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SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES:

Workers' revolution or racial civil war

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by Paul Storey

In the volcanic movement of the black working class in the townships of Uitenhage and Port Elizabeth can be seen the outlines of South Africa's coming revolution.

General strike action; mass marches and demonstrations; unbridled massacre by the police; in response, a flaming fury of revolt spearheaded by the youth and fanning out to wider areas; ferocious popular revenge against black collaborators, business sharks and policemen; continual police retaliation, provocations and brutalities; a virtual insurrectionary situation in the townships; troop mobilisations to reinforce the police; "sealing off", occupation and searches of townships by huge forces of police and troops.

So the battle lines are drawn, and so the fundamental problem defines itself again and again in action for the great proletarian mass of the black people: **how to overthrow this murderous, monstrous apartheid regime.**

The Eastern Cape is not unique. The revolt there has merely raised to sharp relief the features revealed in the heroic resistance in the Transvaal, the OFS, the Western Cape, the Border region and now also in parts of Natal. And this is only the beginning. What happens in Uitenhage can happen... anywhere, everywhere.

As each convulsive wave of the movement passes and temporarily subsides, the militant workers and youth who have confronted the state in action are forced to do battle again in the arena of ideas, grappling with the most intractable problems of theory, strategy and tactics.

There is no doubt about it: the South African regime is the most formidably difficult regime on the planet to overthrow. More so than in any other country, the SA revolution can succeed only if the revolutionary forces take a scientific and professional approach to their tasks.

The violence that has broken out repeatedly in the recent period between supporters of the UDF on the one hand and of AZAPO on the other; the threats, allegedly by some UDF elements, to burn homes of FOSATU members in the Eastern Cape; the divisions among the youth organisations; the splitting of the trade union movement of the black workers according to 'ideological' divisions among the leaders—all this signals deadly danger for the working class and all oppressed people.

It will be impossible to overcome these divisions and mobilise a united mass force against the regime and the ruling class unless a unified revolutionary cadre—within the unions, the youth organisations and the community bodies—is fused together on the basis of clear and correct ideas.

The great strength of the mass movement which has arisen over the past ten or twelve years derives from an elemental awakening of the giant black working class. The organising initiatives of tens of thousands of activists, young and old, in every part of the country, have together infused ever deeper layers of the masses with a growing sense of their own power.

While this has given rise to the mightiest organisations of the working class ever known in South Africa (most notably, though by no means only, the trade unions), this **first stage** in the awakening of the mass movement is nonetheless mainly characterised by spontaneity and improvisation. Improvisation of ideas and improvisation of

organisations and strategies.

This is inevitable and healthy in the development of every genuine "people's" movement which boils up from the depths of unbearable oppression. But the reliance on spontaneity and improvisation has definite limits which the activists in the movement are constantly battling to overcome. In this they come up against the obstacles resulting from the long isolation of the South African proletariat, the predominance of middle-class leadership and the weakness of the forces of Marxism.

Marxism—the revolutionary experience of the international proletariat over its whole history, consciously collected together and summed up—has for several generations been thrown back to a repository of very small forces world-wide, as a result of a whole series of defeats of the working class, the rise of Stalinism, and the strengthening of reformism during the long post-war upswing of world capitalism.

In the popular understanding, 'Marxism', where it has not become discredited and defiled, is today encrusted with confusion and muddled up with resurrected petty-bourgeois delusions which the great teachers of Marxism had long ago decisively laid to rest. Only by long and persistent work, patiently explaining the fundamental ideas in the course of many struggles in which the working class passes again and again through the harsh school of experience, will it be possible for Marxists to establish their ideas once again as a mass force.

This process is to a greater or lesser extent under way in a growing number of countries. But if time and tide wait for no man, neither do the convulsions of the class struggle wait for Marxism. Time is of the essence everywhere.

Clear perspectives needed

In South Africa the very spontaneity and improvisation which has been the strength of the movement in the past period will more and more hamstring its further progress if clear perspectives, and clear revolutionary strategy and tactics, are not brought rapidly to the fore.

The more mightily arises the movement, the more vicious and cunning will be the enemy it confronts, and the more difficult the obstacles which will be strewn in its path.

Intense and vital as the clash of ideas now is among the leading tendencies of the UDF, the National Forum, the youth organisations and the trade unions, it bears still an air of sterility. It does not yet come solidly to grips with the real questions to be clarified.

'Ideologies' are bandied about; rival 'principles' and precepts contend. People are 'Charterists' or 'anti-Charterists'; for 'non-racialism' or 'anti-racism'; so-called 'workerists' or 'populists', etc.

Increasingly however—and this is a real step forward of historic importance—the most advanced and active layers of the workers and youth in all the rival camps of

the movement are drawing the conclusion that "capitalism is our enemy", that the fight is to end apartheid and capitalism together.

But to identify the enemy is only the first step of a conscious policy. It is necessary to identify by what means the enemy can and will be overthrown.

Yet where is there, on the part of **any tendency or element of the leadership of the movement today** a clear conception of the general path of the struggle ahead; a mapping out of the way the revolution will unfold; a grasp of the objective processes at work in their totality, and not just the problems of this or that partial sphere of action; in short, a scientific perspective to guide the movement?

Yet, without such a perspective there can be no clarity as to the revolutionary tasks and programme, no real unification of the working-class movement, no effective workers' leadership of the mass struggle, no scientific strategy, no comprehensive action programme, and no consistent tactics.

Having a correct perspective means being prepared, so as not to be taken by surprise by sudden changes and turns in events; it means understanding the general processes and not being diverted by a superficial reaction to this or that event.

It is to the mastery of perspectives as a guide to action that the most determined revolutionary activists must urgently turn their attention.

The economy— basis of perspectives

As with all societies, we will find the roots of the present political crisis in South Africa in the soil of the economy: in the way the productive system has developed and in the contradictions and crisis which grip that system now.

The interlinked crisis of all sectors of the world today has been explained in previous material—e.g., *South Africa's Impending Socialist Revolution* (1982) and *The Coming World Revolution* (Supplement to *Inqaba* No. 14). These documents should be reread as a background to South African perspectives at the present time.

In the modern epoch it has been impossible for any country simply to repeat the 'organic' all-round development of capitalism, step by step, from small-scale to large-scale production, which the nations of Western Europe and later North America passed through a century or more ago.

National markets are dominated to an ever-increasing extent by the **world market**, and the world market by the power of the giant monopoly corporations of imperialism. In the stranglehold of world monopoly capitalism, the development of the colonial or ex-colonial countries has, notwithstanding formal independence, been partial, uneven and distorted. The dreadful stagnation of most of Africa today results from this fact.

To the extent that capitalism has developed in these countries, and to the extent that a national capitalist class has grown up, this has invariably taken place not as an independent development, not 'on their own feet', so to speak, but in a relationship part parasitic upon the imperialist monopolies and part one of manoeuvre and resistance to loosen their grip.

Considered against the international background, it is clear that South Africa is one of the few countries of the colonial world to have had a significant national capitalist development. It is correct to say 'national capitalist' even though the capitalists are whites and not black Africans.

Descended from settlers, most whites are 'settlers' no longer but now an indigenous part of the society with no motherland anywhere else. As second-, third- and fourth-generation immigrants to America are Americans, so these are South Africans.

Moreover, in the past they (particularly the Afrikaner nationalist middle class) organised and campaigned politically and economically, to wrest part of the surplus from the international monopolies in order to develop domestic industry. If this has not amounted to a national capitalist development, and the rise of a national capitalist class (however deformed), then what would?

South Africa's exceptional industrial development, in a world economy already dominated by the great monopolies of the imperialist powers, was possible fundamentally for two reasons. On the one hand because of the mineral wealth of this country, which produces three-quarters of the gold of the capitalist world. Because gold is readily exportable, it provided a source of easy foreign exchange with which to import machinery, and at least part of the surplus from gold mining could be turned towards investment in industrial development.

But the basis of that development depended equally on the fact that there came to exist within SA a settler population of whites, a sufficiently large minority, so that in the course of time it could be organised and developed into a privileged elite to act as policeman over the mass of the black population, who were torn from the land and turned into a massive working class.

In this way it was possible to enforce a **system of cheap labour based on the exploitation of the black workers**. This, indeed, is the essence of the apartheid system, which has been developed into a monstrosity with no parallel anywhere else.

With the African majority, 73% of the population, robbed of all but 13% of the land; with an enforced racial division of society in almost every sphere; with systematic legislated inequality; with the denial not only of the franchise, but of all civil rights to the Africans, who have been stripped even of their citizenship; with 18 million black people arrested under the pass laws and other influx con-

trols since 1916; with 3½ million forcibly removed from urban areas and from 'white' farming areas to the rural dumping grounds of the bantustans; with the apparatus of a police state, political prisons, detention without trial, tortures and massacres—these have been the means necessary for the development of capitalism in SA to its present level.

Enjoying the twin advantages of yellow gold and 'black gold' (as the crude bourgeois in SA put it), the SA ruling class has been able to withstand the competitive winds of the world market and gain some room to breathe within the stranglehold of the international monopolies.

Over the years, funded by taxation of the gold mines and later also by foreign loans, the state was used to invest massively in industrial infrastructure—for example in transportation, in steel, in producing oil from coal, in electricity supply and so on.

The state sector, together with the privileged standard of living of the whites, at the same time provided a certain domestic market for the development of manufacturing. This development was aided by protective tariffs and import quotas, for example to protect the textile industry; and by a 'local content' program, so that in the development of the motor industry, for example, a certain percentage of the components of every car (up to 65% by weight) has had to be locally produced.

So a basis was laid for a certain take-off, mechanisation and development of modern industry. So it is that SA has developed as the industrial giant of the African continent—with nearly half the motor vehicles, half the electricity consumption, and three-quarters of the railway trucks of all of Africa south of the Sahara.

South Africa is a colossus in Southern Africa—with 14 times the production of Zimbabwe (the second most industrialised African country per head of population), and 80% of the production of the whole region.

By this development, SA capitalism has brought into being a massive industrial proletariat which almost matches that of the advanced countries in terms of its social weight within society.

But in world terms South Africa is a third-rate industrial power, with many of the features still of a 'Third World' economy. It exports mainly minerals and agricultural products, and depends upon imports for advanced machinery, transportation equipment and so on. Thus SA is affected by the same kind of squeeze (partially alleviated by gold) as the whole of the underdeveloped world suffers through the terms of trade weighted against it by the monopolies' domination of the world market.

South African industry developed especially in the Second World War and in the decades of the post-war upswing of capitalism—linked in other words to the progress of world capitalism. In 1946 the SA capitalists were discussing the production of their own packaging materials, so that they would not have to import bags and sacks. Now they claim to be able to produce 80-85% of their own armaments (although this is, of course, with the assistance of the Western powers).

But SA's national capitalist success has in no sense implied economic independence. The more successful they have become the more integrated they have become with international monopoly capitalism.

Within SA itself there has come about the integration of the Afrikaner and English capitalists together in part-

nership in giant monopolies—in mining, in finance, in industry, in agriculture and in commerce. In fact one of the underlying causes of the split within the Afrikaner nationalist movement (with the emergence since the 1960s of two parties to the right of the ruling NP) has been the fact that the working-class whites and the lower middle-class whites feel deserted now by those bourgeois nationalists whom they previously raised to power.

In turn, South African capital has become more and more integrated with the big banks and multi-national companies in the USA, Europe, etc.

With the development of the monopolies, and with the fusion together of the Afrikaans and English bourgeoisie, the state, at least at the topmost levels of command, has been shaped into a more responsive instrument for the dictatorship of big capital.

Extreme polarisation

The main feature of SA society is the extreme polarisation of white capitalist wealth on the one hand and black working-class poverty on the other.

A study by M. McGrath of Natal University in 1983 showed that there is a phenomenal concentration of the ownership of the means of production in a few hands. The richest 5% of South Africans owned 88% of all personally owned wealth—double the proportion in the USA.

This concentration of wealth (calculated on the basis of 1975 statistics) was described as "more concentrated than in any other Western nation."

Whites owned 98% of all farms, 93% of (private) fixed property, 99,7% of quoted shares, and 95,7% of unquoted shares.

Recently it has emerged that no less than 80% of the shares on the stock exchange are owned or controlled by six South African-based monopoly corporations. In addition, the state owns 58% of fixed capital.

That degree of state and monopoly ownership is, from the revolutionary standpoint, a tremendous advantage, because it will immensely simplify the task of taking the commanding heights of the economy into the hands of the working class in the future. In that sense it could be considered an 'achievement' of the bourgeoisie!

South Africa's economic development has also involved a greater dependence upon the world market: in finance, and also in South Africa's reliance on the world market for exports and for importing advanced technology.

Quantitative changes accumulate and produce—qualitative change.

Particularly within the last decade or two decades, the point has been reached in the expansion of industry in South Africa where the capitalists must increasingly export manufactured goods in order for the economy to advance—even, in the long term, to survive. Ironically, this stage in the development of SA capitalism has coincided with the onset of the world economic crisis and the suffocation of world trade.

Why has this change happened?

Like all capitalist countries, South Africa is encounter-

ing the limits imposed on the further development of the productive forces by private ownership on the one hand and the national state on the other. This is the fundamental basis of the present epoch of crises, wars, revolutions and counter-revolutions—the most disturbed period in world history (which we have discussed in previous material—see especially *The Coming World Revolution*).

But in addition there are the special limitations of the system on which the South African bourgeoisie's whole success was founded, namely the apartheid cheap labour system, the chief source of their profitability in the past.

By systematically impoverishing four-fifths of the South African population, they have created a situation where the home market is extremely limited. It cannot absorb the products of expanding industry.

Now dialectically the basis of their success turns into an obstacle. **But they cannot break their dependence on cheap labour.**

In the 1950s, the Stalinists (showing how completely they had broken from Marxism, and how little they have understood) actually appealed to the employers in leaflets to raise the wages of their workers, from the standpoint of the employers' own self-interest! They argued that this would expand the market so everybody would be better off. Of course that is impossible because every individual capitalist has to struggle in competition to keep his costs as low as possible against the next producer. And in competition with the advanced capitalist countries, it is all the more important that labour be kept as cheap as possible in every national capitalist economy.

As practically every trade union member knows from experience, wages can only be raised, or real wages even maintained, by vigorous struggle against the capitalist class.

Even in the most technologically developed countries the bourgeoisie is now screaming for wage cuts, precisely because of the stagnation of world trade and the increasingly desperate competition between the capitalist powers as a result. Yet wage cuts further reduce the size of the market and so further increase the squeeze.

Acute contradiction

Today we see this contradiction in South Africa in the most acute form. The chief capitalist in the motor industry points out in the national press that there is no way the motor industry can develop further in SA on the basis of the white consumer market. Already there are 424 cars for every thousand whites, almost the figure of the United States. Among blacks the figure is 33 cars per thousand.

So he says: it's obvious, if we are to develop and sustain the motor industry, we shall have to develop our ability to sell cars to the blacks. What he doesn't say is who will offer the wage increases to put the blacks in the position to buy these cars!—or how, in any event, that could be done without destroying the underlying profitability (such as it remains) in South African industry.

At the very same moment the textile bosses are complaining about the opposite side of the contradiction! They are complaining that their cheap labour is no longer

as cheap as labour in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea and so on. (More than likely they have cooked the figures to come up with this argument. If they cannot now face the breeze of Far East competition, it is essentially because they have failed to invest in new technology, having sheltered instead behind quotas and tariff walls.)

Today these vultures are screaming for real wages to be driven even lower in South Africa to rescue their profitability!

The insoluble predicament of the bourgeoisie is expressed in the fact that at least half of the retail turnover in the Johannesburg central business district, for example, now depends on black spending. The contradictions of their system oblige them to seek both to expand and to cut black spending power at the same time. In neither direction can they find any way forward.

Imperialist foreign policy

As South African industry has begun to overstep the limits of the domestic market and become increasingly dependent on exporting manufactured goods, so we have seen the change also in South Africa's foreign policy under the Nationalist government from 'isolation' to increased imperialist aggression against the neighbouring states of Southern Africa. Pretoria's secret arms deal with Somalia, reported recently, shows SA's ambitions today as a continental power.

The ruling class feels threatened by any advance of the revolution in Africa—by the effect of that on the black population at home. It wants, of course, to eliminate ANC guerilla bases in other countries—but those are really an irritation rather than a serious threat to the regime.

South Africa pursues an aggressive foreign policy in the vain hope of subduing black working-class rebellion at home: to prove itself 'invincible' by forcing the neighbouring states, already economically dependent, into obvious political dependence upon it. Hence the pressure for 'agreements' like Nkomati.

At the same time, and bound up with its political aims, SA imperialism pursues a deliberate policy of increased economic domination over Southern Africa.

The states around South Africa are hoping to escape the grip of SA imperialism by means of SADCC. This is intended as a kind of economic community of states aimed at reducing their dependence on South Africa.

SADCC is, however, utopian on a capitalist basis, already tending to fall apart through the inevitable competitive struggle between its members over stagnant or declining home markets and scarce investments. At the same time the SA monopolies are penetrating further into the SADCC countries.

Nevertheless, Botha's dream of creating a so-called 'constellation of Southern African states' orbiting around white-controlled South Africa will not succeed either. It will time and again be frustrated and cut across by revolutionary mass pressures welling up all over the region.

Overall, South Africa's policy in regard to Southern Africa is to try to have it as a captive market for its own goods and keep at bay competitive exports from the ad-

vanced capitalist countries. But domination of the Southern African countries, a market of 60 million people, nevertheless provides no way out of the crisis for South Africa.

Although 49 out of 52 African countries trade with South Africa, even the African market as a whole can provide no way out. It is a market of the poor, of the unemployed, of the homeless and the starving. In 1984 it absorbed less than R1 billion of SA's more than R23 billion exports.

Now, for their development, modern productive forces require a world market.

Scale of production

For SA capitalists to produce manufactured goods cheaply enough to gain a real foothold in the world market, or even to hold on to their own domestic market in the long term, they would have to be able to increase massively **the scale of production** in South Africa in order to reduce unit costs.

But that is ruled out, on the one hand, because of the limits of the domestic market already mentioned, and, on the other hand, because of the limitations of the world market and of world trade which is a basic feature of the international crisis of capitalism.

The avenues for major new industrial developments are correspondingly narrowed. As Anglo American Corporation chairman Gavin Relly expressed it: "The country is still dependent almost wholly on a mixture of old technology and raw materials."

'As an example,' says the *Financial Times* (1/11/84), 'he quotes South Africa's reserves of high-quality iron ore, which could be beneficiated into high-grade steel and shipped to the U.S. for rolling, perhaps through Saldanha Bay...'

'"However," he concludes, somewhat despondently, "we had these ideas for twenty years now, and we have not yet been able to make them work."

'Nevertheless, this is still seen as one of the possible areas for expansion, **given that the small size of the South African economy does not allow for economies of scale in the production of finished steel products.** "Widgets tend to be more expensive here than in Widgetville, U.S.," he says.' (*Our emphasis.*)

For these reasons there is a long-term decline evident in South Africa in the proportion of the surplus which the capitalists are re-investing in industry, and therefore a stagnation in productivity. In consequence, the economy is becoming diseased to the roots.

In the ten years from 1972, the annual rate of growth of productivity in South Africa averaged only one-tenth of Japan's; one-ninth of West Germany's; one-sixth of the USA's; and one-fifth of Britain's (one of the most rapidly declining capitalist economies in the world).

Although the choice of statistical basis for calculating productivity in SA (*viz.*, whether GDP or GNP is used) affects the figures to some extent, it does not alter the fact of South Africa's declining competitive position—certainly not as far as manufacturing is concerned. In manufacturing, productivity actually fell about 4,7%

from mid-1982 to mid-1983. A year later the *Financial Mail* (20/7/84) summed up the predicament of the bourgeoisie: "We are no longer seeing even the minimal gains in productivity achieved between 1972 and 1982."

One of the biggest lies peddled by the bourgeoisie in every country is that workers are responsible for low or stagnant productivity. This is nonsense. To an overwhelming extent it is **investment** which determines productivity, or output per unit of labour-time: investment in machinery, technique and expanded production. That is in the hands of the bosses.

In South Africa the monopolies, incapable of undertaking the expansion of domestic industry as in the past, and having already carved the joint among themselves, are turning their greedy eyes more and more towards investment opportunities and profit-making abroad.

According to Clewlow of Barlow Rand, for instance, "Barlows is already a dominant force in many areas of the South African economy and it has become necessary to expand internationally in order to maintain our long term record of growth and profitability." (*Financial Times*, 18/10/84.)

For over a decade now the monopolies have been seeking ways of exporting capital from South Africa. By 1981, South African companies already held foreign assets totalling R13,5 billion (a figure which, despite exchange controls, had increased more than threefold in the preceding six years).

Anglo American, for example, has operations now in 45 countries and is pursuing profits in Latin America, Europe and even the United States.

All this expresses the impasse of the South African economy, the limits to its development on the basis of private ownership and within the confines of the national state.

Investment and inflation

The economic impasse is expressed also in the growing difficulty South Africa finds in attracting foreign investment. While the regime has found it relatively easy to obtain foreign **loans**, the international financiers have grown shy of risking their capital directly in production—as much because the profitability of investments in SA is increasingly in doubt as through fear of the country's 'instability'.

The sale by foreign corporations of their shares on the Johannesburg stock exchange reached major proportions **before** the current 'disinvestment' furore in the USA. In the past the US and every other bourgeois never lost a wink of sleep on moral grounds over their South African investments. It is the change in SA's **economic and political situation**, and hence in the assessment of their material self-interest, which has tipped the scales among those sections of the American bourgeois now hastening to identify themselves opportunistically with the anti-apartheid campaigns of the labour unions and the black civil rights organisations.

The fear of the SA regime and ruling class that disinvestment could become a flood, flows from their knowledge that the economy cannot regain the old

relatively high rates of profit which alone could attract investment back.

The declining competitive position of SA capitalism manifests itself also in a rate of inflation persistently two or three times higher than the average in the advanced capitalist countries, and in a tendency for the value of the rand to depreciate against the major currencies.

Because the bourgeoisie cannot look the organic disease of its system in the face, its most authoritative economic spokesmen have for years refused to admit that there is any "structural" cause for South Africa's inflation rate. Apparently it is **all** a matter of the money supply. Curbs on public expenditure, "if only" sufficiently stringently applied, would succeed in reducing inflation to the levels unavoidably imported from the developed countries. Then South Africa would be on the road to economic health. This is sheer quackery.

In a pamphlet to be published later in the year, *Inqaba* will deal fully with economic issues. Here it is enough to make the central point:

Because of the interlinking of economies through the world market to a greater extent than ever before, the law of value explained by Marx operates ever more imperiously through the world economy.

Lagging productivity in a national economy, due to low investment, means that more labour is required to produce goods locally than the equivalent goods on the world market—and this must reflect itself, in the final analysis over time, in a tendency towards inflated domestic prices and a weakening currency. Even the cheapest of cheap labour cannot overcome this in the modern epoch of computer technology and automation.

The same was proved in Chile despite all the potions of the monetarist witchdoctor Friedman and his 'Chicago Boys'. In the face of a catastrophic collapse of industry, in fact, the Pinochet dictatorship was forced desperately to swing back to policies of deficit spending, which in turn have only made matters worse.

Throughout the world capitalist economy, prices continue to rise even during the worst recessions—a condition which, fifty years ago, used to cause prices to fall. Now only the **rate** of inflation can be curbed, **and then only here and there for temporary periods.**

Directly or indirectly, 500 monopolies control about 90% of capitalist world trade. To the extent that monopolies can ward off competitive pressures, they raise prices at the stroke of a pen in order to reap super-profits.

State expenditure has continued to rise relative to production in all the main capitalist economies, even in Thatcher's monetarist Britain, necessitating continued deficits of vast proportions.

A thousand billion Euro-Dollars—money without real backing in production or gold—float around the European and North American capital markets. Mountains of international debt continue to accumulate, now also in the region of US\$1 000 billion. World arms expenditure is now approaching a similar figure—every year.

All this adds up to massive inflationary pressures throughout the capitalist world economy.

Only brutal **deflationary** policies have held down the rate of price rises in the advanced industrialised countries in the recent period. But these policies have resulted in turn in the wholesale slaughter of old industries, rising mass unemployment, decaying infrastructure, and pressures towards protectionism and trade war which

would precipitate a major world depression if resorted to on a big scale.

Any massive reflation, on the other hand, would rapidly lead to galloping inflation. The bourgeoisie is haunted by the spectre of Latin American rates of inflation, should they be forced to swing back to Keynesian policies. (By 'Latin American' inflation is meant prices which rise, not by tens of percent, but by hundreds or thousands of percent annually. In Argentina, for example, a 1 million peso note, which could buy a car twelve years ago, buys less than a packet of cigarettes today. In Bolivia, inflation has now reached 8 200%. Elsewhere, for example, Israel's inflation rate topped 500% in 1984.)

In the United States, the dominant capitalist economy, the recent boom was based on record budget deficits and astronomical arms spending. However, **for exceptional reasons** which cannot be repeated elsewhere, price increases slowed below 5% at the same time. Now the signs are that a new recession in the US is beginning again **coupled with rising inflation.** The chickens are coming home to roost.

Diseased system

World capitalism is now an organically diseased and totally reactionary system. It staggers on at appalling cost to mankind only because it has not been overthrown, because the proletariat internationally has yet to raise itself consciously to the position of ruling class and carry out the revolutionary tasks which history poses before it.

To free itself from exploitation and solve the problems facing mankind, the working class has to take the productive forces into common ownership and, linking up internationally, organise a planned economy, under workers' democratic control and management.

In this way all the vast resources of the earth, all the modern technique created by science and labour, can be put to use—not for the private profit of a few, but to meet the needs of all. In this way, easily within the space of a generation, it would be possible to end unemployment, homelessness and mass diseases throughout the world, while lifting all humanity out of the nightmare of ignorance, competition for survival, and war—to begin for the first time a really civilised **human** existence and development.

Only the bourgeoisie, whose system has outlived itself; or inveterate reformists for whom the socialist revolution is too ghastly to contemplate; or Stalinist bureaucrats who know that democratic workers' rule anywhere will toll the end of their own dictatorship and privilege—only these can continue to place hope in the regeneration of capitalism in the West.

Capitalism is bankrupt. What is the case on a world scale is the case ten and a hundred times over in a country like South Africa.

In the past, the mainstay of SA's economy has been gold, and that remains the case to an important degree.

Gold production does serve at least partially to cushion the economy against the effects of world recession. In particular, the capitalists can export all the gold produced, and this tends to ease what would otherwise be very

serious balance of payments crises.

But what has become clear is that gold no longer provides a means of sustaining the development of industry as in the past. That was shown in 1979-80 when the gold price reached record levels. An absolute bonanza of profits resulted, which could not be profitably invested in production.

At the same time the ups and downs of the gold price on the world market—a feature of the world crisis—now introduce a factor of tremendous instability in the financial system of South Africa. Very rapidly a high gold price produces an excess of 'liquidity', of money that cannot find a productive home.

It has become characteristic now that there can be booms on the stock exchange, booms in bank profits, bubbles of property speculation as massive amounts of money change hands among the rich—at the same time as industry is stagnating or actually declining.

This is a mark of the sickness of the productive system. It also accelerates the tendency towards inflation, further undermining the competitive position of the economy and the position of the rand on world currency markets.

It is an expression of the contradictions inherent in the economy that the regime has been obliged to move, by a series of steps over the past ten years, towards easing foreign exchange controls and 'floating' the rand on world currency markets precisely as the difficulty of attracting funds into productive investment in SA, and the tendency towards excess 'liquidity', has increased.

Capitalism is an anarchic system, governed by private profit, and cannot be otherwise. Thus the capitalist regime could not simply direct funds available locally into local productive investment. It had to allow capital, which capitalists did not want to invest locally, to flow out of the country. At the same time, foreign investors were all the more wary of investing in enterprises in SA if they could not bank on being able to withdraw their capital again at will. Uninvested local funds fuelled inflation and necessitated a foreign outlet; a lack of foreign investment was threatening further to weaken the country's productive base and thus add to the spiral of competitive decline and inflation.

Under these and related pressures the government introduced, for example, the 'managed float' of the rand in January 1979. This was soon followed by the high gold price of 1979-80, which in turn increased the pressure for further easing of controls. Against the background of a rising gold price in 1982-3, the regime abolished exchange control over non-residents on 7 February 1983, allowing foreign investors to withdraw funds from SA without obtaining prior approval from the reserve Bank.

There was a massive outflow of capital. In the first nine months of 1983, for example, foreign investors alone sold R1 billion worth of shares on the stock exchange in Johannesburg.

The boom in the United States, together with a partial rise in the gold price, contributed to a short consumer boom in South Africa from late 1983 onwards. But the depth of the organic crisis is shown in the fact that that boom lasted no more than six months. A combination of factors rapidly turned it into a recession once again.

Because American interest rates were high, and because the dollar was rising also on the basis of the US boom, the gold price fell.

This, together with doubts about the economic and

political viability of SA capitalism, caused the international speculators to turn away from the rand. Rapidly the rand plunged in value from \$1.30 to below 60 US cents. The rand also fell sharply against sterling and other major currencies, showing that its weakness was due only in part to the exceptional rise of the dollar.

The SA capitalists found themselves in an impossible position. Although the gold price was low in dollars, the rand fell even lower against the dollar—and therefore the gold price actually rose in rands, in fact to record levels. So they found themselves with excess 'liquidity' again—on top of a collapsing rand. Inflation, which never went below 10%, again approached 14% or more officially.

Meanwhile, the South African 'boom', fuelled by massive increases in consumer credit, was sucking in imports at rapidly rising prices (measured in depreciating rands), so giving a further twist to inflation.

The dangerous consequences were rapidly outweighing the advantages the SA economy would derive from the cheapening of its exports abroad.

Therefore very rapidly the government had to take measures to induce a recession, to attempt to rescue the rand and prevent hyper-inflation by jacking up interest rates to a record level of about 25%. This is nearly double the level at which 'high' interest rates have been running in the USA.

Effect of these measures

With a prime rate of 25%, interest on hire-purchase has been raised as high as 32%, sharply hitting the car market. Interest on mortgage bonds has gone above 20%, inevitably affecting construction. Whites accustomed to cheap mortgages now face the little problem of finding R10 000 or more a year just to pay the interest on their R50 000 houses! The high cost of borrowing meanwhile squeezes investment still further and deepens the recession.

But high interest rates alone are not sufficient to support a currency whose basis in the productive economy is in decline. It was notable that, despite the extreme monetary measures taken by the SA government, the rand continued to fall, at one point dropping to 42 US cents. It has only partially recovered since (currently to 51 cents) with some improvement in the gold price and an easing of the dollar. Significantly, it has not regained lost ground against sterling, etc.

The most spectacular consequence of the devalued rand so far has been the 40% hike in the price of petrol. More price shocks are sure to follow.

Not to have induced the recession in this way would have led to even worse inflation. Yet, by crash-diving the economy and throttling production in an attempt to rescue the rand, the ruling class is merely ensuring by another route the long-term decline and instability of its currency and financial system.

Whichever economic policy the bourgeoisie pursues now, it is a question of alternative roads to ruin.

There will continue to be temporary recoveries in the economy—continued cyclical phases in the life of world

and SA capitalism. But these will be like the temporary remissions of disease in a cancer victim. The general course will be downhill. The reason for this lies in the fundamental contradictions we have outlined, for which there is no capitalist cure.

Even future leaps in the gold price, inevitable in the context of extreme instability in the world monetary system, will confer only limited advantages on South African capitalism. As already explained, whether the gold price is high or low, damaging consequences follow each fluctuation. It is now impossible, on a capitalist basis, to rejuvenate the productive system.

Protectionism

As the limits of the domestic market have driven the capitalists onto the world market to find an outlet for manufactures, so the limits of the world market and SA's weak competitive position drive them back to the domestic market again—which, meanwhile, has been more extensively opened to foreign goods.

A section of the bourgeoisie—those dependent to a significant extent on manufacturing—have begun talking of the need for major new protectionist measures to insulate industry from foreign competition while a programme of expansion is undertaken.

But, by employing more expensive materials and less productive technique, and by sheltering the SA monopolies even further from competition, this would soon lead to further leaps in domestic prices. There would be an explosion of demands for wage increases, from black and white workers alike. Costs throughout the economy would rise further, undermining in particular the profitability of exports.

Already the government has had to move to dismantle part of the previous protectionist devices—notably import quotas—as a measure against inflation.

Even if a protectionist policy had a temporary effect in boosting SA manufacturing, it would soon be met with retaliation against South Africa's exports by countries whose exports to South Africa had been cut off. This at precisely the time when SA capitalism is desperate to break new ground for the marketing of its products abroad.

Already heavily dependent on foreign loans, the SA ruling class is worried that exports will soon not be sufficient to finance the country's rising debts. SA's foreign debt is now R40 billion, of which R17 billion is very short-term.

Meanwhile exports have declined as a proportion of GNP from 30% in the late 1970s to about 25% in 1984 (15% if gold is left out of account). Although gold enjoys a virtually guaranteed market, the SA bourgeoisie can scarcely afford to risk retaliation against its other exports, by gambling with protectionism.

Nevertheless, it may resort to such self-defeating measures under the impact of the crisis in the coming years. **Marxists must combat any illusions which may develop in the trade unions that this would provide a way out for the economy, or for employment.**

Whether on the road of protectionism, or an 'open

door' policy in trade, or a combination of the two, the bourgeoisie is leading SA deeper and deeper into the swamp. At each and every step, the effects of the crisis are loaded onto the already bent backs of the black working class.

The present sharp recession has come against a background already of 3 million or more black unemployed, most of whom have no social welfare protection whatsoever. For the small minority entitled to the pittance from the UIF, payments end after 6 months.

Many survive only by sharing the meagre income of the aged in their families, whose pensions were recently 'raised' to a mere R79 a month.

Job losses continue apace. Now even plant closures, hardly known in SA previously, have become a feature of the situation. Press reports claim that 45 000 black jobs have been lost in steel and engineering alone. In a new turn of immense significance, 20 000 white jobs have also disappeared in this industry.

In the three months to October 1984, an estimated 10 000 jobs were axed in the motor industry. Most motor manufacturers were down to a three- or four-day week by the end of the year. On top of that has come the merger of big motor corporations and the closure of the Ford plant in Port Elizabeth.

Employment in other manufacturing sectors has likewise been hit by the recession. In a survey reported in *Die Beeld* (12/12/84), 22% of blacks said a family member had been hit by retrenchment. 5% of whites said the same.

The point we have to stress is that even during the long upswing in the development of South African industry since World War 2, capitalism was incapable of raising the living standards of the mass of black people. The onset of the world crisis and the crisis in SA has had a shattering effect on the living standards of the blacks.

These fell persistently in the second half of the 1970s, even during the few 'boom' years. Then there was a fall of at least 20% in the past four years. In *Die Beeld's* survey, 39% of whites said their living standards had declined in 1984, while 64% of blacks in the PWV and Port Elizabeth areas said so.

Barclays Bank calculates that living standards of all South Africans, white and black, will fall an average of 6% this year. At least half the black population already live in what newspapers term 'absolute poverty'. The burden of poverty on the black proletariat has become intolerable.

Nightmare situation

It is impossible in a few lines to describe adequately the nightmare situation of poverty, of homelessness, of hunger which is faced by growing numbers of the black working class and unemployed masses in the rural and the urban areas.

Food prices are rising much faster than the official rate of inflation, which is currently above 16%. In 1984 alone the price of maize rose 30%, bread 25%. In the twelve months to February 1985, the price of goods in household budgets rose 21%, when the official inflation rate was

14%—and that was before the petrol price went up.

There has been a 20% fall in the volume of maize consumption without any corresponding rise in the consumption of other foods.

Meat has become a luxury. Only 11% of black urban households can afford to eat fruit.

In the Durban area every year 8 000 newborn babies are dumped by parents who cannot keep them. In the rural areas there are now 820 000 people dependent for their food on charitable relief. 'Active malnutrition' among children in the Ciskei is estimated at 89%—and the probable figure for other bantustans would not be much lower.

Thus the hideous system in South Africa—the system of capitalism and apartheid bound together—now devours the very foundations of society, forcing growing numbers down towards an animal existence, murdering human beings with poverty and hunger as surely as with the policeman's gun.

Crisis in state expenditure

With the productive base of the economy weakening, increasingly we see the inability of the state to finance its expenditure out of taxes on companies, incomes and profits. The white population and the monopolies are proving to be an extremely narrow tax base.

The cost of internal repression and external aggression is rising. This year R4,3 billion will be spent on 'defence'. There is the occupation of Namibia to pay for: amounting to R1 031 million between 1982 and 1984, according to Pik Botha. There is the structure of puppet bantustans, the stooge councils, the administration boards, etc—this whole edifice costing at least R2 billion a year to finance.

Then there are the salaries of the 660 000 provincial and central government employees. And, of course, the politicians don't want to forget about themselves. Botha took the precaution, when he 'retired' as Prime Minister and became President, to pay himself a R300 000 'gratuity'!

Finally, and most annoying of all to the bourgeoisie, is the rapidly expanding human need for social services.

There is now a persistent tendency to rising deficits. State expenditure has gone over the budget in every one of the past five years—sometimes dramatically—and despite monetarist stringency. As a result the regime has begun to shift the burden of taxation from companies and the richer individuals towards taxes on the poor.

Black workers have been brought into the income tax net. General Sales Tax has been introduced, and now raised to 12%. Only basic foodstuffs are exempt. That is a tax on the workers, on the youth, on the aged, on the homeless, and on the unemployed.

The contribution of the individual taxpayer, as opposed to companies, has gone up from 31% in 1980 to 58% now.

Nevertheless, the ruling class faces the impossibility of keeping public expenditure within bounds which their system can 'afford'.

The *Star* (24/9/84) bluntly expressed the cold calculation of the bourgeoisie: "These can only be the first tremors (of the crisis in public spending), since the demand explosion in housing, education, health services, social pensions, infrastructure, and the provision of energy and safe water will, in competition with other more legitimate (!) state functions like defence, law and order, foreign affairs and public administration create a bill we (!) cannot meet."

With South Africa's rapidly rising population, "present stresses could reach crisis proportions... To finance these cost explosions from taxation in a tottering economy is out of the question."

Even South Africa's prized national roads grid is threatened with breakdown because of cuts in essential maintenance spending. R2,5 billion is needed just to repair rural roads.

Just how "out of the question" it is that SA capitalism can ever meet the basic needs of the working people is shown by the present backlog of 700 000 houses. One million houses need to be built for black people by 1990—yet only 20 000 were built last year. State spending on black housing this year is to be a paltry R265 million (less than one-sixteenth of military spending).

Meanwhile, massive increases for rents and electricity and water supplies are being loaded onto the township-dwellers, who find it impossible to make ends meet.

Now the SA ruling class, displaying even more lunacy than Thatcher in Britain, wants to privatise the state corporations, or the profitable sections of them. This, they figure, will kill two birds with one stone: raise easy money to finance state spending for a temporary period without immediate tax increases, and give the capitalists new avenues for private profiteering.

The regime plans to sell off part of ISCOR, possibly by the end of this year, and there is talk even of the privatisation of electricity supply.

This would mean turning over the vital infrastructure of the whole economy to the anarchy of the market, and would prepare the way for an even more fundamental crisis in future.

There is an old saying that 'those whom the gods wish to destroy they first drive mad.' Some of the money-crazed bourgeois in South Africa now go so far as to demand privatisation of services—health, education, etc—so that these will only be available to people with the money to pay for them.

Even the lower middle-class and working-class whites would not tolerate this for long. And it would be a sure route to yet more massive revolutionary explosions among the blacks. Yet even this madness on the part of the ruling class could not be ruled out, because of the impossible dilemmas that will face them.

The connection between racial domination and capitalism, between the bosses' apartheid dictatorship and their exploitation of the black working class, now stands nakedly exposed in every sphere of life.

There is a simultaneous economic, social and political crisis going so to the roots of the entire system that there is no possible way out except a social revolution.

This idea has begun to grip the consciousness of masses of black working-class people.

Character and tasks of the revolution

The character of a revolution is determined by two things. On the one hand, by the problems which have brought society to a revolutionary impasse; by the real obstacles standing in the way of social progress; by the nature of the changes that must be carried out in order to clear those obstacles away.

On the other hand, the character of a revolution is determined by the class forces which inevitably enter into conflict with each other, and must fight the fundamental issues out.

The coming revolution in South Africa is, by these criteria, clearly and inescapably a proletarian socialist revolution.

Is this not contradicted by the fact that democratic demands, and above all the demand for national liberation, are to the forefront in the revolutionary struggle? Not in the least. The key to understanding this lies in the theory of the 'permanent revolution'.

This theory, originated by Marx and elaborated in particular by Trotsky, is completely borne out in relation to South Africa—but with a difference from the way in which it applied to Russia.

The objective tasks of the Russian Revolution, in 1905 and again in 1917, were bourgeois-democratic tasks. These were: to expropriate the land from the feudal landlords, and distribute it among a free peasantry; to free the national minorities, oppressed within the 'prison house' of the Russian Tsarist empire; and to break Russia from its dependence upon the Western European imperialist powers, particularly Britain and France, which, in 1917, meant above all ending Russian involvement in the First World War.

Capitalism had developed late in Russia; but then it had developed rapidly, transplanted in a concentrated form by foreign capital, inter-linked with the Tsarist-bureaucratic state, and interwoven with the feudal classes and institutions.

Russia participated in the world war both as a semi-colonial dependant of the other 'Entente' powers and as an old imperialist power in its own right.

To carry out the bourgeois-democratic tasks necessitated the revolutionary overthrow of Tsarism and the clearing away of all the feudal rubbish. In and of itself this did not necessitate the overthrow of capitalism—but on the contrary would have been necessary precisely to allow the all-round development of Russian capitalism.

On a world scale capitalism, having entered the stage of monopoly, was more than ripe for overthrow. On a world scale it was choking the development of the productive forces, and this was manifested in the inter-imperialist world war of 1914-18.

But its bankruptcy was relative and not absolute; uneven and not uniformly felt. There was undoubtedly still economic 'room' for the further growth of Russian

capitalism, in a backward country the size of a continent, covering one-fifth of the globe.

Nevertheless, the circumstances of Russia's belated capitalist development had left the bourgeoisie weak and incapable of playing any revolutionary role against Tsarism. The proletariat, though a small minority of the total population, was concentrated in large industries, fresh and revolutionary. For protection, the bourgeoisie sheltered under the Tsarist state. Of necessity, leadership of the revolutionary struggle against Tsarism passed to the proletariat, which placed itself at the head of the mass of poor and oppressed peasants.

Inevitably, as a result, the bourgeoisie played a counter-revolutionary role against its 'own' bourgeois-democratic revolution.

Understanding this, Lenin and the Bolsheviks fought implacably to rid the workers' movement of any illusions in a progressive role of the liberal bourgeoisie, and to assert the proletariat's leading role and political independence. Any revolutionary government capable of carrying out the bourgeois-democratic tasks would have to break the power both of Tsarism and of the bourgeoisie itself.

Trotsky's analysis

Trotsky, as early as 1904-5, carried this analysis to its full logical conclusion. He explained that the working class would have to take state power into its own hands with the support of the poor peasants, and that, having done so, it would be compelled to pass over without interruption from the bourgeois-democratic tasks to socialist tasks also.

This would be necessitated by the inevitable clash between the material demands of the working class and the material interests of the capitalists. The workers' regime would find itself compelled to begin the expropriation of bourgeois property and thus the overthrow of capitalism.

Lenin adopted this position fully in 1917. The first revolutionary victory, in February, had not placed the working class in power. The workers led the overthrow of the Tsar, but power passed into the hands of reformist leaders, who in turn handed it to the bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie used this advantage to attack the working class, and try to turn the revolution back.

The October Revolution, led by the Bolsheviks, was necessary to bring the working class to power **in order that the bourgeois-democratic tasks themselves could be carried out.**

Land to the peasants; the liberation of the nationalities; an end to the war—these tasks were carried out **not** by the February regime but **only** after the October victory.

But the October Revolution, carrying out first and foremost **bourgeois-democratic tasks**, was in character a **proletarian socialist revolution**—and was compelled to proceed on to socialist tasks. This gave clear historical confirmation to the ideas of the 'permanent revolution'.

Proletarian revolution in backward Russia would have been considered absurd by all the Bolsheviks, including Lenin and Trotsky themselves, **had they viewed the matter solely within the confines of that country.** But they

saw the Russian revolution as the first in a chain of revolutions, which would link Soviet Russia to the power of the working class in the advanced industrialised countries of Europe.

Colonial liberation struggles

In relation to the countries of the colonial world, Lenin took the view that the liberation movements against colonialism—termed ‘bourgeois-democratic’ movements until then—should now be termed ‘national-revolutionary’ movements.

This was to give expression to the bankruptcy, vacillation and even downright counter-revolutionary role of the national bourgeoisie in the colonies—and to emphasise the potential of the proletariat, even in the most backward countries, to lead the nation to liberation, linking its own struggle for power to the progress of the workers’ revolution in Russia and the West.

In the same way, what were previously termed the ‘bourgeois-democratic’ tasks of the revolution in the colonial world could now be termed ‘national-democratic’ tasks, to emphasise that the bourgeoisie could play no role in their solution—that their solution, in fact, was connected with the victory of the proletarian revolution developing on a world scale.

However, as a result of a whole series of terrible defeats of workers’ revolutions in Europe in the 1920s, the Russian Revolution remained isolated and eventually succumbed to the bureaucratic counter-revolution of Stalinism. This substituted the dictatorship of a privileged elite of state officials for the workers’ democracy of 1917-1923, although remaining on the basis of nationalised (i.e., state-owned) and planned economy.

The ‘Communist’ parties abandoned the ideas of Lenin, of the class-independence and leading role of the working class. **The term ‘national democratic’ was falsified to imply the ‘unity’ of the proletariat with the national bourgeoisie.** The proletariat in the colonial world became subordinated for a whole historical period to bourgeois and petty-bourgeois leadership.

Where capitalism collapsed or was overthrown in the colonial world, this took place in the most backward countries and without the proletariat playing any leading role. Power passed into the hands of petty-bourgeois elites, who have modelled their regimes on Stalinism, i.e. on bureaucratic dictatorship resting on a basis of planned economy.

In the main, however, the passage of the colonial countries to independence has taken place without the overthrow of capitalism—hence leaving these formally independent countries subject to an ever more stifling neo-colonial domination by the imperialist powers.

Without workers’ power, fundamental national-democratic tasks remain uncompleted: on the land, where pre-capitalist and capitalist exploitation remain intertwined; in the continued oppression of national minorities; and in the abject dependence of these countries on imperialism.

Entirely bearing out the prognosis of Trotsky, it remains for the proletariat in the underdeveloped countries

to raise itself to the leadership of the nation and complete the national-democratic tasks by the method of **proletarian socialist revolution**, linking up with the new period of advance of the proletariat and of revolutionary struggles in the industrialised world.

In South Africa, which has had an exceptional national capitalist development, equalled or surpassed by few other ex-colonial countries, there has been a **partial** carrying through of social tasks of a ‘bourgeois-democratic’ character. This may appear an extraordinary thing to say in a country ruled by an ex-settler racial minority, where the regime has long earned itself polecat-of-the-world status for its suppression of democracy and the national rights of the majority.

It is important to remember that what was essential to even the most classical of the ‘democratic’ (more precisely, bourgeois-democratic) revolutions in history was **not** the institution of political democracy, but the carrying through of fundamental social changes necessary to bourgeois advance.

The (qualified) democracy of the French Revolution, for example, was soon succeeded by the dictatorship of Napoleon Bonaparte—who nevertheless consolidated the ‘bourgeois-democratic’ revolutionary gains against feudalism.

In Germany, the ‘bourgeois-democratic’ tasks were partially carried out under the Bismark dictatorship.

Writing in October 1945 on the *Character of the European Revolution*, Ted Grant answered writers who had landed themselves in confusion

“simply because they have not understood, or have forgotten, the social content of the ‘democratic’ revolution: the creation of the national state; the overthrow of feudalism and the introduction of bourgeois relations; the separation of Church from State; the agrarian revolution.

“What they imagine is the basic content of (bourgeois) ‘democracy’: freedom of organisation, speech, etc, is in reality a by-product of the class struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie.” (Reprinted, *Militant International Review*, No.26, 1984.)

Precisely the same applies to the democratic franchise. Historically, universal franchise has been won for society **not by the bourgeoisie, but against it**—by the struggle of the working class.

Tasks in South Africa

In South Africa, the ‘bourgeois democratic’ tasks partially carried out under white rule relate to the transformation of the country into a modern capitalist society. This transformation is shown in the development of domestic industry and capitalist agriculture; in the elimination of precapitalist forms, such as the wiping out of the basis of tribal society as well as almost all vestiges of semi-serf relations on the land; in the creation of a centralised capitalist state and a unified market.

Yet, what remains to be fulfilled, what cries out to be fulfilled, what can only be fulfilled in struggle to the end against the white bourgeois regime—is a fundamental task of a national-democratic character: **the national liberation of the African majority.**

The political system inherited and elaborated from the basis of colonial domination in the past—the system of white minority rule—now confronts its revolutionary demise.

In a certain sense, the relation between white and black in South Africa, the domination of the privileged minority over the voteless, rightless majority, does resemble a kind of 'internal colonialism' (as the Stalinists put it).

In a certain (and, we may add, more profound) sense South Africa's social relations resemble those of the ancient slave-based 'democracies' of Greece and Rome—democratic rights and privileges for a citizen minority, depending on the systematic exploitation of a mass of chattel slaves. In our case, however, a system of collective wage-slavery of the oppressed black majority, on which the privileged existence of the whites, their franchise and 'liberties' depend.

Nevertheless 'all analogies are lame'. It would take an idiot to conclude that the concrete tasks facing black South Africans are to be deduced without further ado from such a comparison.

Even if South Africa was a fully-fledged colony, and not, as the Stalinists argue, a case of 'colonialism of a special type', this would in no way justify the conclusion that anything less than a proletarian revolution is required for its liberation.

For reasons already explained, South Africa has already passed through whatever 'stage' of national capitalist development it could achieve. Yet the middle class in the movement still hanker after the illusion that, if it were possible to have black capitalists instead of white capitalists ruling South Africa, this could lead to a regeneration of the economy. Their idea is ludicrous on economic grounds—and also ruled out as a political perspective for reasons explained later in this document.

Amongst activists, this idea is already overwhelmingly rejected. Nevertheless, the South African situation still leaves plenty of scope for misleading misconceptions.

National democratic tasks confront us—that is beyond a shadow of doubt. But it is complete scholastic nonsense to say that the South African revolution is **therefore** "not" a socialist revolution "but" a national-democratic revolution. This idea, invented by the Stalinists, is very influential among radical intellectuals. Unfortunately, it has also gained a certain confused currency among the youth.

The Russian Revolution fully bore out the ideas of Marxism concerning the class character of the state. There is no such thing as a 'non-class' or 'multi-class' state. The modern state is, in the last analysis, either proletarian in its class character or else it carries out the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

If proletarian rule was needed in Russia to carry out the bourgeois-democratic tasks of that revolution, what about the national-democratic tasks facing us in South Africa? The Stalinists are completely wrong to argue that these tasks can or will be carried out under some imaginary state of 'national democracy'—something that is neither fish nor flesh, neither a capitalist nor a proletarian regime.

The South African revolution is a proletarian socialist revolution from the outset. From the outset it inevitably develops as a struggle of the black proletariat directed against the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois state. Nevertheless, it is a proletarian socialist revolution **in which the**

carrying through of a national-democratic task is the first item on the agenda.

This task, let us repeat, is the national liberation of the African majority. It goes hand in hand with all the democratic changes demanded in every sphere of society.

Because of the impasse of world capitalism in general and SA capitalism in particular; because of the dependence of the SA bourgeoisie on repression, on dictatorship, and for generations on apartheid—the bourgeoisie is obliged to be the enemy of democracy.

The democratic tasks can be fulfilled only by breaking the power of the bourgeoisie. This must become the conscious purpose of the mass movement if the revolution is to succeed.

To recognise this does not weaken in the least the thrust of the struggle for national liberation and democracy, but on the contrary will invest it with redoubled revolutionary vision and power.

Every attempt to separate the issues of apartheid and capitalism; every attempt to deflect the struggle against the state and the bourgeoisie from a conscious struggle for workers' power, can only lead to confusion, to the weakening and division of the black working-class movement, and can so serve only reactionary ends.

Three determining factors

The course of the coming revolution in South Africa will be determined fundamentally by three facts:

- by the weakness and senility of capitalism, which cannot afford to transform the conditions of existence now intolerable to the broad masses;
- by a bourgeois state dictatorship whose foundations are cemented in white domination and privilege; and
- by the unstoppable demand for national liberation and democracy in a situation where the oppressed black proletariat makes up the overwhelming majority of society.

For black people in SA, there is no longer any real subsistence possible from the land. The African peasantry in this country has been all but completely eliminated—a process which has been going on for generations. The bulk of the African population was displaced by colonial conquest and by land-grabbing on the part of the whites, backed by legislation.

What remained of peasant farming in the reserves has been undermined and smashed by the combination of deliberate state policies designed in the past to expand the labour supply; by forced over-crowding as a result of removals and the pass laws; and by the operation of capitalist economic laws which ruthlessly drive out of existence small farming conducted on the basis of impoverished and primitive technique.

Now even the small white farmers, with all the advantages of the Land Bank, etc. behind them, are having to give way to the monopolies in agriculture. The big corporations have extended their tentacles very thoroughly into all the most lucrative spheres. Agriculture is indebted up to the hilt, to the tune of R10 billion at the present time.

The 8 000 white maize farmers co. lain of "virtual

bankruptcy", going so far recently as to threaten to withhold deliveries if the government persisted with its attempted producer price freeze. In an unprecedented development, the government threatened to cancel their subsidy and even use troops to break the white farmers' boycott and bring in the maize.

If they are bankrupt, how much the more impossible would be any regeneration of African small farming under a capitalist regime.

Paradoxically, however, under a regime of workers' power—which nationalised under workers' control and management the commanding heights of finance, industry, mining, commerce and big farming—redistribution of considerable areas of land and state support for a growth of African small farming would be entirely viable. This would be a transitional stage to voluntary collectivisation.

Roughly half the African population on the land are an agricultural proletariat working on capitalist farms. The bulk of the rest of the African population on the land are the families and dependents of wage labourers, who are compelled by the apartheid system to rot in the reserves.

To an overwhelming extent, therefore, the African population in South Africa is proletarian in character. Altogether the black proletariat, in all its segments, makes up roughly two-thirds of the country's entire population. This is a proportion without parallel in the colonial and semi-colonial world.

Whether in the cities or on the land, the liberation struggle of the black masses enters into immediate and inescapable class conflict with the bourgeoisie, with bourgeois property and with all the institutions of control designed to secure the property of the bourgeoisie.

The development of capitalism in SA, by concentrating the productive forces in a few capitalist hands, has concentrated immense social forces against capitalism.

It has produced vast concentrations of black population dependent on wage labour in the urban areas. Soweto, for instance—some 'township' this!—has an estimated two million people.

The biggest concentration of the urban population is in the 'PWV triangle'—Pretoria, the Witwatersrand, and Vereeniging (including Johannesburg, the gold mines, the big concentrations of the metal and engineering industry, etc). This area accounts for nearly 80% of all mineral production and nearly 60% of industrial production in SA.

The country's population, presently about 33 million, is expected to double in the next 25 years. The percentage in urban areas is predicted to rise from its present 35% to at least 70%. Already, if you take a circle with a radius of 25 km from the Johannesburg city hall, 70% of the people in that circle are black.

Despite all the attempts to establish a 'white South Africa' where blacks would be merely 'temporary sojourners', government policy—which has for decades been to reverse the tide of urbanisation and send it back to the rural bantustans—has proved a complete failure.

So too has the attempt to develop industry in the bantustans as a foundation for the break-up and scattering of the African population, despite all the incentives offered to the capitalists. Increasingly the policy has become a **defensive** one, aimed above all at preventing the concentration of the black proletariat in the PWV triangle.

The emphasis has switched to creating economic 'growth points'—East London is a typical example—where incentives for investment are provided, and where there is a bantustan right on the edge of the city. Thus the black workers sleep in their so-called 'homeland' and every day migrate to employment in 'white SA'.

The pattern is repeated in the OFS, in Natal, in the Pretoria area, and so on. Included in the 'homelands' are the urban townships, the industrial proletarian townships, of the so-called 'white' cities themselves. So increasingly the whole thing is exposed as sheer political manipulation, to fend off the demand for equal political rights.

Purpose of democratic struggle

The whole point of the democratic struggle in SA is this: that the black masses are asserting democratic demands not for the sake of being able to make a cross on a ballot-paper every five years, but precisely for the purpose of clearing away the obstacles for the assertion of their proletarian class interests, their material demands. They want not 'principles' of democracy, but its substance, its fruits—jobs, homes, decent education, transport, a living wage.

While many of the black petty-bourgeois are deluded on this question, the capitalists themselves are quite clear. **They understand that the demand for the democratic transformation of South Africa presents a mortal threat to them. It threatens not only the continuation of the cheap labour system—the necessary basis of their profits and economic power—but the capitalist dictatorship as a whole.**

Hence all sections of the bourgeoisie, from the most liberal to the most right wing, agree in their implacable opposition to majority rule.

Hence the declarations of Oppenheimer against a 'numerical democracy'. Hence the statement of Professor Lombard, who in 1980 spelled out the predicament of the SA bourgeoisie: "If an unqualified one-man-one-vote election was held today in the Republic, a non-white leader with a communistic programme would probably attain an overall majority on a pledge to confiscate and redistribute the property of the privileged classes."

If the very idea of democracy spells "communism" to the bourgeoisie, what else can a democratic revolution spell to them?

Yet democracy is impossible in South Africa without a revolution—as we shall go on to show. **That fact, as it realises itself in action, will drive even the most liberal sections of the bourgeoisie into the camp of outright reaction.**

We can see the evolution of the big bourgeoisie towards the right in the statements of their spokesmen, both on political and economic questions.

When troops were sent in to Sebokeng in September last year, the statement of PFP chairman Colin Eglin was a typical reflection of the monopoly interests this party represents. He criticised the move as undermining "the effectiveness of the SADF as a shield against external aggression." If the police were inadequate to quell the township riots, they should be reinforced for the purpose. (Star, 15/10/84.)

Now we have the spectacle of Zac de Beer—this one-time Progressive MP and presently Anglo director, who has always fancied himself as one of the most civilised liberal gentlemen in South Africa—calling for the scrapping of minimum wages (*Rand Daily Mail*, 28/2/85). Apparently it is necessary mercilessly to grind the poor into starvation to avoid South Africa's deterioration into a "banana republic".

In the past de Beer called for higher minimum wages. "Today I am pleading for people to be allowed to work for any wage, no matter how low, that they are prepared to accept." Otherwise, he said, SA's inflation rate would continue to be three times that of its major trading partners. Previously South Africa was "tolerably prosperous" and could afford minimum wages. This is the case no longer.

If other bourgeois liberals today criticise de Beer's statement, it is because their hearts are lagging behind their heads. Given time, they will catch up.

In similar vein, we have the aggressive tactics of the 'liberal' Anglo American Corporation management against the National Union of Mineworkers. After dismissing 92 union shaft stewards who had been negotiating with the Vaal Reefs management over various grievances, they proceeded to dismiss more than 16 600 black mineworkers who went on a protest strike.

Riot police were called in with dogs, tear gas and rubber bullets, to enforce the deportation of the workers to the bantustans and prevent re-occupation of hostels in the mine compound which the bosses had closed. At least one miner was reported killed.

Although the reinstatement of most of these mineworkers was negotiated later, many union militants have been victimised. These tactics of the employers are obviously preparatory manoeuvres for the big confrontation that is looming in mid-year between the Chamber of Mines and the NUM over the annual wage claim.

Attitude to unions

After implacable hostility towards trade unions for black workers, the SA bourgeoisie has retreated in recent years to a position of grudging toleration of unions—but only under the pressure of tremendous workers' struggles and tenacious organising efforts which have brought the independent unions to around 500 000 members.

Some SA employers have even come to see 'virtues' in trade unions, as they enable negotiation to take place over issues that would otherwise have resulted in sudden explosions of mass action.

But it is necessary to see the process dialectically, and not imagine that it can develop in a straight line. Still only a minority of black workers are unionised. As the unions grow the workers' sense of power, industrially and politically, grows geometrically. It will be impossible for the SA bourgeoisie to tolerate for any length of time a militant trade union movement in which the majority of the black proletariat is organised.

Inevitably, they will resort later to more and more reactionary measures against the unions. Nevertheless, they will not be able to destroy the basis of organisation in

the factories, mines, shops, etc, which has now been laid.

Outlook of proletariat

The industrial proletariat is, by its nature, a modern class, a civilised class. In South Africa the basis of tribal society has been destroyed, and irrevocably left behind by the great mass of the working class.

Significantly the migrant mineworkers in the NUM no longer refer to each other as Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, Tswana, Pedi or Shangaan, etc. "It is just comrade", they say. "The union brings us together."

Where sections of SA migrant workers in their consciousness and their conduct still manifest tribalism, this is a shell of the past still to be sloughed off. It reflects still the early stage in the awakening of the proletarian mass movement, which in time will draw even the most backward sections into common struggle.

With the rise of the proletariat has come inevitably the rising demand for its full inclusion into civil society, for full civil rights equal with the whites. There is no way that this demand can be diverted for any length of time by the conspiracies of the ruling class.

Because the Africans are the great majority of the population, they do not and cannot seek national liberation by the route of separation. The so-called 'national', so-called 'homelands' constructed for them and imposed upon them by the SA government are plainly seen by the African masses as a device to obstruct their national liberation.

This will likewise be the fate of all the more elaborate schemes for balkanising the country and dividing up the Africans so that any 'political rights' conceded to them will have no weight.

So long as the African majority do not have the power to determine by their franchise the shape and composition of the central government of the whole of South Africa, they will continue to attribute every hardship, every suffering, every indignity to that fact. Therefore they will render unworkable all the 'federal' and 'confederal' schemes which may be introduced by the ruling class in the coming years.

The central demand of the South African revolution is for 'one-person-one-vote in an undivided South Africa'. Nothing short of this expresses the aspiration of the African people for national liberation.

Against this central democratic demand of the majority all the powers of resistance of bourgeois society and the state will be concentrated in future.

The movement in South Africa must set as its conscious goal to overthrow the state, and with it the bourgeoisie whose property and power that state has been created to defend. Only the black proletariat, its forces united and mobilised to the full, organised, armed and fighting with clear aims and a fully conscious leadership, can draw behind it all the other strata of oppressed society and carry this battle through to victory.

But a victorious proletarian revolution—breaking the power of the bourgeoisie, disarming and dismantling the bourgeois state machine—can create in the place of that nothing other than a new state built upon the organisa-

tions and armed power of the proletariat itself. That means a workers' state.

Then and then alone will the democratic revolution in South Africa triumph—through the establishment of a regime of workers' democracy which, from the very

outset will be obliged to take into its hands the ownership and control of the main means of production and carry through, together with the democratic transformation of society, the first steps in its socialist transformation also.

Reform, reaction and civil war

For most of this century the policy of the SA bourgeoisie, in all its conflicting sections, has been determined above all by the need to control the rising black industrial proletariat.

White domination and racial segregation has, of course, been characteristic of South Africa since colonial conquest. The relationship of master and servant, and the separation of the European settlers and administrators from the native people under them, was typical of British and indeed all colonial rule—in Africa, in the Middle East, in India, in semi-colonial China, etc.

However, in South Africa, there has been the erection of this unparalleled state structure of white minority domination, under which South Africa moved to self-government and state independence, and which has been systematically developed as *apartheid* during the long rule of the National Party government since 1948.

That development was not accidental, nor has the creation of the apartheid system merely been the product of fanatical racist theories of the Afrikaners—which is the way it has been presented by the liberals, and by the Stalinists, who have no understanding of (and do not wish to understand) the way in which apartheid and capitalism are inseparably bound together.

Although the liberal bourgeoisie always objected to the apartheid policies of the Afrikaner nationalists, they had laid all the foundations for that policy under their United Party and other earlier regimes of white domination and segregation—reserves, pass laws, etc. Moreover, by 1948 they could offer no convincing alternative policy to deal with the black proletariat flooding into the urban areas as the result of the industrialisation of SA.

When apartheid appeared to 'work', they basically reconciled themselves to it. At the same time they have been able to maintain the luxury of 'opposition', disclaiming all responsibility for the horrors and atrocities of the regime—the inevitable outcome of their exploitative system which it is the state's foremost business to defend.

The rigidity of the system in SA, and the fact that the same apartheid regime has been in power without interruption for 37 years, is an expression of how limited are the alternatives available to bourgeois society for the defence of capitalism.

The tremendous drawn-out mass struggles of the 1950s were a demonstration that a qualitatively new stage had been reached in the rise of the urban proletariat, and in its struggle for political rights. Even with the minimum of real organisation, it constituted a revolutionary challenge to the ruling class and to the state system.

By this we do not mean that all the conditions necessary for a successful revolution had matured in the 1950s. The point is that the working-class movement demonstrated a revolutionary character, and was moving in action towards revolutionary conclusions. This was understood by the ruling class.

It is for this reason that the movement was met by the turn of the regime to massacre, to mass arrests and the repression of all the mass-based organisations of the black people.

In the 1950s, as *Inqaba* has explained in issue No. 13, the Stalinist and middle-class leadership of the Congress movement totally failed to appreciate the class issues that were at stake in the struggle for democracy. Thus, while basing themselves on the mass movement, they repeatedly crippled it by calling off effective actions and rushing to make 'peace' with the liberal bourgeoisie.

Their belief was that the ruling class was fundamentally split between its racist and liberal fractions, and that by encouraging the liberals—and not 'frightening them away'—it would be possible to turn state policy in SA towards a programme of democratic changes. Thus, little by little, the African majority would gain its rights.

They failed utterly to understand that the whole bourgeoisie was inevitably driven by the spectre of working-class power to demand a strong government and vigorous repressive measures against the mass movement whenever it began to gain a sense of its own potential strength.

Liberal deception

The liberal capitalists, being more sophisticated than the crude racist right-wing, simultaneously employed measures of deception against the movement—cultivating hopes that reforms could be undertaken 'if only' the masses refrained from violence and waited upon the generosity of their masters instead of making 'impossible demands'.

As always, the liberal bourgeoisie relied upon the foolish sincerity of bishops and humanitarian do-gooders of all kinds to convey this impression to the masses. These worthies employed as their conduit the CP and Congress leaders who were always falling over themselves for signs of favour from this quarter of official society. Having

not a revolutionary but a reformist outlook, these leaders were keen to take the counterfeit promises of the liberals at their face value and pass them on to the mass movement as good coin.

Barely a year before the Sharpeville massacre, the Communist Party's leading theoretician published an article in which he asserted that South Africa could be one of those "examples in history" where a democratic transformation of society could take place without violence; where, by a combination of other means the ruling class could be compelled to "give way for urgent and overdue changes, without dragging the people through the agony of civil war." (*Africa South*, January-March 1959.)

If this was the 'theory' of the 'Communists'—imagine the hopelessly confused outlook of the middle-class Congress leadership in general. Nor did the PAC leadership, which split from Congress with an ostensibly more radical posture, have any clearer an idea.

Unfortunately, in a serious class struggle, even the most outstanding and necessary qualities of personal courage—which have not only been present in abundance in the fighting rank-and-file, but have characterised many of the movement's leaders then and since—cannot substitute for clarity of understanding, perspectives and strategy.

Thus the mass movement was unprepared for the savage wave of reaction on the part of the state which opened with the Sharpeville massacre of 21 March 1960. There followed a decade of dark reaction in which every imaginable form of oppression and segregation was introduced, tightened and refined.

Even the trade union organisations of the African workers were eliminated—not banned formally, but eliminated in reality. The cause of this lay mainly, though not solely, in the arrests and bannings carried out by the state. In a disastrous move, with complete blindness, the CP and ANC leadership took the best working-class cadres with them into exile, with the notion of waging a guerilla war along the lines of Algeria.

Now, with the Nkomati agreement between SA and Mozambique, the leadership's guerilla strategy—which was always based on false premises—has been more clearly exposed than ever before as the blind alley which Marxists have always pointed out it would be.

But the main factor which gave strength to the reaction of the 1960s was the long upswing in the development of capitalism. However, as capitalism grew, so all the more rapidly grew its future gravedigger, the black working class.

In the early 1970s there was the revival once again of the working-class movement. This revival was spear-headed not by the exiled CP, ANC or PAC leaders (who in fact, after going into exile, had turned their back on the working class and denied that anything could genuinely be done in South Africa at that time), but by the independent initiatives of rank-and-file militants at home.

This, in fact, is what has given the reawakened movement its enormous revolutionary vitality. Of historic importance has been the building of the working-class organisations by the workers and youth themselves, no longer dependent as in the past upon petty-bourgeois leaders for every instruction, for permission to do this and permission to do that.

The revival was heralded by the black student move-

ment under the banner of 'black consciousness' from the late 1960s. Then followed the industrial strike wave in Natal and the Transvaal, and on the mines, in 1973, '74 and '75. There was the beginning of the rebuilding of independent trade unions.

Then came the youth revolt of 1976—beginning with the Soweto uprising. Following that were the political general strikes in 1976 and '77, but so far without real organisation underlying them.

Now the systematic building of trade unions has advanced to the point where half a million African workers are organised in unions under their own control. The use of the school strike has been developed as a tactic of the black working-class youth—to the point where, in August 1984, the number boycotting schools reached a peak of one million. In the black townships there have been the tremendous mass struggles over rents, over fare increases, and so on, during the past few years.

The mass movement taking place today is absolutely unparalleled in its depth, its strength and its sweep. Even the lulls over the last ten years can be seen in retrospect as pauses for the catching of breath. For the first time it has begun to take on a fully nationwide character, extending from Pretoria to East London, from the Cape to Natal, from Vereeniging to formerly sleepy Grahamstown, from Uitenhage to isolated Beaufort-West.

The township and youth struggles draw strength from and in turn reinforce the strike movement of the workers.

In 1984, despite the deep recession, South Africa had its record year for strikes. According to government figures, 378 000 worker-days were lost in 469 strikes. But these figures cover only the 180 000 workers involved in action over industrial disputes. The figures do not include the 800 000 or more workers who took part in the two-day Transvaal general strike in November—the most important political strike in the history of Africa, and the high point of the movement so far in the way it combined the organised actions of workers and youth.

A qualitative new stage was reached also in 1984 when the newly-formed National Union of Mineworkers (then only two years old and already with some 80 000 members), confronted the Chamber of Mines with the first organised strike action on the mines since 1946. Skillful tactics by the NUM forced a climb-down by the Chamber, and gave the union a partial victory in a situation where it was extremely dangerous to launch an all-out strike for which they were not yet adequately prepared. Now an even bigger confrontation with the Chamber looms.

Character of the state

Throughout the past decade, the state has continued to show its murderous character as the armed instrument for the preservation of ruling-class power and property against the black proletariat. The massacres of the youth in 1976, in which possibly a thousand were slaughtered; the repeated police shootings and other brutalities against mineworkers in struggle; the Sharpeville-Day massacre in Uitenhage this year—these are only the most outstan-

ding of the horrors perpetrated daily against the black working people. This is the reality which the mass of black people face.

It would be the most serious mistake, in any perspective on future developments in South Africa, to lose sight for an instant of the nature of the SA state as a formidable, ruthlessly engineered killing machine upon which the **whole** ruling class relies for its preservation.

The capitalist class is fully conscious of the need to have at its disposal effective, organised 'armed bodies of men'—in short, a powerful state apparatus—to hold down the working class. It can never agree to weaken, let alone dispense with, this apparatus.

Nevertheless, the **inability of the ruling class now to hold down and cow the movement by repression alone** is every day demonstrated—in the townships, in the factories, and by the militant youth. This fact has propelled at least the major section of capital to seek the road of so-called 'reform'.

It is important not to dismiss as irrelevant or minimise the significance of the shifts in the policy of the ruling class that are taking place. But their importance lies mainly in bringing to light the essential bankruptcy of the bourgeoisie's position; the underlying splits that begin to tear them apart; and the contribution that these changes make towards emboldening the mass movement, thereby stirring to action more and more of the social forces of the revolution.

Nature of 'reform' strategy

It would be utterly naive to see in these 'reforms' the beginning of a progression towards genuine democratic rights for the black majority; to think that from these beginnings can come an evolutionary transformation of society, or transformation in the character of the state.

The important thing to understand is that the 'reform' policies of the bourgeoisie represent a development in its strategy of **counter-revolution**—to be combined with all the repressive forces available to it, and with the purpose of buying time for capitalism by diverting the proletariat from revolutionary goals.

Although today's 'reforms' are said to be directed against the failed policies of Verwoerd, in a sense it was Verwoerd who pioneered 'reform' as a counter-revolutionary measure against the African people. Put forward as a supposed 'alternative' to naked *wit baasskap*, his policy was to create so-called 'self-governing' bantustans as an 'outlet' for African political aspirations.

The tribal bantustan policy was originated in the 1950s precisely in response to the rising movement of the detribalised urban black proletariat.

Now, because the mass movement has flooded over the ramparts of the sand-castle erected by Verwoerd, the ruling class rushes to find new means of diverting, dividing and obstructing the proletariat.

If the SABC now refers to Verwoerd's conceptions as "nonsense" it is only because the regime and ruling class now need new methods to accomplish essentially the same class aims.

As already explained, it is impossible for the ruling class to concede a genuinely democratic constitution: one-person-one-vote in an undivided South Africa. That cannot be achieved this side of the overthrow of the bourgeoisie; this side of the victory of the proletarian revolution.

Horror of horrors to the bourgeoisie is the fact that the black workers and youth in the forefront of the struggle naturally and immediately combine their democratic demands with the stated aim of taking into common ownership the means of production.

Recent opinion polls, contrived to show a 'majority' of blacks opposed to nationalisation, scarcely convince the ruling class which uses them as propaganda against socialism. The answer given in opinion polls depends largely on how the questions are posed, who poses them, and in what circumstances they are posed. Apparently most blacks would even be opposed to nationalisation under a future 'black government'!

But once the hitherto passive layers of the black working class are themselves stirred to action; once the advanced workers and youth explain clearly to the whole movement the realities of monopoly power in SA, explain the real causes of the poverty of the working people, and expound a programme of revolution through which the main productive forces and resources are taken into the common ownership of the people under democratic workers' control and management—then there would be a tidal wave of support for that idea.

Already in the 1950s, the Freedom Charter, under the pressure of the advanced workers, proclaimed as its goal the common ownership of the mines, banks and monopoly industries, together with the expropriation and redistribution of the land. This was seen as a necessary foundation for democratic change.

If that was the understanding then, what is the understanding now?

At the launching of the UDF in August 1983, at a mass gathering attended overwhelmingly by working-class black people, the most enthusiastic response, greeted by five minutes of applause, chanting and revolutionary songs, was for a speaker who called for the working class to take power in South Africa and take into common ownership the productive forces.

In November 1984 one of the leaders of the Transvaal general strike, Thami Mali, and another militant Siphwe Thusi, spelled out the same view in an interview with a Johannesburg journalist:

"I (Graham Watts—the reporter) ask what it is they want. Is it one-man-one-vote in a unitary SA? Yes, but that's not enough. It must be a 'workers' state' based on the principles of the Freedom Charter, which they call 'a set of minimum demands'. The Freedom Charter is ... all about how 'the people shall govern' and how the land 'shall belong to all those who work it'. So you want a socialist SA? 'Exactly.' " (Sunday Express, 11/11/84.)

What is understood now by the advanced active layer of the masses will be understood and communicated in time to come to the masses as a whole. An awareness of this has already struck into the marrow of the bourgeoisie.

Thus they wail in the press that the blacks do not understand the 'laws of economics'—which means they do not care about the need of the employers to make a profit! They have 'no stake' in the free enterprise system.

Need to change race system

The racial system which stabilised South African capitalism in the past has now turned dialectically into a source of tremendous revolutionary conflict and of irreconcilable class struggle.

The bourgeoisie is compelled to try to move away from that racial system.

For economic and political reasons, the big capitalists would like to be rid of apartheid altogether and rule on the basis of a 'non-racial' dictatorship. They dream of being able to break up the black proletariat, politically and geographically, and hold it down by a combination of state repression and a formally 'non-racial' but essentially **undemocratic** constitutional system incorporating black middle-class leaders. But dreams are one thing; facts are another.

The ruling class is unable to move decisively away from the racist system precisely because they would be unable to stabilise their rule on any other basis.

When, in decades past, the advance of their economic system and the relative weakness of the proletariat would have provided more room for constitutional reforms, they revelled under the racist dictatorship, greedily squeezing every drop of profit out of the oppressed black workers that they could. Now when they need to change their method of rule—when they have no alternative but to change—change is no longer a workable alternative.

Botha, speaking for the capitalist class, declared that it was necessary to "adapt or die". But in fact "adapt and die" will turn out to be the reality for capitalism.

The sickness of their economic system on the one hand, which necessitates material **counter-reforms** against the masses, and the accumulated power of the black working class, on the other hand, is what makes revolution a certainty.

This is why, alongside all the talk of 'reform', the real political changes remain so measly, so miserly, so obviously anti-democratic in purpose, while repression by the state forces is all the time stepped up.

Still the challenge from below forces the capitalists to try to go further in the direction of political reform of the system—much, much further. But, having no confidence in any reform, finding their predicament at every step worse than it was before, they must again and again recoil from it, all the time increasing the savagery of repression. Finding themselves in complete disarray, and with the dawning awareness that there is no viable way out for them, the ruling class will again and again split under the hammer-blows of the mass movement.

It has taken the regime more than ten years to move from the policies of Verwoerd to the present policies of Botha—and even that has necessitated a split of the ruling party. This is an expression of the difficulties facing the ruling class.

The fate of Botha's new constitutional scheme of racial 'parliaments' for the whites, coloured and Indians, shows the fate that awaits future manoeuvres of the ruling class which do not go (because they **cannot** go) to the root of the masses' demand for real political power.

It is clear that Botha turned to this new constitution

with essentially four aims: firstly to incorporate the coloured and Indian middle classes into the system to reinforce white supremacy; secondly to divide blacks against each other by drawing Indians and coloureds to the side of the whites; thirdly to construct a bonapartist executive with tremendous powers, more able flexibly to manoeuvre between the racial groups and the classes and less tied down directly by the control of the white parliament; and fourthly, to provide a basis from which he could conduct further experiments in the direction of some political rights for Africans.

From beginning to end there has been nothing democratic about it.

The structure of the new constitution ensures that that party which has majority support amongst the whites controls the Presidency and the whole system. The coloured and Indian 'parliaments' are permitted to look after their so-called 'own affairs'. The President's Council, dominated by the whites and the nominees of the bonapartist President, decides everything of 'general' significance.

But even on the basis of this undemocratic bonapartist structure, they could not afford to have a 'parliament' for Africans. The reason is obvious: if 73% of the population were permitted to elect their 'parliament', what possible moral pretext could the white minority advance for retaining overall control in the structure?

Any form of directly elected parliament for the African majority would threaten to become a focus of even more explosive discontent against the rule of the present government. Coming up against the concrete obstacle of the white-based state machine, unable for that reason and because of the limitations of capitalism to carry through any of the essential material changes demanded by the masses, it could only have the effect of spurring on the revolutionary struggle for a complete overturn of the state power.

Policy of division

It is impossible for the ruling class to concede direct representation to the Africans, at the level of central government, in proportion to their numbers. Therefore, essential to the bourgeois strategy is the maintenance and extension of tribal and local divisions—and the breaking up of SA for political reasons.

Yet this is bound to be rejected by the increasingly conscious black working class-masses, demanding their national and social emancipation.

The coloured and Indian 'elections' in 1984 were met by a tremendously successful boycott. In the coloured elections less than 20% of the 18-year-olds and above voted. In the working-class townships less than 10% voted. A similar thing happened in the Indian elections.

What was especially significant was that the trade unions came forward, alongside the UDF, and the organised African workers played a leading role together with the youth in approaching coloured and Indian working-class families in their homes and canvassing for the boycott.

The result is that no thread of respectability attaches

to these puppets who have become 'honourable members' of the coloured 'House of Representatives' or the Indian 'House of Delegates'. Quite the contrary, they are discredited and disgraced as stooges, as much among their so-called 'own' people as among the Africans.

They can achieve nothing of significance to provide a basis of popularity. Hendrikse may be 'prime minister' of the coloureds. But, as a student journalist put it, what has he got for his 'own affair'? 180 000 homeless coloured people!

If a member of the Indian House of Delegates wants even to question the law in the OFS which prohibits Asians staying there longer than two months, it has become a matter of doubt whether this would be an 'own affairs matter' (in which case he could raise it) or a 'general affairs matter' (in which case he would be ruled out of order). 'General affairs' are for the President's Council.

Such is the absurdity of the situation that, for example, opposition members in the white parliament can apparently no longer ask the government for its *per capita* spending figures on white, coloured, Indian and African population groups. It can only ask about its 'own affairs'—and about the affairs of the unfranchised Africans.

The real measure of the changes brought about by this new system is shown in the fact that eventually, after a lot of resistance, coloured and Indian MPs are now being allowed to dine with white MPs as the latter's guests in the white parliamentary dining room!

Forced to go further

Such is the fiasco of the new constitution; such is its rejection by the vast majority of the population; so surely has it inflamed the anger of the oppressed people—that Botha at the very opening of the new parliaments had to announce plans to proceed further with constitutional change.

The necessity of this, he said, was to give recognition to the permanence of at least 'some' of the African population within so-called 'white South Africa'—and the hopelessness of attempting to accommodate African political aspirations solely within the framework of the bantustans.

He has announced the creation of a new 'national negotiating forum', through which he hopes to achieve the incorporation of unelected African 'leaders' into responsibilities of government at national level. Yet even Gatsha Buthelezi has dismissed this as a meaningless sop!

That does not mean, however, that Buthelezi wishes to entrust his fate to the democratic will of the African people. Professor Lawrence Schlemmer, who acts as a ventriloquist's dummy for the Inkatha chief, has in fact warned the bourgeoisie not to attempt the establishment of a fourth parliament for Africans. That would merely lead to an explosion of frustrations and release more resistance. So it should be "avoided".

But, says Schlemmer, "some form of incorporation (of Africans) into a joint body at parliamentary or Cabinet level dealing with general affairs is essential." (*Rand Dai-*

ly Mail, 26/11/84.) Buthelezi, in other words, wants to be appointed a Cabinet Minister without having to be elected! Until Botha is ready to offer him that, he maintains his 'democratic' intransigence.

Yet for Buthelezi to enter any position of central state responsibility would lead to the evaporation of any basis of popular support, even among the most backward strata, which he presently retains. And Botha for his part would not be able to move this far without stirring up a big backlash of conservative revolt among the whites, fearing that their privileged status will vanish.

'Regionalisation'

Botha's grand plan is believed to involve the development of new regional authorities, based on the eight economic regions in the government's development plan. It is not clear whether or to what extent these authorities will intersect with or incorporate existing 'independent' bantustans. Probably that is still a riddle to Botha himself at this stage. However, it is most unlikely that the regime would be able or willing to actually dismantle the bantustan political structure.

The government is reconsidering the Buthelezi Commission's 1982 proposals for the joint administration of KwaZulu and Natal—and their possible extension to other areas. This commission advanced a plan of 'consociational' administration for the region.

This idea is critically examined in a recent article in the *SA Labour Bulletin* (April 1985) on 'Regionalisation, Federalism and the Reconstruction of the South African State', by Cobbett, Glaser, Hindson and Swilling.

" 'Consociation', " they write, "refers roughly to the notion of a 'grand coalition' government between different groups which retain a high degree of autonomy and enjoy proportional representation and minority veto power. Consociation ... is thought to be appropriate to maintaining stability in societies 'deeply divided' by linguistic, cultural, racial, ethnic and other divisions." (p.112.)

The 'brilliance' of this bourgeois political concept is shown in the fact that one of the more notable 'successes' claimed for it in the past has been the Lebanon! The strategists of capital in South Africa can have few illusions in its viability, even temporarily, in a society gripped by irreconcilable class antagonisms in which issues immediately become reduced to the language of naked power.

Least of all, for this reason, could 'consociation' be seriously adopted by the SA ruling class as a method of reorganisation of **central** government. It is not accidental that there is nothing 'consociational' or subject to 'veto power' in Botha's bonapartist Presidency. That is the whole essence of the new constitution.

However, the application of a 'consociational' scheme to **regional** administration is now being seriously considered. This would entail the working together of different authorities, in some cases from different, racially segregated areas.

But it should be borne in mind what the (unspoken) real basis was which underlay the consensus reached bet-

ween Buthelezi and the white capitalists in his commission report. The latter could only consider sharing regional 'power' with even a committed bourgeois flunky like Buthelezi because two very important conditions were fulfilled.

On the one hand he himself could hold out **some** promise of disciplining KwaZulu through the mafia-apparatus of Inkatha, which has been consolidated with immense capitalist funds over the past decade. And, on the other hand (and more importantly still), **they could continue to shelter under the power of central government and the armed apparatus of the state**, which would come to their assistance if ever their vital interests were threatened.

In fact, for every step in the direction of decentralisation of administration in SA, we see two steps towards centralising and reinforcing even further the military-police repressive power and the bonapartism of the central bourgeois state apparatus.

Centralisation of power is certain and primary, decentralisation uncertain and secondary, in the policy of the SA ruling class. Thus the powers of the white Provincial Councils, now to be abolished, will be transferred **first** to central government, and only **later** to new regional authorities as and when these are established.

A continued effective monopoly of central state power will remain for the bourgeoisie the necessary condition for any moves towards a system of joint black-white administration at regional levels. But that in itself does not guarantee the workability of the scheme.

Where else than in KwaZulu do the ruling class have an Inkatha or a Buthelezi to lean on? No doubt there are aspiring Buthelezi-type traitors, but none with the same base, none with the same muscle. Even in KwaZulu/Natal all Buthelezi's dictatorial measures have been unable to prevent mass explosions in the recent period.

No viable basis

Moreover, how could regional authorities of this kind possibly be effective unless there were viable lower authorities underpinning them?

The proposed 'regional service councils' to jointly administer water supplies, electricity and sewerage are themselves to be based on the existing racially segregated local authorities. Yet, in most African townships, these local authorities have already either been demolished by the masses or face the imminent prospect of the same fate. "Since the unrest began on 3 September," writes Allister Sparks in the *Observer* (12/5/85), "109 councillors have been attacked and five killed, including a mayor and two deputy mayors; 66 have had their homes burnt down; and 147, including the entire councils of seven townships, have resigned."

In Sebokeng, 16 homeless Lekoa councillors are now living in a protected compound, behind a high security fence of barbed wire with heavily-armed guards at the gate. They are refugees from the people they are supposed to represent. The locals refer to them disparagingly as "the government in exile".

Moreover the council, which had begun its life by rais-

ing rents, is financially crippled by a rent strike maintained solidly since September by more than 90% of the 350 000 residents of the area.

In the Eastern Cape, puppet councillors have been hurriedly resigning their positions in order to escape death at the hands of the enraged populace. This is a symptom of the revolutionary polarisation which has taken place.

In the main, the government will be compelled to maintain direct control over the administration of the townships, and will be unable to establish to any significant degree stable locally-elected councils for these areas.

Thus how can the 'tiers' of regional and sub-regional administration be made viable? Throughout, the regime will be able to staff the structure only with the most disreputable black stooges. Even now these have to think twice, or rather ten times, before going in for collaboration, since the burnt homes and businesses and the charred bodies of councillors have shown that the fruits of office do not consist entirely of perks.

As if these were not sufficient obstacles to its scheme, the government is determined to add more. So afraid are they that any measure of real power in determining policy could pass into the hands of the black people, even at the level of the 'regional service councils', that Botha is taking steps to render this impossible.

In the composition of these authorities, apparently, the various townships together with the white suburbs, etc, are to be given representation in proportion to their contribution to the revenue! (Where, we might ask, is the brotherly 'consociation' here?!)

Black workers in SA have taken up the cry of the American Revolution: "No taxation without representation!" Now Botha discovers a slogan for the bourgeois counter-revolution against democracy: "No representation without taxation!" This can only ensure the even more determined rejection by the masses of this scheme.

It is necessary to see the whole process dialectically, and not to give credence in an empirical way to the new initiatives and ingenious subtleties of the bourgeoisie as they search desperately for ways to 'reform'.

The authors of the article in the *Labour Bulletin* are right to point out that the 'reforms' are designed to enable the ruling class to move "beyond formal racialism without capitulating to what is termed 'majoritarianism'." (p.108.) This is precisely what will make them unworkable. The whole crux of the issue in South Africa is **majority rule**—not '**formal**' departures from racialism but the demand of the black majority that real power to determine the government of the country should pass into their hands. By whatever pretext, this cannot be evaded; by whatever route, all evasions will fail.

The above-mentioned writers have put together valuable research on the developments in SA towards federalism—and in particular on the regime's 'regionalisation' policy. But they are quite wrong when they conclude:

"This reconceptualisation and re-organisation of spatial forms, if synthesised into a coherent policy programme, as some reformers in the state and capital envisage, could provide a basis for a long-term strategic offensive aimed at reconstituting the relations of exploitation and domination in South Africa." (p.107.)

There is no room now for a "strategic offensive" of reform by the bourgeoisie. They are incapable of "synthesising a coherent policy programme". Their policies

constitute a **defensive** response to the rising threat of workers' revolution. Their real nature was summed up in a recent *Rand Daily Mail* cartoon showing Botha in the role of King Canute, facing an advancing tide of black influx which had clearly ignored his orders to stop, "Well in that case I order you to come in only half way," he declares!

Effect of recent 'reforms'

The recent scrapping of the Mixed Marriages Act and Section 16 of the Immorality Act, which prohibited sex between people of different races, is clearly understood by the majority to be mere cosmetic change. Nevertheless this has been enough to give a propaganda handle to the ultra-right.

The right to freehold tenure in place of mere leasehold, recently 'granted' to urban Africans with permanent status in the townships, is likewise generally seen as a pathetic sop. Even the thin stratum able to afford to buy their homes will not thereby be given any 'stake' (as the bourgeois imagine) in the 'free enterprise system'.

Firstly, the socialist revolution does not threaten to take people's homes away from them. On the contrary, it alone can guarantee all people a home. Secondly, as examples in many countries have shown, homeowners with mortgage debts are just as much threatened with homelessness when unemployment and economic recession hit. In Britain's Broad Green constituency, for example, a high level of home-ownership among workers has not deterred them from electing an avowed Marxist and *Militant* supporter as their Labour M.P.

To South Africa's impoverished working masses, in fact, this 'reform' by the regime only adds insult to injury. The 'right' of some Africans to own property is conceded when the substance of property has vanished from almost all Africans.

The same applies to the concession that, after all, a minority of the African people are to be allowed to keep their South African citizenship. Blacks are now left to ponder which is worse—no citizenship, or citizenship without citizens' rights.

Of more immediate impact is the government's intended amendment to the Mines and Works Act to permit Africans to qualify for blasting certificates. Coming at a time when the NUM had placed the issue squarely on the table in this year's dispute with the Chamber of Mines, this concession will be felt by the black mineworkers as a recognition of their potential power. They will be emboldened by it. While only momentarily giving relief to the mine bosses, this change will further alienate support for the government among white miners, and so can only deepen the contradictions it faces.

The pending repeal of the Improper Interference Act to allow mixed-race political parties is hardly an earth-shattering change as far as the black masses are concerned—for their genuine political organisations are banned or otherwise persecuted and, in any event, have turned their backs decisively on the puppet 'parliaments'.

The most immediate impact of the repeal is expected to be that it will allow fusion between the white PFP and

co-thinking bourgeois collaborators in the coloured and Indian 'parliaments'. There is press speculation that this might even put the PFP in a majority in the Indian 'House of Delegates', thus giving it a seat in the cabinet!

The most likely effect of that would be to undermine still further remaining illusions among the blacks in the beneficence of the white PFP liberals. Possibly Botha is calculating on such a development to implicate the PFP indirectly in governmental responsibility and deepen the incipient split already evident within it.

Despite the minimal nature of all these 'reforms' from the standpoint of the masses, it would, nevertheless, be wrong to conclude that the ruling class can introduce no more than token changes or changes of trivial importance politically.

The government's 'suspension' of forced removals (although no reliance should be placed on it) is a step of great significance—because it is an acknowledgement of the power of the mass movement and expresses the fear of the regime to provoke that movement further. Similarly significant is the campaign now going on among a section of the big bourgeoisie for doing away with the pass laws.

Capitalism has been built in South Africa on a foundation of migrant labour, on total state control of the movement of the black proletariat as a necessary measure for maintaining the system of cheap labour. Influx control has also served to weaken the pressure for social spending in urban areas, and the pressure of the working class for political rights, by confining the families of millions of workers to the rural dumping grounds of the reserves.

However, the inevitable process of urbanisation has continued all the same. Industrial labour has increasingly become settled in the cities. Black workers have secured through struggle at least some basic trade union rights and recognition, and migrant workers themselves have become organised in the unions. Despite all the pass arrests and forced removals, 'squatter' settlements of working-class families have mushroomed on the edges of the 'white' cities. In all these respects influx control has miserably failed, or at least begun to fail.

A *Financial Times* survey on South Africa (10/5/85) comments:

"If the reality is that millions of blacks ignore the pass laws ... and the rest of the influx control laws like water passing through a sieve, would it not make sense to scrap them? Nothing would do more to improve the image of South Africa abroad or to convince South Africa's black majority that talk of reform was more than mere rhetoric."

Studies by the Urban Foundation and by academics argue that influx controls have become so ineffective that they will make a difference of only about 2 million in the total urban black population of SA by the year 2000. Thus, argue the liberals, they should be scrapped in an attempt to pacify the blacks and the 'international community'.

This view is finding some support within the bureaucracy. The director of the so-called Population Development Programme has concluded that the best way to deal with SA's rising population is "rapid urbanisation of the impoverished black population and the subsequent upgrading of living standards with particular emphasis on education, health and housing."

According to the *Financial Mail* (21/9/84), "Most leading SA businessmen seem cautiously in favour of

abolishing influx control—**given adequate preparation and infrastructure in the urban areas, plus increased development in the rural ones.**” (Our emphasis.)

But here lies the rub! What they take as “given” is precisely the thing which is not given. If they could “upgrade living standards” all round in South Africa, there would indeed be very significant scope for ‘reform’. But, as our economic analysis has shown, and as will increasingly dawn upon the whole bourgeoisie itself, they are compelled by the imperative logic of their profit system in crisis to **further attack** the already unbearable living standards of the blacks.

Cynical calculation

In fact Anglo American’s Gavin Relly, who favours doing away with influx control, cynically emphasises that more unemployed in the urban areas will help the employers to drive down wages. Once the capitalists favoured pass laws as a means of preventing organisation of the workers and thus holding down wages. Now that the working class has established its permanence in the urban areas and begun to consolidate its unions all the same, this exploiter’s main concern has become to break their bargaining power through unrestricted influx! However, that will not work either.

Whether with or without influx controls, the bourgeoisie faces a revolutionary movement of the black proletariat in the urban as well as the rural areas. It is those among the big business spokesmen who still retain the most ludicrous illusions in the ‘wonders’ of the ‘free enterprise system’ who are most fulsome in their calls for the scrapping of influx control. Others, however, are far more cautious and realistic from their class point of view.

Thus a spokesman for Assocom says: “Assocom believes there must be complete mobility of labour. Thus (!) influx control in its present form must be abolished. However, this could give rise to various socio-economic problems which need to be borne in mind. **Our view, therefore, is that the influx of people into the cities should be dependent purely upon housing and employment (being available) and, once there, those people should be free to move anywhere in SA.**”

So much, by the way, for ‘complete’ mobility of labour!

The FCI president says: “The FCI takes a very pragmatic view of the effects of influx control and also of the consequences attendant upon **anything less than an orderly transition** to unrestricted mobility... From a business viewpoint the capacity of SA’s urban areas to absorb large numbers from rural areas will put pressure on existing resources; an unplanned movement undoubtedly will **over-burden transport, health, housing, law and order and other services**”—‘law and order’ a ‘service’, that’s a new one!—“and depress living standards.”

The president of the Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut says bluntly: “The immediate phasing out of influx control is unacceptable in the light of the **present economic, labour and social conditions in urban areas. Influx control serves an essential and beneficial regulatory purpose until such time as housing and employment can be pro-**

vided for the influx of thousands of blacks into the urban areas... Any reconsideration of this policy under present depressing economic conditions is totally misplaced.”

The president of the SA Foundation and chairman of Gencor says: “At this juncture, **I do not believe that we should be increasing the potential for conflict in the country. I therefore feel I should not comment.**” (All these quotations from *Financial Mail*, 21/9/84; our emphasis throughout.)

Here we have a really classic expression of the impasse in which the bourgeoisie finds itself. On the issue of influx control, as will be the case with more and more fundamental issues in future, the bourgeoisie is unable to produce a coherent policy. Each side is able to prove conclusively that the other’s policy will not work. And in this, both are right!

In the immediate aftermath of Sharpeville, in 1960, the regime felt it necessary to suspend the enforcement of the pass laws for about six weeks. This was because they feared to provoke a revolution. It is entirely possible that we shall see such suspensions—and much longer suspensions—of these laws again in future, under the pressure of the mass movement.

Indeed, were there now to be a really determined, well-organised and resolutely led mass campaign of pass-burning, the complete defiance of influx control laws, and attacks on pass courts and records offices, this system could be thoroughly wrecked. However, to the extent that the matter is left to the ruling class to decide, it is most unlikely that they could move to the abolition of these measures.

Fear to show weakness

The main reason is the one implied in the above quotations. They will fear to give such a signal of their weakness and disarray to the black working class, because that would stir it to even more vigorous struggle and the assertion of ever more far-reaching demands. This fear will increase as the mass revolt intensifies—as will the pressures towards abandoning the pass system. So the dilemma of the ruling class will become more acute.

We should not be surprised if, in the coming period, even some of the most vociferous bourgeois spokesmen in favour of abolishing influx control change their position once again on this issue. But somersaults vice versa are also possible.

On the other hand, what is likely is that the regime will attempt to **modify** the operation of the pass laws by partial exemptions, and by tying it in with the plans for ‘regionalisation’ of administration. Recently, they have slightly broadened the conditions for Section 10 rights and extended the mobility of the minority who qualify.

But the idea that we can be entertained to a period of genuine ‘free mobility’ of black people in SA through the good offices of the ruling class is shown to be absolutely ludicrous at a time when townships are being surrounded by troops, and people entering and leaving are stopped, checked and searched.

Again, for every move in the direction of changing or

dismantling an old measure of state control over the black population, there will be two or three new measures of repression and control introduced.

Essential barrier

Again and again to the fore comes the essential barrier to the transformation of society—the racist capitalist state machine itself.

The big capitalists—the so-called ‘liberals’—would like, and indeed need, to change the racial character of the state. They are frightened half witless by the spectre of rampaging white soldiers and riot police, carrying out ‘unnecessary’ provocative massacres and so whipping up the revolution. They want to give the state a ‘broader base’ among black people, in the hope of making its repressive function more ‘acceptable’ to the masses.

But they are caught on the horns of a contradiction from which there is no escape.

Marx and Engels explained that the bourgeoisie rules, in the final analysis, by relying on ‘armed bodies of men’ together with their appendages in the shape of courts, prisons, the bureaucracy, etc. This is what the state basically is.

But the bourgeoisie, having created a state in one form, cannot simply at its discretion exchange it for another. If there were a hundred years of peaceful capitalist evolution ahead of them in South Africa, who knows what changes they could gradually bring about in the racial complexion of the state? But the reality today is that they are facing a revolutionary challenge to capitalism.

The state which they have built is founded in white domination and privilege. It is a state whose whole essence is to defend capitalism against the black proletariat by the method of guaranteeing and defending the privileges of the whites.

It has been shaped and honed over generations for this purpose. This is reflected in the character and composition of all the commanding strata of the bureaucracy, the judiciary, etc, and in the make-up of the armed forces.

Half of the police force may be black; coloured, Indian and later even African people may be drawn into the army—but essentially the army rests and will remain resting on white working-class and lower-middle class troops, organised by a commanding hierarchy of white upper-middle class and bourgeois officers. And it is the army which, as we have seen increasingly in the townships, is the ultimate weapon of power and repression wielded by the ruling class against the blacks.

Because of the challenge of the black proletariat from below, the ruling class have to try to reform the state system; they have to try to change the state itself. But they cannot afford to weaken the repressive power of the state in the face of this black challenge.

To the limited extent that they can ‘blacken’ the state forces, they render the state potentially unreliable to them; and at the same time this drives to disaffection the reliable white forces they have.

With everything in turmoil around them, they have no choice but to keep the snarling wolf-hounds of the white state apparatus in readiness for action, and again and again unleash their ferocity against the people.

The feebleness of the black middle class, and the advanced stage of racial and class polarisation and conflict, makes it all the more impossible to extend the basis of the state to incorporate blacks on any reliable foundation. This has been shown by the fate of the collaborator councils, for example. Now the black police themselves are under pressure from the masses to resign their jobs or face grisly reprisals.

The regime cannot recruit ‘popular’ black figures into the system, because the system is obliged to carry out openly anti-working class and counter-revolutionary policies and actions which guarantee that any ‘popular’ figure who entered would become unpopular.

Thus they have all the more to retain the old white basis of the state in its essentials, and step up repression. It is imperative that we never lose sight of this fact through all the twists and turns of events that will unfold.

The policies and manoeuvres of the regime and the ruling class will become increasingly chaotic. There will be further ‘determined moves’ and ‘new initiatives’ in the direction of reform; there will be false starts, retreats, savagely increased repression, temporary retreats from that, attempts to combine reforms and repression in new ways, new failures of that, and the long-term undermining of morale and cohesion in the camp of the bourgeoisie and of the whites generally.

White living standards attacked

At the same time that capitalism is compelled to drive down the living standards of the mass of black people, it is forced also to attack the material privileges of the whites.

Now even white living standards are persistently falling or showing a tendency to fall. Where they can be maintained at their old levels, this is only by running down savings, or running up debts.

Four years ago whites were saving 11 cents out of every rand in their pockets; now they are saving 2 cents. Reliance on hire purchase and other forms of consumer credit has gone up astronomically. The majority of the bank credit in SA is consumer credit, and in the recent period it has been growing by R1 billion per quarter.

Bank overdrafts and HP debt now total R14 billion. In 1984 there were 385 065 civil judgements for debt—the amount involved having increased 60% in a single year. This year a record number of families are going through the courts, filing for bankruptcy.

Pockets of real poverty are now beginning to reappear among working-class whites as a result of recession, necessitating in some cases feeding schemes at white schools.

At the same time the imperative need of the capitalist state to cut public expenditure has driven the regime to try to take back the relatively large wage increase given to civil servants in 1983-4, and to begin to drive down their real incomes.

One-third of economically active whites are employed by central government or the provincial administrations. If parastatal corporations are taken into account, this figure rises to an estimated 60%. Whether directly or in-

directly, all attacks on the living standards of the whites inevitably introduce instability into the foundations of the state itself.

When, in March this year, Botha announced a one-third cut in the Christmas bonus for state employees—a measure affecting about one million people—there was an immediate outcry by white railway workers, postal workers, teachers, clerks, etc.

An angry meeting of 1000 white railway workers in Johannesburg on 5 March (typical of many across the country) threatened labour unrest if the cut was not rescinded.

The workers were unimpressed by Botha's appeal to their 'patriotism'. "The time has now come," he said, "to do what we sing in our anthem: *Ons vir jou, Suid-Afrika*." It is beginning to dawn on the white workers that the bourgeoisie's 'nation' and 'country' are not in reality theirs.

"This is a case of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer," declared a leader of the white transport unions. The Minister of Transport was accused of "treating the railway workers like his farmhands."

The bonus cut was described as the worst setback for white workers since the 1922 cuts—the occasion of the only serious white working-class revolt in the history of SA. The 1922 revolt was a key factor leading to the state's strategy of buying the loyalty of the white workers with job security and material privileges. Now the ruling class has no choice but to undermine these privileges.

The era of the tame white working class is coming to an end. But because an **independent class movement** is impossible among a privileged aristocracy of labour seeking to defend their position **against** the demands of the low-paid and oppressed mass of the workers—this revolt among the whites inevitably falls at first into the clutches of the most reactionary bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalist politicians.

A typical headline in the HNP's *Die Afrikaner* reads: "*Wegbeweeg van diskriminasie die oorsaak van ekonomiese krisis*" (the move away from discrimination is the cause of the economic crisis). Treurnicht's Conservative Party puts precisely the same line.

With a declining economic 'cake', they point out, any material advances by or political concessions to the blacks must be at the 'expense' of the whites. This argument makes crude but clear 'sense' to the majority of whites remaining trapped within the blind alley of capitalist society.

One of Treurnicht's favourite platform tricks is to tell his audiences that, when they see the President on television wagging his finger, it is because he is counting the furniture in their living rooms to give it away to the blacks!

This filth flourishes nonetheless in a situation where a white child can expect to use **ten times** the financial and physical resources available to a black child. This when the state, in 1984, spent R1 385 on the education of each white child, and R192 on the education of each African child. Yet a Conservative MP can gain popularity by declaring in the House of Assembly (12/2/85): "The ordinary white person is sick and tired of being the milk-cow (for the blacks)."

Here is summed up the absolute impasse and revolting sickness of bourgeois society; the horrible polarisation and race conflict which has been engendered by capitalism

in SA. From this there is no way out except revolution.

As the crisis of society intensifies, and as the movement of the black masses takes on a more and more revolutionary character, inevitably the great majority of small farmers, urban middle-class and working-class whites must be propelled in the direction of ultra-right racist reaction. So far we have only seen the beginnings of this process. It affects not only the Afrikaners, but the English-speaking whites as well.

The process exhibits many contradictory features. It will develop not in a straight line, but through sudden turns and sharp changes, and while there are tendencies in the opposite direction at the same time.

Among the white workers we can see, simultaneously, moves in some sections of their unions even towards the proposed new non-racial federation, while in politics Treurnicht is gathering white worker support.

The overall line of development will be towards the right.

Botha, it is true, secured a 66% majority in the white referendum of 1983 for the introduction of his new 'reform' constitution. This was despite the National Party itself having only about 50% support in opinion polls, and against the combined opposition of the PFP (on the government's left) and the Conservative Party/HNP (on the extreme right). The explanation for this is twofold.

On the one hand, the great majority of whites sensed the unviability of the old system in the face of the rising movement of the blacks. On the other hand, they were reluctant to weaken the government in the face of this challenge and were prepared to give an opportunity to Botha to test out the programme to which he had committed the government.

However, at the same time, most whites (including all sections of the bourgeoisie and probably even Botha himself) had no genuine faith in the long-term viability of the new scheme either. To get the necessary support Botha had to present the constitution to the whites as an effective guarantee **against having to make concessions to African political demands**. Now already, this is shown to be nonsense. The discrediting of Botha's 'reform' programme—including its rejection by the blacks—now repels increasing numbers of former government supporters towards the right.

Depth of revolt

The depth of the revolt now beginning in the subsoil of white society is shown in the rough reception given to NP politicians in the white working-class and lower-middle class constituencies. It is shown also in the desperate tones in which these politicians appeal for continued support.

A report in the *Rand Daily Mail* (28/2/85) illustrates what is taking place:

'Addressing a rowdy meeting in Mayfair, Mr Meyer (National Party MP for Johannesburg West) ... said South Africa was becoming more and more difficult to govern.

'"It is the responsibility of every person to remember that. If we are not going to solve the problems of this country, fires are going to start that we won't be able to put out.

' "We all know the explosiveness of the situation, even in this suburb, as a result of the tension between races. This is true for all of South Africa.

' "The tension in black areas is high, the economy is at a low point... It is the responsibility of the Government to see that we have the maximum chance of stability and peace.

' "Don't set things alight when we will all burn," he said.'

It is in areas such as this that the erosion of the Group Areas Act is beginning to take place. The white workers and lower-middle class have long accepted the argument of the ultra-right (formerly used by the Nats)—an argument couched cynically in pseudo-class terms—that the liberals only oppose apartheid because they do not need it. They have the money to buy their separation. Instead of catching buses, they ride to work in limousines. If they had to rub shoulders with the blacks, they would see things differently... etc.

Now the worthy citizens of Sea Point, well-to-do English-speaking liberals in the main, who elect a PFP MP and councillors, have demonstrated the correctness of this argument to the white workers. When blacks began to ignore beach apartheid and came in busloads to use the beaches of Sea Point, a flood of protests from the white residents ensued.

Letters to the *Cape Times* complained of blacks urinating in the sand, running about naked, smoking dagga, drinking and vomiting, and of women swimming in bras and panties.

The few 'saner' voices were swamped. A PFP councillor commented: "We whites finally got a chance to see how the other half lives, and it's been a shock."

More of the reality of South Africa's race- and class-divided society is summed up in these events than in all the preachings of the liberal politicians, academics and clergy. As Boraine, the PFP MP admitted, for whites "going into the township situation is like going into a foreign country."

The transformation of South Africa into a non-racial society, democratically governed and controlled by its people, cannot take place peacefully or 'under anaesthetic'—the patient will be fully awake, kicking and screaming throughout the operation.

Because, when it comes down to it, the **class issues** are so inseparably bound up with the race issues, the great majority of whites will inevitably recoil from the implications of real change and try to cling onto their present privileges so long as it is at all possible to do so.

Trying to avoid and delay

Most of those who support 'reform' today do so mainly to **avoid** and **delay** the advent of fundamental change. A similar thing motivates those who believe that 'reform' is but a slippery slope to disaster. Surveys have shown that a majority even of HNP supporters believe that South Africa will have a black government in their lifetime. But they want to put off the evil day as long as they can, hoping that perhaps it will not come!

It is because 'reform' will fail and turn into chaos that the prospect of an increasing swing from the N.P. towards the Conservative Party becomes a virtual certain-

ty. This will take place among English as well as Afrikaans-speaking whites.

At some point the revolt of the whites is likely to induce a revolt among the backbench N.P. politicians. While Botha may manoeuvre to the right to head this off, a further split of the National Party is entirely possible—which could put Treurnicht in a position to capture a majority in the white parliament.

Fearing electoral setbacks which would suggest a weakening of the government, Botha has used the introduction of the new constitution as a pretext for extending the life of the parliament to 1989. The last white elections were in 1981. Now the English press has mooted the possibility that each further stage of 'constitutional reform' could provide an opportunity to defer elections even further.

If a white election were held under the present constitution, the governing party need lose only 35 seats in order to forfeit its outright majority. Recent by-election results have suggested that at least 50 NP-held seats are vulnerable to the Conservatives.

Such a situation could lead to the PFP holding the balance of power in the white parliament. Already there are marked signs of a trend in the right-wing of the PFP towards coalition with the left wing of the Nationalists. A coalition strategy has been in Slabbert's mind already for several years. If coalition became a real prospect, however, the PFP would almost certainly split.

Moreover, a split in the Nationalist Party would not necessarily depend upon an election or a move by the 'verligtes' towards a deal with the PFP right. In perspective, it is necessary to guard against what Marx termed 'parliamentary cretinism'. Even if Botha could contrive by redelimitation or other legislative manoeuvre to forestall a Treurnicht electoral victory, once the right-wing backlash among the whites reached sufficient proportions and became a powerful extra-parliamentary revolt, large numbers of Nationalist politicians would go over. A series of fiascoes in the government's 'reform' programme could easily lead to such a situation.

The bourgeoisie would fear a Treurnicht government, mainly because of the provocative signal this would give to the blacks, and because there would be correspondingly less control over the white reaction. It would lay in ruins all present plans for further 'reform', and increase the tendencies towards racial civil war.

They would therefore manoeuvre furiously to prevent Treurnicht coming to power. But would they go over to a direct military government as a means of forestalling this? That cannot be ruled out, but it is not the most likely perspective.

When faced with the situation concretely, the capitalists would realise that Treurnicht himself would not be able to proceed on an uncontrolled course of reaction. After all, what further repressive power would be at his disposal than the government possesses now? A Treurnicht regime would still, in the final analysis, have to defend capitalism and respond to the almighty pressures of the world economy and the SA economy in the grip of crisis. It is impossible in this epoch for any bourgeois government to achieve real autonomy from the dictates of finance capital.

In fact, even a Treurnicht government would probably have to employ many of the same devices of 'reform' and operate within the framework of the existing constitution.

But it would be even more ludicrous and unworkable as a result.

At the same time, to resort to military dictatorship **against** the will of the whites—to prevent the replacement of a failed N.P. government with one further to the right when this was demanded by a clear majority of whites—would be a course fraught with immense dangers for the bourgeoisie. Even if all the senior officers could be relied on, their power would prove to be a phantom if they were unable to rely on the loyalty of the rank-and-file troops and police.

The army is a reflection of society—in SA's case a reflection mainly of white society. To use the state against the whites would be impossible except within very narrow limits.

Thus such an adventure could lead to crippling splits in the apparatus of the state itself. That in turn would spur forward the revolutionary movement. For these reasons it is unlikely that the bourgeoisie would attempt to keep Treurnicht out by means of a military coup.

In a serious constitutional crisis affecting the whites, the first concern of **all** the bourgeois politicians will be not to open the door to the black revolution. Thus, if the parliamentary road is denied to Treurnicht by the N.P. regime's manoeuvres, it would not follow automatically—indeed it is unlikely—that he would lead an extra-parliamentary bid for power.

More likely, he would try instead to control his own ranks and manoeuvre behind the scenes for a deal. But in that event a split of the Conservative Party, with a section moving further to the right, would become a distinct possibility.

It could not be ruled out that, at some stage, possibly even with the agreement of the Conservatives, the bourgeoisie might have to turn to a military regime—in an attempt to combine repression and 'reform' more effectively against the blacks, while trying to hold the whites together through military discipline. But it would lead eventually to the same inevitable splits, and begin to affect the army itself.

State as instrument of change?

If the state machine cannot be used effectively **against** reaction, conversely it cannot be used as an effective instrument of **reform**. Yet this is precisely the idea put forward by such luminaries as Van Zyl Slabbert of the PFP, and his echoes among the academics. Apparently a "strong Defence Force" etc is needed for the very purpose of bringing about "peaceful change"! This hypocritical nonsense of the liberal bourgeois is really nauseating.

The Afrikaans academic, Hermann Giliomee, has become an interesting writer to watch as a weather-vane of the ideas of the left wing of bourgeois society. Having had the courage to break with Afrikaner orthodoxy, he often expresses matters in terms of their fundamentals to a greater extent than the woolly English liberals.

Thus, in an article in the *Rand Daily Mail* (16/4/85), he sets out a list of sound reasons showing that the basis for viable political reform in South Africa has been

destroyed. But when he approaches the awful implications of this fact, suddenly he can go no further. He springs back. He must find some "solution to gloom at the top"! Thus he offers a conclusion in complete contradiction to what he has just proved:

"It is silly to suggest that any attempt to reform South Africa will be 'too little, too late'. **The basic structures of the South African state are still stable.**" (Our emphasis.)

But the stability of the SA state is precisely the result of the cohesion built up between the **different classes** of white society over the past decades. The basis of that cohesion is racial domination and privilege.

For the state to undertake reform, the state itself has to be reformed. Precisely because there is no objective scope for viable reform of South African society, attempts to reform the state can only render it unstable without any prospect of it regaining stability on a new basis. Stability of the South African state therefore stands in contradiction to reform.

But the bourgeoisie, for its survival, requires both stability and reform. In attempting to reconcile this contradiction, as it must, it will end up moving from 'reform' to counter-reforms and from a 'stable' to an unstable state.

The class struggle has an imperious logic. Radical critics of the bourgeoisie and of the regime, if they do not break decisively with bourgeois society and cross to the standpoint of the black working class, can only end up as abject apologists of the blood-soaked state machine itself.

Incipient civil war

To a certain extent, the movement of the black working class has begun to make South Africa 'ungovernable' by the regime. But it would be totally naive to conclude from this that conditions are emerging for a negotiated 'settlement' of the question of power.

The reality of the matter is that South Africa has entered a period of incipient civil war. At the present time, however—and it may appear strange to say this in a country notorious for violence and massacre—we are still in a **relatively peaceful** period compared with what lies ahead.

Although the situation is characterised by vicious violence of the state against the black working people, it has not so far been characterised by direct inter-racial violence between the white and black communities themselves. This is mainly because the whites can still look with confidence to the state to subjugate and repress the blacks on their behalf. So far the violence of the system remains 'institutionalised'.

But once the mass movement of the black people begins to overwhelm the capacities of the state forces—and already troops and even railway police have to be used to reinforce the police in the townships—this situation will begin to change. It will change all the more with the splits of the bourgeoisie and in the camp of the whites generally, resulting divisions within the state, and the partial paralysis of its striking power.

This will be a situation on which the ultra-right reac-

tion feeds.

After the November general strike, the right-wing spread rumours among the white communities that blacks were planning to embark on a campaign of terror and violence directed against them. Stickers and leaflets forged to appear as though they emanated from the movement, declared: "Rape a white woman; kill a white child!" and called for armed attacks on white schools and the firebombing of white homes.

"The result of these damn rumours," wrote Percy Qoboza in the Johannesburg *City Press*, "is that many white people, particularly in this town, were moving around the streets with loaded guns."

A gun dealer in Johannesburg's northern suburbs told the press that there had been an upsurge in orders, especially during the previous two weeks. "Usually people want handguns," he said, observing that pistols are as commonplace in white homes as toasters. "But all of a sudden we have customers wanting shotguns, pump-action shotguns. That's how I know people are scared." (*Guardian*, 28/11/84.)

During the recent unrest at Vaal Reefs Mine, NUM general secretary Cyril Ramaphosa reported that white miners were going underground with loaded pistols and pointing them at the black mineworkers. Most probably, black mineworkers in this period will be discussing measures of self-defence against the police and racist white miners—measures which will eventually have to involve obtaining and using arms.

The whole logic of the developing situation will lead inevitably to the arming of the revolutionary movement of the black workers and youth for their defence. That in turn will precipitate more vicious state attacks and so add to the spiral of civil war.

Already the fascist AWB leader, Terreblanche, has seized the opportunity to announce that his white storm-troopers will be available to act alongside the state in murderously repressing the blacks. At this stage, of course, that would not be permitted by the regime, because it would lead to the blacks arming themselves even more rapidly. Nor is there any question in SA of the fascist forces ever obtaining state power. But we can certainly envisage, over the next five or ten years, situations in which they will act, as in Chile and other countries, as jackals running at the heels of the army and police. Already they have penetrated significantly into the lower ranks of these state organs.

Perspectives always have to be very conditional, and all the more so in the extremely complex situation of South Africa. We have to be especially cautious on questions of timing, for it is impossible to forecast the precise conjunctures of all the factors and events that will occur. Nevertheless, it is quite possible to draw out in perspectives the basic lines of development which are inherent in the South African situation.

There will inevitably be a serious further development in the direction of racial civil war. It will not be a war fought by great armies from opposing territories (as, e.g., in the American Civil War), or between opposing regimes (as, e.g., between Republican and Nationalist Spain), but rather the development of a state of 'siege', of armed camps and no-go areas, of street fighting, of massacres, of reprisals, of bloody inter-racial clashes, of chaos, decay and disintegration.

In all this the main bulwark of the bourgeoisie will con-

tinue to be the **state**, the organising force of capitalist reaction.

Once the real issues and interests at stake in the SA revolution are starkly posed, the main body of the bourgeoisie will resort to the most extreme measures of counter-revolution. At the same time, because that reaction will inevitably be racist in character, the big bourgeoisie will manoeuvre in order to disclaim direct responsibility for it.

But the full force of the state—including its massive armoury of aircraft, bombs, tanks, artillery, machine-guns, etc—will when necessary be wheeled into action. We should be under no illusion that the ruling class will shrink from slaughtering hundreds of thousands, and even millions, once the chips are down.

The horrors we have seen in the civil war in the Lebanon will seem like a picnic in comparison with what can happen in South Africa.

Nor will the 'opposition' of US imperialism to the methods of the SA regime continue on their present course indefinitely and under all circumstances. In the final analysis, it is the threat of the black workers gaining power—the spectre of communism—which will dictate the policy of imperialism.

The SA ruling class will say, "We tried to reform, but the blacks want communism!" Inevitably the United States will find ways, mainly underhand ways, short of direct intervention, of materially assisting and reinforcing the SA state.

The Soviet bureaucracy, fearing a healthy proletarian revolution anywhere in the world (and particularly in this decisive industrialised country of Africa), and fearing to complicate its search for 'peaceful coexistence' with US imperialism, will hold back from direct involvement while urging the leaders of the movement in SA to find a compromise settlement with the capitalist class and with the whites.

Negotiated settlement?

Already a section of the capitalist class has moved to the position of advocating 'talks' with the ANC. Recently Afrikaans journalists and academics have gone on safari to Lusaka to test the ground for possible future negotiation. Although Botha has repudiated these initiatives, it is probable that he gave at least tacit approval beforehand. Meanwhile, Anglo American bosses have been eagerly keeping up their contacts with ANC exiled leaders abroad.

Tony Bloom, chairman of Premier group, argues that "our new dispensation" will not achieve credibility unless credible black leaders like Mandela and Tambo can be brought into it.

"A dramatic move towards the establishment of credibility would undoubtedly be the opening of tentative dialogue, *on the proviso* (and I stress this proviso most strongly) that it renounces violence as an instrument of policy, with the African National Congress (ANC). It is difficult to establish just how great the support for the ANC is among the blacks in SA, but I venture to suggest that it is very, very substantial...

"There is an historical inevitability about talking to the ANC—it is not a question of if, but rather when." (Article by Bloom in *Financial Mail*, 16/11/84.)

What Bloom's 'proviso' in reality means is that the ANC must openly renounce the revolutionary overthrow of the state and agree to knuckle down under a system in which the capitalist class retains the monopoly of power defended by the present state monopoly of armed force.

This no black leadership could possibly accept without immediately appearing as sell-outs before the people. It is noteworthy that Botha's manoeuvre in offering to release Mandela was made conditional on a similar 'renunciation of violence'. Quite correctly, Mandela rejected it decisively.

It is not 'violence' which is at stake, in reality, but **power**. No ruling class surrenders its historical position of power without a fight. The ANC leadership cannot yield to the bourgeoisie's claims without losing its own mass base of support and rendering itself impotent.

Because a transfer of power to the black majority cannot take place without the revolutionary overthrow of the state in SA, it will be impossible for talks to succeed. That will remain the case even if the ANC leadership, on the one hand, and the SA regime on the other, **wished to achieve a negotiated settlement with each other**. Quite probably Botha himself—even while he puts the UDF leaders on trial for treason—dreams of reaching such a settlement eventually!

It is impossible because the constituencies, the respective class bases, on which the two sides rest are irreconcilable, even temporarily, in South African conditions. However, that does not mean that talks at some future stage will not take place. The question of 'talks', the 'urgency of talks', the 'imperative need for talks', will hang like a ghostly light over all the successive phases, turns and zig-zags in the developing situation of civil war. Receding at times from sight, it will again and again reassert its presence.

The more the revolution clutches at the throat of the ruling class, the more desperate will they become to find a negotiated way out. But all the attempts will break down under the objective impossibility of reconciling even temporarily the real material class-conflicts and racial antagonisms in this way.

It could not be ruled out, at some future juncture, that right-wing elements will split off from the ANC in search of a compromise. Opportunities for negotiation may open up also during the inevitable periods of lull, despair, and even severe partial defeats which will be suffered by the mass movement during the long struggle ahead.

At some stage, even semi-official and perhaps official talks directly between the regime and ANC leaders could not be ruled out. But agreement could not be arrived at, or be made to stick.

Why not like Zimbabwe?

There is a prevalent myth in South Africa, which has a hold also within the workers' movement, that this country can go the route of Zimbabwe—that there can be a negotiated settlement on the lines of Lancaster House.

But the objective conditions that made that possible in Zimbabwe are not present in South Africa; on the contrary SA conditions rule it out.

The vast majority of Zimbabwe's population are peasants, scattered over the country, and not urban working class. Moreover, the independence war was fought as a rural guerilla war, based on the peasantry. For this reason (and others which we have dealt with elsewhere—see, e.g., *South Africa's Impending Socialist Revolution*), **the proletariat remained passive during the decisive stages of the struggle leading up to independence. In the revolution so far it has played no role.**

On the other hand, the Rhodesian state rested on a weak foundation of a white minority making up only one in twenty of the total population. Financially and industrially weak, it was crucially dependent upon South African backing, and the latter depended in turn upon the secret support of the imperialist powers (particularly the USA during the war itself) to sustain the Smith regime.

It was when Kissinger went to Vorster and together they threatened to pull the rug out from under Smith that he was compelled to give way to the Muzorewa government—a nominally 'elected', nominally 'black' government but on the basis of the old state remaining essentially intact.

The guerilla war continued to the point where the state was stretched almost to the limit. Whites began to leave in significant numbers. South Africa would either have had to commit troops directly to the war, or accept the ultimate collapse of the Rhodesian state after perhaps another five or ten more years of attrition.

These were the main factors which provided the basis for the Lancaster House agreement.

Only by a whisker

Even so, that agreement was achieved only by a whisker. The initiative, let us recall, was by that stage in the hands of South African and British imperialism (supported by the USA). Smith and Muzorewa, lacking real independent power, were forced to play along.

Even without a mass movement of the working class, the capitalists were afraid to concede majority rule and the transition of power into the hands of the Patriotic Front (ZANU and ZAPU) because of the weak social base of capitalism in Zimbabwe. They feared that a mass movement could easily break out and, finding support among the guerilla fighters, compel the nationalist leaders to carry through the overthrow of capitalism.

However the assurances of Mugabe and Nkomo that they would, if they won the independence election, maintain capitalism as the basis of the economy and state, eventually satisfied them. The main "assurance" in this respect, however, consisted in confining the guerillas to 'assembly points' preparatory to disarming them. Thus the existing capitalist state apparatus could remain basically intact, at least as the skeleton for the post-independence state.

But had there been a revolutionary mass movement of the working class, it would have been absolutely ruled

out for the imperialists and capitalists to make this concession. On the other hand, had the guerilla war continued to the end and resulted in the collapse of the Rhodesian state, Zimbabwe would have ended up in the same way as Mozambique and Angola—with capitalist property expropriated. This prospect, with all its likely repercussions internationally, was the main inducement to the bourgeois to settle.

So slender was their 'success' however that, if Mugabe had merely raised his little finger—had merely called, after his election victory, upon the workers and peasants to seize the factories and land, and defend the revolution arms in hand—capitalism would have been finished in Zimbabwe. Only an invasion by South Africa—a very risky venture—could have possibly rescued it, and then only temporarily.

Moreover, as transpired later, officers of the Rhodesian army, headed by General Walls, were conspiring before the elections to take power by means of a coup. Had they done so, it would have compelled a revolutionary response from the black nationalist leaders and probably led to the overthrow of capitalism.

Thus we can see that even in the conditions of Zimbabwe, the Lancaster House agreement was possible only **by virtue of a peculiar conjuncture of circumstances**. That conjuncture was in turn only possible because, in Zimbabwe, the proletariat remained passive and allowed the social or class issues at stake in the struggle to be separated, partially and temporarily, from the political issue of 'majority rule'.

This is what has allowed the establishment of a black government on a capitalist basis. Now, having reconsolidated the capitalist state, the 'Marxist' Mugabe finds himself obliged to attack the rights and standards of the working class, preside over a process of counter-reforms, and move towards a viciously repressive one-party dictatorship.

SA conditions different

In South Africa the whole situation is and will be completely different. The SA revolution is from beginning to end a proletarian revolution. Every advance in the struggle is achieved through the rising strength and mass action of the black working class. Reformist leaders, anxious to compromise with capitalism, are not a sufficient guarantee to the ruling class that the masses can be held back.

On the other hand, the white minority, making up just less than one-fifth of the population, is a much stronger basis for the state than was the case in Rhodesia. Moreover the SA state is less directly reliant on outside imperialist support.

Although significant numbers of middle-class and bourgeois elements will leave South Africa when the struggle really heats up (thus reducing, incidentally, the number of white 'democrats' in SA), the majority of working-class and lower-middle class whites who provide the fighting forces of the bourgeois state will have nowhere else to go.

So long as the SA bourgeoisie has the weapon of a for-

midable state power to lean on, it cannot resort to gambling with its own fate. At the same time, for the reasons explained, the forces of white reaction will be strong enough to prevent any concession of real power to the black majority—until the movement of the black majority (the working-class movement) is strong enough to take power by force.

No 'Popular Front' government

It is for these reasons that we would go so far as to say that there could never in South Africa be a coalition government between the ANC and the bourgeoisie—though many ANC leaders might earnestly desire it. Put another way, we cannot conceive of conditions which would permit the creation of an ANC government on a bourgeois basis.

Because the capitalist state in SA cannot be transformed into a democratic non-racial state, but will remain a state of white domination and reaction, it follows that there can be no ANC or any other genuinely 'popular' government ruling on the basis of this state. **An ANC government would first necessitate the dismantling and replacement of this state.**

But capitalist reaction centres upon the state. While the whites will be split and thrown into turmoil, and while the state will thereby be weakened to its foundations and tend to disintegrate, it will be the army and white police apparatus which retains cohesion longest.

Because the state is 'armed bodies of men' in the final analysis, this means that the SA state will remain fundamentally intact until the armed forces have been defeated or shattered. If that can be achieved, it will mean that the power of the bourgeoisie will have been completely broken; unrestricted power will have passed into the hands of a victorious and armed revolution.

By breaking the main barrier to the democratic transformation of society—the state—the main barrier preventing the overthrow of capitalism would also have been broken.

What would be the situation then? It would depend on the route by which the victory was achieved.

If the struggle in SA is fought out to the end purely as a black-white conflict—as a racial civil war—there is no certainty whatsoever that the blacks would win. The probability is otherwise. The wealth, technology, modern arms and destructive power which the state, capitalists and white minority have at their disposal is a formidable advantage. If the reaction is not defeated politically and these destructive powers rendered unusable, they will be used to the full.

In the event that the blacks, fighting on this basis through a long war of mutual destruction, were able ultimately to defeat the state nonetheless, what would be the situation faced by the leadership? The victory would have been gained at the cost literally of millions of (mainly black) lives, and of laying waste the productive forces—the basis of civilised existence which has been created by the labour of the working class. On a mountain of corpses, on the ashes of industry, an ANC leadership could not then, even if it wished, establish a coalition with the

defeated bourgeoisie or maintain capitalism as the basis for a new regime under such circumstances.

Even if, as in Eastern Europe after World War 2, or in China after the victory of the Red Army, a nominal 'Popular Front' with the defeated or fleeing capitalist class was put forward, in reality the leadership would rule by means of its own military forces, and would be compelled to move to nationalising the main means of production and distribution, thus snuffing out capitalism.

Leaning on a war-shattered and prostrated proletariat, what would come into existence would be a **deformed workers' state**—a regime of proletarian bonapartism on Stalinist lines. That would not be a rosy 'democracy' in which all live happily ever after, but a new form of enslavement of the working class under a privileged bureaucratic dictatorship—on ruined productive foundations, but nevertheless on a higher level historically than capitalism and apartheid.

However, let us repeat, the prospect of a 'victory' on such lines is very remote indeed.

Victory of class-conscious proletariat

Let us consider, on the other hand, the more real prospect: a victory of the revolution under the class-conscious leadership of the black working class, which proves able to split the whites decisively on class lines, ultimately cripple the army, and carry through the defeat of the state by means of an organised and armed mass insurrection.

In that event, a coalition with the bourgeoisie would be absolutely ruled out. Nor could any leaders of the movement, even if they wished, sustain capitalism in South Africa then.

Power would in reality be in the hands of the black working class; all leaders would in the first instance have to reckon with that—or be pushed aside. The immediate material demands of the working people would demand satisfaction—something possible only through the expropriation of the means of production.

The factories, mines and big farms would already be in the hands of the proletariat, through armed seizures and occupations carried out in the course of overthrowing the state. It would be impossible to displace the armed proletariat from its conquests save by means of armed counter-revolution—but the state, the only possible instrument for such a counter-revolution, would have been destroyed.

Thus all the prerequisites for the revolutionary achievement of national liberation and democracy are at the same time the prerequisites for the overthrow of capitalism.

In fact, however, it will not be possible to defeat the SA state in this way unless the revolutionary working-class movement fights on a clear programme for the socialist transformation of society, and with a conscious Marxist leadership.

"The perspectives of our revolutionary struggle must never be blurred," says the ANC NEC in a statement of 9 May this year. Quite so. But a hopeless **blurring** of perspectives—a complete failure to appreciate the class issues and real dynamics involved in the South African revolution—is shown in their very next words:

"We are determined to destroy the criminal apartheid system, root and branch, and on its ruins build a true non-racial democracy. To reach this goal we must attract into the arena of struggle all democratic forces drawn from all racial and class sections of our population. On this principle there can be no compromise."

In a statement of 25 April this year, the ANC NEC wrote: "We call on the white community in whose name racist barbarities are being perpetrated daily against the black majority, to move away from its support of apartheid and to increase the ranks of the growing number of democratic whites who are participating in our liberation struggle."

It would be difficult to compound more confusion and error within a few sentences. In these statements there is not a word about the need to overthrow capitalism; to break the power of the bourgeoisie; to prepare the conquest of power by the black working class; to win over whites on a class basis in order to cripple and eventually smash the state. All the words that are here point in exactly the opposite direction—the direction of complete muddle and wishful delusions.

The apartheid system is treated as a thing-in-itself quite independent of capitalism. It is something that can be destroyed "root and branch"—without overthrowing capitalism! "On its ruins" a beautiful "true non-racial democracy" is to be built—without bothering for a moment about the nature of the socio-economic or **class foundation** on which 'democracy' is to be erected!

The "forces" for this revolutionary struggle are to be drawn from **all** "class sections" of our population—including the bourgeoisie! We are to have one happy family of "democratic" South Africans of all classes and races, in a liberation struggle which whites will join in a "growing number" (now that they have been "called on" to do so) regardless of the material self-interest they may have in the present system!

On this basis the lion will lie down with the lamb, the capitalist with the worker, the white with the black, and make a new start upon "the ruins"! Compared with this, the miracle of the loaves and fishes was mere child's play.

This would all be laughable if it wasn't tragic—tragic that such nonsense is put forward by the leadership of a great and heroic revolutionary movement; tragic that such ideas today can claim the backing of so-called 'Marxism' or 'Communism'.

The approach necessary to win over whites in **significant numbers** to the side of the revolution in South Africa is a deadly serious matter. It requires a scientific understanding and not 'democratic' wishful thinking if it is to be successful.

Realities must be faced

The white bourgeois class is fundamentally hostile to genuine democracy, however much its liberal representatives may pretend. Above all, it is hostile to revolution.

As we have shown, too, the political evolution of the vast majority of whites—the **workers and lower-middle class**—will initially be, not "away from" apartheid, but **further to the right**. These whites will have to be won to

the side of the black masses in the course of a civil war developing inevitably on racial lines at the outset.

Only by grasping all this firmly, and not shrinking from its implications, can we find the key to success.

It is because the mighty struggles opening up in South Africa hold out the prospect of appalling destruction and attrition—it is because they will cast in doubt all security, all privileges, all benefits that the whites have hitherto enjoyed—that the mass of whites will recoil and seek an alternative way out instead of a racial war to the bitter end. **But they can do so only if a real alternative is shown.**

That alternative does **not** lie in sugary phrases about 'democracy', or in appeals to their moral sense. **Nor** does it lie in the making of any concession to white privilege, property, power—to so-called 'group rights'.

There should be the protection, on a basis of majority rule, of the rights of all individuals and of all minority groups to their language, culture, etc., and against discrimination. But an undertaking to protect 'group rights', in the sense in which that is put forward today by middle-class politicians, journalists and academics, **means the protection of special minority privileges. It means, moreover, the maintenance of capitalism.**

That is not only an intolerable retreat from the democratic demand for the national liberation of the majority—it will also be completely futile in its intention of 'winning over' whites to democracy.

All the verbal 'guarantees' would not persuade the capitalists or the whites generally to concede majority rule as long as **power** remains in their hands. Indeed, the search for compromise with capitalism and with white privilege is precisely what will guarantee their intransigence and lead to the certainty of a bloodbath of racial war.

Vision of future society

If the only vision of a future 'liberated South Africa' which is presented to the whites is the nightmare that they can see in the African continent to the north—poverty, starvation, one-party military-police dictatorships, corruption, stagnation and decline (examples of the 'national democracy' beloved of the Stalinists?)—then the whites will undoubtedly fight to the end for what they have. And, we should make no mistake about it, they have an immense amount for which to fight.

But, on the other hand, if the black working class can show by its enormous physical power and courage, by its democratic organisation and unity, and by the clarity

of its revolutionary programme, that it is **determined to fight to the end to change society**; if it can show, together with the working class internationally, that workers' power will lay the foundations of **a new socialist civilisation**, capable of giving a decent life to all, free of the horrors of capitalism—then and then alone will it be possible to win over a significant body of the whites, to break the loyalty of the white troops, to defeat the state power politically so that it can be forcibly overthrown.

A programme of workers' socialist revolution is the only way to achieve the national liberation of the black people; it is also the only possible way out of the horror of a full-scale racial civil war.

Double danger

Popular Frontist ideas—ideas of the 'unity' of **all classes** under the banner of 'democracy'; ideas of subordinating the revolutionary **class** movement of the black workers and youth to a hoped-for compromise with capitalism—serve as a double danger to our liberation struggle.

While they guarantee the intransigence of the mass of whites against the liberation movement of the blacks, **at the same time they prevent the full and conscious mobilisation of black working-class power.** These two aspects are closely interlinked.

There are millions of oppressed black working-class people still to be roused to action if the revolution is to succeed. Yet passivity and backwardness is engendered among the people by the idea that revolution is 'impossible'—that the white regime is too powerful to overthrow. Buthelezi, for example, cultivates this paralysing idea when he points out—**correctly in the context of a purely black-white struggle**—that the whites will "scorch the earth" rather than concede power. **Therefore**, he argues, don't fight but negotiate for whatever paltry deal you can get. It is the task of revolutionaries to put forward a clear and **convincing answer** to this.

It is when the masses as a whole see, by the example of the most advanced among their number marking out the road in action, that the movement has the power, has the policy, has the methods, and has the leadership to divide the whites and then smash the oppressor's power, that the full flood of the revolution will begin.

Thus it is of absolute importance that the activists of the movement arm themselves and then arm their fellow strugglers with a clear, scientific conception of the perspectives and tasks of the revolution, and a coherent strategy for the victory of the working class.

Strategy and tasks

In a sense, the South African revolution has begun. We have now entered upon (in Trotsky's words) "a series of battles, disturbances, changing situation, abrupt turns, constituting in their entirety the different stages in the proletarian revolution."

But that does not mean we are in a 'revolutionary situation'—i.e., that the objective conditions have matured for the victory of the revolution, or that the overthrow of the regime is imminent. On the contrary. The state is still immensely strong. Only the first real cracks are appearing in the foundations of the racist system. The forces of bourgeois reaction have by no means yet been fully mobilised, let alone tested and exhausted.

It will require years of drawn-out, tenacious struggles, in which millions of oppressed people rise to their feet—where there will be defeats as well as victories, retreats as well as advances, bloody clashes and mighty shocks—before the way will have been prepared for the collapse and overthrow of the regime.

This process can extend over five, ten or even more years.

The strategy of the black working-class movement in SA must, on the one hand, be based on the fact that we are now in the epoch of the revolution; that tens of thousands are already locked in daily battle with the ruling class and the state; that the task of conquering state power now looms over everything.

On the other hand, however, strategy has to take account of the fact that state power cannot be conquered in SA through one or a few cataclysmic blows. This situation gives rise to many contradictions and poses tremendous difficulties in front of the movement.

International experience

It is necessary, if we are to find the way forward in South Africa, to make a careful study of other revolutions, insurrections and civil wars. From them we must glean all possible theoretical insights and practical experiences to apply to the SA situation. But historical examples and parallels must not be taken one-sidedly, or applied mechanically.

There is no general blueprint for revolution; everywhere and at every time it is necessary to make a concrete analysis of the fundamental processes and the relation of forces between the classes in struggle, while taking account also of peculiar and exceptional circumstances that may arise.

In 1895 old Engels wrote an introduction to Marx's work, *The Class Struggles in France (1848-50)*, in which he explained how the changes which had taken place in Europe after 1850 necessitated careful reappraisal of the strategy of proletarian revolution there and of the

preparations necessary for a victorious insurrection.

Through a long period of relatively peaceful development of capitalist industry, the bourgeoisie had been able to consolidate a formidable state power, and much more reliable military means for the suppression of insurrection.

What Engels termed "the unprepared onslaught" was no longer a means of gaining victory, as it had been in the past. "Rebellion in the old style, the street fight with barricades, which up to 1848 gave everywhere the final decision, was to a considerable extent obsolete."

This did not mean that street-fighting, barricades, etc., would have no role to play in the proletarian revolution. But they would not suffice, as in the past, to win over the troops and thus bring down the government.

Need for preparation

It was now necessary for revolution to be more thoroughly and consciously **prepared**. "The time of surprise attacks, of revolutions carried through by small conscious minorities at the head of unconscious masses, is past. Where it is a question of a complete transformation of the social organisation, the masses themselves must also be in it, must themselves already have grasped what is at stake, what they are going in for with body and soul... But in order that the masses may understand what is to be done, long, persistent work is required..."

This would require a combination of tactics, depending upon the circumstances: the building of powerful trade unions, political organisation, propaganda work and parliamentary activity (where workers had the franchise).

Making full use of the sphere of legal activity permitted to it, the working class would strengthen its position, win the middle layers of society to its side, undermine the state and drive the bourgeoisie to 'despair'. Instead of depending on the lightning revolts which in the past had characterised the movement of the revolutionary proletariat, it was necessary now to engage, in effect, in a protracted war of position against the bourgeoisie.

But the conscious purpose of these methods of struggle would be to **prepare the ground for revolution**—to lay the basis ultimately for an armed mass struggle which could succeed in breaking the loyalty of the troops and winning them to the side of the working class in action.

Engels, having set out in detail the military difficulties of overthrowing a powerfully armed industrial state, posed this question: "Does that mean that in the future the street fight will play no further role? Certainly not. It only means that the conditions since 1848 have become far more unfavourable for civil fights, far more favourable for the military. A future street fight can therefore only be **victorious** when this unfavourable situation is compensated by other factors. Accordingly, it will occur more seldom in the beginning of a great revolution than in its further progress, and will have to be undertaken with greater forces." (Our emphasis.)

It is the lesson of revolution everywhere that so long as the armed forces of the state remain basically intact; so long as the ruling class retains an effective monopoly

of armed force; so long, in other words, as it can rely on its troops and so exercise military superiority—the revolution cannot triumph.

In purely material terms, the ruling class and the state possess overwhelming advantages militarily. A strategy for defeating the state involves first and foremost crippling the ability of the ruling class to use its military forces against the revolution—by rendering the troops politically unreliable.

This general point applies just as much in a country like South Africa where the troops, overwhelmingly, are drawn from and led by a racial group separate from the revolutionary masses.

That is why a victorious revolution—and even insurrection itself—is nine-tenths a question of the **political preparations** and only one-tenth a military question. But, at the same time, the military element remains absolutely decisive also.

Troops—who face the threat of being shot by their officers for mutiny—can only be infected by revolution to the point of deserting *en masse* or turning their guns against their own commanders and going over to the ‘people’ **once the revolution shows that it has the strength to win and the will to go through to the end.**

Revolutions in Europe

The great revolutionary upheavals which swept over Europe at the end of the First World War demonstrated that even the strongest bourgeois states could be brought to the verge of collapse by a mass working-class movement, once fully mobilised and seeking a revolutionary way out of the nightmare of capitalism.

But this revolutionary wave was defeated—mainly because the workers were held back from decisively conquering power by reformist leaders of the mass organisations! At the same time, young and undeveloped revolutionary organisations proved unable to lead the working class to take or hold power.

In the long decades of relatively ‘peaceful’ capitalist development prior to the First World War, the labour leaders had used trade unionism, parliamentary activity, etc, not as a means of consciously preparing the working class for revolution, but as a means of reconciling the proletariat with the bourgeoisie in the name of an imaginary step-by-step transition through reforms to ultimate ‘socialism’.

Instead of seeing reforms, as Marxists see them, as the by-product of the workers’ revolutionary struggle, the leaders of the labour-bureaucracy promoted reforms as the be-all and end-all of the movement.

Thus, when it came to revolution, they were found wanting, and in many notorious cases crossed over blatantly to the side of the ruling class. They split the workers’ organisations, crippled them and demoralised the masses, preparing the way for vicious counter-revolution.

It was only in Russia that there had been built a revolutionary party and cadre—the Bolsheviks—sufficiently strongly rooted in the workers’ movement to succeed on the basis of Marxist ideas in defeating the influence of

the reformists and so decisively affect the outcome of the struggle.

But the Russian Revolution—the ‘classic’ proletarian revolution as far as Marxists are concerned—nevertheless took place in highly unusual, indeed exceptional circumstances. Trotsky has explained (see, for example, *Lessons of October*) that the actual course of the Russian Revolution, far from providing an exact pattern of other revolutions in future, could not be replicated elsewhere.

In February 1917 the Tsar was overthrown by a **virtually peaceful and practically unarmed mass uprising**, led by the workers. The ruling class could not immediately resort to civil war against the proletariat because it lacked the weapon with which to do so. This was despite the colossal size of the Russian army.

The Russian army was, in composition, essentially a peasant army. The terrible conditions which had developed in the course of the First World War, the horrific slaughter and stalemate in the trenches, and the suffering of the oppressed, landless and indebted peasants, combined to shatter the cohesion and discipline of the army and drive it to revolt. The Russian soldiers participated in the forefront of the revolution, elected delegates to the soviets, etc, alongside the working class.

At the same time, the bourgeoisie could manoeuvre, leaning on the reformist leaders, Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, who were raised to power by the mass movement in the first period of the revolution. **Thus they could gain time while preparing for counter-revolution.**

As previously explained, the tasks of the revolution were bourgeois-democratic and it was only through experience that the mass of the proletariat could realise the necessity of itself taking state power in order to carry out these tasks. Not through experience alone, however, but with the help of patient explanation by the Marxist cadres.

Only when the workers were clear as to the tasks could they in turn win the support of the poor peasants for the conquest of power. The role of the party was to raise and organise the consciousness of the working class. Had there not been a strong Bolshevik party, with the clear political leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, then the Russian Revolution would have been defeated.

As it was, the revolutionary turmoil, and the groping of the working class towards power, propelled the ruling class to the premature adventure of General Kornilov’s revolt in August 1917—an attempt at a counter-revolutionary military coup and overthrow of the reformist Kerensky regime. Kornilov’s attack collapsed. His forces disintegrated or were won over by the armed workers, led by the Bolsheviks. This prepared the way for the victorious workers’ insurrection in October.

Almost without bloodshed

By that stage, such was the weakness and virtual collapse of bourgeois resistance, as well as the discrediting and disarray of the reformists, that **the October insurrection itself was accomplished almost without bloodshed**—at least in Petrograd, where it began, and which was the epicentre of the revolution.

It was only **after** the workers were in power that the civil war opened in earnest. Again, the First World War decisively affected events. Only after the victory of the Allied imperialist powers in the world war could they organise intervention by 21 foreign armies against the revolution in Russia. Had it not been for the existence and strength of the Bolshevik party and the conquest of power by the working class, the giving of the land to the peasants, etc., there could have been no question of revolutionary victory in the civil war.

Trotsky pointed out that the peculiar combination of circumstances surrounding the Russian Revolution of 1917 could not be repeated, and that in all likelihood serious armed clashes would occur between the ruling class and the mass movement well **before** the victory of the workers' revolution in most developed countries in future. This was because the bourgeoisie would probably have more favourable conditions and initially more reliable armed forces at its command, and would use them all the more vigorously in civil war against the proletariat—not least because of the lessons it had learned from the Russian Revolution.

Civil war developing in SA

It is obvious that, in South Africa, peaceful or even relatively peaceful conquest of state power is out of the question, and that, with elements of civil war already developing in the country, conditions for eventual armed insurrection will only develop **out of civil war**. All the powers of resistance of capitalist society, all the forces of the white reaction, will have to be overcome in struggle **before** the conquest of state power is completed.

The strategic task is to turn what will otherwise become a barbarous racial war into a revolutionary class war. That will demand tremendous capacities of organisation and leadership.

The example of the Spanish Revolution of the 1930s is instructive. There the mere election of the Popular Front in 1936 was enough to propel the ruling class to civil war. They had the opportunity to use the army against the workers and poor peasants, and they did so ruthlessly. The landlords and capitalists sided overwhelmingly with Franco's military rebellion against the Republic. This was despite the fact that **bourgeois** Republican 'democrats' filled the seats in the first Popular Front government, while the Socialist and Communist Parties were not included in the Cabinet at that stage.

The reason the ruling class resorted to armed counter-revolution was that even the most tame 'democratic' and reformist programme endorsed by the labour leaders in the Popular Front could not disguise the reality that a proletarian revolution was inevitably taking place. The **class** questions were to the fore; the issue of **property** was starkly posed in the movement of the workers in the towns and of the agricultural labourers and poor peasants on the land.

In South Africa even genuine democratic elections are ruled out this side of the victory of the workers' revolution, for reasons we analysed earlier.

In Spain, the refusal of the Socialist and Communist

leaders to recognise that a socialist revolution was involved, and the vicious measures especially of the latter to forcibly hold back the working class in the name of a 'democratic' class-compromise with the bourgeoisie and landowners, led to the revolution's defeat and the crushing by Franco of the Spanish proletariat for a whole generation.

In South Africa the movement must be organised and led on a clear policy of preparing the forces for socialist revolution, if there is to be a victory of the working class in the civil war which looms ahead.

Problem of leadership

The success of the proletarian revolution internationally depends above all on solving the problem of leadership. This was shown in all the great inter-war revolutions which were defeated; again in the aftermath of the Second World War; again in all the capitalist countries today.

In Europe, the end of the Second World War provided exceptional objective opportunities for the victory of the working class.

The troops who had come through that terrible slaughter, and had seen the near-barbarism to which capitalism had reduced much of the world, wanted to change society. The workers had training in arms, were battle-hardened, and in many cases had arms in hand; the bourgeoisie could not wield the state power effectively against them. In fact in several European countries, capitalism was only rescued, and the masses disarmed, by the combined intervention of the Communist Party leaders (carrying out Stalin's policy of agreement with imperialism to maintain capitalism in Western Europe) and the reformist leaders of the old Social Democratic mass parties.

This, together with the ensuing long post-War economic upswing, is what stabilised capitalism in the West for a whole historical period.

Now, as the advanced capitalist countries enter a new epoch of crisis, the proletariat there has such an overwhelming weight in society that even the **peaceful** conquest of power and transformation of society would in **theory** be entirely possible.

But again, the hold of reformism and Stalinism in the bureaucracy of the labour movement means that the awakening working class, as it moves beyond reformism, first has to clear out of its path these entrenched and complicated obstacles before it can unite its forces for the socialist revolution.

In order to transform society, the working class first has to transform its own organisations into conscious instruments of revolutionary struggle. Thus the process of the revolution will inevitably be long drawn-out and confused, and therefore it will inevitably be bloody. The bourgeoisie in the advanced 'democratic' capitalist countries will have the opportunity to, and will, resort to methods of civil war against the working class in years to come despite the enormous risks for capitalism in doing so.

In these countries, as much as anywhere, the proletariat

can come to power only when it succeeds, by virtue of its social power, unity in action, and conscious socialist leadership and programme, in winning over the bulk of the armed forces and police to the side of the revolution.

Without such leadership and programme, victorious insurrection will prove to be the exception rather than the rule in any of the more or less industrialised countries.

Insurrection in Iran

A brilliant—though quite exceptional—example of a victorious insurrection in recent years was Iran, with the overthrow of the Shah in 1979. Let us remember that the Shah's army was the fourth most powerful military machine in the world. Yet, the Shah, a stooge of imperialism, who attempting to 'modernise' Iran on the basis of a diseased capitalist system and under a degenerate and viciously repressive dictatorship, succeeded in alienating completely not only the working class and the urban middle class, but the mass of the peasants as well.

Eventually, through tremendously heroic, sustained urban uprisings, in which the masses endured massacres from ground troops and from helicopter gun-ships again and again but refused to give way, conditions were prepared for the collapse of the state itself. The army finally disintegrated and the troops went over to the revolution when the workers themselves moved decisively, notably with the strike of the oil workers.

Once the army broke in the Shah's hands, his entire regime collapsed like a house of cards.

However, tragically, because of the perfidious role played by the Iranian Communist (Tudeh) Party (which on the dictates of Moscow had given only formal opposition to the Shah), the mullahs were able to place themselves at the head of the revolution and mix, in the minds of the masses, anti-imperialist revolutionary sentiments with the intoxicating fumes of reactionary Islamic fundamentalism.

Thus the lack of Marxist leadership has led the revolution into the dreadful impasse of the last five years. (Now, at last, there are signs of the Iranian proletariat beginning to move again onto the road of struggle.)

It would be completely incorrect to take the Iranian insurrection without further ado as a simple 'model' for the coming revolution and insurrection in South Africa. The Iranian workers, youth and peasants had the difficult enough task of winning over troops who could at least identify with them in class and national terms. In SA the problem is obviously a hundred times more difficult.

The SA armed state apparatus is so formidable because it is rigidly cemented together on a foundation of racial privilege. Resting on a substantial one-sixth of the population—the five million whites totally separated in material life and conscious identity from the revolutionary black masses—it cannot be cracked easily or taken by mere frontal assault.

The more stretched the state forces become, and the more successful the masses are in arming themselves, the more viciously unrestrained the army and police will become. Moreover—to the extent that the armed masses

succeed in rendering the state, albeit partially and for brief periods, impotent—the more open and ugly will become the armed mobilisation of the white civil reaction, with features of inter-racial communal fighting and barbarities entering into the picture.

But if power cannot be taken simply by frontal attack, in one or a few titanic blows, there are also immense barriers in SA in the way of a long drawn-out semi-peaceful 'war of position' and of slow accumulation of organised strength on the part of the working class.

The situation which has existed for the rising trade union movement over the past decade cannot continue indefinitely into the future, as the system is convulsed by crisis and as the room for capitalist reforms is narrowed or turned into its opposite with ever more savage attacks on the working class. This is the essential predicament facing the trade unions, and goes against the unspoken long-term strategy which has guided many of the union leaders.

Social-democratic misconception

Within many of the biggest independent unions there has been the misconception that it would be possible in South Africa indefinitely to construct the union movement on similar lines to Western European Social Democracy in the past, with a stable official apparatus, a long and largely peaceful struggle for step-by-step reforms, in the hope of solving the workers' problems without a decisive struggle for state power.

Even in the advanced capitalist countries the steady advance in the position of the working class was sustained only by the peculiar interlude of the 25-year post-war upswing of capitalism. Now the basis for it is crumbling away, with the sustained attacks on living standards and trade union rights, and the big movements of the proletariat which have begun in Western Europe. These movements enter at once into bitter conflict with the reformist bureaucrats who have become entrenched at the head of the labour movement over the past decades of compromise with capitalism.

Far from modelling themselves in any way whatever on the labour **bureaucracy** of the West, all leaders of democratic unions in SA should be vigorously pursuing direct links of solidarity with the militant **ranks** of the international labour movement as they enter into struggle against capitalism and reformism. They should be carrying out a concerted campaign among SA workers to expose the role the Social-Democratic and Stalinist leaders have played in the defeats of the working class.

Also mistaken in South Africa has been the idea that the unions could **limit** themselves to maintaining organisational independence from the liberation movement in the hope of protecting the position of the workers 'under a future black government'. **The reality is that the black majority will not be able to elect a government in SA until the working class succeeds in taking power.** That process will necessitate the unions moving into the front ranks of the liberation struggle, and being consciously developed into effective instruments, not only of 'economic' struggle, but of the workers' revolutionary

struggle for power.

The struggle for the political independence of the working class can be won only by the working class taking the lead of the whole movement in an organised and conscious way.

In South Africa we have entered inescapably into a period of revolution and counter-revolution, of enormous battles, shocks, advances and setbacks, in which all the best-laid plans for 'peaceful' advance will be ruined. This despite the fact that there will be semi-peaceful interludes and contradictory phases when the tendency of events appears to be in the opposite direction.

Nevertheless, the harsh process of the struggle itself will inevitably sort out within the trade unions the revolutionaries from the reformists, with many of the latter going into early retirement or finding employment elsewhere, rather than face up to the tasks.

The gains of the independent unions over the past twelve years can be defended and consolidated only by preparing them consciously for revolution, and not for any length of time by adapting them or containing them within bounds presently 'tolerable' to even the most 'liberal' section of the capitalists. That would lead only to eventual defeat.

It is only through a revolutionary-strategic conception of trade union work that these vital organs of the SA proletariat—embryonic organs of a future workers' democracy in fact—will be able to survive and surmount the inevitable attacks of the state and the bourgeoisie in the coming years.

In saying this, we fully recognise that trade unions are inherently conceived as organisations for the economic struggle, for improvements of the workers' material conditions under capitalism; that they are by nature organs suited to a long drawn-out 'war of position' and gradual accumulation of strength. Many thousands, perhaps the majority, of the rank-and-file naturally still see them in that light.

The sober-minded workers can also see that there is **no quick victory possible against the state**. Therefore, they are usually reluctant to commit their organisations to what may turn out to be costly adventures, perhaps destroying the gains so painstakingly made.

This is one of the most important factors which has operated to keep major unions out of the UDF, reinforcing the position of union leaders who have failed to give a clear political lead on this issue.

Unions have to struggle politically

However, revolution in SA is not a matter of choice for these or any other workers. Workers who have built a basis of power in the mines and factories, and through the unions, inevitably have to use these organisations to struggle politically, to meet the attacks and provocations of the state. Thus there are repeated convulsive movements in which the trade union activists, responding to the pressures of the rank-and-file, try to work out ways of steering their organisations into the forefront of political struggle.

On the one hand, therefore, the organised workers

come up against the limitations of a slow 'war of position', and of unions simply as trade unions.

On the other hand, the youth movement, volatile, impatient, and ready for the most heroic actions, comes up against the limitations of the spontaneous and 'unprepared onslaughts' of the past period.

As illusions in the possibility of a quick victory against the regime have been dashed, the youth have turned to seek a stable organisational basis by linking up with the big battalions of the movement—the organisations constructed in the factories, the mines, etc—the unions.

Passing into the UDF, the youth find the big unions have no organised presence and are providing no leadership there, while the present middle-class leaders offer no coherent action programme or strategy for power. Those sections of the youth who have been repelled by this and drawn instead to the radical 'socialist' rhetoric of the National Forum and Azapo, find there some well-developed vocal chords but no bones, muscles or sinews.

What is the way out of this predicament, which increasingly tears the movement with sterile splits and even disgraceful physical fighting between the contending factions and organisations?

It is impossible, by constructing 'ideological' models and trying to impose them on the living movement, to develop a coherent revolutionary strategy. Strategy consists in drawing out the apparently contradictory threads of the real processes going on **in the movement of the masses themselves**, and weaving these together into a scientific conception.

Objective basis of strategy

We have in SA a rising black workers' movement which must inevitably flow through the channels provided by the unions, and which must take those organisations and turn them onto the road of revolutionary political struggle. And on the other hand we have a revolutionary movement of the black working-class youth which, for effectiveness, must find a way of fighting in harness together with the power of labour.

These objective tendencies and needs found their clearest expression so far in the organisation of the Transvaal general strike last November. There the youth organisations, wishing to initiate action, came together with the most advanced trade union militants of different sections, drawing in outstanding community leaders together with them. The UDF leaders followed and endorsed the action. The Azapo leaders, for their part, denounced it.

What gave the strike its tremendous force was precisely this combined action of the youth and the workers, in which the power of the big organisations of labour was supplemented by the energy, drive and organising initiatives of the young militants themselves.

But the ultimate test of the success of actions of this kind is the role they play in building the movement in conscious preparation for the struggle for power.

The best way of moving forward from that strike would have been to prepare, vigorously but carefully, a subsequent two-day national general strike, as we have argued

in other material. However, neither the trade union nor youth leaders approached the problem with a sufficiently clearly worked out strategic framework.

The conservatives among the union officials quickly manoeuvred to obstruct any tendency towards further general strike action at that time. The rank-and-file, they said, were 'not willing' to repeat the Transvaal general strike. Of course they were not willing to do that!—what would have been the point? Similarly, an **unlimited** general strike would have been an adventure, leading to a big defeat at that stage. The workers could sense that.

But had there been a clearly explained and well-organised plan to extend the movement **nationally** by means of a two-day strike, maintaining the momentum already built up, bringing in the mineworkers (who were by then ready to move), fighting on a clear issue (such as SASOL), using the full authority of the unions and the UDF, and the energies of the youth organisations, to raise the conflict with the state to a higher step, a tremendous response would have been forthcoming from the proletariat—in the Transvaal, in the Eastern Cape, and throughout the country.

Sensing the danger in the situation, the regime moved quickly to arrest the participants in the organising committee of the Transvaal general strike, and made it clear that in any similar action that might be organised in future, the leadership would be arrested before, not after, the event. This has highlighted the necessity for the militant leadership of the workers' and youth movement to develop more effective underground methods of work, together with open organisation, in the struggle.

Revolutionary workers' party

But above all, these circumstances bring out clearly the need for a revolutionary workers' party if the struggle is to be led in a clear and decisive manner.

However, how is such a thing to arise? The situation in South Africa will prove merciless to half-baked organisational as well as political conceptions. The idea that the unions themselves, through some kind of conference decision in future, can simply launch a workers' party in SA is naive wishful thinking, as we have explained in *Inqaba* (e.g. No. 11) before.

In the first place, a revolutionary workers' party (if it was genuinely that) would be illegal from the beginning. That has to be acknowledged.

Secondly, the mass of the workers already look to the ANC. They obviously do not have need of a **reformist** party. A viable **alternative** to the ANC would have to grip the imagination of the mass of the workers as being a **more effective instrument for the revolutionary achievement of national liberation and workers' power** than they have already.

Even assuming that a majority of trade union members would agree to launch a 'workers' party' in competition with the ANC, how would it go about establishing its credibility among the unorganised masses and among the youth who look to Congress? How would it avoid merely causing further confusion and splits of the movement at this stage?

The closer loom the revolutionary tasks, the less can the awakening mass of the workers afford to abandon **the traditional mass political organisation of the past, which signifies to them unity of the oppressed people in the struggle for power.**

It is enough to pose the question in this way for the general outlines of a solution to the problem to appear. **The revolutionary workers' party and workers' leadership which is needed in South Africa can be created successfully in a struggle of organised workers and youth to build and transform for their purpose the ANC itself.**

Understanding this task and how to carry it out constitutes the core of a revolutionary strategy in South Africa.

Rooted in working-class organisations

Clearly, there can be no effective revolutionary leadership of the struggle which is not rooted in the existing organisations in the factories, mines, etc, and the grassroots organisations of the working-class youth.

The first step in a battle for a clear strategy, programme and leadership of revolution is to win the support of the advanced workers and youth for Marxist ideas. This must take place with the utmost urgency, by the method of honest fraternal discussion, with the weapons of facts, figures and reasoned argument, within the trade unions, the factory- and shop-stewards' committees, and the youth and community organisations of the black working class throughout South Africa.

Every committed socialist is urged to join with *Inqaba* and the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC in this task.

For the advanced workers and youth to carry clear revolutionary ideas to the masses—and also learn from the masses at the same time—it is necessary to put aside all sectarian notions. Marxists must go where the mass movement goes as it arises and in its millions moves into action.

These millions will inevitably move, on the one hand, towards the new union federation, where industrial organisation and struggle is concerned, and on the other hand, towards the banner of the ANC (in all its forms) for the struggle to overthrow the state.

Therefore all revolutionary activists have as their duty to orient, on the one hand to the new federation, and on the other to the ANC banner in order to reach the ear and understanding of the masses.

That is the basis of our whole orientation as the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC. That has been the foundation also of our policy of urging the unions to make a conscious, organised turn into the UDF on a clear programme of action, so that the working class can rapidly take the leadership of the whole political struggle into its hands.

By systematic activity within the mass organisations it would be possible—without in any way endangering the unity of the mass struggle itself—for Marxists to win overwhelming support for their ideas and policies.

We denounce all sectarian splitting of the mass organisations. The struggle is to build and (whenever

necessary) **transform** these organisations through bringing them under the democratic control of their working-class ranks and winning the argument for Marxist ideas and policies.

The movement has need both of unity and clarity; the one cannot be achieved by destroying the other. The rise to revolutionary struggle of millions of workers and youth provides the path to unify the movement under the leadership of Marxism in the coming years.

Once the new trade union federation is launched, combining the strength of some three hundred thousand union members, and including the big battalions of mining and industry, hundreds of thousands of so far unorganised workers will rally to it. Within the federation inevitably a struggle of ideas and tendencies will take place. The organised workers will be looking for political answers from the federation leaders, even while looking to the ANC at the same time.

Question of UDF

The question of the unions' involvement in the UDF, and ultimately in the movement headed openly by the ANC itself, will not go away but will more and more become a focus of debate and absorb the attention of the union militants.

What is of key importance is that the matter should not be argued out in abstract or purely 'organisational' terms. The need is for the union militants to agree on a comprehensive action programme around specific demands, on the basis of which organised as well as unorganised workers, women and youth can be mobilised in united action.

Then, once there is a clear plan of campaign and support has been won for this within the unions, it will make practical sense to draw the organisations of the UDF round the organised workers. The need for a concerted turn by the unions into the UDF to bring it under workers' control would then follow logically and would be seen as quite simple to achieve.

The development within the new federation of a more or less distinct ANC current, committed to the present ANC, SACTU and SACP leadership, seems inevitable in the next period—even though some of the most prominently identified pro-Congress union leaders are likely to keep their organisations out of the federation, at least initially. The policies and arguments of the Stalinists will thus need to be answered clearly and systematically by Marxists within the federation if tremendous confusion of the political issues is to be avoided.

Probably, inside the new federation, a black-consciousness current will also take shape. This is likely to gain an echo among the workers only to the extent that the policy of non-racialism appears to provide a screen for conservatism in the leadership (especially where this is manifested in white officials) and a tendency to draw back from politics.

At the same time, attempts to draw workers in any significant numbers towards the National Forum and Azapo will fail, or fairly quickly rebound, even as these essentially petty-bourgeois bodies will tend to repel in time

the youth who have gravitated towards them.

Black consciousness played an enormously progressive role in the revolutionary awakening of the black youth in South Africa. But things can turn into their opposites. Unclear thinking becomes a terrible barrier on the road to revolution. It is necessary for the whole of the youth movement to move beyond black consciousness to a fully-formed class consciousness—to Marxist ideas. By dressing up nationalist ideas in pseudo-Marxist phraseology, the National Forum and Azapo intellectual leaders confuse and **retard** this process on the part of the working-class youth.

We have to say frankly that, for all the radical 'socialist' rhetoric of these black consciousness leaders (put forward to outflank the ANC), they seem to us to be play-acting at revolution. That is shown above all in their sweeping dismissal of the white working class as inevitably part of the enemy camp. This may look very 'r-r-revolutionary' (to borrow Lenin's term). But it shows that they **entirely lack a serious attitude to the problem of overthrowing the state**. For that, the winning over of the white troops will be absolutely indispensable. What is their policy for accomplishing that?

In their intellectual attack on 'non-racialism' they hopelessly muddle up liberal or petty-bourgeois 'non-racialism' with something completely different: an uncompromising **revolutionary class approach** on the part of the black workers to the white workers.

Black workers in the unions, who experience the racist insults and kicks of the white workers every day, show a thousand times more revolutionary intelligence than the black-consciousness intellectuals, when they strive might and main to win white workers into the non-racial unions. They correctly persist in these efforts even when those few white workers who have joined, after a while leave these unions again under the pressure of white society.

There is not a trace of sentimentality or liberalism—or even class brotherhood in the **naïve** sense—in these black workers' approach to the white workers. **They are simply preparing the ground for later smashing the state and overthrowing their class enemy: the bourgeoisie.**

Must persist

Let the black workers who have embarked on a conscious non-racial policy not be diverted from it even by the going over of white workers to the most vicious right-wing reactionary parties—which is inevitable as a stage during the maturing of the revolutionary crisis. It is precisely these whites, stirred into a half-blind, semi-class revolt, rather than the ones who tail tamely after Botha, who can later be won directly to the workers' revolution when all reactionary ways out of their nightmare have proved useless.

Let us not be deterred even by the horrors and atrocities committed by the whites in the course of racial civil war—for there is no basis but a class basis, class independence, uncompromising class strength and an ultimate class appeal to the interests of white workers, youth and petty-bourgeois **against capitalism** if the black workers' revolution is to triumph.

We can take a leaf from the book of Thami Mali and Siphwe Thusi in this respect. They amazed their *Sunday Express* interviewer (quoted earlier) when "Not once during the interview did either man use the word 'whites'. The enemy, they said when asked why, was 'the state'. When last inside, Mr Thusi tried to persuade his interrogators that they were oppressed. 'I asked them if they owned any means of production, any land,' he said. 'I asked them who were they defending. They were also members of the working class. They owned nothing. I am also fighting to liberate them.' "

Here is expressed, in language which no theory could better, an elemental strategic class sense as to what is involved in the coming workers' revolution in SA. Yes, even this barbarous white racist state machine can be shattered by the political action of the black working class once it rises fully to its feet and marches forward with complete clarity as to the revolutionary tasks.

This is the understanding which Marxists must work to generalise throughout the workers' movement and among the youth, helping to cement it with theory and perspectives into a firm and clear conception of the road to power.

Black middle class

Nor will there be any difficulty in drawing the weak black middle class—with exceptions, of course, but in the main—behind the workers and working-class youth.

The Communist Party and ANC leaders have argued that it is wrong to put forward ideas of socialism and workers' power in South Africa because this 'frightens away the middle class'. Absolute nonsense! It is when a muddled, non-class, so-called 'democratic' revolution or rather **compromise** is put forward that the movement splits, the middle class wavers, and the ruling class is able to deal effective blows against the masses.

This lesson is written in the blood of many defeated revolutions in which the movement was led—or rather misled—on the basis of such false ideas.

The reality of the situation for the black middle class is summed up in an interview which Ellen Kuzwayo, who comes from an ex-landowning family, gave to the London *Observer* (14/4/85):

"The days are gone when I could sit down and counsel anybody—even the 12-year-olds. I worked with the black children of Soweto for years as a social worker—in youth clubs, weekend camps, discussion groups—and I was sure I knew them. But in 1976, in 48 hours, they were not the children I knew.

"They had become angry; and that angered me; and this has happened all over South Africa. I know that one side has more evil than the other, but when people are very angry they find themselves doing things they would never normally do. So you have a situation which is explosive on both sides: **and it compels us to go with it, whether we like it or not.**" (our emphasis.)

Whether they like it or not, the oppressed middle class will follow the working class **when it gives a decisive revolutionary lead**. This is a fact which must be grasped by all the loyal young militants of the ANC and UDF

so that they can sooner and more decisively break with the ideas of class-compromise which have been inculcated into the movement for so many years by the Stalinists.

Sectarianism

Sectarians, on the other hand, stand aside from the ANC and UDF because the **leaders** of these organisations do not put forward 'socialism'. As if that were the criterion! As if it were superfluous to undertake a systematic struggle for socialist ideas **in the ranks of the working-class movement!** We must go where the masses go, regardless of the policies of the leaders and regardless of the stage in consciousness which the masses are passing through. That is the only way to work. For a Marxist, it is ABC.

Sectarians stand aside from the new trade union federation on grounds that its leadership will not be sufficiently revolutionary and its structures too 'bureaucratic', open to 'manipulation', etc. If that were true, it would not provide a shred of an excuse for staying out! What about the hundreds of thousands of union members who will be working day and night to build the new federation and turn it into an effective instrument for workers' power?

The May Day meeting at Khotso House (and there were other similar meetings elsewhere) showed the ripeness of the whole organised workers' movement for revolutionary socialist ideas. Most of the speeches brimmed over with ideas of revolutionary class struggle against capitalism—as even the SA capitalist press had to reflect.

A speaker from the Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions said:

"We are fighting against the forces of capitalism. We are not fighting to remove whites and replace them with blacks. We are fighting for a complete change in the political and economic spheres. We are fighting for the end of the system of exploitation based on capitalism.

"Workers have been divided by the different views of the union leadership, but workers' demands and sentiments are the same and we must help formulate structures for the revolutionary change." (*Star*, 2/5/85.)

Splendid! But what on earth is the 'Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions'?

We must say frankly to all committed socialists: you will "help formulate structures for the revolutionary change" only **inside** the new federation and **inside** the mass movement broadly gathering under the ANC banner. Inside you can build a real mass base for the ideas of Marxism, provided you yourselves have mastered these ideas. Outside you can only serve as a sterile, divisive irritant and frustrate the fulfilment of the very revolution which you proclaim.

Nor should you rest on the illusion that the workers, once they fail to find socialist leadership in the ANC, will swing over to following 'you'. The history of revolutionary movements in all the industrialised countries shows that the main body of the proletariat returns again and again to its traditional organisations, despite even the worst defeats and betrayals by its leaders in the past.

In the case of the ANC, particularly the imprisoned and exiled leaders have an enormous accumulated capital

of confidence among the workers based on decades of courageous endurance and dedication to the liberation struggle. This is enhanced by all those who have sacrificed their lives in the name of the ANC. It entirely overshadows as far as the masses are concerned the leadership's failings in policy and strategy which have, in any event, not yet been fully brought to light in action.

Again and again in the years ahead the workers will try to solve the problems of revolutionary leadership, strategy, action programme, etc, in and through the ANC. If they, together with the working-class youth, fail despite all efforts to establish clear socialist leadership in the ANC, what will happen will be the terrible disintegration and demoralisation of the movement, and the smashing of the revolution by the armed forces of reaction.

In any event, the ANC leadership will inevitably tack to the left in the coming period under the pressure of events and of the masses. At a certain point they will even put forward 'socialism' in words, thus taking the 'left' sectarians' clothes away from them. It would not be the first time such a thing happened in world history.

Communist Party's 'left' turn

Already there are signs of it in the air. The SA Communist Party, which directs the policy of the ANC, is currently going through a 'left' phase. Obviously the ranks of the CP in exile are responding to the revolutionary ferment among the working class at home and in turn putting pressure on the party leaders.

The January 1985 statement by the CP central committee is full of left phraseology about the crisis of capitalism, about the SA state being an organ "for the defence of bourgeois rule", about the need to "destroy" or "render ineffective" the army and police in order "defeat the bourgeoisie", etc.

It quotes Lenin's dictum that the proletariat is the only class "capable of being revolutionary to the very end". It says: "To be revolutionary to the very end means to fight for the victory of the socialist revolution, for the defeat of the bourgeoisie as a class, for the passing of power into the hands of the proletariat so that it becomes the ruling class. This is an historic task which faces the working class of our country, as it confronts the proletariat of all capitalist countries."

However, as is typical of Stalinism, for every step they manage to take onto firm ground theoretically, they feel obliged to take at least one step back into the marsh. Instead of acknowledging that South Africa's revolution is a proletarian socialist revolution which has, first and foremost, to carry out national democratic tasks, they try to cling on to the old false conceptions.

They still insist on the idea of **two distinct revolutions**: one 'national democratic', the other 'socialist'.

Nor is this a matter of semantics. For the 'first' revolution, a regime of "popular democracy" and **not** workers' power is required. Only in the 'second' revolution are we to expect "proletarian rule". Instead of the "democratic revolution" necessitating the overthrow of capitalism, it must merely "go as far as possible in undermining (!) the

positions of the monopoly bourgeoisie"—the Freedom Charter itself goes further than that by proclaiming expropriation!—"and bringing the maximum benefits to the working class and the oppressed and exploited rural masses."

Thus they are in reality still in a complete fog. And the matter is not helped by the statement that the working class—the overwhelming majority of society (and the only consistently revolutionary class, don't forget!)—should make its "imprint" (merely its imprint!) upon the democratic revolution and "prepare the conditions for an uninterrupted advance from popular democracy to proletarian rule." The "conditions", needless to say, are not spelled out.

This piously expressed hope of "uninterrupted advance" is merely the CP leaders' attempt to have it both ways. In practice, while even a membrane separates their 'national democratic' from their 'socialist' revolutions, this serves as a screen for the ideas of class-compromise with capitalism. It gives them a pretext for continuing to put off the fundamental tasks facing the working class, and continuing to seek a settlement with the bourgeoisie.

It is not accidental that, coinciding with this verbal 'left' turn, the ANC leadership has stated that the question of nationalisation in South Africa will only be considered **after** the election of a 'democratic government'. Thus, under the influence of 'democratic' petty-bourgeois and Stalinist illusions in class-compromise, they casually abandon a fundamental pillar of the Freedom Charter which is **absolutely essential to mobilise the working class effectively and give clear direction in the struggle for power.**

Significantly, not a peep of protest is uttered by the South African 'Communist' Party leaders. Far from opposing such a retreat from the revolutionary content of the Freedom Charter, they are fully behind the revision and 'inspire' it theoretically.

Tailing behind events

Such ideas and such leadership place the success of our struggle in great danger. The CP leaders' policy is to tail behind events and adapt their formal position, when necessary, sufficiently to the 'left' to prevent their rank-and-file revolting against the leadership, while at the same time not departing in essence from the old Stalinist class-collaboration policies.

Let us not forget that after the Soweto uprising of 1976, the CP leadership also began to toy with left-wing formulas. But when the movement cooled temporarily and a lull set in, they quickly swung back again to the old bald two-stage dogma. In 1979 they were organising the permanent 'suspension' of Marxists from the ANC for the crime of putting forward the idea of workers' revolution in SA!

In periods when the working class is establishing its dominance in action at the forefront of the whole movement, then all the catch-phrases about the 'leading role' of the working class are dusted off and wheeled out for ceremonial purposes by the CP. But as soon as the working class lapses into passivity, or suffers defeats—or, on

the other hand, as we shall see when the task of taking power is posed before the working class in practice—the CP leaders will rediscover all the points about the necessary ‘broadness’ of the democratic struggle including all classes, about how the workers should not ‘frighten off’ the middle class by trying to go too far, etc, etc.

The policy of the SACP is fundamentally determined by the line of the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, on which it depends. Far from this representing a threat to capitalism in SA—far from there being any basis for Botha’s hysterics about ‘Soviet intervention’ endangering capitalism in Southern Africa as a whole—the policy of the Kremlin is to try to reach a compromise with imperialism over this explosive region, and particularly over South Africa itself. **Promoting workers’ power is absolutely against their interests.**

This is what prevents the SACP from correcting its false policy and going over genuinely to a position of workers’ revolution. The CP’s ‘mistakes’ are therefore not essentially theoretical, but derive from the material self-interest of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

The CP has never been able to sustain a consistent position on perspectives, strategy or tasks of the SA revolution. In 1959, as we pointed out before, they insisted that the democratic transformation of SA could be peaceful. Then, reeling from Sharpeville and the subsequent state crackdown, they swung over to the idea of the ‘South African Reich’, a fascist dictatorship under which nothing could be done. (*Inqaba* No. 3 dealt with the fallacies in their theory of SA ‘fascism’, so we need not repeat the arguments here.)

Without thinking the problem through, the CP leaders jumped over to the ideas of ‘armed struggle’ and peddled for twenty years a barren strategy of guerilla warfare against the SA regime. With this, they continued to combine hopes of a ‘democratic’ compromise with the big bourgeoisie, thus showing that guerillaism was in reality always seen by the leadership as a way of exercising ‘pressure’ and never as a way of overthrowing the regime. In fact it could do neither.

Now they are swinging over empirically again, under the impact of events, to pay respects to the ideas of the mass movement and of armed insurrection.

New errors

In doing so, however, they merely manage to move from one set of mistakes to another, or to combine old mistakes in a new way. Before examining these, it is necessary to set out some details of the recent public policy shift by the ANC on the question of insurrection.

In two NEC statements (which we have already cited) issued in Lusaka on 25 April and 9 May, the ANC leadership makes plain its view that “the conditions for a revolutionary leap forward are beginning to mature.” “The oppressed and exploited people of our country are thus placed, more now than ever before, in a favourable position as revolutionary conditions mature to deliver the final death blow on the apartheid regime.”

We have already explained that a drawn-out period of years of intense revolutionary struggles in SA will be

necessary **before the conditions will have been prepared for the overthrow of the regime.** Just how “mature” are the revolutionary conditions now, in the eyes of the ANC leadership? Just how imminent is the “final death blow” believed to be? In questions such as this—the actual tactics of revolution and their timing—the whole test of a revolutionary leadership is concentrated.

The thinking of the ANC leadership is revealed in a report on these public statements written for the London *Guardian* (10/5/85) by David Rabkin (the former political prisoner jailed by the Pretoria regime for ANC activities). He writes:

“The new ‘call to the nation’ by the exiled nationalist movement represents an important shift of tactics towards a popular Iran-type insurrection rather than a protracted people’s war.”

He makes clear that this turn in the ANC’s policy is primarily a response to the power of the mass revolt within SA over the past few months, but that it is also **an acknowledgement that the guerilla strategy pursued by the ANC in the past has failed.** Let us take up this latter point first.

Marxist policy

In 1979, Marxists were ‘suspended’ from the ANC for arguing against the leadership’s guerilla strategy and in favour of a strategy based on preparing for armed insurrection by the mass of the black working class. Since its inception in 1980, *Inqaba* has consistently put forward the same ideas.

Without acknowledging this, and unfortunately in a mangled way, the new turn by the ANC leadership nevertheless vindicates, rather belatedly, this criticism of its policy which the Marxist Workers’ Tendency of the ANC alone has put forward within the movement.

Summing up our position on armed struggle in *South Africa’s Impending Socialist Revolution* (March 1982), we wrote:

“Lacking any basis for a peasant war, guerilla struggle in our country can only take the form of **urban guerilla action**—which cannot overthrow the regime. **It is, quite simply, not a strategy for power...**

“There is no force which can make the revolution for the SA workers. The revolution will be a workers’ revolution or it will be no revolution at all. If the approach of our movement to armed struggle is to confine it within the limits of armed action by guerilla detachments, this will prove totally insufficient to bring down the regime.

“Despite the heroism and self-sacrifice of the comrades in the ranks of MK, this will not be sufficient to produce the result for which they are prepared to die. Unless armed struggle is developed as the struggle of the working masses, as an expression and extension of their organised strength, their social aims, and their need to change society, it will not rise above an impotent method of exerting ‘pressure’ on the ruling class...

“**Contrary to the popular myth, guerilla action does not demoralise the whites—on the contrary, it usually tends to harden reaction. But when the mass movement has gained the capacity to use armed force, its effects will be profoundly demoralising upon all the forces of reaction...**

"The basis of our military policy in SA must be to prepare the forces for the future armed insurrection against the state.

"This would not imply reckless and adventurist policies in the mass movement, immediately provoking massive military retaliation against the black working class and youth, still in a relatively early stage of mobilising their forces. **The point is to prepare** with the eventual aim of insurrection in mind...

"Within the ANC we must urge a turn towards the preparation of methods and tactics in the realm of armed struggle which will lead to the eventual armed insurrection of the mass of working people against the state.

"Effective preparations are needed for the arming of the workers and youth; importing and stock-piling the necessary arms as well as acquiring and making arms from all possible sources within the country; carrying on military training in SA in conjunction with the building of the underground political networks of the ANC; and so on." (page 155.)

These ideas were further developed, for example, in "Arming the workers' movement—a reply to Comrade Tambo" (*Inqaba* No. 11, August-October 1983). There we also specifically answered the false charge of the Stalinists that we were advocating "suicidal missions based on a 'trained workers' militia' ". They scoffed that our material would lie unread in damp or dusty cellars. Now it is amusing to see ideas of *Inqaba* surfacing unacknowledged in official policy statements of the CP and ANC—or rather, it would be amusing if these were not distorted and turned into a new source of error for the movement.

Unfortunately, a leadership which fails to carry out an open and honest examination of **why** its previous policy was incorrect, cannot arrive at a clear and correct new policy either. Rabkin's interview in the *Guardian* with a leading member of the ANC's Political Military Council shows that they have not fundamentally understood the reasons for the failure of guerillaism. They attribute it **entirely** to the lack of bases (something which, incidentally, a few months ago, they claimed would make no real difference because all the necessary bases were 'inside' South Africa!).

Now the PMC spokesman says:

"We have been trying to engage in armed activities under conditions which are unique in Africa. We are at a terrible disadvantage because we don't have and never will have the kind of rear base that others have—a neighbouring country with enough strength and power to accept it being used in the way Tanzania was used by Frelimo."

Thus the leadership still does not see, or will not admit, that the main barrier to successful guerilla war is the fact that SA is an industrialised country, with no peasantry, and therefore entirely inappropriate to guerilla war. It is the methods of proletarian class struggle which alone can lead to a victorious insurrection.

Victory not possible yet

But a victorious insurrection is not possible immediately or even in the relatively short term. To conceive of seizing power in South Africa by 'Iran-type' tactics of mere

frontal assault against this formidable apartheid military machine is, as we have pointed out, dangerously mistaken.

The youth especially are quite capable of taking this idea of an "Iran-type insurrection" seriously, at face value, and launching an heroic adventure in which they would certainly break their necks.

If that occurs the whole movement may be set back for a temporary period, before it recovers again. In that event, ANC policy would probably once again swing to the right. **If such a defeat is suffered, no-one should blame the youth for their confusion. The confusion lies at the top.** It is demonstrated in this passage in the interview with the ANC's PMC spokesman:

"It remains true that the idea of a general insurrection as an immediate way forward cannot replace the long-term perspective we have of protracted people's war. But we know that history sometimes has a funny way of departing from blueprints. We should certainly keep the lines open to other possibilities which the situation is opening up..."

"I believe the possibility of bringing about the collapse of the existing set-up in South Africa through the build-up of insurrectionary factors has never been as great as it is today."

Here we have every possible confusion rolled into one. Insurrection is "an immediate way forward" (which it is **not**). Nevertheless it "cannot replace" in the "long term" the old idea of a guerilla war (which is what they mean by "protracted people's war")—although this has just been confessed a failure, for lack of bases or what-have-you. And if neither of these strategies work, then we should "certainly" be "open to other possibilities"!

What this means is that the leadership has **no conception** of the stage the movement is passing through or the real tasks involved in preparing for power. It is incapable, as Marx put it, of telling the first or third month of pregnancy from the ninth—and consequently will produce an abortion.

It is jumping about empirically from one superficial idea to another, reacting to events without systematically thinking anything through. Thus guerilla bombings by Umkhonto we Sizwe are continuing even while these are (half) conceded to reflect an unworkable strategy. The plan now, it seems, is to **combine** impotent guerillaism with unprepared and premature insurrection!

Organs of popular power

The NEC statement of 9 May says: "The road now lies open for people to seize the initiative and build their own organs of popular power which must be the only authority in the townships, directly accountable to the people." Rabkin, from his discussions with the ANC leadership, interprets this as follows: "The statement calls for people's committees to be set up as alternative administration in black townships."

The formation of 'peoples' committees' as organising nuclei of revolutionary leadership in the townships is absolutely correct. But, at this stage, these would have to be **based** on relatively small areas or blocks within the

townships, or on factories, compounds, schools, etc., kept largely secret, and only emerging as a combined body to give **open** leadership at township or regional level for temporary periods, and in ways which prevent their easy arrest and crushing by the regime.

It is simply ludicrous to suggest that 'people's committees' can take over "administration in black townships" at this stage.

The ANC's statement distinctly implies that the situation is ripe for the public emergence of popular organs of power within the townships—along the lines of soviets (workers' and soldiers' councils) in the Russian Revolution. But the emergence of such bodies on a sustainable basis will be possible only as **real conditions of dual power** emerge in SA—when the state can no longer enter the black areas safely even with huge police and troop contingents, when its own forces are in disarray, and when an armed mass movement is moving towards a direct fight for power.

Wrong view of general strike

The NEC statement of 25 April is likewise entirely misconceived in its call for all-out general strike action at the present time. "A long-lasting national work stoppage, backed by our oppressed communities and supported by armed activity, can break the backbone of the apartheid system and bring the regime to its knees." That light-minded formula is nothing short of a recipe for a severe defeat. It shows no comprehension of the immense forces and scale of the fighting which will be involved in "bringing the regime to its knees," let alone overthrowing it. A national work stoppage "supported by armed activity"—apparently intended to mean isolated guerilla activity and hastily armed groups of youth—can achieve nothing of the kind.

Instead of tossing around half-baked conceptions of this kind, it is necessary to think through seriously to a conclusion the problems of general strike action on the one hand, and armed mass insurrection on the other—and to work out a properly prepared strategy for both.

An effective general strike which paralyses the country inevitably poses the question of power—of who rules society—but it cannot **resolve** that question. To resolve the question of power, it will not be enough to render the country "ungovernable", whether "supported by armed activity" or not—it will be necessary to establish new organs of revolutionary state power in the place of the old.

The question of power can thus be resolved only by an armed insurrection establishing the rule of the working class. If the conditions for successful insurrection are not present, a "long-lasting national work stoppage" called under illusions of easy victory can only end in demoralising defeat.

General strike action requires great skill and foresight as a tactic, if the movement is to be taken forward and not subjected to unnecessary setbacks. An **all-out indefinite general strike** should not usually be resorted to on a major political issue which the regime cannot easily concede **unless the preparations have been made to**

transform the general strike into an armed insurrection and all-out struggle for state power. Those preparations have hardly begun as yet in South Africa.

The way to proceed towards this goal is through the careful use of limited general strikes—which themselves cannot be successful if they are too frequently and lightly called, or ill prepared—and from these build towards the full mobilisation of the workers and youth country-wide. It will take an extended development to prepare the effective use of arms **by the masses** in conjunction with general strike action.

At the same time, however, the youth have been pioneering essentially correct tactics in fighting to drive out from the black communities all elements of collaboration with the state—the councillors, black police who refuse to resign, etc. This is necessary not only for the purpose of uniting the blacks on the clear understanding that no compromise with the regime is possible. It is necessary also to give the whites a sense of their profound isolation, thus preparing the way for their future splitting and the winning over of sections to the idea of a workers' state.

Nevertheless, without a clear strategic framework—guided, on the contrary, by a confused adventurist perspective now made into official policy by the ANC—these efforts of the youth in the townships will come up against their inherent limits and open the possibility of serious setbacks.

Undoubtedly, very violent and even grisly methods have been and are being used by the youth in the struggle against the collaborators. We have no intention of pedantically 'criticising' these methods, which are used in a situation where the councillors and black police are armed to kill; where they are backed up by white riot police and troops who are shooting down the black youth like flies.

Moreover, revolution (as Trotsky put it) is not performed 'under a conductor's baton'. Excesses are in the nature of revolution, and are absolutely unavoidable at times.

But that is no justification for a failure of leadership, theory, perspectives, strategy and tactics necessary to guide the movement. It is not solely on the two quoted ANC statements that we base this criticism. Those statements are typical of the confusion now reigning in the leading circles of the CP and ANC.

Attempt to launch insurrection

On 22 February, the ANC broadcast from Addis Ababa a call to the black masses in South Africa to take up arms and use them against the state—a call which, in its totality, amounted to an attempt to launch insurrectionary action without preparation, without plan, without timing, without a mass political action programme to lay the basis first. Faith is placed totally in arms and immediate undirected armed action to smash the state.

The broadcast said:

"And where are these arms? Where are the weapons to destroy this regime? They cannot be found anywhere else countrymen. They can only be found in our country itself.

The weapons are there in front of you. They are in the hands of the policemen themselves. Some of these policemen are coming back to sleep within our midst in the townships. We know where they live. Let us break in their houses and take those guns that the apartheid regime gives them to kill us and turn those guns against them. Let us break into their barracks and take those guns and machine guns.

"We are now at war, countrymen, against a very vicious enemy and we have to use all methods to destroy it. We have not only to depend on the weapons of Umkhonto we Sizwe. As this is a people's war we the people must now be armed. We should not only expect Umkhonto we Sizwe combatants to arm us...

"We too (?must) eliminate their puppets who are roaming amongst us within. We should attack the police station and the army barracks and capture those weapons. (Words indistinct).

"...This regime must find itself surrounded by a heavily armed nation out to engulf it and smash it to ruins... Now is the time to act. Now is the time to attack... Tens and thousands of fighting militants armed to the teeth must rise up." (Quoted from *Facts and Reports*, vol. 15, No. F.)

Here we have a few correct statements concerning the need to obtain arms from local sources; but instead of calling for their concealment and for systematic preparations, the broadcast shows the same light-mindedness over the **formidably difficult task** of overthrowing the SA regime by insurrection as was previously shown over the question of guerilla war. Bravado, comrades of the ANC leadership in exile, is no substitute for intelligent strategy and tactics.

Courage not enough

The courageous black youth have shown in many incidents that they are ready to go to the end in this struggle. Take the example of Silvertown, near Brakpan, where, after the demolition of 'squatter' shacks by the authorities in February, 300 young people attacked and stoned the local police barracks. Similar examples are legion all over the country.

But this courage of the revolutionary youth must be consciously organised, and directed within the framework of a scientific perspective, and clear strategic and tactical planning.

If wild and undirected fighting, armed or unarmed, begins to **characterise** the struggle, if political ideas become subordinated to petrol fires, and organisation to mere mass frenzy, this will eventually lead to a revulsion and reaction also within the black proletarian communities themselves—and so lead to splits and, open the way to serious defeats.

It is organised political mass action which must characterise the movement, in the eyes of the blacks and in the eyes of the whites—and that depends upon the big organisations of the working class, the trade unions, the youth organisations, community organisations, the UDF, coming together on a clear action programme.

But to make an action programme effective, **organised class action** must be to the forefront. Socialist ideas are necessary to mobilise the full force of the black work-

ing class. Non-racial ideas are necessary in order to make the class character of the movement clear. Non-racial and socialist ideas are necessary eventually to win over the white workers and middle-class youth.

The movement has to prepare deliberately for armed insurrection. Weapons must be gathered and stored; tactics worked out; training accumulated and shared.

Initially, however, it will be through **defensive** tactics—using arms to defend townships, meetings, strikes, etc.—that the basis will be laid for passing over to the offensive. Guerilla-type actions by small armed bands of youth, etc, have a role to play, provided these are subordinated to an overall conception, political strategy, and finally an organised plan centred around the mobilisation of the big battalions of the organised workers.

Marxist ideas vital

To give the necessary political leadership to this struggle, the ANC needs above all to be freed of the hopelessly bankrupt Stalinist ideas which presently guide its leadership. Only on the basis of authentic Marxist ideas will it be possible to find the way forward.

Thus the essence of the struggle for political clarity in the movement in the coming period will be the struggle between Stalinism and Marxism, between middle-class and working-class leadership, in the ANC.

Through long drawn-out and bitter battles, the conditions necessary for revolution and insurrection will develop. In manifold forms the organised strength and confidence of the black proletariat will grow. It will gain the means, knowledge and experience to use arms.

The viciousness of the conflict with the whites will intensify, but in the camp of the whites and of bourgeois society, there will set in decay, demoralisation and tendencies towards disintegration and collapse.

The road to power will be opened to the degree that the organised black proletariat establishes its leadership in action and gives decisive direction to events with a clear democratic and socialist policy for workers' power.

The titanic movement of the black proletariat in South Africa will awaken the whole of Africa to revolution. This is a continent crying out for the leadership of the working class. It is a continent where annual production is now less than it was 15 years ago; where one-fifth of the population are living on the edge of extinction, and where that proportion could rise to four-fifths by 1995.

The South African revolution is the key to the future salvation of Africa—to the socialist transformation of the continent. At the same time, advances in the world revolution, in Europe in particular, will immensely facilitate and clear the path for the revolutionary struggle in SA.

A regime of workers' democracy in an important country anywhere in the world would provide a beacon which would enable Marxism to win not only the black people as a whole but the white workers and middle class as well to the idea of an alternative society.

In turn the SA revolution will have a world-wide im-

pact. It will be fought out also on the television screens and on the front pages of the newspapers of the world. It will have an immense impact throughout the ex-colonial world, in the Middle East, among the blacks in America, and indeed upon the proletariat everywhere.

The South African revolution has all the grandeur and heroism of the greatest slave revolts in history. It has all the historic inevitability of the struggles for colonial

liberation this century. And—provided the ideas of Marxism prevail within the movement—it will have all the power, direction and promise for a new society which the proletariat carries in its hands. Armed in this way, it will conquer.

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