

# editorial

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With the passing of the first anniversary of the October 19th crackdown, it is of interest to recall what we wrote of those events.

In the editorial of WIP 2, we suggested that

"The actions of Kruger on October 19th confirm that the strategy of total war, and the development of an exceptional state, are reaching a point of consolidation. The point of no return has been passed.....

.....(I)t is clear that the 'verligte' option has lost the struggle in the power bloc, and the apparatuses of the state are becoming ever-more geared towards a function of direct and repressive control over the structures and practices which constitute society."

Much of the seemingly diverse material gathered in this issue of Work in Progress tends to confirm the direction we outlined previously.

The question of the 'control' function of homelands, the way in which the 'squatter issue' and resettlement is dealt with by the state, the exceptionally repressive manner in which the state is responding to the political action of the popular classes (as shown in our information on security trials), all suggest that the South African ruling classes have embarked on a policy of naked confrontation and repression, rather than a strategy of accommodation in the 'verligte' alternative.

Even the election of Defence Minister P.W. Botha as Prime Minister, over the challenge of the 'verlig' Pik Botha, is indicative of the balance of forces in the ruling party and the state apparatuses.

A second most important dynamic operative in the South African context, less clearly perceived a year ago, is the explicit and considerable intervention on the sub-continent of Western imperialist forces. This relates not only to the vacillating and ultimately cowardly self-interest of the Western 5, but also to the more directly capitalist forms of intervention in South Africa - on codes of conduct, trade unions, and general conditions of employment.

Of course, in these endeavours Western capital has its echo within South Africa - indigenous monopoly capital. This is reflected in the sudden interest of the Urban Foundation in questions of 'employment practices', and the generally

regressive attitude of the commercial press (the SAAN-Argus monopoly) and the Progressive Federal Party to the Namibian conflict.

We again run a lengthy set of 'trial briefings', but feel that it is necessary to situate these within a social context. After all, every trial is reflective of a real set of events and conflicts. Our interest in 'security trials' is not a legalistic concern with the process of law, but an interest in the social relations and conflicts which have given rise to such proceedings.

In an attempt to clarify this, we have included 2 detailed studies of recent Terrorism Act trials. We believe that this gives a clearer indication of the reality underlying every item contained in our section on 'The Courts'.

In many ways, the conflicts which have resulted in so many security trials are the other side of the picture sketched above, ie the consolidation of repressive state power. As the popular classes have experienced the direct effects of increased repression - of influx control, mass removals, 'homeland' politics, unemployment, etc. - and as they have come to see their interests as in direct opposition to those of the ruling classes, so they have reacted in more militant ways. For some groups, this has been the isolated acts of arson, stoning and the like. For others, like the people mentioned in our 2 trial studies (Political Conflict), reaction has meant the joining of the banned ANC, and actively working for its aims and objects.

In this context, we continue to believe that WIP fulfils a valuable function in providing information and interpretations not generally advanced in South African society.

THE EDITORS.

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The nature of WIP, which is to stimulate debate and present controversial views, ensures that the opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors.

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