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Comments on Draft Discussion Document

Page 2: The International Climate.

The general feeling is that this section is painted in too rosy colours. While it is stated that the imperialist counter-offensive continues unabated, nevertheless, the specific examples mentioned, such as the June war, are not properly evaluated. It is not correct to say that the Israeli attack on the Arab states "failed in its objectives". Nor is it correct to state baldly ~~that~~ (as in paragraph 7) that "the world situation reflects the growing strength of ~~the~~ ^{the} progressive forces" or (paragraph 8) that "the working class in the developed capitalist countries is growing and gaining greater moral authority and strength" or that the contradictions between the imperialist countries have now reached such proportions that we can safely say "the post-war supremacy of the United States is over". This may be what we want to believe, or what we think may be foreshadowed by present events, but to state a proposition without arguing it, is to ignore the dialectic of history.

Page 2: paragraph 9

Is it only the Americans of African descent who are taking part in the fight against racialism and the war in Vietnam? To ignore the multi-racial character of the opposition movements in America is to misunderstand their true potential.

This does not seem to be an isolated error, but is repeated in some of the formulations stated in the section on "problems of the South African 'evolution'", such as (page 6, paragraph 34) that South Africa belongs "to the colonially oppressed indigenous Africans". Likewise the description of the whites as "colonists" (page 6, paragraph 30) creates an impression that the writer does not think of ~~graph 30~~ them as indigenous, but as colonists who can be driven out like colonists elsewhere. This seems to be more than an error of phraseology, but an attempt to stretch the meaning of "colonialism of a special type" too far, so as to make it fit in with world conceptions of the nature of the colonial struggle against imperialism. Some of our more suspicious members have even smelt racialism in some of these formulations.

Page 2, paragraph 6.

In view of the tremendous importance of the Sino-Soviet split, these three lines are totally inadequate as an explanation of the negative impact ~~of~~ on the liberation movement. The ideological implications of the split must be dealt with, as well as the strategic and tactical implications from the point of view of power.

Page 3. paragraph 10

The writer states "An increase in the price of gold would multiply by many times the contradictions in the South African system...." Why? The gold mining magnates do not seem to think so. "The idea that revolution only occurs in periods of 'economic crisis' is so one-sided and undialectical that it cannot be seriously considered" - yet the author has said that it is because the world imperialist powers are in a state of economic crisis that the prospects of anti-imperialist struggle are favourable. This whole section needs to be argued, because the propositions as they stand are unacceptable, or rather too dogmatic to be accepted without some qualification. Did the Africans and their allies rebel in the fifties as they did because they were better or/worse off than they were during the war? How did devaluation affect African living standards? Etc. Devaluation did not lead to a tremendous advance in the economy of South Africa. On the contrary, the increase in income per head of population during the fifties was only about a quarter of the increase during the forties.

Page 3, paragraph 11

The picture of the successes of the national-liberation movement in Africa and Asia is too favourable. We talk about "giant strides" and "victories". Where? The author has elsewhere said the recent period has been one of coups and counter-revolution? The nature of the support which the national liberation movements of southern Africa have received from the whole of independent Africa should be discussed in detail. The writer says we must not argue that the former protectorates were better off under the British than they are now as independent states. Nobody has done so, but we have also seen a bitter protest published in "Spotlight" against the treatment of freedom fighters by Seretse's Government and police, and Banda and Leabua have been branded as traitors. We have also seen ANC statements complaining of the failure of the OAU to give us the support we need.

Page 4, paragraph 14:

"The international climate operates in favour of the South African revolution.....our ruling class is internationally in a weak position". Morally, perhaps. But resolutions are one thing - what about the eagerness of the West to trade, and to rescind arms bans? What about the vast increase and diversification of South Africa's trade relations?

Page 5, paragraphs 21 and 23.

The use of the word "comedy" is offensive and should be dropped. Hypocrisy and farce, yes, but comedy, NO.

Page 5, paragraph 25

It is wrong to make out that "splinter groups" are only artificially created and maintained by forces external to Southern Africa. No doubt external forces have a lot to do with them, but to write off PAC in this way is as wrong as to write off the Black Power movement because the things said by Carmichael or Rap Brown are nonsensical, or even if it were proved that they were both agents of the CIA. One must differentiate between the mass character of any movement and the ideology of its leadership, or at any rate examine them both carefully to find out their causes. We will still see PAC-type upsurges in South Africa, even if the present PAC leadership has nothing to do with them.

Page 6 , paragraph 27

It is stated, and underlined, that ANC, ZAPU, FRELIMO and MPLA must fight in their own countries under their own independent leadership and command. It is said that this must be recognised otherwise the "revolutionary unity of the liberation movements in Southern Africa" will be disrupted. There is a contradiction here. Either there is unity or there is separation. The group thinks it understands what the author is getting at, but feels he has not expressed it properly. We should also have a more detailed analysis of the nature of the ANC-ZAPU alliance.

Page 8, paragraph 42

The figures quoted are confusing. Share of national income is not the same as non-white percentage of white earnings. And the author uses these figures to show that worsening living standards are leading to a revolutionary spirit among the masses - something he dismissed in paragraph 10 as "undialectical".

Page 8, paragraph 43

The writer says the "no economic crisis" argument is so philistine and monstrous that it is not worth taking seriously.

But in the light of his own vacillations on this subject, it is obviously something that must be discussed. Is South Africa in a revolutionary situation? Are the masses in a revolutionary mood? We must answer these questions, not brush them aside, because they are crucial to our whole operation in the military sphere.

Again in paragraph 43, the writer says: "The Africans are ~~fight~~ fighting against an alien minority that has stolen their country and has oppressed them". This is a racist formulation, more especially when one hears of the bravery of Coloured freedom fighters who died fighting in Rhodesia. And are the whites to be regarded as a bunch of thieves who must be dispossessed and thrown out. What about the sacrifices of the Fischers, Goldbergs, Strachans etc.

The group realises the writer stands by the Freedom Charter, but the ease with which he slips into wrong formulations, as mentioned earlier, has caused some dismay.

Page 9, Paragraphs 49, 50 and 51

The writer argues that because the South African ruling class is not backed by a major metropolitan power, therefore it is more vulnerable, because it represents only a minority of the total population.

The group feels the opposite is the case. It is precisely because the South African ruling class rests upon such a large section of the population, in contrast to almost all other colonial countries, that it is so strong. It does not need a metropolitan army to fight its battles for it because it is strong enough to form and equip its own home army, which defends what it regards as its own homeland. There is no evidence so far that the White Supremacists are unable to deploy the manpower and resources necessary to handle the revolution. If anything, they have shown the opposite.

Whilst stating all these points of criticism, the group would like to place on record its appreciation of this document as one of the most thoughtful and provocative it has received. It led to a lot of discussion and thinking about the points raised, and from this point of view has more than justified the effort of producing it.