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SOUTH AFRICA'S WHITE BOURGEOIS PARTIES

I would like to say something on the question of the white bourgeois political parties in South Africa. A South African white journalist was reported recently to have declared on BRD television that the Boers had always been against imperialism: Had the EQSEE themselves not fought against British imperialist domination?

Now, of course, this image of the brave Boer - symbolized by his Opposition to British hegemony in the Boer War of tagsxiap at the turn of this century when he did; in fact play a progressive role - is just not true when the history of Boer nationalism is looked at overall. _ Already in the first half of the 1920's, when the Boers took over the reigns of government of the xxxxxxini union of South Africa, then a saxaaix eemi-colony of Britain, in partnership with white labour, the : 'itiuh -mperialist inter sts was cm- (Ibis

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nation- he Party heao-o oy Botha and Smuts who were accused of being stooges of British imperialism and the British-dominated mining industry. Already before the 1924 :1 General Election, in order to ensure that British imperialism kn did not Xninxfxnxxlxxh put up a consequent fight against them, the nationalists in their election prepaganda had assured thus: all those who might be nervous zhnuixx at the pr03pect of a Boer governmnt taking over from Smuts who had formerly been regarded by British imperialist circles as the safest representative of their interests in the sub-continent, that they had no intention of nationalizing the mining industry or of changing the political relationship to Great Britain during the existence Of that government, kxnx in other words, they had no intention of building a democratic republic.

Without nationalizing the mining industry - it will be remem-

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bered that the mining industry at this time completely dominated the economy of South Africa and still to a great extent its politics - it was, of course, pure hypocrisy to project themselves as anti-imperialists which the Boers continued to do, mainly in order to mislead the white workers and small bourgeois elements amongst the white population, as also the black people.

The Black people, especially at this time the Africans and Indians, against whom the so-called Pact government began to take various measures in order to reap some of the profits of the super-exploitation system directed by British imperialism in the sub-continent in the previous decades, realised in the aftermath of the 1924 election that the Boer ruling class, in spite of their anti-imperialist eloquencing, remained a system and

democratising South Africa. The Boers, despite their brave words, became the agents of international imperialism. It is true that there were contradictions between Boer and especially British imperialism and British imperialist circles did not like, though they were forced to accept various steps taken by the Pact which attempted to re-align and to extend colonial domination of South Africa's black people so as to build their own economic influence and to slowly erode the dominating position of British capital.

In this period the Boer nationalists were not able to achieve much though they began to take certain steps which laid the basis for future developments in South Africa. Apart from their extension of the colonial system of domination, they began to build a semi-state sector and to develop trading and other relationships with imperialist states other than Britain, notably Germany and the USA. At the

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same time, aided by their control of the government, they
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tackled the question of building Boer capital;

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At the Opening of the 2. World War Smuts was again back
in power. A section of the Nationalists, headed by Hertzog,
having taken to a logical conclusion their compromise with British imperialism, had a few
years earlier fused with Smuts's party, but a Boer na-
tionalist section in Opposition to Smuts existed and after
the war won the all-white election of 1948. Ever since that
date the Nationalist Party has held the reigns of government.
Apart from extending its power throughout the whole state
machinery, it has used this position to build substantially
the economic power of Boer capitalism. It has extended the
state and semi-state sector which is closely allied to Boer
capital and it has helped the growth of private Boer capital
by giving it assistance in various ways, for eg., by the
grant of government contracts, as well as by substantial aid
from state funds to the white farmer-landlords, the majority
of whom are Boers and members of the Nationalist Party, and a
section of whom have gone into commerce and industry with
capital accumulated in the farming sector. Boer capitalism
has reached its monopoly stage and there has begun a clear
and inevitable merging of Boer with British capital-
foreign

Speaking of capitalism and other things and monopoly
capital.

In the period after 1948 state monopoly capitalism has
developed and today we are able to define a military-industrial
complex along the lines of developments in the big imperialist
states. Such a development is inevitable in the face of the
tremendous contradictions which exist in all the imperialist

3:32;: hnkxxa and, above all, in South Africa which, tnxmxn; may; on the economic level, is not a highly-developed imperia- list state, has to devel0p some of the political techniques of the more developed states, because the ruling class attempts to maintain a system of vicious colonial exploitation under conditions where a black working classxgs-ggt;ighgh:(;n Spite of the ravages of the migratory labour system t and other ,strata of the black p0pulation, influenced by internal devel0p- ments as well as the change in the international balance of .forces, are firmly Opposed to the brute domination which they face.

Today, the Nationalist Party; headed by Premier Vorster, is the party of the Boer ruling class, a mon0poly bourgeoisie which acts as the agent, in Spite of the contradictions which exist, of international imperialism and who are gradually, on the economic level, merging with it; Perhgps more so than ever in the past, the international imperialists see the South African ruling class as a bastion of their economic and stra- tegic interests in Southern Africa and in the related terri- . Aa&:29,h , tories and areas. ZrAlso within the Nationalist Party are at considerable section of the farmers, though a section of the farmers support the United Party, formerly the party of Smuta, now headed by Sir de Villiers-Graaff. The Boer workers and emplhyees of various sorts, including a substantial number who work in state or semb-state undertakings, also support the Nationalist Party, having been hoodwinked by x nationalist racist proPaganda, and bribed by a part of the enormous super- profits won from the eXploitation of black labour, as well as by the fact that so many of them are summmxu directly or indirectly state employees; The United Party still repre- sents essentially British imperialist interests and English-

Speaking South African capitalists which are closely related to each other. A section of the landowners support this party and also the greater part of the English-Speaking white workers. Another white bourgeois party, still small but of some importance, is the Progressive Party. No research has, as yet, been done on this Party so I can only make some suggestions as to the interests its represents.

It is wellknown that Harry Oppenheimer, the South African mining magnate, closely allied with British imperialist capital, was a leading personality behind the formation of this party. The Progressive Party, which stands, above all, on a platform of an extension of the franchise to a limited section of the black population, has grown out of the tremendous contradictions in South African society, especially, as seen on the political level, the ever-maturing Opposition of the black people to the apartheid system. British and English-Speaking South African capital foresee the possibility of using this Party to head-off this Opposition. ' At the same time, the Progressive Party represents the genuine interests of a section of the ruling class which has a considerable stake in secondary industry and which finds the apartheid system, though enabling it to reap enormous profits from super-exploitation of black labour, a brake on the rational development of the economy by keeping the black workers who form the great majority of the wage-slaves, a hindrance to the development of the technical-scientific revolution as well as restricting the internal market for manufactured products. In this connection, it is to be remembered, that Oppenheimer knows that a nation

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himself has gone on a big scale into the non-mining sectors of the economy and thus has a certain interest fhowever, I believe, yet limited, though this may changq/in/%he fac? of a more serious threat to his interest fhhn exists at present from the side of the baack pOpulation:j;; seeing certain changes in the present system of colonial exPloitation3'

Thank you for your attention.