

THESES ON SOUTH AFRICA

1. The Republic of South Africa is a minority white settler regime which draws its political, economic and social power and well being from the exploitation and oppression of the indigenous, majority black population. This fundamental relationship in which the white minority controls the state, industry, the press, the land, 80% or more of the national income, most professional jobs, skilled jobs was formalized and codified into law around the turn of the century. The 85% of the land which the white settlers stole from the black population was made white territory, by law, in 1913. The "color bar", excluding blacks from almost all skilled jobs, was established in the 1880's, and has been extended ever since. All basic political rights have been the virtual monopoly of the whites for hundreds of years. Even the marginal, and politically meaningless, indirect rights of representation held by a tiny minority of the black and "colored" populations of the Cape province were finally abolished in 1948. The current "Bantustan" policy eliminates even formal citizenship for blacks in the white 85% of the country.

2. This fundamental oppressive relationship was built into the origins and development of the modern capitalist economy of South Africa. Beginning with gold and diamond mining in the 19th century, through the modernization of agriculture along capitalist lines in the first half of the 20th century, the development of manufacturing and processing industries in the 30's and 40's, and finally the "great Boom" of the 1960's and 70's, the key has always been the super-exploitation of the black masses, on the one hand, and the massive input of foreign investment, on the other hand. Indeed, the super-exploitation of black labor is the primary incentive of foreign investment. It is this fact that explains the growing elements of repression and totalitarianism in the relationship of the white government to the black population. It is, above all, for this reason that blacks are denied the most basic of bourgeois, democratic rights: political rights, the rights of social and geographic mobility, trade union rights, freedom of the press, etc. Far from undermining the oppression of blacks, as some liberals dreamed it would, the economic development of South African capitalism has increased that oppression.

3. The blatantly repressive, racist, and totalitarian nature of the regimes relationship toward the black population, not to mention the willingness of the Nationalist Party at various times to draw on Nazi ideology to flesh out its own racist views, has given the regime much of the appearance of fascism. It is understandable that many people would call it fascist in the popular sense of the word. However the regime in South Africa is not fascist in the scientific, Marxist sense. First, the basic relationship between whites and blacks was established without a totalitarian state or a fascist movement. Rather, it was established by Dutch and then British imperialism. Whether in or out of the British Commonwealth, the white minority has perpetuated this relationship under a number of different political regimes. Furthermore, no fascist-type mass movement was needed to win the loyalty of the white population.

The ruling class turns to fascism when the capitalist system cannot afford to tolerate a labor movement of any kind, even the most reformist or politically backward, for higher wages and better conditions among any section of the working class. If South Africa were fascist in the scientific sense, this would mean that even the minority, highly privileged white section of the working class would be forbidden to organize, forced into state labor fronts instead of real unions, would have its standards of living brutally forced down and would be subject to totalitarian repression. Therefore, if South Africa were actually fascist our basic strategy for overthrowing it would be similar to that for any fascist regime: the unity

and political leadership of the working class. This would mean a united front of all working class elements against the regime.

4. In fact, quite the contrary, the white working class in South Africa does not live under totalitarian rule (it is also true that a very limited degree of legal breathing space is granted for black workers to organize, on a segregated basis and without collective bargaining rights, but this space has shrunk rapidly). This not only means South Africa is not fascist - it means that our strategy for liberation and revolution in South Africa cannot be based on working class unity. Rather, our strategy must be based on the leadership of the black working class without the support and quite possibly against the opposition of the majority of white workers who will side with the white ruling class in defense of their privileges. It is also true that the fact that we do not view it as fascist in the strict scientific sense, does not mean that we think it is "better", or "softer", or in any way preferable to fascism. In fact, as a totally racist regime there are many respects in which it is more disgusting and oppressive than many other actual fascist regimes. We insist on defining it as a white settler regime because this, precise definition informs our strategy for overthrowing the regime.

5. Both the nature of the South African society and state - white settler as opposed to fascist - and utopianism of any strategy based on working class unity, point to the fact that the South African revolution entails a national question as well as (indeed, as part of) the class struggle. The emancipation of the South African masses entails the destruction of white rule, white control of the economy, white cultural oppression and white armed force as part of the struggle for proletarian rule. A successful revolution in South Africa demands, along with the organization and leadership of the working class, a series of tasks that are those of a national liberation struggle. These include among others: the unification of the African masses as a single united action, clearly conscious of their common struggle.- i.e., the overcoming of the tribal divisions deliberately cultivated by the Bantustan policy; and the unification of the Africans of mixed-race ancestry (labelled as "colored" by the apartheid state) with the blacks in a common struggle, as part of the black South African nation; and the unification of rural and migrant workers (miners, temporary residents of the townships, etc.) with the struggle of the workers of the townships.

It is extremely noteworthy that enormous steps toward the national unity of the African masses have occurred in the process of the urban, primarily working class, uprisings of this summer. It is our view that the leadership of the working class within the national struggle, is exactly the way in which the national struggle becomes most fully developed, and becomes combined with the class struggle of the working class leading toward socialist revolution.

This is the general perspective called Permanent Revolution, which we believe applies to the South African revolution and indeed to the struggle in all of southern Africa today. The extremely rapid development of the struggle this June, from a language protest by students to a mass general strike of Soweto workers which then spread to other regions, indicates the actual course of the struggle is unfolding along the lines of Permanent Revolution.

6. The white settler population has real class divisions within it. As well as various middle classes, urban and rural, the white population includes a working class. This white working class has a virtual monopoly on the skilled jobs in the white 85% of the Republic. White workers, skilled,

semi-skilled, and even unskilled make from 5 to 10 times what black workers in the same industries make. The living standards of the white working class are comparable to that of European workers, while those of the blacks are only slightly above those of other African industrial workers. The trade unions of South Africa, even those that have allowed black members, have always been dominated by whites and have always fought above everything else, to preserve and extend the white monopoly on skilled jobs and the high differentials of all white workers. At times this has brought white workers into conflict, even violent conflict, with the white ruling class - which for its own reasons wishes to extend the use of cheap black labor. But these conflicts, directed as they are toward the maintenance or expansion of white privileges, are not the basis for black-white unity in the working class.

During the decades between the 1920's and 50's, there were some traditions of solidarity and unity between black workers and a minority section of the white workers. This was never more than a minority of the white workers, who have in the overwhelming majority of cases struggled against any step toward equality for black workers an "undercutting" their own standards. The minority of unions which stood for racial equality and common organization were organized by SACTU (South African Congress of Trade Unions) and to a lesser extent by TUCSA (Trade Union Congress of South Africa), which vacillated on the question of accepting black unions before eventually deciding against it. It must be understood that the idea of solidarity with black workers, even on a limited basis, among white unions has now been effectively exterminated and has no organizational expression.

7. The abolition of white domination, in general, and apartheid, in particular, is necessarily tied up with the abolition of capitalism in South Africa. White prosperity, the strength of the state, and the advanced nature of the economy exist largely because of the maintenance of cheap black labor. It is this cheap labor that has attracted massive foreign investment, which makes possible a large state sector, and which makes domestic capital competitive. All the forces of capital investment foreign and domestic, ultimately support the fundamental relationship between whites and blacks, and are, therefore, forced to accept or encourage the totalitarian relationship of the state to the black population. Any strategy that seeks to limit revolution to democratic reforms or even national liberation will fail. The logic of the growing struggles for democracy and economic betterment leads to socialist revolution. Today's struggles are but the opening events in the perspective of Permanent Revolution in South Africa.

8. The 12-15 million black Africans in South Africa are being roused to struggle and given leadership by the urban masses and, increasingly, the black industrial working class. The very process of development of the South African economy has created a large black industrial working class - approximately four times the size of the white working class. The bulk of this industrial working class lives in the squalid urban conditions of the townships that border the major white cities of the Republic. They are joined in their rebellion by the largely migrant and immigrant workers in the mines. The "student" movement and mass actions of the past several months represent the rising of the youth of these black working class townships - a youth that faces massive unemployment, possible deportation to a Bantustan, or industrial slavery. Unlike the movements of the 1950's, the present "black consciousness" movement has no illusions about a strategy based on alliances with any section of the white community. While any successful strategy for revolution must be based on the black working class that does not mean we are opposed to support or even participation from white workers or revolutionaries who genuinely share this basic strategy. We do not expect white support to be large or decisive, however. The parallel economic struggles

of the black industrial workers hold out the promise of the black working class taking the lead in this movement. There is no black bourgeois of any consequence and only a small and weak middle class - itself mostly concentrated in the Bantustans. Therefore, it is the industrial working class that will take the lead; another fact pointing toward permanent revolution (the growing of the democratic revolution into the socialist revolution under the leadership of the working class).

9. The South African Revolution will be international in its impact. South Africa economically dominates the southern half of the African continent. Virtually every state in Southern Africa is dependent on South Africa for one or another aspect of economic activity. This economic domination has been the basis of the "detente" policy of the South African regime in recent years. This "detente" was, in fact, nothing more than an imperialist policy for furthering the political as well as economic domination of South Africa - and as a result of much of European and American capital as well.

South Africa's policy of "detente", beginning from the 1969 "Lusaka Manifesto" issued by a number of independent African states which opened the door to a dialogue with the apartheid state, rested on three foundations: (I) South Africa's effective domination of the southern half of the continent; (II) the penetration of independent African nations by western neo-colonial interests; (III) the existence of a buffer of Portuguese colonies, i.e., Angola and Mozambique, between South Africa and black Africa. This last factor was extremely important in both political and military terms. The rule and co-operation of Portugal in Angola and Mozambique was an important factor in choking off any possibility of successful guerrilla struggle penetrating into South Africa, or getting off the ground in Zimbabwe. (ANC guerrilla forces were very effectively neutralized by South African incursions into Rhodesia and South African aid to the Rhodesian white settlers). The successful colonial revolutions in Mozambique and Angola have fundamentally changed the equation of power in southern Africa. They have not only defeated the Portuguese but also one whole phase of western imperialist strategy for creating pro-western puppet states. Despite its continuing economic power South Africa no longer has powerful colonial allies with whom it can collaborate in defeating the liberation movements and thereby isolating the struggle inside its own country.

10. Revolution in South Africa will, therefore, transform the economic and political situation of southern Africa instantly. It will be a major blow at European, Japanese and American investment in Africa. It will open further the prospect of working class revolution in Angola, Mozambique, and the other formally independent states of southern Africa. In short, permanent revolution in South Africa necessarily becomes permanent revolution in all of southern Africa.

11. The strength of the South African state, and its oppressive, racist apparatus, rest on the strength of South Africa's economy, and particularly its modern industrial sector. This sector, and indeed the entire economy, has been heavily financed by foreign investment - this is particularly true of the of the most modern industries. The state sector, the strongest part of the "domestic" economy, has been largely financed by foreign loans and now encourages joint participation by foreign firms. Even the private "domestic" sector is deeply intertwined with western capital. For example: DeBeers - which has a virtual monopoly on world diamond production - is owned by the Anglo-American Corp., a company which controls many South Africa businesses and which is itself dominated by a consortium of European and American (Morgan Guaranty & First National City) Banks. Foreign investment only serves to perpetuate the mass poverty and oppression of the black population. For

that reason, virtually every South African liberation organization has called for foreign capital to get out. Revolutionaries in the capitalists countries that are the major investors in and main stays of the South African regime must make the same demands as an act of basic solidarity with the South African revolution.

12. The trend toward revolution in South Africa is being further bolstered by the collapse of South Africa's "detente" policy, her policy toward Zimbabwe, (Rhodesia), and growing economic difficulties. The detente policy of course, has collapsed as a result of the successful liberation struggles in Mozambique and Angola. The victory of MPLA in Angola marked the turning point in the disintegration of southern Africa "detente". The next step, and the key link at present in the chain of events, is the gradual collapse of the "gradual" perspective for phoney black majority rule in Rhodesia. The impending removal of Kissinger by Carter has sealed the failure of the Geneva talks, possibly closing the door on a U.S. guaranteed "detente" in Southern Africa. A liberation war in Zimbabwe leaves South Africa facing two options; the first is to commit itself to the military defense of Rhodesia (while simultaneously fighting what is nearly a major war in Namibia). The second is to accept the collapse of white rule in Zimbabwe which has been called "South Africa's Sixth Province", with all the political and psychological consequences that entails. Finally, the world depression has left the South African economy in serious shape. Even the present "pause" in world capitalist recovery has hurt South African exports, while continuing world inflation increases, the price of oil and other critical imports. The South African economy, which requires 6.5% annual growth to provide jobs for 250,000 blacks added to the work force, is presently at zero growth. Fear generated by black rebellion has cut down on vital Western investment and loans, leaving the future of the economy in doubt. Indeed, all the pillars of white South African domination seem to be eroding.

As in every other working class revolutionary struggle, a revolutionary working class party is a necessity if black workers are to successfully take and hold power. We cannot pretend to be able to lay out the exact strategy or tactics that can build a revolutionary party in modern South Africa. Several generations of South African nationalists and political organizations have arisen in this century and been destroyed by the power of the repressive machine. The building of a revolutionary party must take place in very difficult conditions, in which almost all real activity must go on essentially underground.

However, it is clear that the current upheavels have brought about fantastic advances in the politics, level of combativity and confidence among the urban workers and the radicalized students who are the spearhead of the Black Consciousness Movement. It has become clear in this process that the students have built strong links with a large section of the urban workers, and this creates the potential for a much higher level of organization.

The Black Consciousness Movement is clearly broader than either of the two main existing nationalist parties, the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan African Congress (PAC). Our guess is that neither ANC or PAC dominate the broad movement, though both probably exist inside it.

There is no definitive information available on the actual relative strength or political orientation of ANC and PAC inside the country. Indeed, reports from good sources vary. Some reports indicate the ANC is much smaller, only a few hundred dedicated members, dominated by the South African Communist Party, and the PAC is much larger and has various socialist currents within it. On the other hand it is also reported that the ANC has

the strongest roots in the working class, has organized strikes and mass organizations during the recent upheavals, while PAC has no orientation toward workers and calls for "national African socialism" based on pure nationalism.

There is no basis for us at this stage to make a clear determination that either ANC or PAC dominate the liberation struggle. In fact, quite possibly neither one does. We also have no grounds to give political support to either ANC or PAC; in fact neither of them has consistent working class views and there is no reason to think either will create a revolutionary working class party. Our orientation is to support every manifestation of black struggle and resistance to the regime; we are for working with ANC, PAC or independent support movements where they exist but our purpose is not to politically promote PAC or ANC in themselves.

According to written sources (articles several years old), the ANC is essentially committed to underground guerilla action in order to win the multi-racial reforms it failed to win by peaceful means through the "Congress Alliance" in the 50s. The ANC's attempts at guerilla warfare in the 1960's failed and led to its near-destruction. Its efforts to create an underground organization were often ineffective. The PAC which broke away from the ANC in the late 1950's rejects multi-racial illusions, but traditionally has also rejected Marxism in favor of an alliance of all blacks on a purely national basis, having nothing to do with "divisive" class issues.

Current information on the actual policies of ANC or PAC inside South Africa today, or their relative strength, is extremely hard to come by. We cannot make any hard or precise statements about them. However, the dimensions and potentially revolutionary scope of this summer's upheaval is much broader than either of them, and lays the basis for a regroupment of forces. This may force the movement to thoroughly re-examine the basic issues of strategy and politics which led the old ANC-CP in South Africa to an impasse, and point toward a left-wing direction for a new revolutionary organization. In fact it is quite possible that this process has already begun inside the country, although still unknown outside.

Adopted by EC.,
November 17, 1976.