

***** How Canada condones

by Linda Blanchet
& Katy Le Rougetel

This summer The Republic of South Africa was shaken by what may have been the most widespread uprising in the history of the south African liberation movement.

The oppressive regime of John Vorster has responded by slaying hundreds of Black and "colored" (mixed race)

protesters and a massive witchhunt campaign.

Growing industrialization and a shortage of labor has helped the development of large Black working-class populations in Soweto and other Black townships. Since the early 1970s this new layer has shown increasing confidence and militancy, defying state repression in a series of strikes, demonstrations and other actions.

The recent uprisings are

merely an indicator of explosive social tensions that have been building in South Africa for centuries. Black Africans are struggling against a system that condemns them to virtual slavery. They are crowded onto "reserves" or Bantustans, which are kept in utter poverty. They may not own property or settle in white areas of the country. They must carry passes at all times or be thrown in jail. They may not form or join trade unions, and strikes by Black workers are banned. Black workers' wages, at present averaging one-twentieth those for whites, remain at starvation level.

The cornerstone of South Africa's apartheid labor policy is the migrant labor system, under which Blacks contract for labor in the cities for one year at a time, usually in isolation from their families. This system ensures a large degree of government control over the movement and employment of Black workers, and provides employers with a

regular and inexpensive supply of labor.

The entire capitalist class of Western Europe and North America maintains economic and political links with the Vorster regime. South Africa offers attractive incentives to foreign investment, including large deposits of gold, diamonds and other valuable minerals.

The apartheid system gives Canadian and foreign corporations access to a large pool of workers whose wages are kept at rock-bottom levels, promising reduced labor costs and therefore higher profits.

The riots in Cape Town and Johannesburg this summer were sparked by several issues, most notably language and a new Vorster effort to further stratify and segregate South African society.

Blacks, taught Afrikaans in school, wanted to learn English, saying if they had to learn one Western language, it might as well be an international one.

Frustrated by the Vorster Regime's apparent indifference, students and workers from the black township of Soweto rioted this summer, setting off a chain of demonstrations which underscored the frailty of the white supremacist regime.

Indeed, with the erstwhile white flanks of Mozambique and Angola in the hands of leftist blacks, Vorster and the Rhodesian whites of Ian Smith are being forced to compromise before continent-wide violence flares.

Despite the shuttle-diplomacy of Henry Kissinger, calculated to make Gerry Ford look good, it may be too late.

Vorster may have signed his own death warrant by creating a series of "homelands" for South Africa's indigenous people, forcing blacks who may have lived in Cape Town or Johannesburg into areas of their tribal origin and making them aliens in South Africa.

That's somewhat akin to forcing all Albertans born in

Labrador to either return to Labrador or be subjected to discrimination in Alberta.

The Canadian government, though it has condemned apartheid in South Africa, has not discouraged Canadian corporations from taking advantage of trade and investment opportunities there. Such big-name industrial concerns as Massey-Ferguson, Alcan and Falconbridge maintain subsidiaries in South Africa.

Despite the view that foreign investment may be a liberating force for Black South Africans, the record of Canadian corporate involvement shows the opposite to be the case. Black workers

**Canada's
complicity
blithe,
without
conscience**

have won a number of concessions as a result of large upsurges and foreign pressure, but their status remains abysmally low.

A look at the activities of three Canadian subsidiaries in South Africa indicates their unwillingness to improve conditions for Black workers.

Information about the activities of these Canadian subsidiaries in South Africa was derived from a study by Hugh Nangle appearing in the *Ottawa Citizen* in June 1973.

According to Nangle's study, the total assets of Massey-Ferguson's South African subsidiary increased from more than \$28,890,000 in 1962 to more than \$28,530,000 in 1972. But at Massey-Ferguson's plant in Vereeniging, the overwhelming



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