

AN ADDENDUM

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I APPLAUD Julius Lewin's Freudian device of bringing submerged ideas to the surface. Revolution, as a method of social change, figures prominently in the social sciences, and one should feel free to discuss it without taboos, let alone the limits placed by the Suppression of Communism Act. Important practical questions are involved, as he points out. What, for instance, are appropriate forms of action if revolution is not, so to say, on the order of the day?

He finds that only two of the ingredients of revolution are present: rapid economic growth and a rigid class system. The one has given rise to an African middle class and large proletariat; the other denies them freedom of development. This is the classic setting for revolution. If the stresses are not relieved, and conditions are ripe, an explosion takes place that blasts social obstacles aside and opens the way to a freer and more productive form of society.

Two of the prerequisites are lacking: a feeble government and a mass army. Power is concentrated in the ruling section, which is acutely aware of any challenge to its supremacy and determined to resist it with all the forces of the State. There is, he suggests, no reason to suppose that its authority will be weakened in the foreseeable future.

This analysis is surely correct, as far as it goes. But it was clearly not meant to give the whole picture. My comment will, therefore, take the form of additional observations which, I hope, will put the problem he raises in a broader context.

Despotic governments flourish most in stagnant, backward societies. When economic growth is great, people take on new habits, ideas and ambitions, which bring them into conflict with old, traditional ways and institutions. This is what South Africans have found in the course of the past three generations. Let me illustrate.

The urban population was 23 per cent. of the whole at the beginning of the century; now it is 44 per cent. In numbers this means that about 5½ million people live in the towns to-day, as compared with 1¼ million in 1900. The proportions are 78 per cent. for Europeans and Asians, 65 per cent. for Coloured, and only 27 per cent. for Africans, but the latter, with nearly 2½ million in the towns, are the most numerous.

Two further points need to be made about this movement. Firstly, it flows mainly to the big industrial centres, where changes are most rapid and far-reaching. Over 3 million people, or 60 per cent. of the urban population, are now concentrated in the four biggest metropolitan regions, which produce nearly 80 per cent. of the gross value of manufactured goods. The second point is that, though nearly a million Africans are migrant workers, something like 1½ million have made their homes in the towns and are likely to remain there.

Because of the very big differences between tribal culture and urban civilization, and the unsettling effects of the migrant system, a satisfactory adjustment to town life usually takes place only in the third generation. Most urban Africans are in the first or second generation stage; that is, they or their parents were born in the country. There are many, however, whose families were settled for a longer period in the towns, and their numbers will grow rapidly in the next ten or twenty years.

Statistics are dull, but give useful insights into social relations. So here are some more. It may surprise some readers to learn that only about two-fifths of the White urban population belong to the working class, in the usual sense of manual wage-earners, but few will wonder at the fact that of every 100 of these workers, 82 fall in the skilled categories, 15 are semi-skilled and three are unskilled. There is evidence to show that, in the past 25 years, Europeans of working class origin have moved up the ladder into managerial and white-collar jobs. This trend towards a bourgeoisie may have something to do with the elimination of Labour as a parliamentary party.

The White population, having rejected the possibility of augmenting its numbers by immigration, has been hard pressed to fill all posts over which it once claimed a prerogative. Coloured, Indians, and Africans are moving into professional, administrative, clerical, commercial and technical occupations, but their greatest advance has been into skilled and semi-skilled trades. Together they form 17 per cent. of skilled workers in industry, and 66 per cent. of the semi-skilled. Their share of these preferred jobs would undoubtedly be much greater if the jobs they do were classified according to actual skill and not the colour of the worker's skin.

The upward trend can be seen also in education statistics. Some 54,000 Africans and 26,000 Coloured and Indians are

in secondary schools (Standards 6 to 10) and 1,500 are enrolled in universities, besides another probable 1,500 who are taking correspondence courses for University of South Africa examinations. These figures are far behind the European enrolments of 140,000 in secondary schools and 23,000 in universities, and are likely to remain so, but it is clear that a fair-sized middle-class is taking shape in the non-European population.

If the economy keeps on expanding, the process of absorption at different social levels will gain fresh momentum and, with it, pressure on colour-class barriers will intensify. This, I think, is generally acknowledged. Hence the talk of slowing down the pace of industrialization, or diverting it to the Reserves. Both suggestions can be dismissed: the first, because an economy must go ahead or stagnate, and stagnation will not be deliberately chosen; the second, because it is cheaper and more profitable to move people to centres of production than to bring the means of production to people. If a large part of the country's small capital resources were diverted to the Reserves, the effect would be to sharpen class antagonisms in the European zone and hasten the growth of an African proletariat and middle-class.

The rate of growth may slow down, of course, but only if a general deterioration sets in throughout world capitalism. This would have other repercussions, such as the further strengthening of anti-colonial movements and of socialism, which would react adversely on the depigmented oligarchy. In a boom or bust, its position, relative to that of the voteless masses, is bound to weaken. Indeed, it has weakened, for all the show of strength and spate of repressive actions in the past ten years. *Kragdadigheid* may be esteemed for its own sake, but dykes are not built against receding waters.

It is this insecurity that the outside observer senses. South Africans are no more aware of the dangers than are people living on the volcano's edge. Few of us give more than a passing thought to the pattern of extreme violence that pervades our culture and is symptomatic of inner stresses: ten unlawful killings a day, four of them murders, which is seven times the number in Britain, possessing a population four times as big. Must we say that our enormous crime rate has no political significance?

This analysis does not refute Lewin's main point, which is the absence of overt signs of revolutionary ferment, but it gives reason to suppose that the position is more fluid than

might appear from the monopoly of power exercised by the White population.

My opinion is that the extra-parliamentary opposition has matured and expanded in the past quarter of a century, and that it will advance at a greater rate in the next decade. There is a vast difference between the leaders of the 1920's, who protested but asked only to be consulted, and those of to-day, who organize mass campaigns of action and demand the right to take part on an equal footing in the making of decisions. Political education, which is something different from school education, is proceeding apace, and as the town-bred youth comes into politics, an alliance between workers and intellectuals, which is the most formidable of all political combinations, will take the initiative.

The alliance is being forged now, in a multiplicity of warring sects, endless bickering over aims and methods, and the copious use of abusive epithets: herrenvolk, quislings, Africanists, renegades, racialists. These enmities between persons who share a common destiny perplex and dismay many good-wishers; but they are typical of periods of great confusion and change. The process at work consists, in part, of the repudiation of White leadership, either from the Right or from the Left. The main drive comes, however, from the need to formulate policies and programmes which will unite the extra-parliamentary opposition.

Its main difficulty is to find suitable forms of mass protest and struggle. Lewin only touches on this problem in his reference to the need of a strong trade union movement, and I hope he will come back to it in further contributions. On the whole, the opposition has made skilful use of the meagre opportunities available within the framework of the law, and has avoided actions that give the governing class a pretext to crush it with the full power of the State.

It is an exacting situation, and calls for high standards of leadership, discipline, and organization. The errors of judgment made during the parliamentary elections and the abortive three-day strike indicate that the leaders have lost touch with the people. It is possible, as Lewin implies, that they are being guided by an incorrect appraisal of what is possible under existing conditions. If this is so, the discussion that he has initiated should be continued at all levels and without delay. Under a wise leadership, there is much reason for hope and

confidence.

One further observation is needed to fill in the picture. Lewin does not allow for any impact that events in the world at large may have on this country. This is not because he is indifferent, for I know of few people who follow them as closely or with as much insight. He evidently decided to treat South Africa as an 'isolate', and examine it without introducing complications over which we have no control. Now that this has been done, I feel that we should put ourselves back in the world scene.

The Government has earned the unenviable distinction of making the most enemies in the shortest time. By repudiating both liberal capitalism and socialist equality it has incurred the enmity of both camps. Insisting on being the sole surviving exponent of White supremacy, it has become the symbol of racialism and the main target of the anti-colonial front. Not even its imperialist friends can afford to defend it openly.

It is not likely that other countries will apply trade boycotts or other 'sanctions' to restrain South African vices. The country is 'safe' for trade and investment, and can be depended on to pay its debts. Capitalists prefer a strong authoritarian government that is on their side in the Cold War to a liberal, progressive but neutral or hostile government.

The climate of world opinion is, none the less, having a great and visible effect on opinion at home. Our White population, which plumes itself on belonging to the Western Christian Capitalist way of life, and to which Africa is as much a 'dark continent' as it is to Europe, is feeling isolated, humiliated and afraid, in spite of its defiant protests. The collapse of colonialism and the racial myth has stripped it of its ideological pretensions. There are many signs, such as the recent SABRA discussions, that influential intellectuals are finding it difficult to reconcile their ethics with race oppression. The moral basis of the system has collapsed, and no society can survive if those who control it lose faith in their claims to dominate.

More important is the effect on the subject peoples. They have seen the tide of colonial liberation spread through Asia into Africa; they feel that it is eroding the foundations of White autocracy in all territories. They may not get much in the form of material aid from abroad, but they know, and the knowledge will percolate through the masses, that the rest of the world is on their side.