

# S. African police kill six black strikers

On 22 April South African police opened fire without warning on a peaceful protest by striking transport workers. At least six strikers were killed. Fire engines were used to hose the blood off the streets.

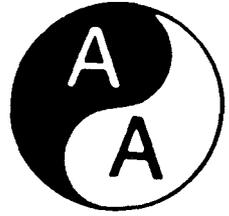
When protesters took refuge in the office block where COSATU [Congress of South African Trade Unions] and many of its affiliated unions are based, police besieged the building with eight armoured cars, snipers on nearby roofs, and assault forces that dragged trade union officials into custody.

The apartheid state is trying to crush a six-week old strike by nearly 20,000 transport workers, led by SARHWU — the South African Railway & Harbour Workers Union. The initial cause of the strike was the unjust dismissal of one worker. Far more than that lies at the root of the biggest strike ever seen in the public services in South Africa: this strike is about the daily humiliation, degradation and vicious exploitation of black workers on the railways. Their racist employer is SATS (South African Transport Services) — a state monopoly dominating railways, docks, long-distance road transport and South African Airways. SATS refuses to recognise SARHWU and is trying to break the strike by the mass sacking of 16,000 workers who ignored an ultimatum to return to work.

The Botha regime has every reason to seek to crush this strike:

- to break one of the biggest, most strategic unions in COSATU;
- to support the claim that the State of Emergency has 'worked', by suppressing all opposition; and
- to go into the May 6 whites-only election as the guardian of apartheid-style 'law and order'.

# Shootings mark bitter climax to stoppage by railway workers



In fact the State of Emergency has failed to crush the spirit of resistance. Postal workers have risked prosecution and dismissal by coming out in solidarity with the transport workers. SARHWU must not be crushed. It was one of the founding members of COSATU in 1985, having survived repeated set-backs in previous years, including the murder in police custody of one of its outstanding leaders, Lawrence Ndzanga, in January 1977.

## **WHAT YOU CAN DO!**

- Send a strong protest to the Ambassador, South Africa House, Trafalgar Square, London WC2, demanding the reinstatement of all dismissed SATS workers, the release of all trade unionists in detention, and recognition for the SA Railway & Harbour Workers Union.
- Seek the closure of the SATS-owned South African Airways Offices in London (Oxford Circus), Glasgow, Manchester and Birmingham.
- Send donations to the SATS strike solidarity fund, c/o South African Congress of Trade Unions, 8 Flowers Mews, off Archway Close, London N19 3TB. (Make cheques payable to SACTU Strike Fund.)
- Send solidarity messages to SARHWU, 803 COSATU House, 268 Jeppe Street, Johannesburg 2001, Republic of South Africa.
- Demand of the Government and your MP that SA Airways be refused landing rights in Britain, and that SAA adverts be refused by all media (TV, radio, newspapers and magazines) in line with the government's voluntary ban on the promotion of tourism to South Africa.

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## **FOR FREEDOM IN SOUTHERN AFRICA!**