January 1981.

BLACK WORKERS' LEADERSEEKS SOLIDARITY IN U.S. TOUR

From mid-October to mid-December 1980 Tozamile Botha, community and strike leader exiled from South Africa in the spring, made his first visit to North America. Initially he addressed the Annual Day of Solidarity with South African Political Prisoners at United Nations headquarters in New York. Another week was spent in London attending a UN sponsored seminar on western corporate involvement in South Africa and three weeks were spent touring Canada, from Montreal to Vancouver. With the cooperation of the African National Congress, Botha spent about seven weeks addressing trade union, campus, community and church groups in the U.S. in a tour co-ordinated by ACOA.

Coming on the heels of a year of major labor and community unrest in South Africa, Botha brought impressive credentials as leader of the two-month long strike at Ford Motor Company's Port Elizabeth plant. This action helped initiate the wave of strikes in South Africa.

As president of the Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organization (Pebco) he organized meetings of up to 10,000 residents which offered a defiant challenge to South Africa's racist apartheid system. Whether in testifying before Congress, meeting with the leadership of the United Auto Workers (UAW), or addressing universities where trustees have resisted divestment, Botha brought a clear message of the sacrifices being made by the people of South Africa for their liberation, a message uncompromised by so-called "signs of change" and corporate "codes of conduct". He called upon his audiences to demonstrate their solidarity concretely in any way they could.

A brief summary of the tour, highlighting many of the places visited follows.

Labor

Botha began his tour in New York with a meeting sponsored by the local Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) built on less than a weeks notice. ACOA sponsored a labor press briefing where Botha also met with the president of District 1199, National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, Leon Davis. The briefing generated articles in many trade union publications such as the hospital workers magazine, District 65, UAW's paper, and District Council 1707 AFSCME paper. The president of the Fur, Leather & Machine Workers Joint Board (FLM), Henry Foner, arranged for Botha to address FLM workers at a leather tannery in Newark, N.J. and a FLM construction local meeting in New York. The FLM paper, Tempo covered the visits.

In Washington, he met with the staff of the International Affairs Department of the UAW. The national paper of the American Federation of State County & Municipal Employees (AFSCME) covered his visit to their headquarters in a meeting with trade unionists arranged by TransAfrica. Near
Boston he met with local trade unionists at UAW plant offices in Framingham, Massachusetts, and in Chicago he met with trade unionists at CBTU meeting. In Hartford the Connecticut Anti-Apartheid Committee organized a reception for Tozamile sponsored by numerous community and trade union groups, including UAW Region 9A; District 1199C; and IAM Local 1736.

In Los Angeles he addressed members of the International Association of Machinists (Local 727), met other trade unionists at UAW Local 216's offices, and addressed members of the Communication Workers of America (CWA) arranged by the local chapter of the National Black Communication Workers Coalition.

In San Francisco, his major speech, held at the Service Employees International (SEIU) hall, was endorsed by SEIU locals 250 & 723; International Longshoreman and Warehouseman's Union (ILWU); Local 10 and the Bay Area CBTU. He met with UAW officials at their plant office in Fremont, California, ILWU and state AFL-CIO officials as well.

In Detroit, he met with many of the national staff of the UAW at Solidarity House, including the research department, was interviewed by Solidarity, the national paper, met Horace Sheffield, special assistant to Douglas Fraser and national secretary of the CBTU and Marc Stepp, UAW Vice-President and Chrysler department director. Stepp, who had just returned from a trip to South Africa, hosted a reception for Botha.

Congress

Tozamile was invited in mid-November to address a hearing of the House of Representatives International Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, chaired by Congressman Stephen Solarz (D-N.Y.). Botha was closely examined by the subcommittee concerning his opposition to the "Sullivan Principles" code of conduct for workplace reforms in South Africa. A briefing for Congressional aides was arranged by Stephen Weissman of the Africa Subcommittee staff and Botha also met with Senator Paul Tsongas (D-MA), who chairs the ad hoc Congressional monitoring group on South Africa. The Washington Office on Africa arranged a session for church and other national organization representatives based in the Capitol to meet with Botha.

Other Organizations

A number of other organizational forums introduced Botha to different constituencies. In Philadelphia, he met with national staff of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and the New York AFSC office hosted a forum on labor and South Africa with Botha featured. A special meeting was organized at the African Studies Association annual conference in Philadelphia for Tozamile. In New York, he spoke before a meeting held in the Interchurch Center organized by the Africa office, National Council of Churches and addressed an African Forum at Phelps-Stokes Fund offices.

Community meetings were sponsored in a good number of cities for Botha. The Black United Front held a fund-raising reception in Brooklyn, N.Y. Labor Notes (labor activists newsletter) hosted a session at a Methodist church in Detroit; he attended a church conference on racism in Los Angeles; southern Africa support groups hosted meetings in Chicago, Baltimore, Boston and Poughkeepsie (N.Y.).
Colleges and Universities

Anti-Apartheid and divestment groups, African studies and black student unions sponsored forums for Tozamile at a large number of universities. His visit did much to extend the reach of divestment activities, (the issue is being taken up where it has never been raised before), and helped rejuvenate the forces where battle continues. Audiences up to 500 in a number of places came out to hear Botha. And frequently classes, meetings with administration officials and similar functions were arranged. His December visit to the West Coast unfortunately prevented many engagements from being arranged.

Colleges visited included Boston University, City College (CUNY), Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Hampshire, Harvard, Howard, Los Angeles Valley College, Northwestern, Princeton, State University of New York (Binghampton and New Paltz) Suffolk University, Swarthmore, Temple, the Universities of Illinois (Chicago Circle & Campaign-Urbana) Massachusetts (Amherst) Rochester, Texas (Austin), Virginia (Charlottesville), Vassar Washington State (Pullman), Western Michigan (Kalamazoo) and Williams College.

Media

Aside from the labor publications noted, Botha was interviewed in a number of publications worth noting, including the San Francisco Chronicle, the Detroit News and the Chicago Defender. Africa Report and Southern Africa magazine carried interviews as well as The Black Scholar, The Guardian and Intercontinental Press. Labor News, a publication of Amnesty International USA on trade union human rights violations, carried an extensive interview which reaches hundreds of unions. Local papers, campus publications and television interviews were arranged in virtually every place visited, including radio interviews with the Inner City Broadcasting Network, National Black Network and United Nations radio (broadcast inside South Africa). For a feature article on labor unrest in South Africa Business Week spoke to Botha on tour and quoted him.

Just before Christmas as he departed for Africa, I believe Tozamile left with the knowledge that his tour had brought the message of the liberation struggle in South Africa to many thousands of Americans, helping build the base for new actions to sever the links between the US and apartheid.

Paul Irish
American Committee on Africa
198 Broadway
New York, NY 10038
Labor Leader Visits S.F.

A Black South African's Plea

TOZAMILE BOTHA

"We are prepared to suffer"

"We are prepared to pay for some meaningful change."

"People are becoming aware of their labor power," said Botha, referring to the wave of strikes that disrupted several multinational factories last August. "They see freedom coming nearer."

He became politically active while studying law at a black South African university. Later, as a teacher, he helped raise money for statistics, American corporations are prepared to suffer and benefit from the apartheid system — that nation's legally enforced system of racial segregation.

They benefit from the cheap labor system," he said. Wages of blacks at the Ford plant in Port Elizabeth (South Africa's Detroit) are only a fifth of the white workers, he said.

To maintain the disparity, labor organizers are questioned and intimidated by police, and strikers are often "deported" to the reservation-like "Bantustans," and stripped of their rights to work in the cities.

Their claim is that blacks will starve if they pull out of South Africa. But the blacks are doing all the menial jobs," he said. "We are prepared to suffer — it is the penal-

TOZAMILE BOTHA

of the newly organized black union followed. Workers returned to work after 2½ months, following the intervention of the American consul-general, without satisfaction of their demands for equal pay for equal work, promotions, and desegregated facilities.

The day after the strike ended last winter, Botha was "banned" by security police, without trial. Last May, Botha, a short, barrel-chested man, slipped into exile over the border to Lesotho, a black-controlled nation that exists like an island within South Africa's borders.

Lesotho also hosts other exiled South Africans who belong to the African National Congress, a political organization that took responsibility this spring for the spectacular bombing of a synthetic fuel plant.

Only a combination of tactics — boycotts, strikes, sabotage and guerrilla warfare — will produce profound change in South Africa, Botha said.

He has been touring Canada and the United States, asking unions to make sure their pension funds are not invested in corporations investing in South Africa.

According to U.S. government statistics, American corporations have invested more than $2 billion in the South African economy and employ about 25,000 workers.

Despite what companies call "the hassle factor" of strikes, international disapproval, and the possibility of violent revolution, they are lured by the 20 percent overall rate of return on investment.

The South African economy has proved to be remarkably strong in the present recession because of its supplies of strategic minerals and the buoying effect of rising gold prices on this major gold producer.
AFSCME Hosts South African Trade Union Leader

Washington, D.C.—He has the same
last name as his nation's prime
minister, but exiled South African
trade unionist Thozamile Botha has
little else in common with the head
of his country's racist government.

Botha spoke last month at AFSCME's International headquarters.
He's currently on a U.S. speaking
tour that will include testimony on
South Africa before a congressional
committee.

Botha was a central figure in
last year's fight for decent working
conditions for non-whites at Ford
Motor Company's South African
subsidy. At one point, he was
fired for political activity, but a pro-
test strike by 700 black workers won
his job back.

South Africa government offi-
cials later had Botha "banned"—a
peculiar South Africa procedure that
makes it illegal for a person to hold
a job, meet with more than one per-
son, be mentioned in the press or
leave home evenings, holidays or
weekends.

Facing even stiffer penalties
early this year, Botha fled South
Africa.

AFSCME's International Con-
vention last June noted in a resolu-
tion that U.S. investments in South
Africa have bolstered the current
apartheid—segregation—regime.
Botha couldn't agree more after his
experience at Ford.

"I was one of only two blacks
out of 22 engineering trainees, and
our wages were just 25 percent of
the whites' wages," says Botha.
"Many other jobs are totally closed
closed off to blacks, and many facilities at
the plant are still segregated.

"American workers can best
help us by getting U.S. companies
to stop doing business with South
Africa," Botha notes. "Those dol-
ars only strengthen what we're
fighting against."

Joint Board hosts a South African labor leader

Thozamile Botha, who led over 500 black workers on
strike at Ford Motor's plant in Port Elizabeth, South
Africa last year, was guest speaker at a meeting of
the PLM Joint Board's Steel Equipment Section and a plant
meeting of the Ocean Leather tannery in Newark in mid-
October.

Botha's visit to this country was sponsored by
the American Committee on Africa, which has
endorsed the campaign to eliminate U.S. support for
the racist apartheid government of South Africa. The
PLM Joint Board has cooperated with both the committee
and the campaign by removing the Union, benefit
and pensions funds from banks that lend money to the apar-
theid regime.

Botha, who had been elected president of the Port
Elizabeth Black Civic Association, was given an al-
damnament by the Ford management to scold his political
activities or lose his job. When news of his firing spread
among black workers the plant the same day, all the
doored tools and struck. He was reinstated with full back
pay within three days.

Following this, Botha led the workers in a two-month
strike for equal pay and treatment, which forced manage-
ment to rescind their discriminatory regulations and
substantially increased the South African workers' earnings.

The Steel Equipment Section meeting was held at the
Union Office on October 15 to draw up demands for its
contract renewal at the end of the year. Botha was intro-
duced by Business Agent Benjamin Parmer and spoke of
his experiences and answered questions.

Two days later, Botha spoke to the Ocean Leather
workers at a meeting in the street outside the plant during
a break arranged with the company.

At both meetings, the workers expressed interest in the
struggles conducted by South African workers for both
trade union and human rights, and in the role of U.S.
companies and banks in supporting apartheid.
South African worker seeks U.S. support

Anti-apartheid leader tours America; draws bleak picture of his homeland

To some, social conditions under apartheid in South Africa sound so oppressive and so inhuman that it is difficult to believe they could exist in this age. Apartheid is so alien to the American experience that some are able to reconcile it in their own minds as either the result of cultural development that we cannot understand, or a perversion accident of colliding societies. Others may put their minds at ease by thinking that it can't possibly be as bad as they have heard.

Botha came to prominence in 1979 as president of the Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organization (PEBCO). That group, which numbered as many as 10,000 members, helped organize a mass movement of black resistance to white minority rule in the inner eastern Cape region of South Africa.

Botha was employed at the Ford Motor Company plant in Port Elizabeth where his political activities got him into trouble with white authorities. In October 1979, Ford management issued an ultimatum for Botha to stop his political activities or lose his job. When news of the firing spread among black workers at the plant, all 700 of them put down their tools and struck. Three days later, Botha was reinstated with full back pay.

In the following weeks, black workers were harassed and some were demoted. Led by Botha, they went on strike with a series of demands for equal pay and treatment. Seeking to break the strike, Ford "dismissed" the strikers and their demands, but said any who came back would be discharged without seniority. More than 500 workers stayed off the job for two months. Ford was forced to rescind its action, reinstate the workers with seniority and meet most of the demands last January.

The Ford episode was seen throughout South Africa as an important victory for black workers. The self-confidence generated was a key factor in initiating a new wave of strikes, student boycotts and demonstrations that are challenging the white minority regime in South Africa.

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During the Ford strike, Botha was also leading PEBCO actions opposing the forced removal of black residents from Walmer township to a location far outside Port Elizabeth. The South African police jettled Botha and other PEBCO leaders, planning to make a citywide strike in protest of the Walmer eviction. Botha was held in jail for seven weeks without being charged under South Africa's draconian "security" laws. On release, he was issued "banning" orders (a form of house arrest), restricting him from work, public gatherings, and meetings with more than one person.

In May, Botha escaped to Lesotho, where he continued organizing work. Strikers continued to spread in auto plants near Port Elizabeth, and Botha remained in close touch with black strike leaders at Volkswagen.

Botha's cause is a labor cause. Although apartheid touches the lives of Blacks in South Africa in every respect, it is most felt in the workplace. For instance, Botha tells of his early training as an industrial engineer at Ford: He began training with a white man at exactly the same time, at only one-fifth of the white man's pay. Six months later, that white worker was Botha's supervisor.

Trade unions in South Africa, while legal, are organized and registered with the government along racial lines—African (Black), "mixed" (mixed race), Indian and white — as is everything in South Africa. Most of the African unions have refused to register with the government, making it illegal for them to, among other things, raise the outside funds that are often needed to finance strikes. Some opportunistic blacks, says Botha, have affiliated with white-dominated unions and have been "bought out by the government," undermining the efforts of the black majority.

In his travels throughout the United States, Botha is making special appeals to the labor movement. In addition to financial support—which can be put into useful channels by the American Committee on Africa—Botha is asking that unions use their political muscle to stop banks and other financial institutions from extending the credit that South Africa needs to survive. He is also urging the appropriate unions to refuse to load machine parts and other exported goods destined for South Africa.

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The American Committee on Africa, the agency that sponsored Tosamile Botha's trip to the United States, is another of the small but important agencies whose employees are a part of District Council 1707 and Local 107. Its work is to increase public awareness of the problems faced by the people of Africa and to work against oppressive regimes, particularly in Southern Africa.

Among its campaigns have been the discouragement of U.S. economic involvement in South Africa, a campaign against South African participation in the Olympics, and the successful "We Say No to Apartheid" drive in which athletes, writers and entertainers were urged not to visit South Africa or allow their works to be used there. ACOS publishes a quarterly newsletter, "ACOA Action News," and maintains an extensive publications list.

Ena Fox is chairperson of ACOA, whose headquarters is on lower Broadway in Manhattan.
Botha—South African leader talks about movement

By DAN LABOTZ

Waves of strikes, student boycotts and demonstrations over South Africa last summer, challenging the racist apartheid society and the white minority ruling whites.

Tumulti Beza, now in exile, was a key figure in that movement, and THE DEFENDER had the opportunity to interview him when he was in Chicago as part of a national tour organized by the South African Congress of Allied Organizations (ACO) in cooperation with the United Nations. The tour began October 19, 1980 when Beza spoke before the U.N. Special Committee on Apartheid, and continued on the annual day in Solidarity with South African Prisoners.

Tumulti Beza was one of the organizers and leaders of the community and labor protests. The Ford Elizabeth Black Civil Organization (PEBCO) grew out of the Ford auto workers' movement, and Beza was among the leaders of this movement.

Beza commented on the support given to the Ford auto workers by white students and labor unions.

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Beza spoke of the*hate and fear*...for workers who were attacking the racist system. Workers were shot, beat and killed.

Beza summarized the movement in South Africa, saying it was a movement of the black working class.

Beza concluded his interview with the:...struggle for freedom and equality.
Arrested and ‘Banned,’ South African Escapes

During November and December 1979, black workers at the Port Elizabeth Ford Motor Plant went on strike demanding higher wages. Seeking to break the strike, Ford dismissed the strikers, but said they would rehire any who came back — without seniority. Over 500 workers stayed out two months. Ford rescinded its action, reinstated the workers and met their demands in January 1980.

One member of the Workers’ Committee at the plant was Tsegamile BOTHA, also leader of the Port Elizabeth Black Civic Association (PEBCO). During the unrest, he and two others, Monoe BADELA and Phalo Joseph TSHUME, were arrested as he prepared to address a strikers’ meeting to discuss proposals put forward by Ford. After his release, they were subsequently “banned” from any future political activity. Amnesty International adopted them as “prisoners of conscience.”

Rather than face the harsh restrictions of a banning order, Botha escaped to Lesotho in early May. The United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid invited him to address their annual “Day of Solidarity with South African Political Prisoners” in October.

During this visit to the United States, Botha was interviewed by AIUSA in its national office.

AIUSA: Would you describe your arrest?

BOTHA: I was first arrested under the general law that provides for detention without trial for 14 days. Then I was transferred under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act into indefinite detention without trial.

AIUSA: What exactly happened during your arrest?

BOTHA: I was going to a meeting in connection with the dismantled Walmer township. We [Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organization—PEBCO members] had earlier decided to stage a demonstration on Monday, 14 January. That was the day that the Ford management was unconditionally reinstating workers...

When I got to the township, the manager of the hall refused me the key, saying that police had threatened him with jail. As I was trying to persuade him, two cars drove up and parked bumper to bumper with my car. When I went out, four chaps got out, and we saw the head of the security police...

They wanted to know “who are the complaints?” “Whom did we meet?” They kept me there for five days and nights without sleeping.

AIUSA: Did they beat you?

BOTHA: No. Then they took me back to Jaffrey’s Bay, where I was kept for 44 days. Upon my release on 28 February, they took me to SAMLA and gave me the banning order. I could not be seen near or on any university premises or near any factories. I couldn’t receive visitors at home. I couldn’t go out from 5 a.m. until 6 a.m. on weekends, or on holidays. They even said my wife couldn’t see friends at home. Of course, there was no way I could earn a living, so I started selling vegetables...

AIUSA: While you were still in prison did they allow anyone to visit you?

BOTHA: Nobody knew where I was. They didn’t even change my clothes. My wife sent me clothes, but they kept my clothes at the SAMLA building.

AIUSA: Were the clothes ever returned?

BOTHA: When I was released.

AIUSA: And you never saw anyone except the prison officials during this whole time?

BOTHA: There was no way that I could see anybody.

AIUSA: How did the guards treat you? Were they hostile?

BOTHA: They were not kind at all. They saw me as a terror. That was their attitude.

AIUSA: Were you ever taken before a judge during this time?

BOTHA: No. As a banned person I was not given any legal rights.

Interview

Arrested and ‘Banned,’ South African Escapes

Cont’d from page 3

Within seconds, there were 10 Landrovers fully loaded with police in camouflage uniforms. They were shooting before I was even taken into the car.

The other chaps I was with were taken in one car and I was put in another. We were driven to the Walmer township police station.

I complained that the handcuffs hurt me, as my wrists were beginning to swell....

AIUSA: Were these handcuffs the kind where if you struggle, they get tight?

BOTHA: Yes....Later on, after hours, they took me to a fire station and cut them off with shears....

From there, they drove me on a freeway for five hours, and then we were driven to the Port Elizabeth police station. They took all my clothes and left me naked in the cell with two blankets.

I stayed there for two days.  

AIUSA: Did they give you any food?

BOTHA: They gave me porridge with worms. I ate all the worms on the plate. When the station commander came, I showed him the worms and said I couldn’t eat the porridge....

After two days they came and started asking me questions. After the second week, they took me to SAMLA.

AIUSA: Is that a police station?

BOTHA: It’s in Port Elizabeth - the notorious place where Steve Biko [the former leader of the Black Consciousness movement, who died in custody] was shot dead.

They took me to the “ticket room.” I started telling them about PEBCO.

They said that PEBCO had organized the strike. They said that PEBCO was a front for the African National Congress (ANC)....

Immediately after I introduced myself, he turned me around and searched me. Then he said, “Handcuff him.”

Cont’d on page 4