

effective armed force on their side.' Herein lies the reason for the paradoxical situation that although South Africa is ripe for revolution no revolution has yet, nor is likely, to occur.

Are there any realistic alternatives to direct revolutionary action? Mr. Lewin thinks not. Passive resistance, political organisation, strikes, boycotts—all have failed and are not likely to achieve anything in the future. What then should opponents of the government do? There is nothing that they can usefully do. Men, it is implied, cannot pit themselves against the forces that control society. It follows logically from this that Mr. Lewin neither has, nor has need of, a programme of political action. He has, however, faith in the workings of the controlling forces, for he concludes by telling us not to despair. I would despair if I agreed with him, but I do not.

THE FUNDAMENTAL FLAW of Mr. Lewin's provocative analysis (and reason for his failure to produce a political programme) lies in his mechanistic view of history and society. The clear implication of his analysis is that society is governed, and revolutions made, by the operation of 'objective' forces over which man has no control and on whose bidding he must patiently and passively wait. But, whatever the power, importance and role of these objective forces, no revolution has ever taken place without the planning, ideas and action of the dynamic element and essential agents of history, human beings. Parallels could be found, where, although all the conditions he cites were present, no successful revolution took place—e.g. 14th and 15th century revolts in Europe. Although certain conditions may guarantee an explosion (and this is arguable), no revolution has been carried through to a successful conclusion without planning, programme, experience and leaders, all of which are created by precisely these activities, experiments and abortive attempts at which he scoffs. The test of a revolutionary movement lies in its ability to cope with and take advantage of a revolutionary situation when it occurs. Until then, it cannot be written off as a failure.

WHILE THIS HAS bearing on his claim that political action (except as a gesture) is useless and ineffective, it does not meet his central argument which is that the opportunity to stage a revolution will not occur in South Africa, nor will the activities of the opposition help to bring it about.

I think that Mr. Lewin underrates the effectiveness

and useful undermining function of the opposition. Considering the power, determination and ruthlessness of the Government, they have, with comparatively meagre resources, done well. Although laws have, predictably, been passed in the face of protests, while campaigns have been stamped out and radical newspapers and organisations banned, yet, the individual protests and failed campaigns, taken together, add up to an impressive display of opposition, systematically sustained over a wide area and long period. Surely, a constant source of anxiety, strain and harassment to the Government and check on some of its actions and plans and a continual drain on its resources and energy? Why else the tremendous build-up of police force and army, the women's shooting clubs, the panic at the prospect of a strike, the bannings and banishing orders and the establishment of an enormously wealthy Foundation to counter the activities of a poorly-financed boycott campaign? Mr. Lewin may write off the South African opposition, but the Government does not.

Mr. Lewin also underestimates the importance and dynamic power of those 'objective' forces which are a threat to the Government and to apartheid. The Nationalists are strong, but their strength is built upon precarious and vulnerable foundations. Apartheid is a rigid, unpopular system, continually weakened not only by hostility, from both in and outside the Republic, but by social and economic changes which naturally take place in any society and, increasingly, by changes which are taking place in Africa and the world. South African society is not as static and isolated as Mr. Lewin represents it as being and as the Government would dearly like it to be.

MR. LEWIN HAS not explored the implications of, nor the alternatives raised by, his thesis. But he has (in an otherwise very average collection of essays) raised crucial and neglected questions. Immersed in organising protests and campaigns we seldom seem to discuss questions of long-term strategy. What is the balance of the opposing forces in South Africa? What should be the working relationship of groups, whose ultimate aims differ from each other? What are the most effective tactics in the present situation—should the boycott campaign, which has failed economically while strengthening Verwoerd's psychological hold over the whites, be reviewed? Perhaps *The New African* could provide a much needed forum for the discussion of these and other problems.

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Title: ~~central~~ ~~NOM~~ ~~Motsoane~~...speaking for politically-conscious Africans attacks. Perhaps then it is the Africans themselves who are to blame for the lack of the type of English language press Mr. Motsoane wants.

Certainly white-supremacist newspaper owners are not going to provide it.

JIM MEINTJIES

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To The Editors

DEAR SIR,—Mr. Motsoane's interesting article on the "English" press in South Africa (*New African* 20 February) poses, but fails to answer an essential question: why *should* newspapers owned by white supremacist groups support the liberation movement? As I see it there is no reason at all why they should, and no reason

why Mr. Motsoane can expect them to do so. If the newspapers he complains about were owned by groups intent on ending white supremacy, he would have cause to be angry, but the pitiful fact is that even newspapers owned by such groups have failed to gather any substantial African readership: reliable estimates reckon the total monthly readership of the radical newspapers at less than the *daily* readership (among Africans) of the *Mail* and the *Star*, two