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ECONOMICS AND POLITICS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Whole document in  
Schedule 5

The Structure of South African Society

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32

143

Today we live in a fascist country, and in order to understand the political situation we must examine briefly the features in the society that have led to this development.

Fascism is imperialism gone mad. Imperialism is the final phase of capitalism. It is capitalist economy when it has grown into a monopolistic economy. When important sections of, or the entire economy is concentrated in the hands of a few and the free, laissez faire stage of capitalism is at an end, then the characteristic is that of the monopolists, in line with their desire for maximum profits, try to reduce the wages of the workers and increase prices. Through monopoly of the market they are in a position to dictate to society. Having eliminated competition by the creation of giant trusts or cartels which smash the "small capitalist" and drive him away from the market, the monopolists hold society to ransom. They step up their drive for profits and simultaneously drive living standards down. They are not satisfied with monopoly in their own countries but the big monopolies spread out into other countries, dominate the world market and carve up the world into spheres of influence for their products.

But of course as monopoly grows, working-class consciousness, political consciousness also grows. The monopolists find that as they try to drive down wages and living standards they are opposed by organised workers who are prepared to fight for a better world. In the case of colonial countries the National Liberation Movement is always a challenge to the monopolists. When this opposition becomes serious or when a revolution becomes imminent; when it is no longer possible by bluffs and tricks to deceive the people, then the monopolists are forced to resort to force in the protection of their interests. By assiduous propaganda (usually racial and chauvinistic) and by pandering to the lowest instincts of the more backward sections of the working and petty bourgeoisie groups, they build a mass party and use it as an instrument of terror to protect their monopolies and crush the rising opposition of the workers and National Liberation Movement. This is the meaning of Fascism. This system of rule is only of benefit to the monopoly capitalists. Sometimes it is possible for the monopolists to give temporary benefits to those misguided sections of the working and petty-bourgeoisie groups. This they do either by buying them off with part of the super profits which they sweat out of colonies or by creating an artificial prosperity through a war economy. But these "benefits" of fascism are temporary and illusory. In the long run fascism leads to disaster.

What in South Africa forms the basis or prop for the development of a fascist state. Who benefit by fascism and who oppose it.

(1) At the top of South African Society are the people who benefit most from the present structure. These are the Have's in S.A. — The monopoly mining magnates, the banks and Insurance companies, investment and financial houses, the big landlords and the industrialist financiers. If a close examination is made of the South African economy, even through the 'statistics' of the monopolists themselves it will be seen to what extent the entire economy is controlled by a few companies at the head of which are a few men. These are the men who profit by the present structure of society. Because of the vast power represented by these men, no government can afford to ignore them. They make and unmake governments by producing artificial crises or by refusing credit. An examination of these monopolies is not complete unless it is remembered that to their number must be added the big companies and financiers overseas who

Communism - advocate Peoples Democracy p 7 have..../  
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have invested their money in South Africa. A great deal of the mining, finance and industry in South Africa is owned and controlled by these overseas interests jointly with their S. African partners. For some time these overseas interests were largely British, but lately, indications are they the "Yanks are coming". The announcement by the South African government that they were removing 'Discrimination' (sic) against the import of goods from dollar areas was notice to the world that the United States interests were beginning to apply pressure in the country.

These overseas investors have a big stake in the "stability" of the South African society. In other words all steps taken to prevent interference with status quo and steady flow of profits, they will give enthusiastic support. These foreign interests must never be forgotten in any discussion of the local ruling class.

(2) Below these monopoly capitalists there comes a groups of "small" capitalists. These are the smaller landlords, factory owners etc. The number of these is larger than that of the monopoly capitalists. When we say they are small capitalists, that is in relation to the monopolists. This group is ever striving to reach the small circle at the top. Although they are undoubtedly capitalist these "small" men very often find that the big monopoly financiers, industrialists and plantation, dairy-industry landowners, are driving them off the market. With their superior resources, capital and connections they confront the small men with an impassable barrier. As long as the small man has no ambitions and is satisfied with the crumbs of the market the monopolists tolerate him. But as soon as he endeavours to be a threat he is smashed. This gives rise to an opportunist anti-capitalist trend within this group. Because the monopoly groups in their drive towards total control of the market, often have to push the "small" men to the wall, the small capitalists acquire a temporary anti-monopolist and sometimes anti-capitalist (!) streak that leads to interesting contradictions. It is this group that produces the cry of "Hoggeinheimer" every now and again. It is this group whom demagogues in the Nationalist Party represent in their insincere demands for the nationalisation of the gold mines. It is they who fulminate with a kind of righteous indignation against the "foreign capitalist interests". To a great extent it can probably be said that the backbone of the Afrikaner leadership is drawn from this group, although there are beginning to be signs that the Afrikaner Commercial capitalist and landowner groups are gradually entering the rarified atmosphere of the big men. Hence the silence over nationalisation of the mines.

(3) Below this group of "small" capitalists is the petty bourgeoisie group consisting of technicians, manager, merchants professional men of all sorts and of all races in South Africa. This is the true petty bourgeoisie in the country, who are comfortable and who (if they behave themselves) can "get on well". It is a varied group and parts of it are very close to the two upper classes and others are not too far from the better paid sections of the working class. Some have working class origins and others are from the upper classes. It is this group that provides the rank and file leadership of the various organisations. From this group is recruited the worst reactionaries and also the best revolutionaries. It is a vacillating group neither irrevocably committed to the Fascist camp nor firmly within the democratic camp. Like all groups in S.A. this one is greatly bewildered as a result of the racialist pattern of our society. Although racialism is but one weapon in the capitalist armoury, it is an objective fact that exercises a tremendous influence on the attitudes of the

various .... /



various groups in S.A. With respect to the petty bourgeoisie group the effect of racialism is to produce different reactions ranging from fascist to progressive, in proportion as racialism has been swallowed by the person concerned. In the main this group can be expected to support the fascists or at any rate remain passive, except that a crisis can very well produce a big break up of this group with sections moving over to the camp of progress and democracy. Running with the hare and hunting with the hound more or less sums up the attitude of this group.

(4) Below this group are the workers and the peasants. In line with the policy followed by the imperialists the world over the local ruling class has created a sharp division among the workers by establishing an aristocracy of labour, that has an apparent stake in the system. By ruthless exploitation of certain sections of the workers, the ruling class has obtained the super profits with which to buy off sections of the working class. This process has been rendered more effective in S.A. by the fact that the population is not homogeneous. By careful identification of biological differences with the disparity in the degree and methods of exploitation the ruling class has camouflaged the Universal Exploitation of All Workers, whatever their race. This leads the workers in S.A. to spend a great deal of their time tilting at windmills. The European worker protects his interests against under-cutting by the other groups. The Coloured in turn "protects" his interests against the Indian and the African, The Indian against the Coloured and African; and the African with no interests to protect is fighting all the others in order to get them.

The thick layer of racialism creating, first of all a barrier between White and Black, and then intermediate barriers between Non-White workers serves to complicate the situation and make it difficult if not impossible (under ordinary conditions) to show the workers the universality of the exploitation by the ruling classes over all workers.

A further difficulty is the poor development of the trade Union movement among the Nationally oppressed groups especially the Africans. If these were strongly organised they could employ their strength as a lever which would force the other workers to come to their senses and see the need for unity.

What then is the position of the working-class in S.A.?

Working class unity does not exist in S.A. There is the compromising section which has been blinded by racialism to such an extent that only a serious event or crisis can make them lose confidence in the present system. Whilst it is the duty of all sincere fighters to constantly hammer at and strive to secure the inclusion of this group within the camp of progress, it might also be better strategy to concentrate for some time on the largely unorganised but reliable elements of the working class (mainly African). But no section of the working class must be given up. The hold of racialism over sections of the working class is not as strong as is thought. A serious emergency would have quite unexpected results. Particularly would this be the case if there is a strong party in existence which clearly understands the line of march and is able to take immediate advantage of any favourable situation.

Within the European working class there is a small but important section that is firmly within the camp of progress. This section is going to become more and more important as the National Liberatory struggle of the Nationally oppressed groups develops into full strength. The National Liberatory struggle (which is also simultaneously a class struggle) will find useful allies in the advanced elements in the European working class.

Summing up then we can say that the African Indian and Coloured working classes are the vanguard not only of the National Liberatory struggle but also of a further advance to a higher plane. The path to liberation must be based on the African, Indian and Coloured working classes together with advanced elements in



the European working class.

The most reliable allies of the working classes are the the labouring peasant masses consisting of (i) of the masses labouring on the Big farms and plantations and (ii) the semi-peasant migrant labour group in the reserves.

Owing to certain historical facts we do not and never have had in South Africa a true peasantry such as developed in Europe and Asia. Here from a communal form of land tenure there was a jump to landlessness. The ruthless land-robbing policies of the imperialists did not allow for the growth of the plot-holding, small producer class that is the product of bourgeois democratic revolutions. Strictly speaking the Africans do not even own the small plots they hold on the reserves. These reserves are really resevoirs of labour and the land belong to the "crown". The Africans are in the positions of serfs who cannot live off the land alone but are forced periodically to move to the mines, farms and towns. There they come in contact with ideas and acquire proletarianisation.

On the plantations, estates and farms of the landlords, recent developments are turning the labourers into worker-peasants. In the place of the traditional scene of the farmer sitting on the stoep with his pipe, we are seeing the emergence of farming combines that are buying out the small farmer and creating huge estates and dairy industries run on modern lines, with up-to-date machinery. The labourers on the farms have to drive tractors, repair machines, and learn the techniques and skills of the urban worker or at any rate some of them. It must be remembered, however, that the isolation of the labouring peasants from one another and the absence of the large concentrations of population prevents them acquiring the complete proletarian outlook.

All these new tendencies are advantageous to the struggle in the long run. With nothing to lose the South African Labouring peasant group on the plantations, estates, and farming combines are a group with a tremendous revolutionary potential and a most reliable ally of the working classes.

To the basic classes in the camp of progress must always be added the revolutionary intelligentsia, who are recruited from all classes and groups. These are the group without whom no modern revolution can succeed through all its complex phases. The revolutionary intelligentsia is not a class but it is the revolutionary conscious detachment; the vanguard, and teacher which must lead the struggle by reason of the fact that it clearly understands the line of march and the probable general results of the struggle.

Summing up therefore we can say that the democratic movement in South Africa is based on the Workers, peasant masses and the revolutionary intelligentsia.

The reactionary camp consists of the monopolistic feudal and primitive mining and land baron group. With them are the industrialist group. To these must be added the small bourgeoisie and compromising sections of the petty bourgeoisie and working classes. To them must also be added the racialists of all races.

ILLUSIONS TO BE AVOIDED.

(1) There is a tendency to place hopes on a possible progressive trend in S.A. supported and led by the new rising industrialist class. It is this dangerous illusion that has led to the ideas of the liberals. In spite of some talk of the hampering effects of the colour-bar in industry, the migrant labour system etc. no hopes must be placed on the industrialists. There might be such a development temporarily, as long as it does not threaten the parent

interests .... /



interests of the mines and farms.

There is such a close tie up between the industrialist elements and the other groups that a serious advance supported by the industrialists is out of the question. Owing to the tremendous extent of monopoly development in this country, of the mining industry and the virtual control by it of capital and financial resources it is well nigh impossible to force the development of an independent industrialist class line, that might have formed the basis for the democratisation of the S. African regime. The development of industry is too closely bound up with that of the mines to enable it to strike out on a different path. The men in industry are the same as those in mining and finance. This leads to contradictions which can be taken advantage of but we cannot pin hopes on this. The recent injection given to the Gold Mining industry by the starting of Uranium production is a further blow to any such hopes. *date*

Another common illusion is to place hopes on the possible development of an African or Non-European Middle or capitalist class. It is this hope that anti-Marxist African Nationalists are basking on. This is a vain hope for various reasons. We will give two.

(i) The world of capitalism has shrunk considerably in the last few decades as Socialism advanced. In other words the area that is available for exploitation by the capitalists is much smaller today. The competition for markets is therefore exceedingly sharp and the capitalists are not (if they can help it) allow more capitalists to enter the field. The tendency is for them to smash rising capitalists, not to help them grow.

(ii) Internally in South Africa the acts of the Nationalist government can be regarded as an example of this tendency. In order to get a really virile capitalist class among the Africans, for instance, there would have to be a removal of the colour-bar structure particularly with reference to Real Estate. The Group Areas Act, the removal schemes, and the declared policy of the government and indeed of all ruling circles in the country, are all against the idea of a possible Non-European capitalist class. Local conditions and the sharpening struggle between capitalism and socialism are completely against the development of a democratic capitalist regime in this latter half of the twentieth century.

The only class that can form the basis for any advance in South Africa is the rapidly growing industrial class. That is the only base on which a sustained, genuine struggle can be based. This is so whether one likes it or not. The objective facts, the permanent as distinct from the temporary artificial phenomena, indicate that there is hardly any likelihood for a bourgeois revolution in S.A. under the leadership of the bourgeoisie.

A FURTHER ILLUSION is to look to the Western powers for sympathy or inspiration in the struggle. When we speak of the Western powers we refer to the ruling classes in these countries.

That Africans should entertain this illusion is a tragic irony that cannot be explained. Africa is the last continent to be a prey to Colonial powers. It has vast resources that the West needs to make up for the empires lost in Asia. Any move towards the liberation of Afrika disturbs the entire colonial groups... France, Britain, Belgium, Portugal, Spain, etc. Recently a dangerous newcomer has entered directly into the field - America. With loans, arms, and equipment the U.S.A., in furtherance of the monopoly capitalists to establish world dominion of the Dollar, is supporting all colonial powers in their oppression of the African. The

curious .../



curious policy statements and behaviour of the American government in debates at U.N.O. and elsewhere are sufficient indication of the position as far as she is concerned. We certainly cannot expect help or sympathy from the ruling classes in the countries that are actually oppressing and enslaving us. The slave-master is the last person to agree to the freeing of slaves. The man who profits by our oppression and colonial humiliation is the last to sincerely help or assist. us .

If we have any friends among the Western countries at all they will be found among the working-class movements in those countries. We could cite numerous facts to show that even in recent times such as During the historic Defiance Campaign, the only genuine assistance, with no strings attached, came from these progressive movements. It is they who are consistently and unreservedly anti-discrimination and anti-colonialism everytime and in all places.

A very potent illusion, which is also very subtle is that of a possible third way between Socialism and Capitalism. This is a most comfortable illusion which the capitalists, incidentally, are most anxious to spread and foster. The advantage to the capitalists of this doctrine of a third way is that it starts any revolutionary movement on the inevitable path away from the uncompromising revolutionary path. Once having accepted the doctrine that there is a "third way", degeneration sets in and the next thing is that every departure from the revolutionary programme, every step back to capitalism, every compromise, is pointed to as "our special way and creed". That this illusion should be held by colonial peoples who have suffered so much from the 'third way' governments of Attlee, Spaak, Schumann etc. is an interesting example of political blindness. In order to fight a struggle half-way (it is less dangerous!) people evolve the most amazing rationalisations of which this is one of the most subtle, because it can be made to rest on the national pride and desire of any group to contribute something especial to world progress and culture. It turns out that this "third way" is really a defence of capitalism and the colonial system. Even more poignantly is this demonstrated in the case of Tito who is now an apparent darling blue-eyed baby of the imperialists.

We must distinguish this illusion of a "third way" from the genuine truth that each people will fit the advanced outlook to its own peculiar conditions and objective situation. Every people will in the course of struggle, using the marxist dialectic as a method of analysis, evolve the theory, leadership of its struggle and be inspired to achieve a destiny in keeping with their conditions, background, historical antecedents. Communism is not National Nihilism. On the contrary it is only under socialism that the National cultures find their full bloom and flourish as a prelude to the eventual fusion of all cultures into one mighty world culture. That is the inevitable destiny of mankind.

In illustrating the different historical situations in which different parties in the world have been called upon to solve we might refer sketchingly to pre-revolutionary Russia and pre-revolutionary China.

In Russia we had a situation in which the leaders of the struggle were the Russian Communist Party, i. e. the party formed from the working class of the then Oppressor group. On seizing power the Russian party called on the colonial peoples to free themselves and united with them on an equal basis to form the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The revolution was in the main a revolution taking place within the oppressor nation i.e. the Russians..../



Russians.

In China we had a semi-colonial country consisting largely of peasants dominated by the Chinese big bourgeois together with compradore landlords and bureaucrats, assisted by international capitalists. Unlike Russia where it was a revolution of the cities assisted by the country led by marxists. The party consisted largely of persons of a peasant origin. It was a national democratic revolution led by the working class that left the towns to organise the peasants and lead them to capture power in the cities.

Here in S.A. we have a situation in which part of of the population belongs to different races and the oppressor group is living in close juxtaposition with the oppressed in a closely intergrated economy. There is no hope of a party in the oppressor group, organising a revolution apart from the oppressed and then freeing them as in Russia. Nor is the situation similar to that of China. The situations differ to such an extent that no justice can be done to this aspect in a superficial survey of this kind. Nor is that the intention here. We merely wish to point out that the solution of the problems here will call forth a great deal of Original, Independent, Creative thinking. In order to be true Marxists - (Communists) we must be truly Africanist. (this is a term of convenience to describe Marxists today).

The question of Communism challenges the attention of the entire world today. It is a problem which cannot be dismissed or postponed in the democratic movement in S.A., particularly for the leadership. World conditions - the Cold war - demand an attitude to be taken by everyone. As far as the National Democratic Movement is concerned in S.A., it is true that the immediate task is to secure freedom from National Oppression. But there is no such thing in Social movements as freedom by the instalment plan. If we examine what is implied by the expression 'national freedom' we will find that it must mean freedom, from migratory labour, passes, plantation and land serfdom etc. All these would knock the bottom out of the capitalist system in S.A. In other words National freedom if it is not to be mere bluff (as the liberals would have it) will mean the destruction of the entire political and economic set-up in the country and the establishment of the most democratic system yet devised by man, namely People's Democracy. Whilst it is true that national democratic slogans are relevant and have mass they must be given content as time goes on.

In discussing the question of Communism it is an essential for the democratic movement and its leaders to have absolutely open minds, and put all preconceived notions aside.

The Communist Manifesto which is still the clearest exposition of marxism was published in 1848. Almost all the classical works of Communism and its revolutionary tactics were written before there was a single communist state in the world. It is important to remember this.

Furthermore it must be admitted that of all people the Africans have suffered most from the ravages of capitalism. First of all millions of our people were captured and transported as slaves to America to work on the cotton and sugar plantations. The wealth from America with African slave labour as its mainstay was the basis on the industrial revolution which accompanied the rise of modern capitalism. As slaves we suffered to lay the foundations of this system. Later on Africa was the happy hunting ground of the 19th century capitalist imperialist groups. Even now we are still under the iron heel of the capitalists. We should be the last people in the world to hate anyone who desires to destroy this evil system.

Communism is not necessarily the antithesis to Nationalism. It is the antithesis to Capitalism. But it must be



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