy. However, such a strategy must first confront some extremely serious contradictions within the labour movement itself and in its relations with national governments.

5. DIVERGENT NATIONAL–GLOBAL INTERESTS, RHETORIC AND STRATEGIES

SADC trade unions’ politico-ideological orientation towards the world market is of interest to the rest of the international working class, because virtually all the world’s unions are struggling with how to respond to debilitating global economic processes. But by no means have Southern African workers found a unified or unifying approach to what clearly should be universal, namely the multifaceted struggle against neoliberalism. Just two examples of the divergent, sometimes contradictory, processes currently underway must suffice: resistance to structural adjustment (especially the role of the IMF/World Bank), and the debate over ‘Social Clauses’ in trade agreements.

The IMF and World Bank played substantial macroeconomic policy-making roles in Southern Africa during the period of economic crisis. We can consider the experiences of the two most important union movements—those of South Africa and Zimbabwe—for illustrations of the dangers and possibilities to which this influence gave rise. As noted above, South Africa’s *Gear* policy was a resounding failure in all except two areas: fiscal discipline and a low inflation rate. At the press conference announcing *Gear*, the then Deputy President Thabo Mbeki confirmed: ‘Just call me a Thatcherite’.³⁶ Although the SACP initially endorsed *Gear*, Cosatu reacted critically: ‘We have serious reservations over conservative fiscal policies that the document intends to implement’. After a month, Cosatu general secretary Mbhazima Shilowa said, quite simply: ‘Something has gone terribly wrong’.³⁷ A year later, the SACP formally condemned *Gear*, and by mid-1998 Mandela and Mbeki very publicly rebuked the SACP at its national congress, in the midst of another currency crisis (and in doing so were understood to be addressing the domestic and international financial markets as much as the activists).

By the end of 1999, in his 'Millennium Message', Cosatu's new general secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi, complained of the 'deepening unemployment crisis and massive inequalities growing at catastrophic proportions ... The interventions made by the democratic government have failed to stem the characteristics of the apartheid economy'. Referring to the ongoing public-sector wage dispute (in which government rejected a stalemated bargaining forum and instead unilaterally imposed a below-inflation increase), Vavi warned that collective bargaining was 'under threat' and that in particular 'bureaucrats in the Finance Department want to ... fragment [the] centralized bargaining we won during the dark days of apartheid'.³⁸

But if Cosatu's reactions to structural adjustment, World Bank policies and fiscal tightening at the expense of workers were admirably critical in their rhetorical tone, this did not translate into a practical or even sustained ideological challenge in reality. There were no strategies or tactics for beating the Department of Finance bureaucrats or the conservative forces in the ANC more generally, notwithstanding a major show of force in the form of a national strike in May 2000 endorsed (at the cost of a day's pay) by half of the eight million work-force. *Gear* continued to be implemented without substantive challenge, aside from discrete strikes against particular aspects of neoliberalism (e.g., municipal privatization)—even when at the worst point of the East Asian crisis in 1998, the Washington Consensus was attacked by the leading intellectual Joel Netshitenzhe (writing with Shilowa and SACP intellectual Jeremy Cronin) in the ANC Discussion Document referred to above:

The present crisis is, in fact, a global capitalist crisis, rooted in a classical crisis of over-accumulation and declining profitability ... As the depth and relative durability of the crisis have become apparent, the dominant economic paradigm (the neoliberal 'Washington Consensus') has fallen into increasing disrepute.³⁹

Known locally as 'talk-left, act-right' politics, this sort of alliance discourse contrasts with the potentially more radical, if softer-spoken, reaction of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) to that country's dismal 1991–95 Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) and subsequent policy drift, a dissonance which should be explained. For ZCTU statements may initially give an equally, though opposite, misleading impression of the underlying balance of forces and political dynamic.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the ZCTU under Tsvangirai's leadership broke out of the paternalist grip in which the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) government had held the federation since its 1981 founding (when Albert Mugabe, brother of Robert, served as secretary), and through which union strategies, tactics and politics were controlled during the 1980s. As general secretary in 1989, Tsvangirai even found himself in jail for two weeks simply for supporting left-wing students' criticism of ZANU's rapid right-wing drift towards structural adjustment. Quickly identifying neoliber-

alism as one of the most important issues (along with corruption) dividing the Zimbabwe government from the masses, Tsvangirai predicted a difficult period ahead at a time when bourgeois commentary was universally optimistic.⁴⁰

And ESAP's failure did indeed generate unprecedented 'IMF Riots' in 1993 and 1995 (see section 1 above). Yet the ZCTU was not well-placed to take advantage of this opening, and instead zigzagged between a front-building strategy and a desire for corporatist technical solutions. This can probably be explained by the movement's initial political marginalization, its weak shopfloor base, and the ZANU government's divide-and-conquer strategy. As the ZCTU retreated into an aspirant-corporatist mode, even Tsvangirai sought an accommodation with neoliberalism.

To this end, in 1996 the ZCTU issued an important policy advocacy document, *Beyond ESAP*. Blinkered by the desire to remain relevant to reforming ESAP in potential tripartite settings (including sectoral fora dealing with housing, social security and other social policies), *Beyond ESAP* in fact codified many of the Mugabe regime's worst conceptual errors and policy recommendations. Tsvangirai himself wrote in the foreword that 'While acknowledging that SAPs are necessary, the study shows that they are insufficient in fostering development'; a more militant political strategy would have generated the affirmation that ESAP was unnecessary and indeed that it underdeveloped Zimbabwe during the 1990s.⁴¹

The basis for such concessionary language was a protracted but fruitless attempt to establish a broad 'social contract' that would, as Tsvangirai put it in the mid-1990s, 'involve the three parties reaching a consensus where workers agree to restrain wage demands on the one hand and employers agree to control price increases for commodities, invest surpluses to create more jobs and train workers on the other. For government, you would expect them to cut spending'.⁴² However, in the wake of a year-long wave of worker militancy in 1997-98 (including previously docile public sector employees and even the chronically atomized plantation workers) and two successful national mass strikes against Mugabe's policies, Tsvangirai suddenly moved to the left: instead of joining a National Economic Consultative Forum in January 1999, as expected, he led a ZCTU walkout on the grounds that Mugabe's government could not be trusted; a few weeks later, he convened a broad-based National Working People's Convention (a significant name) which issued quite radical resolutions;⁴³ he led a civil-society 'National Constitutional Assembly' process that in 1999 garnered sufficient popular support to force Mugabe to set up his own constitution-rewriting commission; and when in mid-1999, he announced the formation of the 'labour-backed' Movement for Democratic Change (MDC, often termed the 'workers' party'), a founding manifesto balanced its overall good governance orientation with quite expansive socio-economic visions.⁴⁴

The best indication of the potential for Zimbabwe workers' leftward momentum in 2000 and beyond—in the wake of the conservative discourses

of the 1990s—may simply be Mugabe’s own confused and confusing reaction: a resurgence of leftwing rhetoric.⁴⁵ By late 1999, Mugabe publicly told the IMF to ‘shut up!’, amongst other outbursts reported in the international press, and after losing a national constitutional referendum to the MDC in February 2000, he stage-managed land invasions of white-owned commercial farms. But again and again, throughout its history, ZANU had shown a remarkable capacity to talk-left, act-right, with Mugabe reserving his most revolutionary-sounding rhetoric for those occasions when leftwing political threats appeared.

In the June 2000 election, the MDC took 46% of the vote in an election characterized by massive intimidation of MDC supporters, to become the official opposition, setting up a close contest for the presidency in 2002 (Mugabe would by then have appointed his successor). Could the outcome be as bad as Zambia’s—where former trade union leader Chiluba was influenced by neoliberal advisers as well as by aspirant-bourgeois political allies prior to taking power? Given the MDC’s need to contest ZANU in rural areas with a progressive programme and alliances, this is not a foregone conclusion. Time will tell whether talking right—as in *Beyond ESAP*—becomes the actual electoral platform and programme of governance, or whether a mass-democratic, populist instinct can find space to grow within the MDC, ensuring that the leaders must continue looking leftward for popular support.

Beyond these fluid, disparate and contradictory national struggles, can internationalist strategies and tactics reconfigure class struggle in a more favourable way? In the case of trade agreements, the interests of the world’s workers *appear* to lie in a concerted programme to raise the standard of living (including gender and environmental protections) of those at the bottom of the global hierarchy, by attaching clauses to trade agreements enforced by the WTO. Yet the debate on the inclusion of social, labour, governance and environmental clauses in trade agreements to this end became extremely thorny during the 1990s, serving as a divisive ‘wedge issue’ within the international movement.

Divisions were also found in Southern Africa. From Johannesburg, Vavi and other Cosatu leaders pushed for such clauses to be applied against regional trading partners. In contrast, many progressive African social movements, NGOs, churches and women’s groups, development agencies, technical think-tanks and intellectuals—some of them gathered in the Ghana-based Africa Trade Network—condemned the imposition of conditions on what they argue is already a terribly unequal trade, investment and financing relationship with the South. A November 1999 workshop of SATUCC and regional social movement activists issued a ‘Statement on the Seattle Ministerial’ rejecting ‘the widening of the ambit of issues under the WTO through the inclusion of the Social Clause’. The potential value of such clauses was outweighed, in the activists’ view, by the damage done to power relations through amplifying the legitimacy and power of the WTO. But Cosatu’s Vavi—who did not attend—immediately disassociated SATUCC (over which he presided) from the workshop statement. Instead, in Seattle a few days later, Vavi joined forces with

the South African government and local big business, to demand less-protectionist trade rules, but nevertheless including the Social Clause. The delegation gained prized access to Green Room deliberations, though it returned empty-handed (and Erwin soon dropped his support for the Social Clause).⁴⁶

The Social Clause strategy thus appears discredited. If we take as a first principle that labour internationalism is violated by promoting the interests of an oppressor nation over those of an oppressed nation, above all when the wishes of the latter have not been consulted, then this is no loss. On this basis it is easy to support boycotts against apartheid-era South Africa and SLORC-run Burma—for whom sanctions called for by popular, democratic movements translate into a strategic attack on local oppressors—but difficult to justify ‘humanitarian’ interventions in the sphere of trade via Social Clauses enforced by the WTO, where economic interests are imperialist or at best narrowly protectionist, and where *status quo* power relations are only exacerbated.

Just how visionary can regional and international labour and social solidarity be, in the early twenty-first century? We retain optimism, for as Gramsci put it, ‘It is absurd to think of a purely objective prediction. Anybody who makes a prediction has in fact a programme for whose victory he is working, and his prediction is precisely an element contributing to that victory’.⁴⁷ Our examples from Southern Africa’s national labour movements, from uneasy regional integration and regional visions, and from international economic policy and institutional contestation, suggest strategic orientations that can promote unity and avoid divisive tactics. Against TINA—‘There Is No Alternative’—Southern African radicals have long counterposed the Zulu word for ‘hope’, THEMBA: ‘There Must be an Alternative’. In sum, there must be, as a South African mineworker said at the Seattle labour rally, a basis, perhaps beginning on a regional scale, to have ‘workers of the world unite’.

NOTES

1. To establish our boundaries, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) comprises both strong and frail nation-states: Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Seychelles, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The large, well-populated but impoverished island of Madagascar also belongs, geographically, but is generally excluded due to its isolation and Francophone heritage. For the purposes of this essay, we mainly consider the capital flows, labour movements and regional linkages within the ten most southern, mainland countries (i.e., omitting the DRC, Mauritius, Seychelles, and Tanzania.)
2. Samir Amin, ‘Regionalization in Response to Polarizing Globalization’, in Bjorn Hettne, Andras Inotai and Osvaldo Sunkel (eds), *Globalism and the New Regionalism*, London, Macmillan, 1999, p. 77.
3. Similar imperatives were introduced in Portuguese-controlled Mozambique and Angola, and in Namibia (the German-run former South West Africa until South

Africa took over after World War I). But such accumulation was mainly based upon extractive (rather than settler-oriented) economics, via control of plantation labour.

4. Liv Torres (ed.), *One out of Ten: The Labour Market in Southern Africa*, Oslo, Fafo, 1998, p. 56. Nearly half of these workers are from Lesotho, with another third from Mozambique and the balance from Swaziland and Botswana. The definitive work on migrancy is David McDonald (ed.), *On Borders: Perspectives on International Migration in Southern Africa*, New York, St Martin's Press, 2000.
5. Edward Roux, *Time Longer than Rope*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1964.
6. Dale McKinley, *The ANC: A Political Biography*, London, Pluto Books, 1997.
7. Robert Fine and Dennis Davies, *Beyond Apartheid*, London, Pluto Press, 1991.
8. Brian Raftopoulos and Ian Phimister (eds), *Keep on Knocking: A History of the Labour Movement in Zimbabwe, 1900–1997*, Harare, Baobab, 1998.
9. Greg Ruiters, 'Urban Struggles and Urban Defeats in the 1980s', *Urban Forum*, 11, 2, 2000; Mzwanele Mayekiso, *Township Politics*, New York, Monthly Review, 1996.
10. Colin Leys and John Saul, *Namibia's Liberation Struggle: A Two-edged Sword*, London, James Currey, 1995, p. 84.
11. John Saul, 'Liberation without Democracy', in Jonathan Hyslop (ed), *African Democracy*, Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1999, p. 167.
12. *Fosatu Workers News*, April 1982, p. 2. See also Dave Lewis, 'Capital, Trade Unions and Liberation', *South African Labour Bulletin*, 11, 4, 1986, p. 35.
13. Cited in John Saul, 'Class, Race and the Future of Socialism', in William Cobbett and Robin Cohe (eds), *Popular Struggles in South Africa*, London, James Currey, 1988, p. 216.
14. Without such corrections, the per capita GDP collapse is enormous, leaving Southern Africa with six of the world's sixteen poorest countries: the DRC (\$110), Mozambique (\$140), Malawi (\$210), Tanzania (\$210), Madagascar (\$250) and Angola (\$260), according to *The World Bank Atlas 1999*.
15. Ben Fine and Zav Rustomjee, *The Political Economy of South Africa: From Minerals-Energy Complex to Industrialization*, London, Christopher Hurst and Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 1996.
16. Patrick Bond, *Cities of Gold, Townships of Coal: Essays on South Africa's New Urban Crisis*, Trenton, Africa World Press, 2000.
17. Patrick Bond, *Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa*, London, Pluto Press, 2000.
18. Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, *Beyond ESAP*, Harare, p. 48.
19. World Bank, *Project Completion Report: Zimbabwe: Structural Adjustment Programme*, Country Operations Division, Washington, DC, 1995, p. 23.
20. Southern African Political Economic Series, *SADC Regional Human Development Report*, Harare, 1998.
21. Thomas Callaghy and John Ravenhill (eds), *Hemmed In: Responses to Africa's Economic Decline*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1993.
22. Herbert Jauch, 'Building a Regional Labour Movement', *South African Labour Bulletin*, 23, 1, 1999, p. 85.
23. Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labour Question in French and British Africa*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 468–471.

24. Carolyn Bassett and Marlea Clarke, 'Class Struggle', *Southern African Report*, March 2000.
25. Leys and Saul, *Namibia's Liberation*, p. 167.
26. Roseline Nyman, 'An Overview of Namibian Unions', in Torres, *One out of Ten*, p. 162.
27. Glenn Adler and Eddie Webster, 'South Africa: Class Compromise', *Southern Africa Report*, March 2000.
28. Cosatu Press Statement on Public Sector Strike, <http://www.cosatu.org.za>.
29. Vishwas Satgar and Conrad Jardine, 'Cosatu and the Tripartite Alliance', *South African Labour Bulletin*, 23, 3, 1999, p. 8.
30. ANC/Alliance, 'Global Economic Crisis and its Implications for South Africa', Discussion Document, reprinted in the *African Communist*, 4th quarter 1998, p. 5. However, to understand the limits of the South–South discourse, it is worth reminding ourselves that the South African government occupied a host of crucial positions during 1998–99—the headship of the Non-Aligned Movement, the presidency of the UN Conference on Trade and Development, the chair of both the Commonwealth and the Organization of African Unity, the host of the Southern African Development Community, UN Security Council member, the Governing Board chairmanship at the IMF and World Bank—and did virtually nothing to change global power relations and economic processes.
31. Fred Ahwireng-Obeng and Patrick McGowan, 'Partner or Hegemon? South Africa in Africa', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 16, 1, 1998.
32. Herbert Jauch and Dot Keet, *A SATUCC Study on Export Processing Zones in Southern Africa: Economic, Social and Political Implications*, Cape Town, International Labour Research and Information Group, 1996.
33. Paul Jourdan, Ketso Gordhan, Dave Arkwright, and Geoff de Beer, 'Spatial Development Initiatives (Development Corridors): Their Potential Contribution to Investment and Employment Creation', Working Paper, Development Bank of Southern Africa, Midrand, October, 1996.
34. Emblematic is the Coega SDI, as described in Patrick Bond, 'Economic Growth, Ecological Modernization, or Environmental Justice?: Conflicting Discourses in Post-Apartheid South Africa', *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, 11, 1, 2000.
35. Dot Keet, 'Globalization or Regionalization: Contradictory Tendencies? Counteractive Tactics? Or Strategic Possibilities?', Institute for Global Dialogue Working Paper, Johannesburg, June 1999.
36. Associated Press, 14 June 1996.
37. For analysis, see Hein Marais, *South Africa: The Political Economy of Change*, London, Zed and Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press, 1998.
38. Zwelinzima Vavi, 'Cosatu Millennium Message', Johannesburg, 22 December 1999.
39. ANC Alliance, 'The Global Economic Crisis', p. 1.
40. *Southern Africa Report*, July 1991.
41. *Beyond ESAP's neoliberal policy prescriptions are critiqued in Patrick Bond, Uneven Zimbabwe: A Study of Finance, Development and Underdevelopment*, Trenton, Africa World Press, 1998, Chapter 12.
42. Cited in Lloyd Sachikonye, 'Trade Unions: Economic and Political Development in Zimbabwe since Independence in 1980', in Raftopoulos and Phimister, *Keep on Knocking*, p. 127.

43. 'National policies should prioritise the mobilisation and organisation of resources to meet people's basic needs ... The country should aim to reduce its dependency on foreign loans and the loss of sovereignty that this brings ... The right to a minimum standard of health inputs (food, water, shelter) and health care must be defined and entrenched in the constitution, guaranteed and funded on an equitable basis by the state through its mobilization of national resources'. (<http://www.samara.co.zw/zctu/position.htm>)
44. <http://www.mdc.co.zw/intro-frames.html>. Nevertheless, in February 2000, Tsvangirai appointed a charismatic (white) official of the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries as MDC economic secretary to lead the MDC economic desk, generating expectations that once in power, Zimbabwe would follow Zambia's post-Kaunda experience. Coverage of the ambiguities is found in *Southern Africa Report*, May 2000.
45. Further background is provided in Patrick Bond, 'Zimbabwe's Political Reawakening', *Monthly Review*, 50, 11, 1999.
46. Workshop on Trade and Investment in Southern Africa, 'Statement on the Seattle Ministerial', Johannesburg 11–13 October 1999; SATUCC, 'Communique', Johannesburg, 5 November 1999; for more on the debate, see <http://www.aidc.org.za>.
47. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, London, Lawrence Wishart, 1971, p. 185.