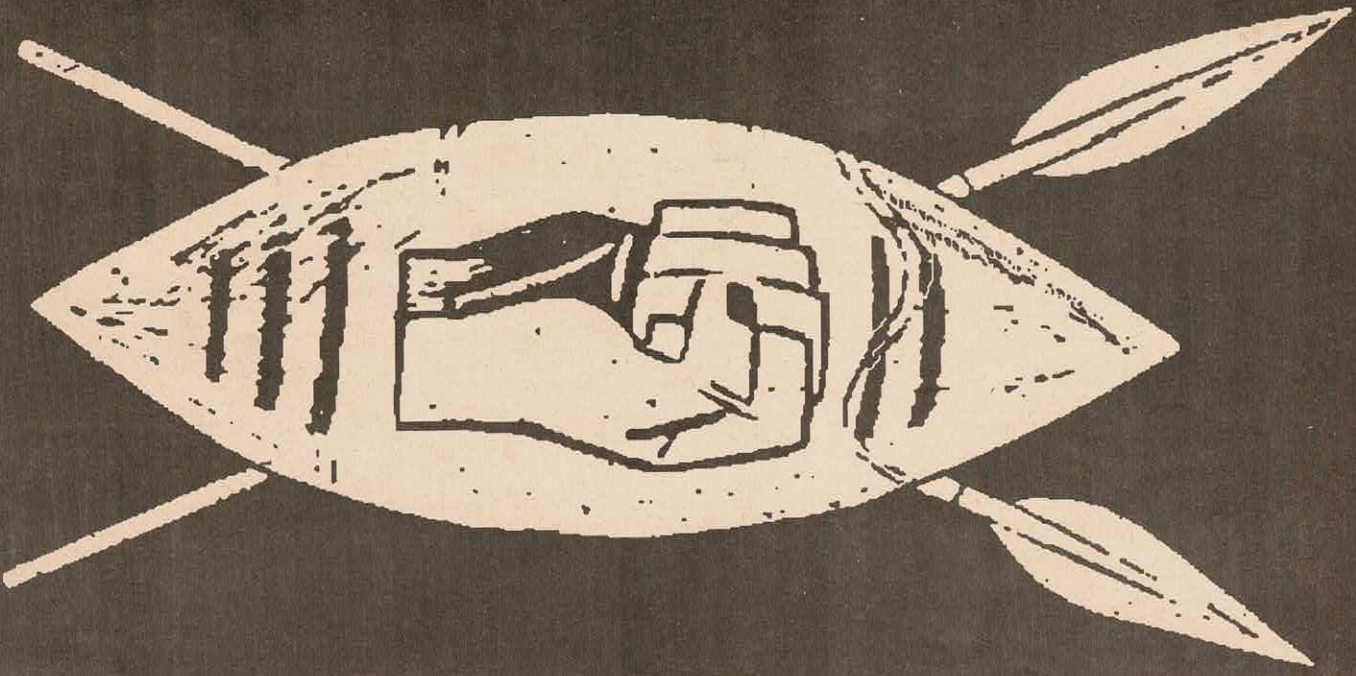


# FRONTLINE WORKER

Journal for a socialist movement in South Africa

No 2



## *Inside:*

Articles on a  
**NEGOTIATED  
SETTLEMENT  
OF APARTHEID**  
including

● Negotiations,  
alliances and the  
Left

● Policy shifts  
since de Klerk

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Apartheid Laws

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# FRONTLINE WORKER

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## Negotiations

We have drawn some parallels (and divergences) between what is happening in Eastern Europe and in South Africa. But of immediate significance is the effect the changes in Eastern Europe are having on the policies of Western powers to the apartheid government in South Africa. In a word, all Western powers are now, in varying degrees, putting pressure on the South African government to enter into some form of negotiations with representative organisations of the black majority. Similar pressures are also being applied to the liberation organisations resulting in the argument by the ANC that if it does not seize the initiative on negotiations then these and other powers will impose a settlement or set the terms for a settlement.

Given the fact that negotiations are assuming an important role in our struggle - and enjoying popular support because of the expectations they raise - we have devoted much space to the subject. Our contributors span the spectrum of views within the camp of liberation organisations on the question of negotiations. On the one hand, we have articles by Rosemines Phahle, Peter Blumer and the Centre for African Studies in Mozambique. Although arguing from different perspectives (the last being pro-Soviet and pro-ANC) and seeing some problems with a negotiation strategy, they are not opposed to negotiations. On the other hand, we publish documents issued by Action Youth in Johannesburg and the Cape Action League which express opposition to negotiations. However, one of the points over which all the contributors are in apparent agreement is that call it what you like, perestroika, the collapse of communist regimes or lessening of tensions between East and West, is one of the factors operating to bring about change in southern and South Africa. So events in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe not only parallel some events in South Africa but they also have some measure of influence on the course of events in southern and South Africa.

The importance we attach to developments in Eastern Europe and their significance to South Africa is demonstrated by our inclusion of an article on Eastern Europe.

## ACRONYMS used in articles

ANC	African National Congress
AY	Action Youth
AZACTU	Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organisation
BC	Black Consciousness
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
CAL	Cape Action League
CDF	Conference for a Democratic Future
CONTRALESA	Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa
COSAS	Congress of South African Students
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CUSA	Council of Unions of South Africa
DP	Democratic Party
EC	European Community
END	European Nuclear Disarmament
FLS	Frontline States
FOSATU	Federation of South African Trade Unions
IDASA	Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa
JODAC	Johannesburg Democratic Action Committee
LRAA	Labour Relations Amendment Act
MACWUSA	Motor Assemblers & Components Workers Union of South Africa
MDM	Mass Democratic Movement
NACTU	National Council of Trade Unions
NAFCOC	National African Federated Chambers of Commerce
NP	National Party
NSC	National Sports Congress
NSMS	National Security Management System
NUMSA	National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
OMW	Organisation of Mozambique Women
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
SAAWU	South African Allied Workers Union
SACP	South African Communist Party
SADCC	Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference
SAB	South African Breweries
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SACOS	South African Council of Sports
SADF	South African Defence Force
SANROC	South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee
SANSCO	South African National Students Congress
SAYCO	South African Youth Congress
SATS	South African Transport Services
SDP/SPD	Social Democratic Party
SWAPO	South West African People's Organisation
UDF	United Democratic Front
UM	Unity Movement
WHAM	'Winning Hearts and Minds'
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union



## Mass Action

the boycott of the elections. While everyone was clear as to supporting a boycott of the "Coloured" and "Indian" Houses, there was confusion over the white elections. Sidney Mafumadi assistant general secretary of COSATU, issued a statement declaring that the MDM will have nothing to do with the racist elections, which should be boycotted. This raised consternation amongst the UDF's white liberal supporters who saw it as necessary to vote for the Democratic Party. A few days later Murphy Morobe issued a statement in which he stated that the official and final position of the MDM was that it was not calling for a boycott of the white elections, only for the "coloured" House of Representatives and the "Indian" House of Delegates. The question is where did Morobe get the mandate and authority to say that his position was the final and official position of the MDM? Was COSATU consulted? Was

the UDF consulted? Were other organisations consulted? These problems of democracy and accountability and who exactly constitutes the MDM, can expectedly become more acute as different positions within the MDM begin to emerge.

What is obvious though, is that the intensity of sectarianism, which reached a pinnacle at the second COSATU Congress of 1987, has markedly decreased. It seems that the joint NACTU and COSATU campaign against the LRA has played a significant part in easing tensions between different organisations. In particular the unity forged through the Workers Summit has already had important spin-offs. At the COSATU congress the left orientated NUMSA proposed and had accepted a resolution calling for the rebuilding of the mass movement in a disciplined and accountable manner crossing all ideological divisions within the liberation

movement. At the same time the banned anti-apartheid conference has been once again set in motion in the form of the Congress for a Democratic future which includes representatives from UDF, COSATU, NACTU, AZAPO, and the CAL on the convening committee.

Recently at a rally to declare banned organisations unbanned, organisations of the UDF invited organisations from the Black consciousness fold to join them. However this has not been plain sailing. At June 16 joint rally held in Johannesburg, hostility erupted when UDF supporters jeered Muntu Myeza of AZAPO who had just taken the platform. But there is widespread realisation that in this period of continued repression unity is perceived as being crucial by many activists coming from different political movements and united front initiatives must continue.

## Welcome Home Nelson Mandela

We welcome the release of Nelson Mandela and salute his uncompromising struggle against the apartheid regime during his long imprisonment.

The unbanning of the ANC, PAC, SACP and all other political organisations is a victory for the oppressed and exploited people in their struggle for democracy. We believe our struggle continues and that these victories should be used to intensify our efforts to put an end to all forms of oppression and exploitation.

## Forward to Democracy and Socialism!

Issued by:

The Cape Action League  
Action Youth  
Students of Young Azania  
Mayibuye  
SAC  
Socialist Action (Natal)  
B.L.A.C.

## SACOS WELCOMES COMRADE NELSON MANDELA

The President, officials and members of the South African Council on Sport (SACOS) throughout South Africa welcome the release of Comrade Nelson Mandela with great elation and a tremendous sense of satisfaction.

The final release of Comrade Mandela is consistent with our continuous and persistent demand over 17 years for the release of all political prisoners and detainees; and more specifically for the release of the authentic leaders of the oppressed and exploited masses of our country.

SACOS is hopeful that the momentous release of the best known prisoner of conscience that the world has known in the last two and a half decades will be the prelude to the release of all prisoners of conscience, even those imprisoned for refusing to be conscripted into an army to defend an unjust socio-political system; and to the unconditional unbanning of all progressive political movements and organisations of the people; and the unconditional unhindered return to South Africa of all political exiles.

On this occasion of great joy, SACOS wants to send out a call to ALL progressive political and community organisations and ALL progressive anti-establishment leaders of substance to get together as swiftly as possible to force a principled unity of ALL the oppressed people in this country, so that we as a united people can formulate our principled demands for the return of our land to its rightful owners and the reins of government to the people of this land on the basis of free and equal adult suffrage.

SACOS welcomes Comrade Nelson Mandela as a great leader of substance and salutes the sacrifices he has made after 26 years of imprisonment. At the same time, we pay tribute to ALL of our comrades of whatever progressive political tendency, who have spent life terms in jail or even one day in detention in defence of our just struggle for a free, non-racial democracy.

We are mindful also at this time, and pay special tribute to our thousands of martyrs, who over the many years of struggle have died so that we might be free! They paid the supreme penalty. May we honour their memory by marching forward to achieve our ultimate objective: a free, non-racial democratic South Africa! Free of oppression! Free of exploitation! Free of prejudice!

Let our rich, beautiful country be governed by the free will of the people of our country!

Amandla! Freedom is ours!



# SUPPORTING MDM & NEGOTIATIONS AND STOPPING FURTHER TACTICAL ERRORS

Roseinnes Phahle

This article aims to address the liberation organisations, particularly the leftwing ones which, standing outside the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), are either outrightly opposed to or equivocating on negotiations with the apartheid government. Many of the misgivings which some of the Left have expressed over negotiations are correct. But are the misgivings sufficient ground for opposing negotiations and staying out of the mass movement developing on the basis of the struggle to negotiate?

There are other sections of the Left who also perceive problems with a strategy of negotiations. But they have not dissociated themselves from the negotiating position. Notable among them is NUMSA which is not only a part of the MDM but, alongside other unions in COSATU, is playing a significant role in ensuring the strength of the workers' movement is reflected in the balance of forces which will influence the outcome of negotiations.

In addressing the question of negotiations, the earlier decisions by some sections of the Left not to join UDF and by black consciousness-led trade unions not to join COSATU will be brought into question. Equally, the case for supporting negotiations and affiliation to the MDM will not be argued without a critical view of the ANC which dominates both the MDM and the negotiation campaign.

## The likelihood of negotiations

The present conjuncture contains a number of factors which combine to make a 'negotiated settlement' of apartheid, or some aspects of apartheid, a possibility. Some factors making negotiations possible are (not necessarily in order of importance): the thawing

of the cold war between East and West; international pressure on the apartheid regime as the result of the 1984-86 mass upheavals; the regime's debt crisis; the regime's continuing legitimacy crisis as reflected by the boycott movement against the tricameral parliament and other constitutional reforms; the position of Western governments which, though opposed to comprehensive sanctions and 'armed struggle', are poised 'to do everything possible' (Herman Cohen, US Under Secretary of State for Africa, Business Day, 17 May 1989) to pressure the regime to negotiate meaningful change; the emergence of a 'Cory Aquino factor' (explained later); the regime's agreement to implement UN Resolution 435 in Namibia; the release of the most important ANC and SACP leaders and the unbanning of both ANC and SACP.

Of course, a factor which stands above all, without which there would not now be any talk of a negotiated settlement, is the struggle inside the country relentlessly waged against apartheid.

Indeed, negotiations are already underway. They have been for the last three years. There have been on-going exchanges between the regime and Mandela. At this early stage, they are more likely to be negotiations about negotiations, about positions which each side has to abandon in order to create an atmosphere for negotiations. Also, the series of delegations of white business men, white academics and white politicians who have met with the ANC and Soviet academicians, the meetings between the ANC and representatives of Western governments, and between Mandela and Botha, Mandela and de Klerk and cabinet ministers, were all exercises in preparing the ground for negotiations.

All these factors indicate a very strong movement towards negotiations and some kind of a negotiated settlement. The protagonists of this movement include most importantly the ANC on which the Mass Democratic Movement (comprising UDF, COSATU, SACC) is unmistakably centred. Outside the MDM are liberation groups such as the BCM (comprising AZAPO, NACTU), PAC, New Unity Movement and some leftwing groups, notably CAL and AY, which in varying degrees have expressed opposition to negotiations. At times, the opposition has displayed an incredible lack of understanding of the strength of the pro-negotiation process, expressing itself in terms which have ruled out any possibility of the South African government negotiating a settlement with the ANC or any liberation organisation - the strong do not negotiate with the weak, they have said.

The most astute supporters of negotiations have described them as 'another site of struggle', in one sense meaning that other forms of struggle should not be halted in order to get negotiations going. That there is an undertaking to continue fighting the struggle on all fronts should be good enough reason for all liberation groups to give support to the struggle for negotiations.

Yet the non-MDM organisations and sections of the Left outside the MDM will be making a grievous mistake if this time they find themselves again in opposition to the popular trend. Other mistakes they have made in the recent past include the decision in 1983 to stay out of UDF and the recent decision not to participate in the Conference for a Democratic Future. These decisions by sections of the Left have had the consequence of making these sections ever more marginal to popular or mainstream resistance politics.



sions) failed to match their militant rhetoric with organising and leading a mass struggle. Only through mass mobilisation, as the recent events in some Eastern European countries so clearly demonstrate, is it possible to bring down an oppressive regime without armed insurrection and without at first negotiating with it. But, alas, of the PAC, UM, BC and CAL, not one of them have had the capacity to mobilise for mass insurrection or armed insurrection.

To be sure, some of these organisations with an unsuccessful record of mass mobilisation have a considerable potential for emerging as a pole of attraction alternative to the ANC. Black consciousness, for example, though organisationally weak at present, is a deeply and widely held sentiment which is to the majority of people in South Africa as God or the Catholic Church is to the people of Poland, and may yet again have its day, especially if under any future government the people's social and economic grievances fail to be redressed. But for so long as black consciousness activists have, as sympathetic a writer as John Saul puts it, a "limited strategic sense and a minimal grasp of the possible role of the popular classes in effecting social change" (*Socialist Register* 1989, p51), so long will they fail to realise their potential.

### Old perceptions but new forces and new alliances

The views of the ANC formed in the decades of the 30s, 40s and 50s play a part in shaping present-day perceptions of the ANC by that political generation or their descendants. Their responses to the ANC initiative to negotiate is coloured by what they have known of the ANC of those decades. Of course, in some respects the ANC (and its major component, the SACP) have not changed. Many of their leaders are a product of that early period. They have clung tenaciously to their past, deployed their tradition of struggle as a powerful symbol in the struggles of the eighties inside the country, and remained intolerant of any person or group even mildly critical of that past. Internationally, they have remained unwavering in their support of undemocratic and repressive neo-Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe, slavishly adapting to every twist and turn

of policy by changing regimes in the Soviet Union.

But there has been a considerable change which has affected the ANC. What has changed is the context, the terrain in which the ANC is currently operating in South Africa. Other forces have emerged which have altered the terrain and to which the ANC, to its credit, has responded. They have had an impact upon the ANC and the ANC, in turn, upon them as well. By their own actions, taken independently of the ANC, these forces have recreated an ANC in many ways different from the ANC of the last decades.

The most important of the new forces is the workers' movement spearheaded by COSATU which was formed from a combination of socialist and syndicalist traditions with those of the ANC. Initially, the ANC tradition was the weakest of the three in COSATU. The powerful, industrial unions which formed the backbone of COSATU at its inception developed independently of the ANC and in the early years were opposed by the ANC. Strong as these unions were and, at the time, committed to the creation of an independent working class political organisation, when a COSATU leadership was elected they were outmanoeuvred by the weaker, non-industrial general unions which subscribed to the popular traditions of the ANC. But this has not meant that COSATU is totally dominated by supporters of the ANC.

At its formation and for a while after, there was a promise that COSATU would articulate a working class politics which would sooner or later bring it into conflict with the non-class appeal of the ANC. This much was implicit in Cyril Ramaphosa's keynote address to COSATU's founding congress and in several speeches shortly afterwards. It was implied in resolutions adopted by the NUM, MAWU and several other affiliates in their annual conferences preceding COSATU's second congress. One after another these unions were adopting resolutions which pointed to socialism as their aim.

As the unions were raising socialist perspectives, the ANC in conjunction with the SACP remained resolutely opposed to any question of socialism being raised at the present time as they

adhered to a Stalinist stage-ist theory of evolution. But conflict with the ANC never came about. One after another, these unions dropped their sights, surreptitiously dropped their socialist rhetoric as they settled for the ANC's Freedom Charter and some, like NUM, took a u-turn and entered a period during which they would brook no other political programme and menacingly opposed supporters of any programme which they perceived to be in competition with the Freedom Charter.

What requires explanation is why the new forces inside the country, not only the major labour federation but also the youth and students, sought as an ally outside the country not the PAC but the ANC.

The reasons may be complex but quite clearly the PAC in 1976 was in a state of such disarray (and may still be today) that no serious organisation based internally in South Africa could have hoped for any help from the PAC. In spite of support by several countries and donor agencies, the PAC, due to embezzlement of funds by some of its leaders, had no funds with which to support a response to the demands of the post-1976 struggles.

Since 1976, influence and domination of the mass movement in South Africa has been a function in large part of the funding from abroad: movements which are presently dominant are those which have secured large scale funding and are directing the funds to build their organisations as well as support others inside the country.

Financial and other material help from outside is often derided by American and West European Trotskyists. To them the only barriers to influencing a mass movement are a 'false' consciousness on the part of the masses and a lack of 'clarity' on questions of socialism and the nature of the Soviet Union on the part of organisations, and each of the Trotskyist sects will demand agreement with their particular line on these questions before they can consider giving material help if any at all. In this latter respect they are not different from Maoists or Communist Parties who only give help to their replications in South Africa.

But help in financial and other concrete ways is one of the most crucial aspects



boycott position being associated with a South African Trotskyist tradition, the ANC stalwarts favoured putting up 'boycott' candidates who would not take up their seats in the event of being elected. Displaying their preference for 'boycott' candidates, even after a highly successful boycott of the elections, the ANC was still canvassing support for the tactic of 'boycott' candidates in some of the meetings it held abroad with South African white parliamentarians. But after a specially convened conference of UDF in Port Elizabeth in 1983, when the UDF's own Left supported by youth, SAAWU and MACWUSA overwhelmingly rejected the idea of 'boycott' candidates, the ANC stood full square behind the campaign which resulted in the success of the boycott, giving a start to the unprecedented militant struggles of 1984-86.

● More recently, during the 1989 white general election, black students at the University of the Witwatersrand disrupted a meeting because some of the speakers were participants in the white election either as candidates or supporters of the Democratic Party despite the tacit backing ANC (and UDF) were giving to the Democratic Party's participation in the elections (hence the statements by ANC and some UDF spokespersons that they were not calling upon whites to abstain from the elections).

The import of all this is that the ANC, despite its considerable power and prestige, has not had everything its way. In many instances it has tailed behind, been pulled by its nose by the actions of the youth and workers inside the country and has acted abroad as spokesperson for the organisation inside the country. It has preferred this role in order to win support and influence rather than polemicise and alienate potential support.

The ANC has played a commendable role by allowing autonomy for its internal partners - how best to struggle against apartheid and its brutality is a decision belonging to those within the country. This is another way of describing the way the ANC surrendered leadership of the struggle to its internal partners. No one expressed this more honestly than Joe Slovo who recently said: "It is unique to be a leader when the way to lead is to follow the militant

mood inside the country." To borrow from the language of structuralist marxism, the ANC may be *dominant* but it has not been (though it may now also become) *determinant*. The youth in the townships, the workers in the new unions and the radical intellectuals once derided in the *African Communist* as 'legal marxists' have through their own actions created an ANC they can influence.

Of course, all the liberation groups inside South Africa have contributed to the militant mood referred to by Slovo. In the case of boycott campaigns, non-MDM organisations like CAL, AZAPO and NACTU contributing as much if not more but lacking the publicity which attends every action and statement by the MDM organisations. In a very real sense, they have been a part of the *determinant* forces inside the country. But by not being a part of the MDM, straight-jacketed as they are by outmoded perceptions of the ANC, they have no influence at all on the ANC; it is not its own leadership which Slovo means the ANC is following from abroad but rather that of the MDM's main internal components, that is, UDF, COSATU, COSAS and SAYCO.

These components of the MDM are far from reactionary organisations: all have displayed a militancy without rival and all have a leftwing element. They have defined a new terrain of struggle, made some mistakes but won many notable victories in a struggle focusing only on the abolition of apartheid and attainment of the vote. As the ANC has become a part of that terrain, a leading component of MDM, it cannot be viewed in the same way as it was a decade or more ago. *Organisations like CAL, AZAPO and NACTU, by their own self-exclusion from the MDM, have failed to become a significant part of the new terrain.*

## Staying out of UDF and COSATU: a serious error

At this point, we must bring into question the decision by NACTU to stay out of COSATU, the decision by NACTU, AZAPO and CAL to stay out of UDF, and count the cost of these decisions.

There were three major political tendencies which were involved in the talks which led to the formation of COSATU. In order of strength on the shop floor, they comprised the FOSATU group of unions which at the time were advocating an independent working class politics to presage the development of a socialist movement untrainted by neither nationalism nor populism, the CUSA-AZACTU group of unions which were close to AZAPO, and a host of very small pro-ANC general unions whose strength, particularly SAAWU the strongest among them, was not in the factories but in the townships. Among the unaffiliated but relatively big and influential unions were CCAWUSA, AFCWU, GWU and at a very late stage NUM (after it split from CUSA) all of whose positions were very close to the FOSATU grouping.

The pro-ANC unions were led by SAAWU and MACWUSA. These two walked out of several unity talks, dragged their feet and acted in a manner aimed at obstructing unity and the emergence of a single labour federation. But when unity was finally struck, it was the socialist (and some syndicalist) FOSATU unions and pro-ANC group of unions which were the sole partners to COSATU. CUSA had withdrawn from the penultimate unity talks, and AZACTU (at the instigation of NUM) was not sent an invitation to the founding congress of COSATU.

*The withdrawal of CUSA was the worst tactical error committed by any organisation in the recent period of struggle.* AZACTU must share in the error because it neither protested its exclusion nor had it shown any enthusiasm for unity. CUSA by its withdrawal and AZACTU by its indifference played into the hands of the pro-ANC unions, for in the new COSATU federation the pro-ANC elements would contend with one rather than two or more opposing political tendencies. Weak though they were as unions inside COSATU, the pro-ANC unions were able to draw on the very powerful tradition of the ANC to overwhelm the FOSATU tendency.

The leadership of the FOSATU unions were overwhelmed by the ANC tradition because they had failed to build their own political base in the communities beyond the factory gates. They failed because of their syndicalist



party with any deep roots in the working class. In this position, it is rather unrealistic of CAL to demand and expect of mass organisations to join in with it as equal partners in a united front.

Also, CAL has misconceived Trotsky's argument when, in 1983, CAL implicitly used it not only to oppose the alliance forming around the UDF but also refused to join UDF. *If CAL had understood Trotsky, it ought to have joined the UDF and, at the same time, maintained its political and organisational autonomy and would still have remained free to form alliances with other groups not affiliated to UDF.*

CAL has clung to its conceptions of 'popular front' and 'united front' in a situation where these notions are dubious and irrelevant. While the UDF has over the years developed to crystallise into a kind of a party (with left and liberal factions), in its early days when its leaders were exhorting black consciousness organisations to join it and declaring the Freedom Charter not to be its official policy, it perhaps could have been made to function like Trotsky's perception of a united front if only CAL and the black consciousness organisations had affiliated to it. So once again the Left lost an opportunity to be influential as part of an organisation which now is one of the pillars of the MDM.

### Other theoretical humbugs: two stages

There is a section of the Left in South Africa whose formulations give two impressions. First, their opposition to the ANC/SACP's two stage theory expresses itself in an all or nothing manner, that is, the struggle is for socialism and nothing less. It may be for this reason that they are opposed to negotiations because at the present time negotiations can only be about the abolition of apartheid laws and the introduction of votes for all, and not about socialism.

Second, the working class must lead the struggle in a manner that allows for no alliances with other classes. For example, they are opposed to alliances with NAFCOOC on the ground that it is an organisation of (black) business persons, NUSAS on the ground that as a white student body its members are the children of the bourgeoisie and the

Black Sash on the ground that its members are wives of the captains of industry and commerce. It matters little or nothing that these organisations may have taken some stand against apartheid and affiliated to UDF. This lies at the bottom of the characterisation of the UDF as a *popular front* and thus opposition to it.

But there is nothing wrong in pulling together all the plugs in order to fight a single issue or for a limited gain, and in forming alliances to achieve the objective. The immediate abolition of apartheid, limited as this objective is in leaving the socio-economic questions unresolved, would be a considerable victory for the people of South Africa.

If the people can perceive a very high chance of abolishing apartheid they will rally behind that platform which presents the most coherent and credible means of achieving the abolition of apartheid. The present conjuncture presents just such a chance. It is foolhardy or ultra-leftist to deny this chance and to oppose negotiations to end apartheid. The demise of apartheid should not be postponed until such time as the working class is politically organised to lead the struggle or until such time as socialism is achieved. People, most of all the working class, will not support any policy which requires of them to go on struggling when their present sufferings can be ameliorated through the abolition of apartheid.

It must be expected that an alliance limited only to a struggle against apartheid will draw to itself representatives of capital and other interests hostile to a struggle for a socialist society. It is only logical that this should be so. The Left has given a dual characterisation to the suffering of the majority in South Africa: oppressed as a people and exploited as workers. The platform against oppression attracts groups and organisations which are not necessarily in support of the platform against exploitation. In attempting to combine the two struggles and opposing the ANC's and SACP's two-stage theory which relegates the second platform to some date in the future, the Left should therefore not oppose the first platform or popular alliances around this platform.

In any case, opposition to a two-stage theory of evolution does not mean opposition to reforms and partial victories. First and foremost, it means building a socialist organisation so the working class can have a political voice in the limited struggle against apartheid and, hence, within the matrix of organisations constituting the national liberation movement or the MDM as it now dominates the latter. With such an organisation in existence, the struggle against apartheid and the struggle for the franchise can be combined with the struggle for socialism. Indeed, universal franchise may be possible only through socialism!

The struggle against exploitation and for socialism may be borne alone by the socialist movement. But the struggle against apartheid and for simple democratic rights is a struggle whose support has a much wider canvass. As noted already, by its very nature it gives rise to the formation of alliances. It is impolitic to oppose anti-apartheid alliances because they embody the prospect of a sell-out, a white liberal group, or fit in with the objectives of two-stage theorists.

Better to join being aware of the forces at work within a popular alliance than to stay out because of a perception, not shared by the masses, that there is a likelihood of a sell-out. The masses will vote with their feet when they do see a sell-out. As yet they see no sell-out.

The alliance formed around the platform of negotiations should thus not be opposed if at the present conjuncture there is no clear alternative to negotiations. Any alternative must be so clear that it can be supported by the masses.

In any event, whether a clear alternative is sought or not, the conditions which the ANC has proposed for negotiations to take place must be examined very carefully to see if they are wanting in any way. Is there any thing wrong with the conditions: demanding the unbanning of organisations, the release of political prisoners, the lifting of the state of emergency, the removal of the army from the townships? If there is nothing wrong then they must be supported without reservation.

Or, is there anything wrong with the demand for a constituent assembly?



attainment of majority rule or 'one person one vote' any easier. This is because the various interests on the ruling class side will do everything in their power to hold to every vestige of power and privilege.

The South African government will enter negotiations in order to reform apartheid if it will do everything in its power to retain white privilege, white domination and control of the economy by the white minority. South African and foreign capital will do everything in their power to preserve the private enterprise system, and, in concert with the present government, will privatise as much state-owned enterprises as possible in order to deny any future government the benefit of some base of nationalised industry. And the Western powers will do everything in their power to keep South Africa 'safe' for Western investments.

Against this array of forces, the ANC and other liberation forces, if they remain committed to a democratic dispensation, will not have an easy task in the negotiation process. In this sense to describe them as an Aquino factor is not to derogate them but simply an objective fact that at this point in time they are not a threat to Western interests. To the extent that the ANC does everything in its power to negotiate the achievement of one person one vote in an unfragmented South Africa it must be supported by the Left.

### ANC's constitutional guidelines and 'armed struggle'

Are the ANC's constitutional guidelines and its Bill of Rights meant to assure the US (and the British) government that they aim not for socialism but only for the eradication of apartheid and a liberal democracy? We consider this question in order to show what the ANC itself has done to present itself as the Aquino factor to Western governments and thereby secure the latter's help to bring about a negotiated settlement in South Africa.

Two things the West will require of the ANC: an abandonment of violence ('terrorism' as they put it) and an assurance of no socialism (threatening Western capital in South Africa).

First, the armed struggle. Here there is really nothing for the ANC to give up because the armed struggle is not on and never was on though there has been much talk about it, a discourse of belief in its existence and effectiveness. But what has passed as armed struggle is the exploding of an occasional and, for the most part, ineffectual bomb in places like a shopping centre or outside a police station. However, the government has enjoyed much mileage out of the discourse of armed struggle: maintained a most repressive regime, destabilised the neighbouring countries and used it as a reason for hitherto not negotiating with the ANC. Thatcher has also used the so-called armed struggle as an excuse for not giving recognition to the ANC and meeting with its leaders.

But now the South African government no longer demands the renunciation of violence as a condition to negotiating. De Klerk dismissed Mandela's re-affirmation of armed struggle as mere 'war talk' for talk is all it is, as the government itself recognises. 'A search for peaceful solutions to the country's problem' is the only commitment which the regime says it seeks of any potential party to negotiations. Clearly, a face-saving formula by a government which helped create the myth of 'armed struggle'. The ANC will also have to find a face-saving formula, or quietly stop its bomb bias without any public announcement to that effect. The signs in the last twelve months are that the ANC is presently pursuing the latter course.

An armed struggle even on the modest scales (compared to other countries) waged by ZANU and SWAPO was never feasible in South Africa. Its possibility has receded further since the independent states on the borders of South Africa will not allow their territories to be launching pads for an armed struggle in South Africa lest their economies are subjected to even greater destabilisation by South Africa. The die-hards who still think they can defeat the regime militarily are living in cuckoo-land! But if armed struggle is not on, the discourse of 'armed struggle' remains as powerfully populist as ever.

The discourse of 'armed struggle' is one which all the liberation organisations use to impress their fighting mettle upon their constituents and the oppressed

people as a whole. Sadly, it is fighting talk which many activists like to hear. Even organisations like Azapo and BCMA which are incapable of waging 'armed struggle' use the language of 'armed struggle' as part of their own.

The PAC says it has not laid down any conditions for negotiations because it believes not in negotiating with the present regime but in 'removing it by means of an armed struggle', as the PAC's acting president told a London meeting during 1988. An illusion of self grandeur because the PAC's attempt at 'armed struggle' is so far enfeebled by that of the ANC.

In much the same way as the PAC today is dismissive of a negotiated settlement, the ANC's belief in its own rhetoric about its ability to wage war led it to play down the emergence of the trade unions. In the late 70s, the ANC believed that armed struggle was the only option and that it was not possible for an independent trade unionism to emerge from open and 'legal' struggles in South Africa.

In the last few years, side by side with a most determined effort to launch an 'armed struggle', against considerable odds, the ANC has come to refer to 'armed propaganda' rather than 'armed struggle'. Tom Lodge explains 'armed propaganda' as seen by the ANC to be 'spectacular and technically sophisticated guerrilla operations directed at demonstrating the state's vulnerability and encouraging popular political assertion' (*South African Review* 5, ed. Moss and Obery, Johannesburg 1989, pp42-43). Clearly a far cry from armed struggle directed at overthrowing the state by insurrection!

But the ANC more than the other organisations has benefitted from the discourse of 'armed struggle'. Many of the youths who joined ANC in the aftermath of Soweto 1976 did so in the belief that the ANC, in terms of its resources, bases in Africa and international backing, was the only liberation organisation with a capacity to launch an armed struggle.

At the present time, the ANC remains deeply divided on whether the route to power is the 'armed struggle' or round-table talks with the regime. The rank and file membership may still largely be supporting the first route. But the



## Negotiations

Future and the drive towards a negotiated settlement.

*To seek support for the MDM and at the same time be critical of its leading component means that principles are not being jettisoned or surrendered for the mere sake of joining a popular bandwagon. It means that the principles, particularly socialist principles, are being retained but the practice of politics redefined so the principles can have an effect upon the mass movement.*

Earlier it was pointed out that marginalisation or weakness has been the outcome for organisations which have excluded themselves from UDF and COSATU. The reason is that the mainstream of liberation politics or the mass movement is now constituted by an alliance of these organisations under the aegis of the MDM.

Whoever seeks power in a democratic and popular way must first and foremost seek to influence the mass movement. There are times when the influence can be won by maintaining an intransigently independent position. Such a time is not yet because none of the non-MDM organisations seem to be able to connect with the mass movement from an independent basis. Some like NACTU are losing members to MDM organisations. The only option open to them is to join the MDM around which the mass movement is concentrated.

*Join the MDM as it is now with all its imperfections and contradictions. Join it not as entryists, an all-knowing elite, a self-appointed vanguard, but join it to be subject to its discipline. That is, supporting majority decisions arrived at democratically within the mass movement: policies once democratically adopted must be supported however much they were opposed before being adopted.*

But working in the MDM is not an unproblematical matter. There are already many individuals who have withdrawn themselves from non-MDM left organisations to join and actively work in the MDM. They constitute a 'broad Left' in the MDM, quite distinct from some small entryist and vanguardist proselytizers whose aim is a parasitic existence within the mass movement. Some have even taken up jobs with one or other of the many infrastructural

service organisations allied to the MDM. Escaping the prospect of marginalisation by remaining outside the MDM, their tasks are not made less difficult by working within the MDM. They are looked upon with suspicion, as Trotskyist entryists, by anti-democratic elements, for example, the Stalinists. They are afraid to express dissenting opinions.

By dint of hard work in the mass movement's campaigns, some leftwing individuals have attained high office in leading organisations of the UDF and unions affiliated to COSATU. Even when they have reached these positions, the anti-democratic elements still do not trust them and have used any means to exclude them from decision-making bodies to which they were elected. These elements have blamed some of their non-democratic practices on the state of emergency. If they have not informed some executive committee members of when meetings were taking place and important decisions taken they have claimed that it is because the state of emergency makes it difficult to make contact.

At times, in order to be able to have decisions taken outside elected committees in which they are likely to be opposed, the anti-democratic elements have operated by setting up 'working sub-committees' and co-opting to them only those who supported them, and then, thanks to the state of emergency, usurping the functions of the committee.

At other times, the anti-democratic elements established committees independently of and as an alternative to popularly founded and democratically elected structures in order to exclude leaders or rank and file members whose views they dislike. With an office and a paid full-time staff these committees are very soon able to supplant popular structures.

The most recent example of this sort was the so-called UDF's sports desk. Unable to challenge and take over the leadership of the long established anti-apartheid South African Council on Sports (SACOS) which they believed to be Trotskyist and Unity Movement led, the desk has now been transformed into the National Sports Congress to rival SACOS on the spurious ground that

SACOS has failed to organise a mass based sports organisation.

Popular sports like soccer, for example, is financially sponsored by big business and has thus far been elusive to mass democratic participation. Notwithstanding its criticism of SACOS, the NSC is making no inroad into controlling the popular sports which have evaded affiliation to SACOS.

The NSC now enjoys a closer relationship than SACOS does with SANROC the body which was formed as an external wing of SACOS. As a captive organisation of the ANC, SANROC has been subversive of SACOS in its support for the NSC.

There is also the example of the dispute inside CCAWUSA. When a minority faction failed to gain control of CCAWUSA and have the Freedom Charter imposed on CCAWUSA, they set up a rival organisation to CCAWUSA. Despite being in the minority they enjoyed the support and recognition of the COSATU/NEC while the majority in CCAWUSA were excluded from participation as members of COSATU.

We have earlier mentioned the undemocratic practices inside COSATU following its launch. Other examples include the attempt in 1984 to manipulate the Media Workers Association to affiliate to UDF, the National Education Crisis Committee which began as representative of all organisations and ended serving only the purposes of pro-ANC elements. Many more could be cited.

All these examples point to the extreme difficulty of working as part of the MDM. The difficulty is double-fold. First, it is difficult to work in an organisation whose political direction is questionable. Second, it is difficult to work in an organisation which is intolerant of dissent.

*But Marxists and socialists in Europe and North America, often too weak to have an impact on the labour movement, are working as a 'broad Left' inside Labour and other movements hostile to them. Miscalculating as it always is to copy what the Left in other countries is doing or at other times has done, the question is nevertheless asked: Why, in South Africa, should the Left also not seek to work within the mass movement, and*



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But quite often ethnic organisations are a response to oppressive and exploitative conditions and the repression of culture and language under capitalism. In these respects ethnic organisations have become a feature on the landscape of advanced capitalism: as such they may in some cases be progressive organisations deserving the support of the Left.

## Conclusion

This article was written under the pressure and urgency of a rapidly changing situation in South Africa. It has been subjected to several revisions to take into account some of the changes in the situation. With such an avalanche of change it has not been possible to adjust the article to show cognisance of all the changes.

In the course of writing, seven ANC leaders were unconditionally released from prison, Mandela's document to P W Botha was published, Mandela's insistence on the nationalisation of banks and mines (contrary, as argued in this article, to ANC/SACP to renege on the Freedom Charter's clause relating to wealth), the banning on ANC and other organisations was lifted, more political prisoners are due for release, there is a moratorium on hangings, the state of emergency partially lifted and Mandela released.

Since his release Mandela has given press interviews in which he has emphasised his and, perhaps, the ANC's preparedness to compromise on one person one vote and all major issues (as he put it in the interview with Trevor MacDonald of *ITN* on 14 February 1990).

All these are developments which have a bearing on the arguments of this article and, given time, would have led to a re-formulation of some parts of the article. But the import of the arguments is unaltered by the dramatic turn of events. If anything, the new situation points to the urgency for the Left to assess its own relevance and effectivity.

In summary, the article has tried to argue the following points:

1. The Left outside the MDM has underestimated the pressures making negotiations a reality.

2. The Left has made a mistake in staying out of UDF and COSATU (some may be non-effective members of COSATU simply because their trade union is affiliated to COSATU). The Left has made another mistake by staying out of the Conference for a Democratic Future.

3. The Left labours under outmoded notions of the ANC and its arguments for staying out of all the above organisations are borrowed from another era and thus have dubious relevance to South Africa to-day.

4. The ANC dominates and articulates the popular demands of the mass movement: both the ANC and the popular demands can in the present time only be influenced by being part of the Mass Democratic Movement.

5. The consequence for the Left staying out of the MDM has been marginalisation and leaving the MDM subject to all other influences but themselves.

6. Opposition to the stage-ist theories of the ANC and SACP does not mean that the ANC and SACP should be opposed because they are struggling only for what they conceive as the first stage: the eradication of apartheid. As a matter of duty, socialists must support them in their limited task of abolishing apartheid.

7. While sustaining 'war talk', that is, the rhetoric or discourse of armed struggle, the ANC has in fact scaled down or abandoned 'armed struggle'. It should not be criticised for this course because an armed struggle is not and never was feasible in the circumstances of South Africa.

8. Thanks to its Constitutional Guidelines, scaling down or even abandoning altogether 'armed struggle', Perestroika and the collapse of Communist Party regimes in Eastern Europe, the ANC now seems like the Aquino factor in South Africa: Western governments and capital cannot at present be afraid of the SACP or the ANC's link to the SACP and can trust both not to threaten their interests in South Africa, and as such will wield their power to force a new political order in which the ANC plays an important part.

9. However, the Aquino role being played by the ANC or any criticism of

the ANC made in this article does not imply staying out of alliances like the MDM which are ANC led and dominated. Indeed, the ANC must be supported in so far as, in the present conjuncture, it deploys the Aquino role to win the minimum demand for one person one vote. Never in the long history of our struggle have we been in so strongly an advantageous position as we are now to win at least this one demand that the oppressed people will never forgive us if we should lose the opportunity or obstruct those liberation organisations ready to seize the opportunity.

10. Alliances in the fight against apartheid are necessary. It is in their essence that they have limited objectives and are of short term duration. Alliances neither mean an abdication of organisational autonomy nor a suspension of an independent programme for socialism. Above all, alliances in South Africa do not mean the kind of 'popular front' the Left has imported as a concept from Europe of the 30s and is misapplying to the South African reality of today.

11. In order to escape marginalisation the Left must join the MDM - that means subordination to policies to which the Left may be opposed but if democratically agreed then the obligation is to support them.

12. The MDM has elements within it which make it at times undemocratic and intolerant of dissent. So being a part of the MDM is not easy but this is not a good reason for staying out.

13. The Left has a role to play in the MDM: to unreservedly support and defend the MDM in the short term quest to end apartheid.

*What matters most is not how correct the non-MDM Left is in its ideas. This Left has had 'correct' ideas for fifty years and more but with minimal influence. What matters now is that it finds its feet in the mass movement for a democratic change. Today, the mass movement expressed by the MDM is a movement with a strong leftwing within it and so pregnant with socialism that the non-MDM Left has no good reason to stay out of it.*



"democratic transition" would, in any case, require taming the workers' movement so that social demands be brought little by little within bounds of the reformers' schemata.

## Talks at the top difficult to control

Whatever the tempo of the "negotiations" in the period ahead, the mass movement is henceforth in a situation where it will be very difficult for it to exercise control over the dialectic between rank-and-file struggles and talks at the top. How will the mobilisations be used to influence the official discussions, and what will be the effect of the latter on the mass movement - these are the questions that are going to be discussed in the organisations.

What lies behind these sudden developments? For the past seven years the country has seen the largest mobilisations in its history. The 1980s have seen the development of an unprecedented level of consciousness, organisation and activity. Moreover this fantastic radicalisation has combined with a long economic depression and has obviously aggravated it. The ruling class has been profoundly divided by this, and the imperialist governments are themselves divided over what attitude to adopt towards their South African ally.

The Black movement is more and more organised around a majority that is socially proletarian, in the trade unions but also in the communities. The repression has hit very hard, and a relentless attack has been waged to cut down the organisational capacities of the movement. But this has never succeeded in pushing back the average level of consciousness of the Black population. Finally, with the passing of time, experience has led broader and broader sections of the working class and youth to pose the problem of socialism as the sole means of breaking definitively the mainsprings of racial segregation.

But is such an analysis sufficient to explain the situation today? Are the overtures and concessions made by De Klerk only the expressions of a relationship of forces unfavourable to the apartheid regime, as the ANC maintain?

Four great periods of struggle can be distinguished in the course of the last ten

years. The first ended in 1984, after the great boycott of the elections for "Coloureds" and "Indians". The mass movement was very strongly structured and highly mobilised. The second period is that of the school boycott, the great strike movements, the boycott of white businesses, etc.

## Renewal of big mobilisations against elections

Then followed the period of setbacks, with the second state of emergency, the fall in the number of strikes, the weakening of the United Democratic Front (UDF). Finally, a new conjuncture has opened, starting from August 1989, with a renewal of the big mobilisations against the elections to the "White", "Coloured" and "Indian" chambers.<sup>4</sup>

But it is insufficient to look only at the recent mobilisations. The imperialists, to begin with the Americans and the British, and the South African government have certainly noted on this occasion that the Black movement still has enormous reserves of combativity. But these last few months, in themselves, have not provoked the dramatic turn of events in South African political life and the great turning point today. We have instead to hark back to the period of setbacks in 1987-88.

At that time, the mass movement was suddenly faced by the regime regaining a capacity for initiative - the state of emergency, selective repression, winning over the employers through a program of deregulation and privatisation etc. Thus, despite the extent of the confrontation in the preceding period, the state apparatus had not suffered any lasting damage, and no real weaknesses had emerged within the army.<sup>5</sup> The regime was undermined, but the Black movement, for its part, was unable to solve the problem of the seizure of power.

This dilemma was aggravated by the fact that, throughout the years 1985-87, the propaganda of the ANC had claimed that it was becoming impossible to administer apartheid, that a situation of dual power existed, and that the final stage had been reached in building a people's army.

The middle cadre, and above all the young militants of the townships, were convinced then that the end was near.<sup>6</sup> For all that, the question of power was not on the agenda. The armed struggle of the ANC had been a particular form of propagandism, which galvanised the youth, but did not represent a convincing strategic project.

It suddenly became necessary to pose the question of the lines of retreat and of defending the gains of the movement. It was already too late to stabilize the movement in the townships. Such questions as the links with the trade unions, structures and instituting democratic procedures within the mass movement had been neglected.<sup>7</sup> A turn towards a more long term strategy had to be made.

Problems emerged then even in the ranks of the ANC leadership in exile. The debate became public, between those who began to evoke the possibility of partial victories against apartheid, and those who developed above all the line of "armed struggle", advocating a perspective of a revolutionary arming of the masses, and insurrection.

It is significant that this intense debate, occurring at the very heart of the ANC, was not replicated in any form either in the other political organisations or, above all in the trade union movement. While the question of tactical retreat was raised in some trade unions, nonetheless when the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) met in conference in May 1988, nothing explicit was proposed on the strategy to follow.

The debate<sup>8</sup> within the ANC has not been one of abstract theories of "militarism" versus "realism". For the first

6. This judgment was not generally shared by the principal trade union leaderships.

7. This question was at the centre of the report of the COSATU secretariat to the Federation's special congress on 14 and 15 May 1988.

8. The public debate in the ANC's review, *Sechaba*, was officially closed with the issue of August 1989.

4. See IV, 170, October 2, 1989.

5. However problems have recently emerged within the police force. The impact of the campaign against military service should not be forgotten either, although the essence of this initially was above all the refusal to go and fight in Angola and Namibia. (see IV, 147 19 September, 1988).



until recently a very repressive policy but which, at a local level, is opening negotiations little by little with representatives of the people's associations<sup>16</sup>? How to conceive a long term strategy when, alongside the continuation of dire poverty for the Black majority, a layer of small entrepreneurs and black youths is growing very rapidly, who aspire to reach the level of consumption of the white majority?

Well before the beginning of the great debate on negotiations, the question of partial gains was present in the minds of the trade union leaderships. For if the 1984-87 movement did not open the way for the seizure of power, it was then necessary to devise a new strategy to safeguard the workers' movement. But the scenario envisaged at that time was not one of reforms negotiated at the top.

## Workers' Charter not put forward as socialist

At COSATU's July 1989 congress, the debate on the "Workers Charter" illustrated this evolution. Before then the trade union left had presented the Workers' Charter as an overall socialist project. But now it was put forward as a programme of democratic and social demands, certainly basic, but not in itself constituting a socialist project. It is easy to understand the views of those workers' leaders who, convinced that the question of power is not on the agenda, believe it necessary to fall back on a more modest project of defending the working class. However, as a result the Workers' Charter becomes in fact a supplement to the Constitutional Guidelines, in the same sense as the ANC'S Charter on education or on Women. It is no longer seen as providing the working class with an overall programme<sup>17</sup>.

Today's openings provide radically different conditions for the everyday struggles. The demonstration authorised at the Cape on 13 September, and the rally in Johannesburg on the 29 October, symbolise the new margins for manoeuvre the mass movement has at

its disposal. It is essential to recognise this in order to understand how the overwhelming majority of the mass movement are going to relate to the ANC's new policy<sup>18</sup>. The rank and file militants are going to perceive the new situation as an opportunity to bring down apartheid.

Already, important debates are going on in the most advanced sectors: - the ANC has presented its Constitutional Guidelines as a project which the whole mass movement must freely debate. At its July 1989 congress COSATU passed a resolution on the negotiations process, saying that it was necessary "to ensure in the event of negotiations taking place that the masses of our people are involved in shaping the process so that no negotiations take place without the democratic participation of the people" and "that only a sovereign body mandated by the people and accountable to the people as a whole can have the authority to develop a new constitution and decide on the method of implementation".

What can be the basis for representing the mass movement in a genuine process of negotiation? How open will it be? How is COSATU going to reconcile its project of uniting with the other trade union federation, the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU), with its adherence to the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), in which the ANC is strongly dominant?

## Charter current faces choice on unity

In principle, the big unity conference "for a democratic future" must clarify

these questions. Either unity is preserved, and all the workers' and revolutionary currents can participate as foreseen, or there will be a return to the old sectarianism, and the Charterist current will reduce this meeting to a front between itself and the bourgeois democratic currents<sup>19</sup>.

● Everybody agrees now on the demand for a "non-racial" South Africa, that is to say without any law making reference to racial or ethnic origin. The old debate on the existence of separate "nationalities" or of "nations" in South Africa is now closed, at least for the time being. But what will a South Africa genuinely free of all discrimination look like? What definition to give to the term "equality"? Formal equality before the law? Equality of opportunity to claim a place within a market economy<sup>20</sup>?

● The question of the land is inextricably linked to the question of the Bantustans: How is this essential part of apartheid to be dismantled? What do the ANC's Guidelines mean by an agrarian reform conducted by the existing state?

● Numerous statements, notably from the Charterist current, reaffirm that the working class must be the central force of change. But what kind of social and political hegemony is it to exercise? How, for example, in the current situation, can the trade unions conserve and defend their independence, as well as their unity and democracy?

● The debate on the mixed economy has been introduced by the ANC and the Soviets, with the examples taken being Nicaragua and the Soviet Union. Is it not curious to treat as identical three radically different situations: that of a small dependent country, at the beginning of the transition to socialism, that of a highly industrialised country after seventy years of "socialism", and finally that of a country like South Africa, for which the ANC's project is not one of a revolutionary state?

19. This conference, initially scheduled for October, has now been put back to 9 December.

20. The ANC is fully conscious of this problem, as is evident when it employs the term "positive action" to designate the elaborate mechanisms needed to correct the disadvantages suffered by black people, particularly in the area of land ownership.

16. See *Work in Progress* number 61, September 1989, Johannesburg.

17. Moses Mayekiso, leader of the metalworkers' union NUMSA, explains its change, but continues to defend the necessity, in other respects, of a socialist perspective, *South African Labour Bulletin*, number 2, 1989, Johannesburg.



# Changes in South African domestic and regional policy since F.W. de Klerk

Of central importance for the goals of peace, security and development in southern Africa is the domestic and regional policies of South Africa. This paper, prepared by the Centre for African Studies, University of Eduardo Mondlane, Mozambique, serves to describe and analyse the changes in South Africa since F W de Klerk assumed presidency of the apartheid state on August 14, 1989.

Much conventional analysis of the policies of the de Klerk regime is based on assessments of de Klerk's own personality or character traits (which are often contrasted to those of his predecessor, PW Botha) and/or speculation about his own subjective intentions. Not only are such approaches methodologically shallow and inadequate, they also fail to grasp the significance of the most important dynamics of the current situation in South and southern Africa.

Although de Klerk has a reputation for pragmatism and is not closely linked to the structure of the military-dominated administration which was developed under Botha, he is in fact a rather cautious and conservative figure who comes from the centre right of the governing National Party (NP). His entire political career, like that of his predecessors, has been devoted to defending the philosophy, system and institutions of apartheid. In particular, de Klerk has acquired a reputation as one of the most dedicated defenders of racially exclusive "own affairs" political structures. The change in leadership in the apartheid state has thus not led to the rise of a figure any less dedicated than his predecessors to the defence of the essentials of the apartheid system. The main significance of de Klerk's rise to power lies in the changed objective circumstances in which he has taken over and

in the potentially different response of the regime he leads to the pressures generated by these circumstances.

De Klerk's accession to the leadership of the apartheid state took place against the background of the emergence of important new realities in the regional, domestic and international terrains of struggle. Among the most important of these were:

- The military setbacks at Cuito Cuana-vale, which highlighted the limitations of militaristic aggression as a means of guaranteeing long-term security for apartheid;
- The failure of both "Total Strategy" and its successor WHAM ("Winning Hearts and Minds") to create a new supportive alliance capable of resolving the domestic crisis of apartheid, as well as the gradual withering away of white political cohesion concerning what the future path of South Africa should be;
- The growing pressures of international isolation, and most particularly the effects of South Africa's exclusion from the "normal facilities" of international financial markets on the South African economy;
- The changing international environment, resulting particularly from the adoption of the policies of *glasnost*, *perestroika* and "new thinking" in the

Soviet Union. This has led to growing cooperation between the Soviet Union and the West in seeking "political solutions to regional conflicts". There is also in the West a growth in anti-apartheid sentiment.

Even before de Klerk took over, it had become clear that these "new realities" had congealed to produce new objective circumstances which the authorities in Pretoria could not ignore. The military option in Angola had become extremely costly in military, political and economic terms. Pretoria's known involvement in destabilisation elsewhere in the region, and most notably in Mozambique, was threatening to become costly diplomatically and ideologically, and this was threatening to increase South Africa's international isolation at precisely a moment economic pressures dictated the necessity for a major effort to reduce this isolation. At the same time, the regime needed space, time and a degree of legitimacy to tackle the question of how to proceed with domestic restructuring given the growing recognition that neither "Total Strategy" nor WHAM were capable of producing a viable solution to the continuing crisis of apartheid.

However, while most of the above described "new realities" can be recognised as setbacks or at least barriers to



nic group formation (eg the formation of an open race group characterised by voluntary association), a reassessment of the functions and power of the head of state and the manner of his election.

Despite some new elements, a close reading of the Five-Year Plan and an analysis of official statements made later leads to the conclusion that the plan in its essentials sticks to the policy of the Botha government. Entrenched racial and ethnic group divisions remain the key to the NP's outlook for the future. The complicated distinctions on the composition and decision-making principles of various proposed "own affairs" and "general affairs" bodies as well as the proposed "unique system of democracy not based on numbers" but on "power sharing" and "concurrent majorities" in general serve the purpose of securing overall white dominance. Whites will be able to veto almost any change not to its liking. The new elements thus represent quantitative, and not qualitative shifts.

Instead of addressing the main issue, Pretoria emmeshes itself in a twisted constitutional rhetoric which offers a first class "collector's item for students of bizarre constitutions" as the South African political scientist David Welsh recently put it. The Five-Year Plan is thus not a workable proposal to end the race and class conflict in South Africa. If de Klerk sticks by it, he again positions himself as a man of the past. The NP plan represents phony political participation and one-sided power distribution with respect to the socio-economic transformation of apartheid. It may even produce more instability, in that it gives certain *de jure* political participation to the black majority, while *de facto* continuing to deny it real influence.

## Position of the ANC

The positive elements in the latest developments is that the regime, or parts of it, may have come to the conclusion that there is no solution to the South African crisis without the ANC and that it is necessary to involve the liberation movement in the process of negotiating a new constitution. This is not unambiguous, however. For example, the regime would probably like to see the ANC split and deal with a truncated ANC as one of several negotiating part-

ners. However, the regime is interested in representatives of the white community (there has been over 30 meetings between the ANC and South African whites since late 1985). Another sign is the, albeit selective, lack of punitive action against certain activities linked to the recent defiance campaign. A third sign is the hint that the ANC does not need to renounce violence in order to be unbanned and participate in negotiations. They should instead, according to the regime, commit themselves to peaceful negotiations and solutions. The struggle between the apartheid regime and the ANC has thus taken on the dimension of being an overt struggle for political legitimacy, initially about who has the more convincing negotiating formula to offer.

The ANC sees negotiations as a process in which the major protagonists the national liberation movement and the mass democratic movement, on the one hand, and the apartheid regime, on the other, seek an agreement on the terms to end their conflict. The ANC's position is that it is in principle willing to seek a negotiated solution, but insists that any negotiations should have as the objective "the transformation of our country into a united and non-racial democracy". Moreover, before negotiations can take place, a climate conducive to negotiations would first have to be created.

On the future, the ANC has issued a tentative proposal of constitutional guidelines and, more recently, a detailed plan for settling the conflict in South Africa. This plan has been endorsed by the OAU and the Non-Aligned Movement. The key elements of these proposals are:

- Any process of negotiation should have as its objective the ending of apartheid and the establishment in South Africa of a non-racial and democratic system of government.
- Any decision to participate in a process of negotiation should be taken by the people themselves through a process of democratic consultation and debate.
- The above implies the necessity to create a climate conducive to negotiation by normalising political life through the following measures: the unconditional release of all political

prisoners and detainees; lifting the state of emergency; the unbanning of all banned organisations; repealing all repressive legislation and withdrawing the army and the police from the townships.

- The existing regime should be recognised as an interested party in the negotiations. This means that the existing regime and its agencies cannot manage the transition process; a cease-fire should be negotiated at which time an acceptable interim transitional government will be established.

The above constitutes what the ANC considers to be the principles for serious negotiations. These positions and proposals are supported by the Mass Democratic Movement and other forces for change inside South Africa as well as by the key international actors, such as the Frontline States, the OAU, the Non-Aligned Movement and the United Nations.

## Other domestic actors

While the positions of the de Klerk regime, on the one hand, and the ANC and MDM, on the other, represent the most significant alternatives on the contested terrain of negotiation politics, a number of other forces inside South Africa have also adopted positions on this issue. At one extreme, the PAC and Black Consciousness tradition have declared that any negotiation at this stage would be a sell-out. Inkatha, on the other hand, after vacillating for years on this issue, has finally declared itself willing to participate in a negotiation process. It has said that its ideal is a united, non-racial South Africa, but that it is willing to contemplate a compromise formula which results in less than this. However, this gesture comes at a time when it is increasingly becoming recognised within the dominant classes that a deal with Buthelezi and other similar forces will not be sufficient to resolve the crisis of apartheid. At the same time, Buthelezi's base is being significantly undermined by the recruitment of a number of chiefs in the Zululand area to the MDM-affiliated Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (CONTRALESAs). Buthelezi's marginal importance in this process is reflected in the relatively lukewarm response of the regime to Inkatha's announcement.



- A proposal to hold elections for non-homeland black people next year to select representative to negotiate a new constitution.
  - Meeting between de Klerk and Tutu, Boesak and Chikane in mid-October.
  - An apparent downgrading of the importance of the National Security Management System and the State Security Council. However, these structures remain in place and are still influential in the decision-making process. The difference is that their views do not automatically prevail on all issues as they tended to do under P W Botha.
- On the other hand:
- Detentions continue, several hundreds have been detained since mid-August, among them key leaders of the MDM.
  - Hangings have continued.
  - The September 1989 white election saw 23 people killed and hundreds wounded.

### Political concessions

The political concessions and other measures taken by the South African government since de Klerk came to power do not in themselves offer a basis for analysing the current political processes in South Africa. Rather, they have come about as a result of various factors and dynamics at the national, regional and international level and can only be understood and interpreted with those factors and dynamics in mind.

The present climate appears to favour negotiations both to the conflict between apartheid and the forces of liberation inside South Africa and to the other conflicts in the region caused by apartheid South Africa. Whether negotiations lead to a political solution to the domestic and regional conflicts or to the continuation of apartheid domination in another form depends on what type of negotiation, with whom and in what climate.

The crucial question is of course whether there is a new thinking within the apartheid regime which reflects qualitative changes in the subjective views of the decision-makers or whether the measures result from changes in the objective circumstances in which political decisions are made.

We agree with most observers in concluding that there has been no fundamental shift in the basic and consistent objectives of the apartheid regime, that is, the aim is still to safeguard political and economic power in the hands of the white minority and maintain a position of regional hegemony in economic and security matters.

The main conclusion, then is that the present political concessions made by the NP government in South Africa should be interpreted as tactical retreats and political and diplomatic manoeuvres in order to buy enough time to find a solution which guarantees the continuation of white political and economic domination despite the changes that have occurred in the balance of forces. The need for such manoeuvres has been brought about by the "new realities" already mentioned.

Promises of detente, dialogue and negotiations are not new features in South African politics. When under pressure in the past, the apartheid regime has on several occasions turned to such policies in order to buy time and ward off internal or external pressure. This has never meant a change in overall objectives - the goals have remained the same. What has changed has been the precise mix and timing of various "carrot and stick" instruments to achieve these goals, especially with respect to regional policy.

But the manoeuvring space has constantly narrowed and history may not necessarily repeat itself for ever and ever. On the domestic level, the manoeuvring space of F W de Klerk is such that words need to be followed by action of some kind. On the level of regional policy, at least some South African officials now begin to recognise that destabilisation has exacerbated, rather than reduced the threat to white power. Destabilisation has been a rational and cost-effective strategy to defend white domination and achieve certain aims with respect to the policies of some neighbouring countries; there is no doubt about that. But there are basic contradictions in such a strategy; it is a defensive strategy aimed at buying time. It does not offer any solution to the basic problems of domestic legitimacy and external pressures.

### Two projects

Inside South Africa there are currently two main projects facing each other. One is the reformed apartheid project of the NP government as expressed in the Five-Year Action Plan, eg a project aimed at maintaining race group classification as the key instrument in the political and economic affairs of the country and guarantee that ultimate political and economic control continues to rest with the white minority. The other is the project of the ANC and the MDM, eg a unitary, non-racial, democratic South Africa where universal suffrage determines the distribution of political power.

Despite the heavy-handed repression during the latter half of the 1980s, the balance of forces has constantly shifted in favour of the democratic forces. Promises and empty words no longer satisfy international opinion. The organisational capability and commitment of the forces for liberation has proven strong enough to survive the concerted assault of the regime since 1984. The impact of internal and external pressure (limited as the latter may be) is beginning to be seriously felt inside South Africa, both in economic and political terms. This, more than anything else, has brought about the moderate concessions so far made by the F W de Klerk government. These concessions represent an attempt at regaining the strategic initiative definitionally lost by the Botha government in the mid-1980s. De Klerk and the people close to him appear to have concluded that the new realities described above make it necessary to enter into some form of credible negotiations with the ANC on a new constitution.

### Delicate balance

What we are witnessing at the moment is a cautious jockeying for positions of the two main opposing internal forces. Both sides try to advance their position and respective strategies in a complex game plan in which both the apartheid regime and the forces of liberation seek to turn the confrontation into a political contest, while at the same time trying to maintain support from their respective constituencies, gain support from new ones and satisfy the expectations of international opinion.



## 1. Reformed apartheid

This is the domestic scenario envisaged by the de Klerk government. It is based on the Action Plan of the NP and has been further elaborated upon in various official statements. This falls well short of a post-apartheid solution since its basic objective is to preserve, and not eliminate, the basic pillars of the apartheid system. This scenario could have at least three different impacts on the region as a whole, depending on the balance of forces.

The first possible regional 'sub-scenario' would emerge if South Africa succeeded in using the current diplomatic and economic openings to significantly reduce its international isolation and obtain a degree of international endorsement for its 'reformed apartheid' programme. If these objectives were to be realised, a greater convergence between South African and Western policy could be expected around a project seeking to 'rehabilitate' the region under South African hegemony. This could lead to Western participation in joint ventures with South Africa channeling aid and investment into projects which would tend to strengthen rather than lessen ties of dependence. Such a strategy has been elaborated in South Africa and tentatively named a "Marshall Plan" for southern Africa. This scenario implies that the West closes its eyes to the crisis of apartheid inside South Africa and to apartheid's role as the root cause of conflict on the regional level or, alternatively, believes that the newly elected white minority government and its State President somehow will seriously involve itself in negotiations leading to its elimination from political power.

At the security level, this scenario would initially imply some withdrawal from certain forms of destabilisation. However, since the crisis of apartheid would remain essentially unresolved, a strong impulse towards seeking to export the crisis of apartheid to the region would remain especially at moments when the domestic crisis of apartheid was felt most intensely. A complete unilateral abandonment of 'war by proxy' by South Africa would be extremely unlikely, although cycles of ups and downs in such support would be possible. Any more permanent reduc-

tion in the level of destabilisation would probably continue to depend on acceptance by a victim state of some form of 'Pax Pretoriana' terms. That is to say a measure of peace (in the sense of absence of war) could be bought, but at the cost of significant concessions to South African demands. This would imply severe constraints on the capacity to assert real independence. For the region, this scenario would also mean that the apartheid regime could acquire the resources to overcome its current military and financial vulnerabilities.

A second possible regional sub-scenario would result from an early collapse of Pretoria's current diplomatic/economic orientated approach to the region. If this were to occur, and there was not sufficient international pressure to render the costs prohibitive, a rapid return to the cycle of escalating regional aggression could be expected. There could, however, be certain changes in the selection of the major targets of destabilisation, with Zimbabwe and an independent Namibia coming in for more attention. For Mozambique, such a scenario would mean not only the continuation of the bandit war, but also the possibility that Zimbabwe finds itself so tied down by destabilisation at home that it is obliged to reduce its commitment to Mozambique.

A third sub-scenario would be that the momentum of changes in the international system and new regional realities succeeds in continuing to restrain those in Pretoria favouring militaristic options, while not capitulating to the strategies of South Africa's diplomats or allowing apartheid to break out of its international isolation. Such a scenario would amount to keeping destabilisation at bay, while simultaneously keeping apartheid weak. Undiminished or increased international pressure is central to this scenario. For the independent states of southern Africa as a whole, such a scenario would open up a certain space for the advance of SADC projects currently blocked by destabilisation. It would also be conducive to the role SADC plays in the strategic planning of the major Western powers. It would enable the anti-apartheid struggle to derive maximum benefit from the new regional conjuncture, while minimising the openings created

for the apartheid regime to overcome its current economic and military vulnerabilities.

Identifying the third as the scenario preferred by the FLS and SADC member states is relatively straightforward. It is, however, the alternative which requires the most skilled diplomacy and the most active and carefully formulated strategy. This will be rooted in a recognition that success depends on being able to force South Africa to respond to proposals from the region (or from extra-regional interests), rather than the other way round. It implies an element of dialogue with Pretoria which does not spill over into legitimisation of Pretoria's policies and objectives. It implies the formulation of policies on economic interaction which not simply offer an open door for South African capital, but seek to obtain the best terms possible in relations which remain unavoidable and allow other forms of economic cooperation where this is compatible with national and regional plans and priorities. It implies continuing to locate the central focus of regional economic policy firmly within the SADC perspective of reducing historical ties of dependence on South Africa. Such a strategy formulation should, in our view, be based on the insight that the present South African government is profoundly intransigent on the key issue: it is neither in any form of serious power sharing. The offering of carrots by extra-regional forces is therefore as counter-productive now as it was in the past. Further progress depends on increasing rather than decreasing external pressure.

The reformed apartheid scenario and its three regional sub-scenarios have one thing in common: they describe a situation still profoundly characterised by the struggle to maintain or end apartheid. The other two possible domestic scenarios refer to situations in which there has been more substantial change in either the political or socio-economic pillars of apartheid.

## 2. Power sharing after a transfer of power

This scenario could, albeit somewhat simplified, be described as the project of South African 'Big Business', with support of foreign financial and monop-



# Negotiations and Liberation

**A statement issued by the Cape Action League on its position on the present discussions about a negotiated settlement of the conflict in South Africa.**

## **Why the sudden interest in negotiations?**

Most people in South Africa today are aware that an important discussion about the future of our struggle for freedom is taking place throughout the country and at many different levels in many different organisations. National Party ministers and lesser dignitaries are today speaking in terms of negotiating a settlement of the conflict in South Africa. They use words and phrases that sound very much like the kind of thing that liberals have been saying for many years: Listen to the black people; free their leaders from prison and detention; let the exiles return; talk to the real leaders of the people; scrap discriminatory laws; and so on. Today, if one listens only to the words, it is sometimes quite difficult to know who is speaking: whether it is a member of the National Party, of the Democratic Party, the

Labour Party, Inkatha, or even someone from within the liberation movement!

Everybody is talking about "talks", "negotiations" and "negotiated settlements".

Why this sudden interest? Why the shift in focus from "making the country ungovernable", "liberation before education", states of emergency, total onslaught, total strategy, etc.? Why does it seem as though peace has broken out when the war is so obviously not yet over? There are many reasons and we want to list only some of the more important ones.

### **External factors**

Let us begin with those developments beyond the borders of South Africa which have helped to bring about the situation in which we find ourselves today, one in which "a climate of ex-

pectation" about the possibility of a negotiated settlement exists.

*Perestroika* in the Soviet Union and, more generally, events in Eastern Europe are the most important influence on the situation. For reasons connected with its own economic, political and social survival and development, the Soviet Union has to withdraw from zones of conflict in the rest of the world. In the simplest terms, this means that it is no longer prepared to get involved (or trapped) in wars beyond its borders that go on for many many years. These wars represent a serious drain on the resources of the Soviet Union and do not always lead to any gains for it. Consequently, we have seen the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and the gradual withdrawal from all other conflict regions of the world. President Gorbachev and his government have said very clearly and firmly that they



Finally, the logic of example is another important reason why people think that this is "a time to speak". The settlement in Namibia, the apparent progress towards a settlement in Angola and the stop-go attempts at getting the Frelimo government and the Renamo bandits to talk to one another. All these developments give rise to the question: Why not South Africa, too?

The working people of South Africa are well informed about events happening around us and a climate of expectation consequently comes about. Since people will always prefer peaceful solutions to violence, this means that the oppressed people are generally more open to suggestions of talks than they would have been in 1984-86 when they were daily confronted with well-armed, trigger-happy troops in the townships, in the schools, on the mines and even at places of work. This, too, is a form of pressure on the liberation movement. And, of course, we should stress that in the movement itself there are many leadership elements who believe, on principle, in peaceful methods of struggle and, thus, in compromise and negotiations.

## Talks, negotiations and a negotiated settlement

Before we consider the different positions on the question of negotiations, let us ask ourselves simply what all the words mean. Or, perhaps better, what do people mean when they use these words. In the period into which we have just moved, it will be extremely important to have total clarity on what it is that we are talking about. Otherwise, we could easily find ourselves manoeuvred into a blind alley. It could take us many years of fruitless struggle to extricate ourselves from such a situation.

Trade union officials negotiate with bosses every day; delegations from civic associations are forced to talk to local government authorities such as city councils, divisional councils and regional services councils from time to time. When they do so, they usually have a mandate from the workers whom they represent and they are expected to discuss with the people on the other side those issues for which they have a mandate. In such cases the working

people are always very careful never to write out a blank cheque for so-called "leaders". In other words, they will never put themselves in a position where a "leader" or a group of "leaders" can decide for them what the best offer is. They maintain control over their own destiny through democratic organisation and procedure: the mandated delegates have to report back to them and ask for new mandates if necessary. If they don't carry out their mandate, they can be dismissed or recalled. "Negotiations" or "talks" are, thus, nothing new. However, in the present context, we have to be much more careful and much clearer. There is absolutely no reason why we should be afraid to "talk" with the South African government and its allies about the future of our country. In fact, we have every reason to make it crystal clear to anyone that wishes to listen to us how we see the future of our country. The mere fact of our informing the other party how you see the future cannot compromise you.

It is an entirely different matter, however, when you begin to "negotiate" with that party. To begin with: negotiations presuppose that you accept the good faith of the other party, i.e., that you are willing for the attainment of your goals to accept a framework which includes the other party as an equal. This is what happens when trade unionists and bosses negotiate an agreement. In a political struggle for power, such negotiations take place very rarely. This is so because to negotiate with the enemy during such a struggle means that you accept their legitimacy. In the history of such struggles, therefore, radical social movements have only negotiated when they have found themselves in danger of collapse, that is, in order to get a breathing space during which they could restore their strength in order to attack the enemy with greater vigour afterwards.

If the struggle is one for civil rights in a country where the constitution guarantees equal rights to all the citizens, as was the case in the U.S.A. in the 'sixties, then "negotiation politics" are clearly appropriate. This is decidedly not the situation in South Africa. We are not involved in a civil rights struggle. Our struggle is a struggle for the control of state power between a white ruling class

and its allies on the one hand and the black working class and its allies among the oppressed people on the other hand. This is so because experience has taught us that this is the only way in which the exploited and oppressed people will gain control over their lives and thus be able to feed, house, clothe and educate themselves and their children. Social justice, peace, equality of opportunity and freedom cannot come out of some tinkering with the apartheid constitution under which we now live.

It is sometimes said that the liberation movement will "negotiate" with the present apartheid regime for "the transfer of state power". This is the kind of thing that happened in most anti-colonial or independence struggles in Africa, most recently in Zimbabwe, for example. Beside other important considerations about the nature of our struggle and the nature of the ruling class (is the South African situation a "colonial" situation of any kind?), two assumptions in this formula have to be questioned.

The first is the assumption that the South Africa state has to and wants to negotiate. Negotiations take place between two parties of comparable strength, who recognise that to continue fighting would simply destroy their power bases. They negotiate, therefore, because they want to save or consolidate their bases. In this regard, it remains true that you cannot win at the negotiation table what you have not already won on the battlefield. In South Africa today, the liberation movement has undoubtedly made dramatic advances. However, it is mere wishful thinking to believe that we have reached a situation where the South African regime has to negotiate because of the organisational strength of the liberation movement. They are interested in talking to the people simply because of their economic problems (some of which are undoubtedly the result of the liberation movement's political mobilisation inside and outside the country). In other words, for the South African government, the party "on the other side" is actually the Western imperialist countries even if they remain invisible at the negotiation table, rather than the liberation movement itself. They want to give the impression that they are moving "in the right direction" so they can obtain a



# Talking Negotiations? The air is full of talk about talks

Statement issued by Action Youth at the time of the  
Conference for a Democratic Future on 9 December 1989

The release of comrades Walter Sisulu, Jaftha Masemola and their comrades, and the holding of "legal" marches has been explained by de Klerk and his cabinet as helping to create a climate for negotiations. An intricate game of poker is being played on the stage of South African politics. The key players in the game are, however, sitting largely outside the country in capitals such as London, Washington, Bonn, Paris, Moscow and Lusaka.

The Conference for a Democratic Future is taking place against this background. We must clearly ask if the South African government is being pushed into a transfer of power, or even a sharing of power, by the imperialists and local big business. On a massive scale, the media are creating a climate of expectation. Freedom is around the

corner, if only both sides are reasonable and willing to compromise, is the line being pushed. This is a totally wrong projection of the situation!

We see no possibility of bridging the vast abyss between the white ruling class and its allies on the one hand and the oppressed and exploited on the other. There is no alternative to continuing the struggle at all levels!

## **The people want peace, freedom and justice**

On the other hand, we are well aware that the overwhelming majority of our people would prefer a peaceful way to freedom and equality. This is only natural.

For this reason, we do not reject on principle talks which take place on

conditions set by the liberation movement as a whole, in order to explore this possibility.

But we refuse to delude the working class that it is possible to negotiate for a transfer or even a sharing of power. Those who spread this illusion will live to regret it!

## **Who's on whose side?**

The Nationalist government, the Democratic Party and the imperialists (particularly Britain and the USA) are in basic agreement with each other.

They believe that the apartheid system must be modified but not replaced. By modifying the system, removing the superficial features of apartheid, they hope to defuse the mass struggle and to remain in power. As far as they are



which embarks upon a planned and balanced programme of development and the redistribution of wealth can hope to solve these problems.

The working class must strengthen itself through struggle, building organisation and raising its political consciousness - tilting the balance of forces in its favour and enabling it to liberate the whole of society. Negotiations from a position of weakness cannot achieve a radical transformation of society!

## Tasks in the present situation

Mass organisations are at present in a state of retreat. Although the working class is still very militant, as can be seen from the anti-LRA strike and the SAB and SATS strikes, the level of political consciousness and organisation is still low.

The only viable strategy is to build the self-confidence of the working class by asserting the right to free assembly, and building area committees, street committees, democratic trade unions etc.

The organisations must not only be welded together by struggle against their specific material conditions, but through discussions and struggle they could develop a common view of the political and economic future of our country. Only in this way can the working class take control of their own lives and lead the other classes and sectors, for example, the youth, students, progressive petit-bourgeois organisations etc. Only then will we be ready to discuss the question of negotiations.

## The demand for a constituent assembly

We support the call for a Constituent Assembly in which the working class plays the dominant role. Representatives in such an assembly must represent structures that are firmly rooted amongst the oppressed and exploited. These grassroots structures or Councils of the Oppressed and Exploited must operate in a fully democratic way, on the basis of the right of members to freely put across their views, the right to recall representatives if they do not carry out the mandate of the Council, the right to full participation in writing a

new constitution. These Councils must be open to representatives of workers - transcending trade union affiliations, civic organisations, unemployed groups, student bodies and political organisations. Mass representation and non-sectarianism must be the hallmark of the Councils. They should be established throughout the country and in the process break down interecine fights between political organisations of the masses.

These Councils will ensure that leaders are truly representative and that the Constituent Assembly becomes an effective vehicle for the transformation of society in accordance with the wishes of the masses.

## Representative organs

The Councils should serve a dual purpose:

1. Discussion around the drawing up of a constitution as well as
2. Coordinating mass action.

It is clear that such a process for building a Constituent Assembly will not be quick and easy. There is indeed no easy road to freedom. The call for a Constituent Assembly can only be supported if the *informed* participation of the oppressed and working people is guaranteed.

A process based on the election of a hundred (or even a thousand) delegates drawing up a constitution and then asking the people to accept it through a referendum must be rejected. History has shown us that the involvement of the OAU or the UN in the creation of a Constituent Assembly can only result in an expensive disaster.

The masses are at a huge disadvantage with respect to access to resources and due to the legacy of decades of ethnic, racist and anti-working class propaganda they have been subjected to. Unless they are able to actively participate in drawing up the constitution, through their grassroots organisations, the process of writing and approving a constitution can only be compared to an advertising campaign. The people will merely be used to rubber stamp a document.

The Constituent Assembly should strive towards a constitution where certain

indispensable conditions for freedom must be present:

- One person one vote with all the democratic freedoms of speech, assembly and association.
- A unitary country without bantustans, their structures or personnel.
- The abolition of all forms of discrimination and racism.
- The socialisation of the main means of production in our country ie the large farms, the mines, the monopolistic industry, the banks, the means of communication and transport. Without this, the redistribution of the wealth which the working class has created in this country will be impossible. Both economic and racial inequalities will continue to reproduce themselves. Democracy cannot exist without socialism.

## Mass action

The programme of mass action should focus on campaigns which affect the overwhelming majority of the people:

- For a living wage,
- Anti-LRA campaign,
- Against high rents and rates,
- Housing for all,
- The right to work,
- Against privatisation,
- The right to learn, and
- Against racism and sexism.

## Towards a democratic CDF

- A follow-up conference must be called next year.
- The convening committee must be democratised. All significant political tendencies in the struggle must be represented.
- Delegations must be properly weighted (should the trade unions representing more than one million organised workers have fewer delegates than the combined representatives of the churches, business people and sports persons?).



state has proven its inability to reflect or respond to the many different aspirations of its population. The historic justification for the single-party state, namely, the overriding need for unity in the construction of a particular social model, was always flawed. Without the ability to give expression to and defend their own different interests and aspirations, the participation of the people in 'the construction of socialism' could only turn into its opposite - a wholesale rejection of socialism. These different interests did not cease to exist under the single-party state, so they had to be suppressed. Now they have emerged freely into the open.

In conditions of scarcity, and in the absence of democratic accountability and control, the single party could only become what it did in fact become, a vehicle for the self-interest of the party elite in the state, the economy and cultural life. The form and extent of corruption in eastern Europe differed from the familiar western and third-world models. It had less to do with foreign bank accounts and extravagant life-styles (although they did exist, as we have discovered from the GDR and Romania) and was based more on material and social privileges (better housing, special shops, travel opportunities, better educational opportunities for their children, etc.)

One of the lessons of eastern Europe is that central to any conception of a socialist state must be plurality of political parties and genuinely representative parliamentary-style institutions. More than anything else, it was the demand for free elections and a genuine parliamentary government that united all the different currents in the Eastern European revolutions. The rapid formation of numerous political parties (36 in Czechoslovakia alone) is not the product of some desire to imitate Western political systems. The historical verdict on political parties as the decisive precondition of democratic participation is beyond question.

The East Germany party (the SED), in its new statutes, has, for the first time in eastern Europe, allowed the formation inside it of political factions (new party statutes in *Neues Deutschland*, 14 Dec. 1989). This came too late, however, after the party had already lost its power

and it was not a solution to the broader problem of democracy, in any case, since it is restricted only to those who are communists and members of the party.

## The Crisis of Communism: the Economy

The scale of the economic crisis in eastern Europe hardly needs documenting. The new materials and data released since the overthrow of the old regimes show that the crisis is even worse than the most pessimistic observers had assumed. In general, the problem presents itself in the form of technological backwardness, scarcity of consumer goods, poor quality goods, low levels of productivity and inefficient, loss-making enterprises.

The problems inherent in the command economy have been clear for many years and the first attempts to deal with them began in Yugoslavia in the early 1950s after the Stalin-Tito break. There were also attempts at reform in Hungary in the early 1950s (ended by Soviet invasion) and in Poland (1956-57). Since then there have been a whole series of attempted reforms: the New Economic System in the GDR in 1963; the Kosygin reforms in 1965; the economic reforms of the Prague Spring and the Hungarian NEM of 1968; and the Polish reforms of the 1970s. Only in Hungary and Yugoslavia did the reforms mechanisms survive, but in no country did the reforms achieve the economic success hoped for. In Hungary there was some improvement in the consumer goods sector but if we look at all the other main economic indicators (growth rates, productivity etc.) we find that Hungary has fared no better over the past twenty years than the other 'unreformed' countries. The essence of all these reform attempts was the limited introduction of market mechanisms which, it was hoped, would act as a corrective to some of the worst distortions of the plan.

Of course, even in the early 1950s these problems were not new. Already in the 1930s oppositionists in the Soviet Union were dealing with this problem. Trotsky was expressing the view of many oppositionist thinkers when he

wrote in 1936 that

"it is possible to build gigantic factories ... by bureaucratic command. But the further you go, the more the economy runs into the problem of quality, which slips out of the hand of the bureaucracy like a shadow. Under a nationalised economy, quality demands a democracy of producers and consumers, freedom of criticism and initiative, conditions incompatible with a totalitarian regime ..."

This problem of quality has been endemic to the eastern European economies. The gigantic factories were built. In fact, the policy of economic autarky which these countries followed since 1948 has meant that every single country, regardless of its size and availability of natural resources, built a comprehensive industrial structure as self-sufficient as possible. The enormous and ubiquitous steel complexes throughout eastern Europe have become a symbol of this irrational and wasteful policy. Thus the GDR has invested massively in producing its own microchip and Romania built a massive petro-chemical complex (now a disaster) while the Romanian people starved and froze in their homes. But very few of their products were exportable. The low quality of goods has meant that even the Soviet Union, in recent years, has been returning increasingly large numbers of low quality goods to countries like Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

There can be no question that this economic backwardness and the problems it created for the workers and the poor of these countries, were a major factor fuelling the popular discontent. But what is the solution favoured by the newly emergent oppositions and by the discredited communist parties? It is, in fact, a more thorough implementation of market-style reform, greater privatisation of nationalised enterprises, foreign investment and all measures necessary (such as currency and price reform) for closer integration with the capitalist west. During the past decade in particular, the intelligentsia (the professional middle classes organised mostly in and around the communist parties) have become convinced that this is the only way to achieve economic prosperity.

That an alternative model, the "democracy of producers and consumers" en-



parties will be supported by and accepted into the Socialist International. All of these parties remain quite small at the moment but there is no question that, in some countries at least, particularly East Germany, they will play a major role in the future.

## The struggle over capitalisation

The economies of Eastern Europe are a disaster. Even when growth rates are relatively high, they were accompanied by abysmally low levels of productivity, low quality products, chronic shortages of consumer goods, long working hours, unhealthy working conditions and technological backwardness. To the waste and distortions caused by bureaucratic mismanagement and corruption were added the dysfunctions caused by economic autarky and by being cut off from world technological development.

There is universal acceptance in Eastern Europe that their economies have failed and that the new internal mechanisms as well as new relations with the capitalist West are needed. The reformed communist parties have themselves put forward programmes which envisage:

- large scale dismantling of the central planning mechanism;
- enterprise autonomy;
- private ownership;
- foreign investment and ownership; price and currency reform; and
- greater reliance on the market.

While some like the GDR economic minister, Christa Luft, may stress the continued role of planning and the compatibility of this programme with socialism, the Polish leaders speak openly of the introduction of capitalism. The actual differences in strategy, however, are not substantial.

This strategy is, in fact, the common currency of the vast majority of the opposition groups, although there are important nuances. For instance, the Hungarian Democratic Forum, concerned about the absence of private Hungarian capital and the threat of foreign ownership, has called for a "programmed privatisation" which would use various mechanisms to encourage

"group ownership" (for example, employee stock ownership). They propose that state funds should be used to assist such a programme since domestic savings cannot match the estimated value of state enterprises.

The opposition groups like Forum and Free Democrats face a real dilemma. Although favouring marketisation and privatisation, they see the need for some form of social control over the process, control which is completely absent at present.

In Hungary, the Forum of Independent Lawyers wrote a letter to the press in September 1989 calling for the suspension of further privatisation. The Democratic Forum and Free Democrats have also made protests. What they are finding is that the previous managers are being given ownership rights by the state, and state property is being sold below its value. One Hungarian sociologist, Elmer Hankiss, has written that the conversion of economic and political in Hungary is taking place within the country's present elite.

It should come as no surprise that the *nomenklatura* in these states would prefer capitalisation to socialisation and workers' control. In a recent study of Poland, Jacek Rostowski suggests that what is happening in that country is a "buy out by the *nomenklatura* itself". He agrees that:

"privatisation is an easier solution for the reformist communist leaderships than is the reform of the socialised sector ... (It) has the advantage of ensuring the economic independence of the enterprises without giving power to workers' councils."

The Polish *nomenklatura* is operating various forms of "inpenetration" with the private sector, through bribes, seats on boards of trustees of new companies, and so on. Rostowski calls the emerging system a "mixed economy kleptocracy". Whatever the validity of this analysis for Eastern Europe in the present situation, it does point to the kind of problem that the new political opposition will have to confront immediately.

The PPS in Poland as well as all the major opposition groups in East Germany have expressed opposition to the threat of uncontrolled privatisation and

foreign ownership. The austerity which international capitalist institutions are calling for as a precondition for aid, as well as the real threats to egalitarian wage structures, employment and social security rights, will make the *nomenklatura's* plans for partial or wholesale capitalisation without any form of social control difficult to implement and control. A policy of "socialist autarky" is, however, a dead end and would only lead to greater misery and, eventually, a complete embrace of capitalism.

## Conclusion

This is not the place to go into all the implications of the revolutions that have happened in Eastern Europe. But it is essential to at least outline the framework which these revolutions have created for socialists in both parts of Europe. Ignoring for the moment the military, security and disarmament aspects of the new situation, the first thing that has to be said is that these revolutions have destroyed the coherence of the Eastern bloc and undermined the rationale of the Western alliance. The CMEA (Comecon) has achieved a lower level of economic integration than that achieved by capitalist Western Europe, and the signs of its disintegration were clear at its meeting in January.

Secondly, the EC, the capitalist club of Western Europe, is patently incapable of providing the institutional framework for the integration of East and West Europe. Any strategy of expanding or democratising the EC is completely unrealistic. What is needed is a new political and economic framework for the integration of the continent, a new set of pan-European political institutions which are democratic, which respect the rights of people to control and determine their own forms of production and economic life and which break down all the barriers to economic exchange, cooperation and trade. The development of a programme to this end is the task confronting European socialists.

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employed, earning the same as the men. At first the men were resentful, and made sure they got the hardest and most unpleasant jobs, but the women persevered. When tractors were introduced, the men again resisted moves to teach the women to drive them, especially when they were promoted over the heads of men - tractor drivers earned twice as much as agricultural labourers.

The driving force behind the moves for equality is the women's organisation, which had its origins in the establishment of a women's detachment during the early struggle for liberation. At first, this met with strong opposition from the men, but the women showed their capabilities in both the military and political fields. They insisted on being trained in the use of weapons, although few of them saw combat during the war of liberation.

In 1973, the Organisation of Mozambican Women (OMM) was formed, its founding conference addressed by President Samora Machel, who spelt out the fundamental necessity of the liberation of women for the victory of the revolution. Women, he said "are the most oppressed, humiliated and exploited beings in society." The only basis for their liberation is the socialist transformation of society.

OMM second conference came after independence, in 1976, again addressed by Machel. He emphasised the importance of women being fully integrated into the production process, but delegates complained that they were too often being forced back into traditional roles, due to the *machismo* of many men and the acceptance of these roles by many women. Whilst Machel criticised the leadership of OMM, he omitted to mention that its goals, as a mass organisation within Frelimo, had been guided by the party, whose top leadership was all men. OMM has never been an autonomous women's movement, but has always been expected to follow the lead of Frelimo. But out of that conference came the watchword of the next phase of the revolution: *Women can do what men can do* - words that were to transform the lives of many women.

Despite the efforts to involve women equally, huge problems remain. Over eighteen thousand men are employed on a palm plantation in Zambezia, with

three women office workers. Even when more women are working, divisions of labour are common. Whilst women queue up for work, men claim they are only interested in having babies and living off their husbands' money.

Even when women had full time jobs, they still had to work the family plot in order to feed their children. There was no day care for their children and both the plot and their job might be many miles walk from their homes.

Nine years after independence, the state farm programme was judged a failure, despite having received the giant's share of resources. Family farms were still producing three-quarters of the crops, usually for self-consumption. But just as the decision to switch resources to smaller farms was taken, the destabilisation programme led to massive desertion of many of these farms and to their devastation.

Frelimo has a policy of establishing communal villages. In the best of these, wells have been sunk, schools and clinics established, and local administrations democratically elected. But Mozambique suffers from a lack of trained and skilled workers - to mend the wells, to teach literacy, to work in the clinics.

How does a country, even one not under constant vicious attack, pull itself up by the bootstraps? One answer to the problems of producing enough food was to promote co-operatives, on which the co-op members worked one day a week. But lack of modern equipment, or tractors that broke down with no one to repair them, led to low productivity. In any case, in Mozambique culture, working co-operatively is not the norm.

At the start, mobilising the women was seen as important, but when Stephanie visited a village in 1982 the women's organisation seldom met and the OMM secretaries were vague about how many members they had. She gained the impression that the work of the organisation was less about encouraging women to fight for their liberation and more about how to be good wives. It teaches them basic hygiene, encouraging the 'bad' housewives to be clean and expecting them to create harmonious conditions in the home. Not only were women responsible for clean conditions

in the home, but also in the village and schools and other public places. No pressure is put on men to change their ways and help their wives with these tasks.

At the same time, the OMM did help women to feel that they had the ability to take charge of their own lives. However, the daily grind worked against their chances of improving themselves. By sunrise they have already prepared water, ground grain and taken care of the children. Then they work on their plots all morning, taking their younger children with them. Then firewood has to be gathered, water fetched and the housework done. Fetching water was a particularly time-consuming job, sometimes done by younger boys, but never men, even when the village had a pump. In other villages, it also involved long walks. Pumps also tend to break down, and are a favourite target for the terrorists. But for the women they also represented a place to get together with the other women and were an important source of social cohesion.

Along with fetching water, grinding grain was another very labour-intensive job to be done by women. When an electric grain mill was installed by UNICEF, it could have represented a major breakthrough for the women, but not only did it break down sometimes, the corn it produced was declared - by the men - not as good as the hand produced stuff. Again and again, the men insisted on the old ways.

By 1982, Stephanie saw that much of the progress she had seen in earlier visits was lost - fewer women were going to literacy classes or doing voluntary work, such as helping to construct a new village.

But by 1987, when she returned to the same village, she saw real improvements, such as better health care facilities, larger schools and more teachers, and improved food production. The water pump still worked and people wore better clothes. A new irrigation system created rich, fertile land that was no longer prone to flooding. The system of creating state farms had been reversed and the farmers allowed to work their own land, with better access to tools. Many of these farmers are women.



also. But the southern practices of lobolo and polygamy are being carried into the north, although women can still get out of such marriages more easily there. Often, women are refused divorce on the grounds of polygamy if the judge decides the man can support two wives, and Frelimo is generally opposed to divorce. Pressure is exerted against polygamists - preventing them standing for elections, sending delegations to talk to men preparing for a second marriage, sending women proposing to marry a married man away for 're-education', and so-on - but this heavy-handed approach is not enough to end a centuries -old custom. The younger generation of women is expressing its anger about both lobola and polygamy - they no longer see women as property to be bought and believe in marriage for love.

In 1984, a special conference on social issues was preceded by local meetings, at which these issues were aired. Whilst the men defended polygamy, the women booed when the word was mentioned. The men believed they needed two wives, so that their personal needs were always attended to, even if one was away or ill. Although some men denounced the custom, on the whole the divide was clear. On lobola, whilst many women hated the way it simply transferred power from father to husband, others defended it because it was to strengthen marriage bonds. Men wanted to keep the power it gave them over their daughters and over their families. Less popular was the rise in lobola since independence, so that it cost more than many young men earned in a year. It stopped women leaving their husbands, as they could not afford to pay back the lobola. And childlessness leads to many conflicts between couples - lobola is paid on the understanding that a wife will have many children.

The conference itself was attended by many of the (male) Frelimo leadership, including President Machel, but whilst this indicated the importance of the subject, it meant ordinary women did not get much chance to speak. And the conference was used to exhort women to rebuild and defend the nation, but had no programme for women's struggle. There was a failure to realise that women cannot take a full role in the

nation's productive life whilst they are shackled by outdated and oppressive customs within the family. There was no attempt to tackle the question of men's role within the family.

Whilst Frelimo has tackled the problem of illiteracy, it still affects women the most, not least because of the attitude that girls' labour is needed in the home and fields. Girls still drop out of school to marry young.

But initially, at least, there was great enthusiasm for education, despite a great shortage of schools, with workers studying after work. For those women who succeeded, a whole new world opened. But Mozambique was starting with ninety percent illiteracy (compared to, say, Cuba's 23.6 percent) and so a sustained campaign was needed. The decision was made to concentrate on the workforce, and this meant that women were largely excluded. Whilst the problem which dogged the whole programme led to a high drop-out rate, women found the difficulties were even greater for them - few of them spoke Portuguese, and they had to find time for their domestic tasks. Yet in a village Stephanie visited, there were more women than men taking classes, partly because many of the men were already literate, but also because those who were not were too ashamed to admit it! But none took exams, because of the pressures of their lives.

Many of these pressures sound familiar to us - women were openly ridiculed when they made mistakes, reinforcing their sense of inferiority. Again the failure to tackle the inequalities in the home increased women's difficulties.

But despite all the difficulties, the overwhelming picture is one of courage, resolve and hard work, to overcome the terrorists and bandits, to build a new Mozambique. The women have great courage and whatever their problems, they can still express themselves in the traditional way - through dance.

I knew little about Mozambique before I read this book. Telling the history of independence through the lives of women makes it real and fascinating. Highly recommended.

Leonora Lloyd

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