

A letter from a reader in South Africa

20 December 2001

To the editor,

First of all, accept my sincere appreciation for the significant and necessary role performed by the *WSWS* editorial committee in heightening our consciousness around so many facets of our daily lives and struggles. This, of course, includes your almost singular, and thus highly valuable, commentaries on the atrocities inflicted by the American administration/military on the innocent people of Afghanistan; a precursor of what will surely translate into full-scale plunder and rape of the resources of this already war-torn and destitute people.

Make no mistake, I fully abhor the atrocious acts perpetrated on September 11 by hitherto unknown and faceless cowards, but I strongly feel (like the overwhelming millions across the globe) that the American administration is acting tenfold worse by summarily executing and wiping out innocent men, women and children, in some cases even villages in its pursuit of so-called freedom and the eradication of terrorism. I have carefully followed your daily commentaries on developments both in Afghanistan and on American soil.

Recent developments in America, such as the curtailment of civil liberties, detention without trial and public notification, remind strongly of conditions in South Africa during the height of the struggle for liberation in the '70s and '80s especially. The world is reminded that during this time South Africa was ruled by a fascist, merciless, undemocratic, vehemently racist, abusive, exploitative and tyrannical government. Is this where America is heading?

Today in South Africa political liberties have been won, "democratic governance" abounds in all spheres of public life; however, the hard-won victories and programs of the progressive working class lie in tatters for all to behold. Since the dawn of our bourgeois democracy poverty, destitution, unemployment and crime have been progressively growing. Homelessness

continues to ravage and kill the spirits of those who dreamed of and fought for freedom, democracy and equality in a liberated South Africa. The South African rulers have made their primary budgetary concern the escalation of its military arsenal (why? since the country is not at war, nor threatened by any of its neighbours or any other country in Africa or elsewhere for that matter). This will cost the country some 70 billion rands—the biggest expenditure in this field since 1994.

Another primary concern of the ANC government is the privatization of state assets. The leadership in the working class unions in South Africa is partly to be blamed and accountable for these developments as can be clearly observed from its close alliance with the bourgeois-capitalist ANC ruling class. The lesson to be learnt is simply that a system of capitalist exploitation and the accumulation of private wealth by those who control the means of production can never lead to the emancipation, freedom, happiness, progress, and well-being of the poor and working people of this world.

Recent events in America bring back stark images and nightmares strongly reminiscent of South Africa's apartheid era. But above all, recent events in America similarly reveal the colossal power wielded by the political agents of the capitalist class. However, having said this, one should ask why are Western capitalist governments driven to such extremes as can be observed in their proclamations and decrees during the period following the September 11 attack? Is it because they realise the enormous power and challenge posed by an organised and principled international working class? Is it not time that workers internationally realise their own strengths and collectively obliterate all oppressive and exploitative systems which currently govern our lives?

Returning to the issue at hand, namely the war in Afghanistan, I am therefore particularly appreciative of your worthy efforts to make known to the world in

clear and uncertain terms, an accurate account of this war (as observed not by the perpetrators but by the victims) and the true reasons behind this war (as espoused from a workers' perspective, thus being anti-capitalist amidst the predominant media force internationally). I am also highly appreciative of your courageous efforts, knowing just of how ruthless and merciless the ruling class can be when faced with simple truths and honesty.

CK

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