

POTWA

Newsletter

Post & Telecommunication Workers Association

May 1989

Northern Cape Congress

The Northern Cape Region of Potwa held a very vibrant regional congress in Vryburg on the 15 & 16 April 1989.

The Congress was characterised by a spirit of comradely self-criticism.

This political maturity of the comrades went as far as to give a proper critical analysis of the structures of our organisation. The analysis accepted that the functioning of some of our organisation's structures is not up to standard.

The congress also noted that the participation of the general membership in the activities of the organisation is not satisfactory.

As it is typical of matured comrades, the congress realised that such problems are not peculiar to Potwa. Shortcomings such as these are indicative of a huge and growing organisation.

Because of this, the comrades explored ways and means of solving these problems. The congress concluded that the opening of a regional office combined with effective usage of our Potwa newsletter would go a long way in solving some of our problems.



The comrades also agreed that there is a strong need for politico-economic education amongst the membership. Such an education programme should also include educating the membership on our organisation as well as on general trade unionism.

Resolutions

The clear sightedness of the congress was clearly shown in the resolutions adopted. It adopted the following resolutions:

- 1) The congress fully endorsed Potwa's affiliation to Cosatu.
- 2) The congress also adopted the Freedom Charter as a guiding document to our struggle for National Liberation and for emancipation from exploitation.
- 3) The congress pledged its full support to Swapo.
- 4) The congress also condemned the privatisation of the Post Office. It resolved to embark on

anti-privatisation campaigns.

The last item on the agenda was elections.

The following comrades were elected.

Regional Executive Committee:

- Chairperson: Cde Merimetsi (Kimberley)
- Vice-chairperson: Cde George Mokoena (Kimberley)
- Secretary: Cde G Buchwana (Vryburg)
- Vice-secretary: Cde E Molothlegi (Vryburg)
- Treasurer: Cde Tys (Postmasburg)

Regional Education Committee (REDCOM)

- Chairperson: Cde Zena Khumalo (Kimberley)
- Vice-chairperson: Cde Ketumile (Postmasburg)
- Secretary: Cde Mokoesi (Kimberley)
- Vice-secretary: Cde Michael Lekweni (Postmasburg)
- Treasurer: Cde J Molathlegi

Save the patriots!

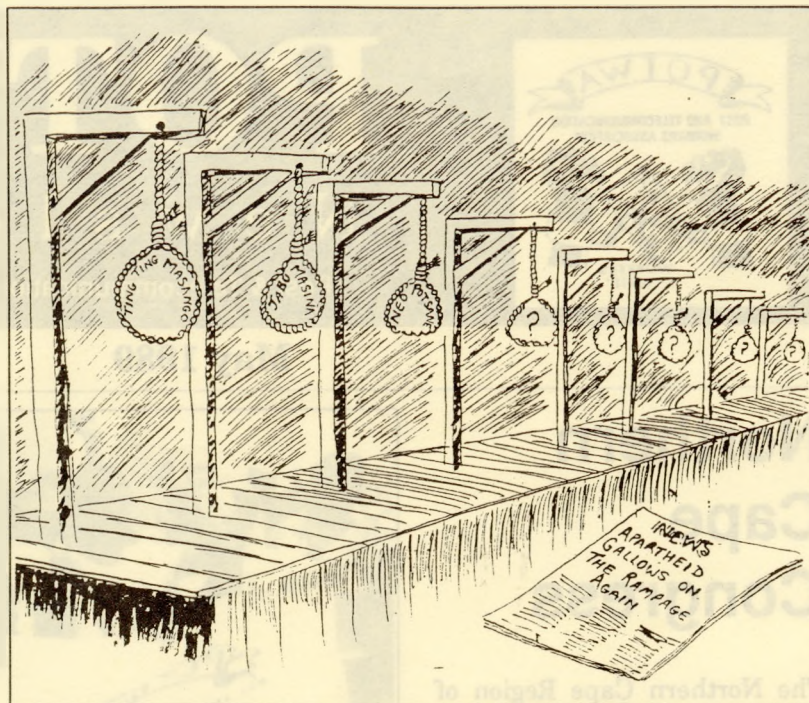
The South African government, through its courts, has again sentenced more of our patriots to death.

The latest victims of the government's unquenchable thirst for blood and violence are freedom fighters Jabu Masina, Ting Ting Masango and Neo Potsane. The three guerillas were sentenced to death in the Delmas II 'treason' trial.

The three cadres join an ever increasing number of patriots languishing in Botha's dungeons. All waiting to be hanged by their necks until they die, thanks to the laws passed by the racist parliament.

South Africa is known as the World's capital of death penalties. This is because the number of people 'legally' murdered by the government is the highest in the world. The South African government continues to murder the highest number of people in defiance of calls by the international community which values life.

The ANC, an organisation to which the three guerillas belong, signed the Geneva Convention in 1980. The Geneva Convention, which recognises struggles for national liberation, bestows the status of Prisoner-of-War



upon captured cadres of warring parties. Such status protects captured cadres against death sentences, among other things.

According to the Geneva Convention, the three ANC cadres shouldn't have appeared in a civilian court of law. The death sentences passed on the three are illegitimate and amoral, according to the Geneva convention.

All the world recognises the Geneva Convention. The South African government has constantly refused to ratify this convention. This places the government outside civilised mankind.

How can we stop this legal carnage?

The South African government is under the illusion that it can drown our resolute march to freedom in our blood. In pursuance of this illusion, the government is going to kill many, many more people. But it can be stopped!

To stop this carnage we must:

- Join campaigns aimed at saving our patriots.
- Be prepared to actively take part in actions aimed at securing the release of political prisoners.
- We also need to popularise the plight of our patriots by signing petitions, asking others to also petition the government.
- Our active participation in the factory floor struggles and in the broad national liberation struggles will ensure the release of our patriots.

Remember: Today it is the ANC Three, yesterday it was the Addo Four, before that it was the Sharpeville Six,..... The list is endless.

Who is next? It may be me. But it can equally be you.

To stop this we must act now, and act in unity.

Namibia is on the way to freedom!

The people of Namibia have been waging a relentless all-round struggle against colonialism for more than 200 years.

First, it was Germany which colonised and plundered the wealth of Namibia. The heroic Namibians rose to this challenge and presented Germany with a very formidable resistance.

At the end of the 2nd World War, the league of Nations handed over Namibia to South Africa to rule temporarily.

Later, after the formation of United Nations, United Nations called on South Africa to hand Namibia over to Namibians.

South Africa decided it could not let go of the National wealth of the people of Namibia. In defiance of the verdict of the International court case held in Hague, South Africa continued with its oppression of Namibia.

Holding in disdain the wishes of the people of Namibia and progressive mankind the world over, South Africa and her capitalist friends continued to rape the riches of Na-



A Swapo leader, Hendrik Witbooi, addresses a rally

mibia.

Faced with this arrogance, the people of Namibia had no alternative but to continue fighting. But this time the resistance was qualitatively different.

Swapo, with its military wing, Plan, was now better poised to wrestle power from the enemy into the hands of Namibians.

When Fapla, the people's army of Angola, and the Cuban internationalist forces, succeeded in routing SADF out of Angola,

Plan soldiers bravely occupied trenches next to Fapla and Cuba's internationalist force comrades. Plan shares equal glory, rightlyfully so, with the victorious Fapla and Cuba. Side by side with Plan and the Cubans, Fapla showed

that the SADF can be defeated.

The struggle of Namibia is one of the longest and most bitter struggles in Africa. But even now, the enemies of Namibia are continuing to plot against Namibia's liberation. South Africa and her western allies like Margaret Thatcher of Britain, are hell-bent on discrediting Swapo.

A bloodbath has been created by South Africa.

Namibia's fighters are being trapped and massacred on a wholesale scale. Country-wide intimidation of Namibia's civilians is the order of the day.

This situation calls upon us to be ready to come to the assistance of Namibia.

• Please turn over

Support our comrades in Namibia!



Victims of South African action: Slain Swapo guerillas on the territory's northern border after the April 1 battles

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We are called upon to support any rallies organised in support of Namibia's freedom.

We must always remember that

- The enemies of Namibia are our enemies.
- The freedom of Namibia brings our own freedom that much nearer.
- The freedom of Namibia further reduces the chances of SADF cross-boarder raids.
- We know that South Africa

will continue with its cross-border raids and destruction of Frontline State's economies including the economy of Namibia, but with a Free Namibia, even such raids will be reduced.

- The killing of innocent children and defenceless women of the frontline states is about to end, but only if we support Swapo.

Long live the fighting masses of Namibia!

Viva SWAPO!

Viva PLAN!

Comrades!

This is your newsletter.

Help to make it serve your genuine interests — submit your stories, poetry, views and news of events.

And don't throw this bulletin away when you have finished reading it.

It is our weapon — pass it on to your comrade or friend.

Privatisation of the post office

The South African government announced that it is going ahead with its plan of selling the post and telecommunication industry.

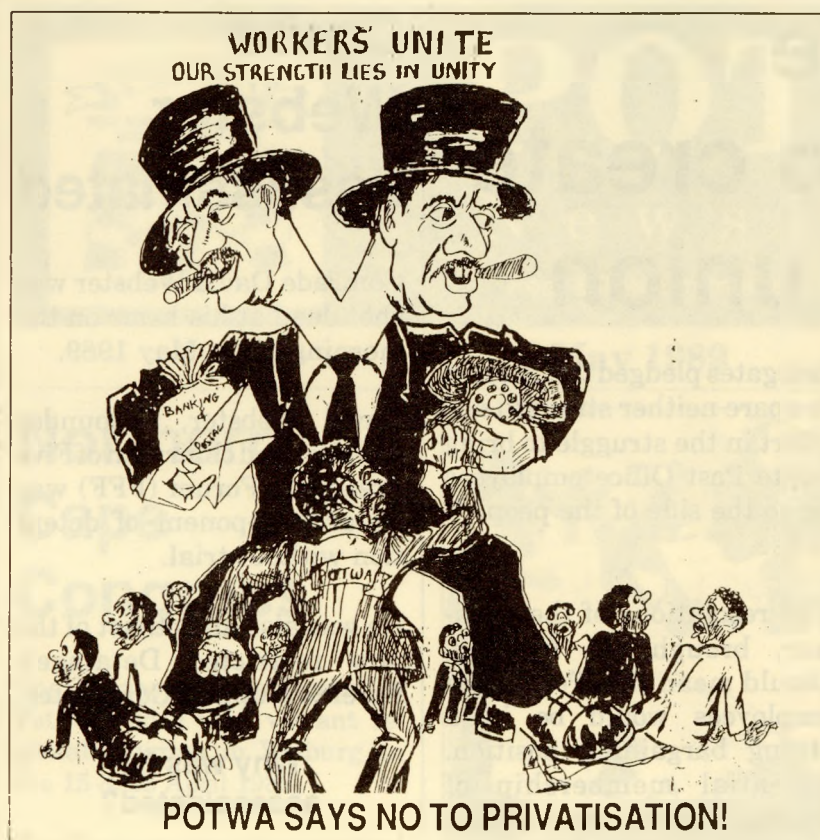
In pursuance of this plan, the government is to begin re-organising the department of Post and telecommunication into two units. These will be the Post and Banking unit on one hand and the telecommunication on the other. This re-organisation is to begin on the 1st April 1989.

Why are they selling off the post office?

The apartheid government is under increasing pressure from the democratic forces inside the country and from progressive mankind the world over.

One of the tactics used by the international progressive community to force South Africa to abandon its apartheid policies is economic sanctions. Workers in countries like Britain, USA and Germany are putting pressure on their governments, the banks and multinational companies to stop doing business and giving loans to the racist South African government. These workers are convinced that economic ties with South Africa only help to entrench apartheid.

To help us in our all round struggle to dismantle apartheid, they believe they should



deny the South African government the economic muscle it uses to finance bantustans and maintain troops in our locations.

These efforts have pushed the government to a situation where it has very few friends abroad. It is no longer in a position to raise loans easily. Instead of dismantling apartheid, the government resorts to selling our national heritage to a few rich individuals who will use it to satisfy their greed for profit.

The income accruing from selling our national wealth will be used by the government to further entrench apartheid.

Why do we oppose privatisation?

The capitalists who will buy the post and telecommunication industry operate on the principle of 'Maximum-profit

from minimum-input. This principle means that capitalists care little for the welfare of the workers. They care much, much more for big profits. For capitalists to obtain maximum profits, workers will be replaced by machines that can generate huge profits. This replacement will be done with scant regard for the welfare of the workers.

Such a situation is already happening with Siemens workers. Workers at Siemens went on strike recently in protest against retrenchment. Siemens is retrenching workers because the Post Office has cut its budget for digital equipment capex. With privatisation such retrenchment will be the order of the day. Thus unemployment will escalate further.

• Because all capitalists always seek huge profits, they

only operate where profits are guaranteed. Rural areas are not fertile grounds for maximum profits. Because of this, these capitalists will not service rural areas adequately. Because of this rural communities, migrant labourers and urban based communities will find it more difficult to communicate with relatives and their loved ones.

• The capitalist owners of the Post and telecommunication industry will compete with one another. This will make them import sophisticated machines to maximise profits. The consequences of this will be escalating costs of communicating.

• Only white capitalists and multinationals will afford to buy big shares in the Post and telecommunication industry. The overwhelming majority of our people will be left out.

• Lastly, but not the least in importance, we oppose the selling of our national heritage to individuals.

Potwa demands

• The restoration of all our national wealth, including the mines, Iscor, railways and the Post Office, to the people.

• We demand the creation of more jobs and living wages.

• We demand full trade union rights.

• We demand an end to racial discrimination in the post office and in our society.

• We demand the scrapping of the Labour Relations Amendment Act.

Post office workers to create one giant union

A historic seminar, organised by Potwa, resolved to create one union for the South African Post and Telecommunications industry.

This history-making decision was arrived at in a seminar held in Lusaka on the 25/26 March 1989.

Delegates from Potwa, Transvaal branch of South African Post Office Employees Association (SAPOEA) and South African Post and Telecommunications Employees Association (SAPTEA) vowed to work tirelessly to bring about the merger of the three unions. A machinery to bring about this unity was also set into motion. The unity moves are expected to be complete by January 1990.

The role of the White working class did not escape the attention of the delegates, who all agreed that Whites had been bribed into defending Apartheid and Capitalism.

But this, the delegates argued, should not stand in the way of awakening the White working class to the need of working class unity. The seminar also agreed that the Whites of our country have a role to play in the struggle to take our country out of the ruinous path the government has taken it into.

On the basis of this, all the

delegates pledged themselves to spare neither strength nor effort in the struggle to bring white Post Office employees on to the side of the people's cause.

The resolutions of the seminar, brought to fruition, should mean that Post Office employees would be in a strong bargaining position. Potential membership of Potwa, Saptea and Sapoia alone is well over 42 950 out of a total of +- 97 020.

The seminar was graced by the presence of its honorary guests, Sactu. Sactu, the revolutionary beacon to progressive unionism, has always fought for working class unity irrespective of race, sex or creed. Sactu, correctly maintains that factory floor struggles are the proper schools for the working class struggle. Sactu also asserts that under South African conditions, factory floor struggles should complement the overall National liberation struggle and the working class struggle. Again we believe this analysis is correct.

We need to strengthen this bargaining hand. To do this, we need to swell the ranks of Potwa, Saptea and Sapoia. We must organise ourselves in the various Post Offices and yards into strong P & T Committees. Our strength lies in our unity.

David Webster assassinated

Comrade David Webster was shot dead at his home on the morning of 1st May 1989.

David Webster, a founder member and chairman of Five Freedoms Forum (FFF) was an arch opponent of detention without trial.

He was also an activist of the now restricted Detainee's Parents' Support Committee.

Why was he assassinated?

We believe that the faceless thugs who carried out this gruesome act, did it to protect the crumbling apartheid regime. Who else stands to benefit from the death of this people's leader? Who else would think of celebrating May Day by murdering an activist of the Masses?

We, members of Potwa, condemn the assassination of comrade David Webster. We pledge to pick up his spear.

Victory or death! We shall win!

