

# Canadian Complicity in

**EDITOR'S NOTE** - Although the view put forward here by the authors may not be the most accurate or realistic possible, it does present an interesting opinion on the present southern African situation.

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reprinted from the Gateway

Photos by Steve Patriquen

Edmonton (CUP) - 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.

Over four months of unrest have seen almost 300 deaths among the country's non-white population.

The first riots were touched off by a language debate. Blacks, taught Afrikaans in schools wanted to learn English, saying if they had to learn a 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 minority rule.

Indeed, with the erstwhile white flanks of Mozambique, Botswana 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 into areas of their tribal origin and making them aliens in South Africa.

Growing industrialization and a shortage of labour 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.

## LIVING LIKE SLAVES

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, and 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 into jail. They may not form or join trade unions, and strikes by Black workers are banned. Black workers' wages, although rising, are still only a fraction of their white counterparts.

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 and its territory of South-West Africa offers attractive incentives to foreign investment, including large deposits of gold, diamonds and other valuable minerals.

## CANADA JOINS IN BLACK EXPLOITATION

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 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 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 in South Africa indicates Canadian corporations' 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 a recent study,\* the total assets of Massey-Ferguson's South African subsidiary increased in ten years from more than \$20,890,000 in 1962 to more than \$28,530,000 in 1972. But at Massey-Ferguson's plant in Vereeniging, the overwhelming majority of Black workers were paid less than the government's official poverty line. (PDL: Poverty Datum Line). The lowest-paid white worker at the Vereeniging plant earned at least \$191 monthly above the PDL.

This disparity in wages is maintained by racist laws denying Black workers the right to form trade unions and protect their wages and working conditions. These are determined by government labor councils controlled by whites.

Dr. L.E. Knoll, chief executive of Massey-Ferguson in South Africa claims

his Canadian shareholders would be "very unhappy" if Black workers were paid higher wages. Since the company obviously has the resources to substantially reduce or close the wage gap between Blacks and whites, it is evident that Massey-Ferguson intends to continue operating completely within the framework of the racist apartheid system.

According to Nangle's study, the total assets of Alcan Aluminum's South African subsidiary are more than \$41,300,000. However, at Alcan's Pietermaritzburg operation, the Black workers are paid extremely low wages in comparison to the white workers.

In addition, they are expected to purchase their own overalls and safety boots. There is no assistance to workers in obtaining adequate housing and educating their children.

The company has for its Black workers African townships buses are overcrowded the Alcan plant.

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## MINING FOR 56

Falconbridge of Falconbridge operates mines in

The Blanket Mine profit of \$1.3 million starting wage for Mine was 56 cents

Some Blacks



Falconbridge for received about \$4 some white supervisory and received \$810 per

Entire Black fa shanties made sheeting. Recreation beerhalls and a Whites, on the other attractive houses swimming pool clubhouse.

"It is not unfair charge that Falco slave labor mine

Falconbridge copper mine in administered by

Namibia is rich uranium, copper Africa rules Nam international inst the U.N.