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MASS ACTION AND NEGOTIATIONS

- ★ CHRIS HANI on the prospects for peace
- ★ JOE SLOVO on the prospects for negotiations
- ★ RAYMOND SUTTNER on lessons of the Bisho march

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Mass action works!



EDITORIAL NOTES

The agreements reached at the ANC-South African Government summit on September 26 are a major breakthrough for our liberation movement.

Of course, we need to be cautious about claiming victories. The balance of forces in our country is such that victories, however real, are likely to be partial. They are victories that can be reversed. We need to be careful not to demobilise ourselves, or lower our guard.

Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that the summit agreements are a real victory.

The regime has committed itself, amongst other things, to:

- a democratically elected Constituent Assembly, that will have deadlock-breaking mechanisms;
- an Interim Government of national unity;
- effective legislation outlawing the public display of weapons;
- effective measures to counter violence launched from 28 notorious hostels - clear implementation steps and deadlines have been set out for the fencing of these hostels and other security measures;
- the release of all our political prisoners convicted of "offences" committed before October 8, 1990.

Let there be no doubt about what has been primarily responsible for this major retreat by the De Klerk regime. Three months of sustained and unprecedented mass action, more than anything, has forced the regime to back-track. The victory our movement has just scored is the victory of hundreds and hundreds of thousands of South Africans, who rallied, who marched, who demonstrated, in every corner of our land over these last months. *The African Communist* salutes all our people. This victory is yours.

The breakthrough was also the result of effective negotiating by our comrades charged with this task. It is clear that since 1990 we have sharpened our negotiating skills considerably, and we have learned to combine mass action and negotiating.

Yet another major factor in the breakthrough has been international pressure on De Klerk. Since the deadlock at CODESA 2 and since the Boipatong massacre on June 17, massive pressure from Western governments, and from financial institutions like the World Bank and the IMF has been placed on Pretoria. Much of this pressure is not public and the regime has been doing its best to conceal it.

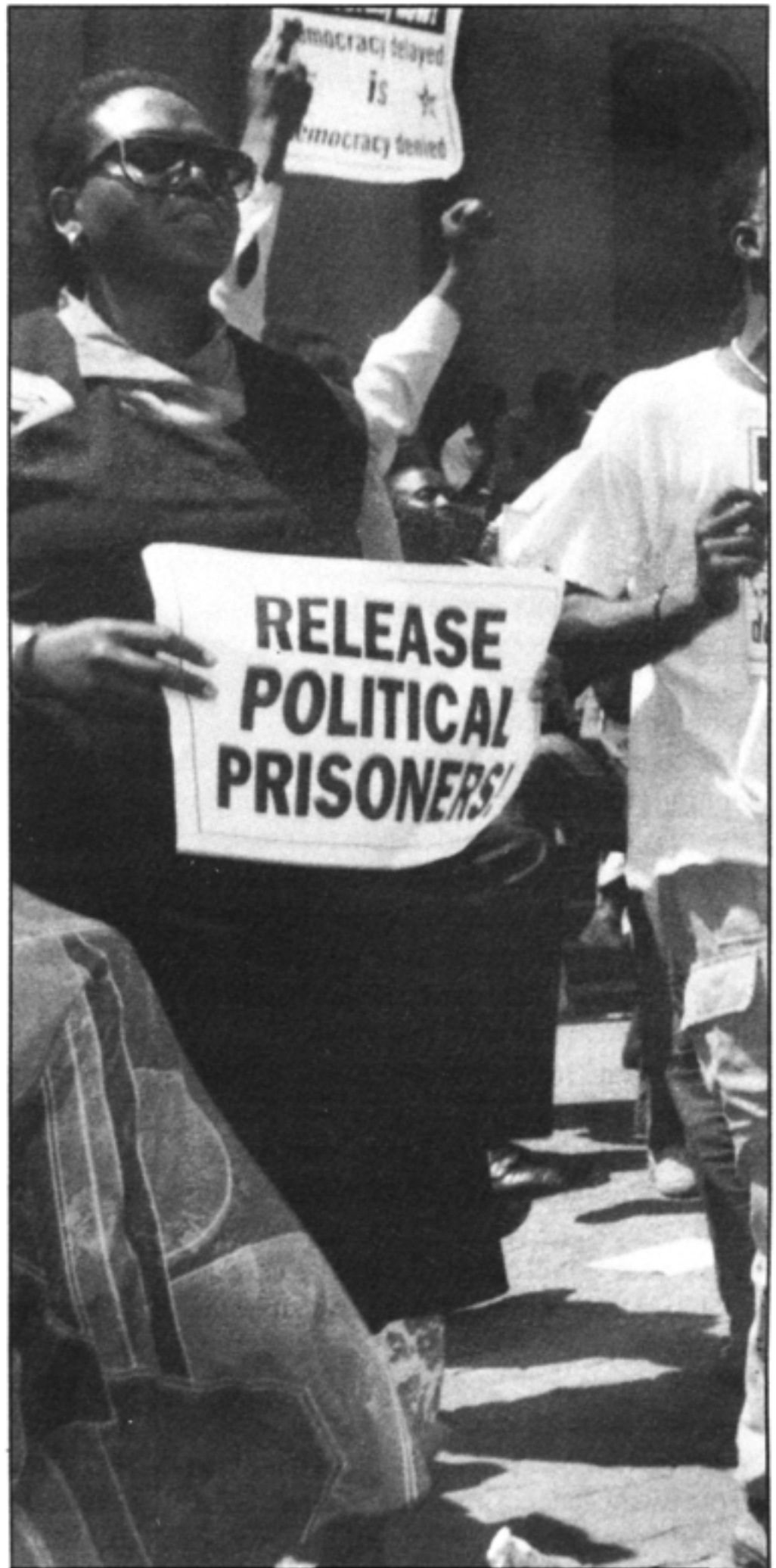
All of these pressures combined, have opened

up very clear strategic and tactical divisions inside the De Klerk cabinet. Those who favour prolonging the whole transition process with a view to weakening the ANC through a long drawn out process, those who favour building an NP-IFP alliance at the expense of progress at the negotiating table have, at least temporarily, lost the upper-hand in the cabinet.

They have lost this upper-hand because the delays in the negotiating process were, for the first time since February 1990, beginning to cost De Klerk more than they were costing the ANC. Likewise, the price paid by De Klerk for allowing the IFP to project itself (largely through violence) as a major national player, was proving to be far higher than any electoral lobola the IFP is likely to deliver in the future.

When De Klerk is feeling strong, he tries to project the transition process as a "troika" affair. When he is weakened, he is forced to accept that there are only two major parties - his regime and the ANC-led alliance. In the weeks before the summit there were growing signs that a seriously weakened De Klerk wanted a summit with comrade Mandela, almost at any price. Buthelezi has been peripheralised, and he is now deeply embittered and angry with his erstwhile friends in Pretoria.

The deadlock between the two major parties prior to the September 26 summit also led a whole series of other forces to try to raise



VICTORY IS YOURS: Protesters campaign for the release of political prisoners

their own profile and stake out some kind of "middle ground" turf for themselves. The PAC, having spent the last years trying to outflank the ANC-alliance down the left (mainly, of course, in rhetoric), has suddenly done a ninety degree turn. It has dumped its "revolutionary guards", jumped into negotiations with the regime, and even, in the person of its president, disgracefully paid a courtesy visit to Gqozo with the blood of the Bisho massacre hardly dry.

The Democratic Party tried its hand at a mass march (although it denied that it was really mass action, or even that it was really the DP calling it). The DP reportedly spent R35,000 on the march, and got 350 mainly white marchers. As one newspaper noted, that works out at a R1000 a marcher! Less amusingly, the DP also jumped onto the red-baiting band-wagon in the week before the Bisho march, and afterwards

shamelessly blamed the victims much more loudly than the perpetrators.

One of the secondary advantages of the September 26 summit is that it has cut down to size all of these opportunistic, "middle ground" initiatives.

The past three months provide us with rich and collective lessons. They have clarified the limits and possibilities of our situation. They have highlighted the need to combine mass action and negotiation. The unity of the tripartite alliance has been deepened in action. The need for an even broader unity of democratic forces has been underlined. We have scored many successes, but we have also made our own tactical errors.

This issue of *The African Communist* is devoted to assessing the events of the immediate past, and to opening the debate on the way forward.

The Leipzig Option

According to Brian Pottinger, a senior *Sunday Times* journalist, the Bisho march was "the communists long-cherished ideal of a 'Leipzig Option'". The article's headline repeats the point: "The march on Bisho was the Communist Party's 'Leipzig Option' turned sour" (*Sunday Times*, 13/9/92).

Virtually all the main-line South African newspapers tried to cast the march and massacre in similar terms. The march was supposed to be a communist conspiracy. And in trying to make this argument many referred, like Pottinger, to Leipzig. "Hardline Communists hijacked the march on Bisho in a classic eastern European-style attempt at takeover" is the

headline over the *Sunday Star*'s (13/9/92) assessment of the Bisho massacre.

In the body of the *Sunday Star* story (written jointly by Jon Qwelane, John MacLennan, Peter De Ionno and Brendan Seery) a "risk analyst", Wim Booyse, is quoted. Booyse sees "the rise in radicalism in the ANC in the 'Leipzig School', which takes its cue from the success of mass protests bringing down discredited regimes in eastern Europe."

According to the same *Sunday Star* article, critics of the SACP "see similarities between the methods of those who led the march and the man they still revere - Lenin."

The sleight of hand in all of this is fairly

obvious. While paying lip service to the "right to mass protest" these journalists are all trying to deprive mass action of any legitimacy. So they establish a chain of equations which goes something like this: the Bisho march = mass action; mass action = the Leipzig option; Leipzig is in eastern Europe; eastern Europe conjures up communism; communism = Lenin and insurrection; therefore the Bisho march was an evil communist plot.

In the light of all these negative references to the "Leipzig Option" it is interesting to go back to 1989 and see what the main-line newspapers in South Africa were saying about the real Leipzig option as it was unfolding in the former German Democratic Republic.

Well, of course, it was an altogether differ-

ent story then. You see, the mass action in Leipzig in 1989, far from being a "nasty commie plot" was actually directed against what these very newspapers were then calling a "hardline communist regime". All their present qualms about Leipzig-style mass action were nowhere in evidence.

In fact, they positively cooed at the rolling wave of mass action that engulfed the GDR. *Rapport* led the way: "More and more news is coming through: Protest demonstration after protest demonstration in East Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden", writes Coenie Slabber in *Rapport* (12/11/89). "The waves of protests in eastern Europe have hardly been going for five months, and in the process one communist government after another has fallen... and now the East

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German government has fallen before the surge to freedom of its people." (*Rapport* 12/11/89).

"The East Germans learnt not to be afraid. The resignation of Erich Honecker and the dissolution of his cabinet as well as the politburo by his successor, Egon Krenz, was the direct outcome of the daily and uncompromising popular rejection of the GDR regime." (Leopold Scholtz, *Rapport* 12/11/89). And so it went on. Anybody could be forgiven for thinking that our mainline newspapers were actually in favour of the "Leipzig Option".

The difference

So what's the difference between Leipzig in 1989 and Bisho in 1992?

On the day following the Bisho massacre the *Business Day*, in its main editorial ("At the abyss"), saw fit to spell out what it considered to be the difference:

"Comparisons with the mass uprisings which toppled totalitarian governments in eastern Europe are not valid. No negotiations were in prospect there; Mandela, De Klerk, Gqozo and Mangope have all been part of the negotiation process designed to bring about a peaceful, democratic settlement." (8/9/92)

Leaving aside the completely false implication that the whole question of freedom of political activity in and the reincorporation of bantustans was all about to be amicably settled at CODESA, there is another major falsehood in this editorial.

Once again, to uncover the falsehood, all we have to do is to go back to 1989 and read how the self-same *Business Day* was covering events in the GDR.

On October 18 1989, for instance, the *Business Day* reported (under the headline, **East Germans are losing patience**) that:

"New protests for reforms, crowned by a big march through Leipzig, showed East Germans' patience with their Communist rulers was wear-

ing thin, diplomats said yesterday.

"The diplomats...said many of the country's 16,6 million people were unimpressed by East Berlin's decision last week to offer controlled dialogue and to consider limited reforms.

"The longer the talking goes on without any results, the more dangerous the situation becomes', one said after returning from Leipzig, where 100,000 people chanted for reforms as they marched peacefully round the city...

"The talks started a week ago to ease tension following the riots. The crowds acknowledge the Politburo's gesture, but they see the offer of dialogue as an offer to talk on the party's terms, not on society's terms, another diplomat said."

Throughout the rest of October and into the first week of November, as events came to a head in the GDR, the *Business Day* carried similar reports.

Leipzig & negotiations

When it came to Leipzig they were perfectly capable of understanding that mass action, rather than being something absolutely opposed to negotiations, could actually help to speed up and transform the character of the negotiations. The newspaper had no difficulty grasping that incumbent regime's are always tempted to prolong talking without real concrete progress being made on the ground, unless, of course, they are encouraged by pressures, including mass action pressures.

The prospects of negotiation, far from dampening the resolve to engage in mass action in Leipzig, and other east German cities, actually led to its intensification. The *Business Day* had no difficulty understanding and supporting this simple reality back in 1989.

But of course those weren't "our" masses. They were someone else's masses.

When it comes to the Leipzig option, distance, like absence, seems to make the heart grow fonder. ♪

Just how possible is peace?

An address given by SACP general secretary CHRIS HANI to 200 leading business people at a function on September 11, 1992, organised by *Finance Week*

My thanks to *Finance Week* for the opportunity to address you this morning.

I am not sure if I've been invited because you see me as part of the problem, or part of the solution when it comes to peace. Perhaps, at its politest, your answer would be dialectical, or to use plain Afrikaans: "Ja-nee".

Let me be honest and confess that this kind of "Ja-nee", more or less summarises my own reason for wanting to exchange views with you this morning. When it comes to resolving the terrible problem of violence in our country, I see the business community as part (not the major part) of the problem, but also necessarily part of the solution.

Well, let's leave aside our various motives for being here. The fact that we ARE here together, members of the business community and a general secretary of a Communist Party, suggests that there are some grounds for hope in, if not agreement, then at least a relatively peaceful coexistence.

Unfortunately, however, bringing peace to our country is not just a matter of exchanges between people of influence on various sides. It is unfortunately not simply a question of "the personal chemistry" between leaders - as the media so often seems to imagine.

In looking at the causes of violence in our country I would like to highlight two main issues:

- the first, is the **strategic use of violence for political ends**; and
- the second relates to the **underlying structural reasons for violence** in our country.

I intend spending more time on the first, it is the more immediate problem, than the second.

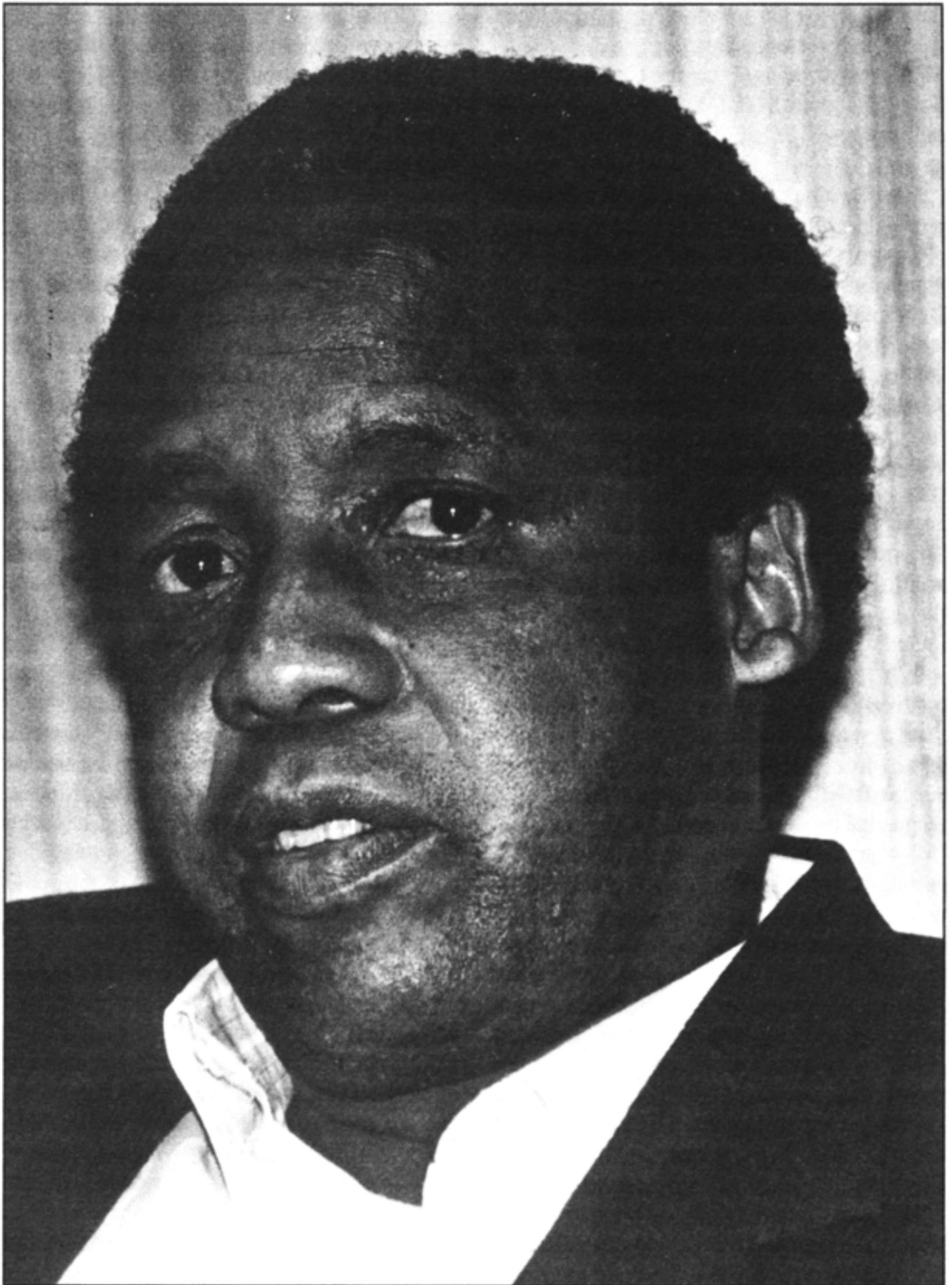
But before even doing that let me say a few words about the terrible massacre on Monday in Bisho.

Bisho

The more I weigh up what I saw and what I have since learnt about the event, the more I believe that the massacre was not an accident. It was not the result of sudden panic on the part of the Ciskei troops. The triggers were pulled in Bisho, but the plan was hatched in Pretoria.

The troops who fired on us had hard nosed ammunition in their magazines, not rubber bullets. They had rifle-launched grenades loaded, not teargas cannisters. The massacre option was their first option. The teargas only came later.

Looking back now, why did the heavy SAP escort that accompanied us from Kingwilliams-town suddenly melt away just minutes before



the massacre, only to return soon after when the firing had stopped?

Is it just accidental that the Ciskei Defence Force is commanded by seconded SADF military intelligence officers on the Pretoria payroll?

Was De Klerk gambling that fingers would be pointed, as he has tried to point them, at the victims of the massacre, at the planners of the march and not at the perpetrators? Why have De Klerk, Pik Botha, and Hennis Kriel failed to make one single critical comment on the conduct of the CDF?

All of this brings me to my first major theme:

The strategic deployment of violence

It is our conviction that the National Party government is pursuing a twin-track strategy. This strategy involves negotiating with its major political opponent, the ANC and allies, and at the same time deliberate destabilisation, including violent destabilisation of our forces.

What is more, this twin-track strategy worked relatively well for the government for more than a year. From about August 1990 until some time this year, De Klerk was very successfully projected, at home and abroad, as the man of peace, the negotiator. The ANC and IFP were seen by many as the culprits in a spiralling and mindless "inter-ethnic", "black on black" war.

There were always many reasons to doubt this view of the conflict, even before the Inkathagate scandal (which revealed ongoing government bankrolling of Inkatha), the Trust Feed Massacre trial (which revealed the security forces masquerading as ANC are prepared to kill their own surrogates, IFP supporters, in order to fan hatred) and events around Boipatong.

If it was "inter-ethnic" violence then why were the original killing fields in Natal, in which thousands of Zulu-speakers murdered

other Zulu-speakers?

If it was just political party rivalry, then who was behind the train massacres? These are random killings, which seem to be switched on and off, and in which party affiliation, or ethnic background are absolutely irrelevant.

And who was benefitting from the violence, strategically?

Certainly not the ANC-led alliance.

In the first place, as a number of independent surveys have shown, well over 80% of the victims of the political violence are ANC members or supporters.

In the second place, the violence has had a major, destabilising impact on ANC organisational efforts, precisely at a time when, after 30 years of being banned, it is desperately trying to build normal, above-board political structures. I should add that the violence comes in two broad varieties - general mass destabilising violence (train massacres, attacks on vigils, etc.) designed to disrupt and terrorise, and the more professional and surgical assassination of key second and third-layer leaderships in the townships. Hardly a week goes by without the assassination of two or three ANC or SACP branch or district officials.

This organisational destabilising has also directly impacted on our ability to negotiate effectively. While the leadership of the ANC and its allies has been talking out at the World Trade Centre, our support base has been hit by massive violence. A great deal of popular cynicism about negotiations has resulted. Our ability, therefore, to "deliver" (it's not a word I like) our constituency, is therefore, massively impaired. (This incidentally is why the central demand for free political activity everywhere in South Africa, which was the main demand of the Bisho march, is also so central to the success of negotiations.)

And then, on top of all this, for a good many months, De Klerk managed to persuade a

significant constituency here in South Africa (including much of the business community) and abroad, that his hands were clean. That the violence was mindless black on black, inter-ethnic fighting, that it was political rivalry between the ANC and Inkatha.

No wonder, and this is the mildest way I can put it, De Klerk has at the very least lacked the political will to take decisive steps to end the violence.

For decades the public display of dangerous weapons has been outlawed. Why did De Klerk suddenly change the law in 1990?

There are 18 notorious hostels here in the PWV, they are veritable armed bases. Literally hundreds of people have been killed by attacks emanating from these 18 hostels. By contrast, Phola Park, a whole squatter camp and an ANC stronghold, or, in the case of Bisho, a whole so-called "capital" have been encircled with razor wire. Why is there still no securing of the 18 notorious hostels? Why are illegals living in these hostels not removed and the original inmates allowed to return?

The brand of strategic violence that we have been seeing in our country is known, in US military parlance, as "low intensity war". It was developed out of numerous imperial and colonial anti-insurgency operations, and particularly after the humiliation of US forces in Vietnam. It involves the extensive deployment of proxy rather than US (or in our case SADF) forces. It uses Contras, Unitas, Renamos, Askaris, Lesotho Liberation Armies, the Ciskei Defence Force, etc, etc, backed up by small, special forces and seconded officers from the main army.

Its objective is not military victory, but political victory. It aims to destabilise a constituency or a country, and then impose a political settlement on a war-weary people. It is "low" intensity, or low cost (for the regular army and its political masters) because it tries

to avoid the politically expensive, high cost, commitment on any scale of "white troops", of "white conscripts". It is, as one US strategist puts it, "subliminal war", it is barely noticed in the media, it is happening somewhere else (mostly in the Third World) and it is someone else who is dying (mainly peasants who don't speak English). As one former US secretary of state put it: "the best way of maintaining US influence in the Pacific is to let Asians fight Asians". Sound familiar?

But if it is "low" cost for some, it is "high" cost for the communities against which it is directed. Ask the people of Boipatong or Alexandra, or the Natal Midlands, or the Ciskei. It is, as one US Colonel describes it: "Total war at the grass-roots level."

Now this strategy has its own pedigree here in southern Africa. It has been used with devastating effect in Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. In recent years it has been deployed in South Africa itself.

Unfortunately for the securocrats in South Africa, who want to go on playing low intensity war, but fortunately for the rest of us, our country presents special problems for this strategy. It is one thing to wage low intensity warfare in the remote rural terrain of a third world country. It is something quite different in the industrial heartland of South Africa.

There have been hundreds of Boipatongs and Bishos in southern Angola or Mozambique. But these massacres have remained "subliminal", barely visible to the world. Boipatong might look like the third world, but it is also an hour away from the largest international press contingent on the African continent.

We are certainly going to pay for the devastation and scorched earth of our southern African region. This legacy is going to have a long-term impact on our own South African economy. The region is our natural market, it

lies in ruins, and that is bad news for all of us in the region. In the words of an old Nigerian proverb: "He who defecates on the road to market, will encounter flies on the way home." There are a lot of flies awaiting us in the future.

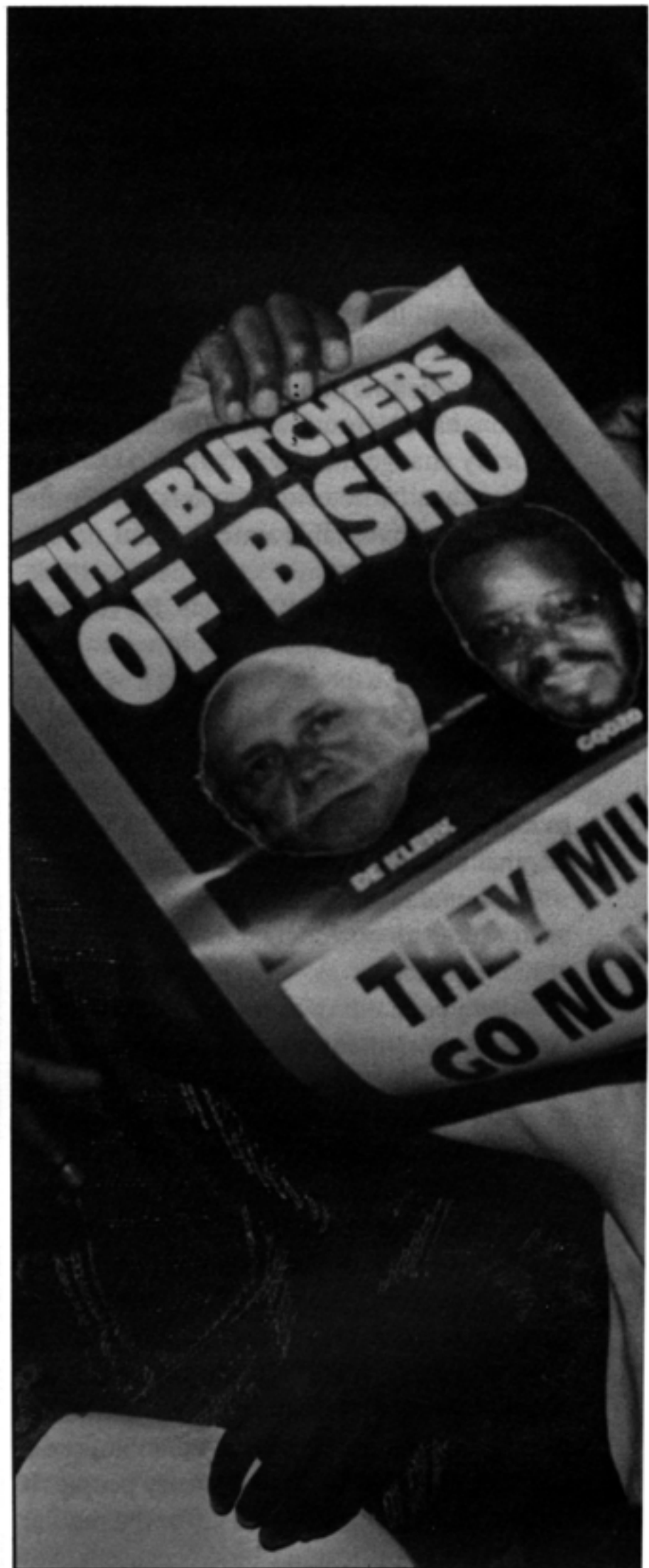
But the impact on our economy of the destabilisation of Angola and Mozambique is much less direct and immediate, than it is when it occurs right here in a Boipatong or an Alexandra.

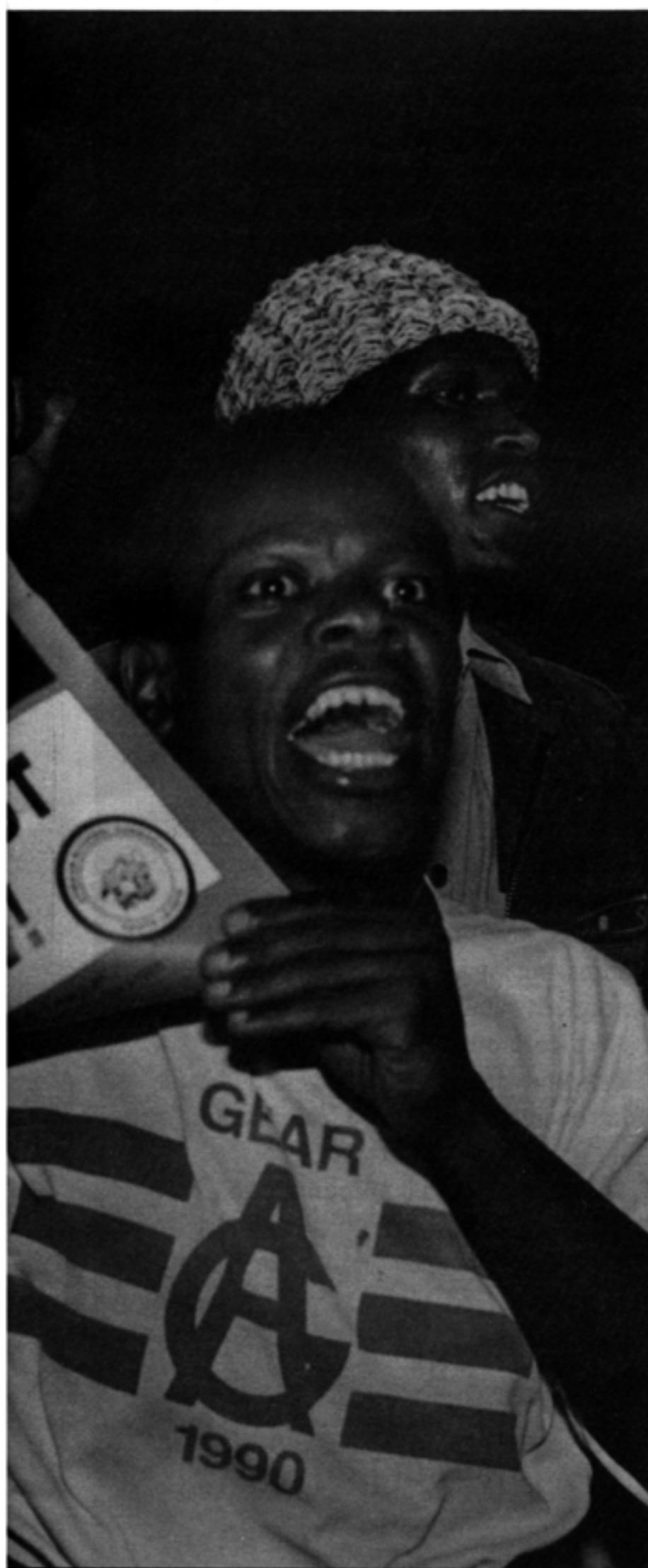
I believe that the political costs to the government of waging a low intensity war strategy are now starting to escalate. Low cost is starting to be high cost. De Klerk's personal image has been badly eroded in the last several months. We can debate whether De Klerk has personally sanctioned this strategy, whether he simply connives in it, whether it is being directed from much further down the hierarchy. Tactically, the answer to this question might be significant, but ultimately it isn't that significant.

Whatever the truth, and it might be a mixture of these possibilities, the government must develop the political will to abandon a strategy that worked relatively well for it for some months, but at a huge price and with tremendous dangers for all of us. It is working less well now, even from its own narrow partisan point of view. We need, all of us, to ensure that the government now takes the firmest steps immediately to end this kind of strategic violence.

The business community has a particular interest in and the capacity to assist with this persuasion. Some time last year I read an interview in *The Star* with the chairman of Anglo, Julian Ogilvie Thompson.

"God knows...we all know perfectly well that the influence business had on the NP was minimal", says Ogilvie Thompson. "I don't expect that the influence of business on the new democracy in South Africa is going to be





any different.”

And he adds modestly: “I may be the chairman of a big group, but just like anybody else I have one vote.”

Wrong - on at least two counts.

- There is, of course, the “minor” detail that seems to have escaped Ogilvie Thompson. Having one vote happens not to be the privilege of the great majority of people in our country.
- But, more to the point, it is simply nonsense to pretend that business is not a major political role player. And its capacity to influence government today is possibly greater than it has been for decades. That capacity needs to be used and it needs to be used intelligently.

I have, so far, focussed on the government’s low intensity war strategy.

No doubt many of you will feel that I am evading something significant. Is all the violence state inspired? Is it all plotted by some nasty securocrats in Pretoria?

I readily admit that the answer is: No.

In the first place, some of the political violence is the result of ill discipline on our side, of political intolerance, of comrades turning into tsotsis, of the legitimate right to self-defence being hijacked for personal ends. Many of you will know that I have gone on record more than once to condemn ill discipline, militarism or blind anger within our own ranks. I stand by those criticisms.

But these negative and worrying phenomena are not the same thing as the systematic deployment of violence as a central component of a political strategy. Since 1990 the ANC-led alliance has not deployed violence strategically. Indeed, despite much provocation and popular calls to the contrary, we believe it would be a grave strategic error in the new situation to use violence strategically.

This is our responsibility, and we must discharge it.

But there is, of course, another reason why

it would be wrong to blame all violence on a low intensity war strategy.

Underlying structural causes of violence

Last year over 11,000 people died violently in South Africa. More than 8,000 of those deaths were not politically related. We are living in a chronically violent society. Cape Town is the murder capital of the world, Johannesburg is not far behind. We have the highest known per capita rate in the world for other violent crimes as well, notably rape.

These are all the symptoms of a radically sick society, in which the moral and social texture of lives has been devastated. This is the legacy of decades of apartheid, and decades more of segregation.

Yes, peace has a chance, although it seems to be getting slimmer by the day.

But to give peace a chance we need, first of all, to address the gravest immediate threat. We have to isolate and stop those who continue to be tempted to deploy strategic violence for political ends.

But then, and I don't mean in some distant future, we need to tackle the deep, underlying problems - homelessness, joblessness, illiteracy, the lack of running water, the lack of electrification.

As a Marxist and as free marketers we could indulge in a long and fascinating argument about the strengths and shortcomings of the market. The fact is, the great majority of South Africa's people are not even IN the market, they are utterly marginalised, without resources

and skills to sell, without means to buy.

We could indulge in debates about growth strategies. I certainly accept that there has to be sustainable economic growth in our country. I also accept that we need foreign investment.

But unless growth is accompanied by more than a trickle down, the underlying social crisis will feed instability and violence and these will in turn undermine any growth.

In turn, endemic social violence will continue to scare off potential foreign and indeed domestic investors.

There will have to be redistribution.

Now, I don't hold to a dead cow version of redistribution. I mean, you kill it, and then carve it up, one for you, one for me. That version of redistribution has a very limited shelf-life, roughly the shelf-life of dead meat.

By redistribution I mean, rather, redistribution that occurs within a realistic and coherent economic policy framework that encourages a dynamic reorientation of resource distribution and economic growth. In other words, redistribution should be approached less as taking away, and more as development to address social needs. And, in turn, the addressing of social needs to be seen as an important catalyst for more development.

We certainly disagree about many things. But, somewhere within the general framework I have vaguely outlined I feel sure that we can find some common ground.

If we don't find common ground, as South Africans, across ideological divides, we will be left with no ground under our feet at all. ♪

BISHO



A special focus on the Bisho massacre and its aftermath, including:

- ★ **Strategic lessons of the Bisho march**
- ★ **How the SADF runs the Ciskei army**
- ★ **How the SABC murdered the truth about the massacre**
- ★ **A statement by the SACP Central Committee**

The Bisho march and massacre: An assessment

SACP Central Committee member RAYMOND SUTTNER looks back

On the fateful day of September 7, I was one of over 100,000 people who marched on Bisho, "capital" of the Ciskei bantustan. From the early hours of the morning in minibuses and on foot marchers had been coming from all over the region to the Victoria Stadium in Kingwilliamstown. It was from there that we proceeded.

As a member of the ANC NEC detailed to do supportive work in the Border region, I had been asked by the Border ANC region to come down a few days earlier to help with preparations. I had also participated in the earlier Bisho march on August 4.

On this, the second Bisho march, I immediately sensed a different mood in the crowd. This time the marchers proceeded in a business-like manner. In the August march there had been a more joyful mood, with much toying. This time the pace was fast, as if people were anxious to get the job done. All along the

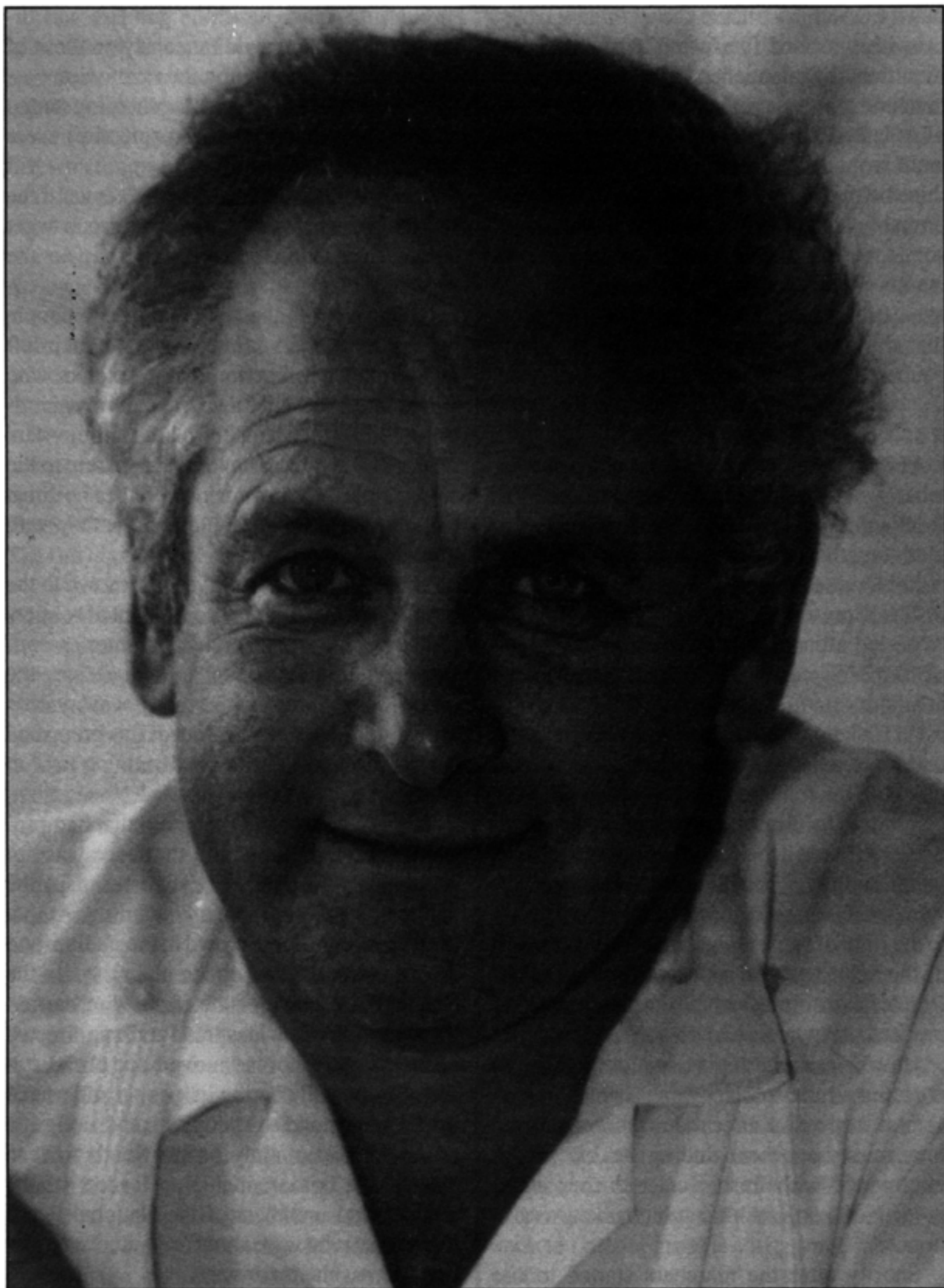
route there was a heavy South African Police and South African Defence Force presence.

At the artificial border point between Ciskei and the rest of South Africa, razor wire had been erected, blocking the entrance to Bisho. I was with one group of marchers who proceeded towards the razor wire to negotiate with John Hall and Dr Antonie Gildenhuys of the National Peace Accord, with a view to proceeding further.

Another group, the larger body of the marchers, proceeded to the left of the wire towards the Ciskeian 'national' stadium. They were moving into the stadium and a group then immediately began moving through a gap in the fence, that had earlier been observed. They hoped to get through to the central business districts of Bisho and occupy them.

Unknown to any of us on the march, matters were about to take an ugly turn.

As the world now knows, it was at this point



that the SADF-instructed Ciskei forces opened up with sustained fire, using hard-nosed ammunition, rifle-launched grenades and even machine guns on the unarmed crowd.

At least 33 people were killed and over 300 were wounded, many critically, with at least three being paralysed for life. The death-toll is probably higher. Relatives are still looking for some people who have not returned since the march. Their disappearance needs to be seen against the background of persistent rumours that the Ciskei authorities carried out hasty paupers' burials on the night of the massacre.

A cold-blooded ambush

Looking back over the events, remembering what we saw and what we have since learnt from numerous sources, we have been able to piece together evidence of a carefully planned, cold-blooded ambush.

The representations made on behalf of the ANC-led alliance to the Goldstone Commission on 24 September 1992 deserve to be quoted at length:

"...Ciskei security forces were guarding buildings adjoining the road, and were also blocking the road behind the razor wire. The committee [of the Alliance, sent out to reconnoitre-RS] noted this and also noted conditions in the stadium. Ciskei defence force members were visible approximately 250 metres away to the right of the flattened fence, but to the left of the opening there appeared to be an unobstructed path through which the marchers could proceed if they chose to do so."

However, as the representation goes on to note, not all the soldiers were visible:

"An inspection after the massacre showed they must have been hiding behind shrubs intertwined with freshly cut branches and a mound of earth behind which there was a trench."¹

Shortly after the marchers started to file

through the fence, machine gun fire was directed at them and simultaneously on those of us who were approaching the razor wire.

"...As matters developed, the shooting started as the discussions [at the razor wire] were commencing.

"Shortly after the marchers had entered the stadium, an attempt was made by a group to get out of the stadium through the gap in the fence....

"A group of approximately 150 people moved out of the stadium and ran to their left away from the direction of the soldiers who were some 250 metres away, apparently guarding buildings. Members of the group were unarmed and it must have been apparent to the soldiers that their movement presented no threat to them or to any of the buildings that they were guarding.

"In fact, although this was not known to the group, there was another contingent of soldiers hiding behind trees, shrubs and other camouflage. As matters turned out, therefore, the group was running towards and not away from armed soldiers. The forefront of this group had hardly reached the dirt road running east to west...when the shooting started...

"When the front of the group that had proceeded through the gap in the fence was approximately 80 metres beyond the gap, the shooting started without any warning. At that time there was a large crowd in the stadium and an even larger crowd on the main road on the South African side of the razor wire barrier. The shooting was widespread and was directed at the people who had moved out of the stadium, some still coming in, people still seated on the grandstand and people on and alongside the main road, mainly on the South African side of the border, including leaders of the alliance and members of the National Peace Secretariat who were about to conduct negotiations across the razor wire.

"The shooting consisted of two sessions of automatic rifle fire. The first volley lasted for between one and two minutes and was followed by a second volley shortly afterwards, which lasted about a minute. During the rifle fire whistling sounds followed by explosions were heard near the stadium and the main road close to the razor wire. These explosions were caused by rifle grenades launched at the crowd. As is clearly indicated in the SAP video supplied to the Commission, four mini-craters were found where unarmed marchers were present and not anywhere near the Ciskei security forces."²

There had been no warning, nor had there been any firing from our side.

Mass heroism

The full human dimension of the massacre still needs to be told. Some comrades showed considerable heroism during the attack. One security comrade threw his body over Comrade Cyril Ramaphosa, as a human shield. Marshals were killed or badly injured while helping others to take cover.

That night comrades held a vigil at the place of the massacre, youth toyi-toying up and down the road to keep themselves warm and also, turning grief into creativity, two new songs were composed. One of these goes: 'Wena Gqozo sithi hayi-hayi.' [Gqozo, we say no more, no more.']

Some comrades had returned temporarily to Kingwilliamstown. When they tried to rejoin the group at the vigil they were stopped by SAP threats of police dogs and teargas. They returned to the stadium in Kingwilliamstown, where they waited till the next day.

On the day after the massacre, comrades were heartened by the arrival of Archbishop Tutu, and the reverends Chikane and Mgojo. The visit of ANC President Mandela to the place of the massacre and his speech at the

subsequent rally did much to raise the spirits. More than 30,000 packed the stadium to proclaim that Gqozo's fate is sealed. He will still be removed. The same message was reiterated on September 18, when over 100,000 people paid tribute to the first group of martyrs from this massacre buried in Kingwilliamstown.

Towards an evaluation of the massacre

The massacre at Bisho needs not just to be recorded. The organisational, strategic and tactical elements that went into its development, the state response to it, and the lessons that we should draw, all require careful and honest analysis.

In the first place, it is instructive to draw a comparison with that other horrific massacre of recent months, Boipatong. In my view, both Boipatong and Bisho need to be located within the regime's overall Low Intensity Warfare (LIW) strategy. The regime has, at the very least, been conniving in violence by allied proxy forces (the IFP at Boipatong, the CDF in Bisho). Over the last several months, after De Klerk had deliberately deadlocked CODESA 2, the strategy has been to turn our mass action campaign against us.

Pretoria's immediate reaction to the June 17 Boipatong massacre was to blame (!!) the deaths in this ANC-supporting squatter camp on our own mass action campaign, which we had launched just the day before.

But the sheer cynicism of this disinformation campaign rebounded badly on the De Klerk regime. Its knee-jerk and over-rehearsed propaganda was just too much to swallow in the face of the scale and horror of the massacre in which sleeping infants, children and women were killed; in which there were numerous indications of security force involvement, or, at the very least, as the Waddington Report was soon to note, of gross security force incompetence.

De Klerk learnt some lessons from the political disaster of his Boipatong campaign. He learnt some lessons... but he did not abandon his strategy.

After the Bisho massacre the same kind of disinformation campaign was unleashed. It was presented as "black on black" violence. The actual culprits, those who pulled the triggers were exonerated; and when this wore thin, then everything was done to ensure that the buck stopped with the CDF (as, in the case of Boipatong, with the Madala hostel-dwellers). Everything was done to obscure the involvement of the SADF and SAP. Once more, the central themes were repeated: "it is the mass action that causes the violence", "the mass action is designed to scupper negotiations."

But, of course, Bisho was also different from Boipatong. In the case of Boipatong the victims were caught in their beds and shacks. They were murdered in their sleep. Those who died at Bisho were victims, but they were active victims. They were killed directly in the course of mass action, as they brought their political power actively and deliberately to bear on the structures of the apartheid regime.

It was this difference that encouraged Pretoria into believing that what failed at Boipatong might just work at Bisho. And to some extent the gamble worked, at least within South Africa where a wide range of "middle ground" forces fell in with and even propagated with relish Pretoria's line³.

The international community, to its credit, clearly and unambiguously took a different stand. UK's Douglas Hurd, the Bush administration, and the German and Australian government's all placed ultimate responsibility for the massacre fairly and squarely on the South African government.

But if the actual character of the Bisho massacre was different from Boipatong in one significant way, so too was the propaganda

campaign. Shrill anti-communism is, of course, a constant theme in the regime's anti-democratic propaganda. But there are periods when the volume is turned up, when there is a concerted and focused anti-communist propaganda offensive.

This was the significant propaganda twist that was added to Bisho. Of course, there will be those who will argue that this twist was supplied simply because a number of well-known communists were prominent in the Bisho march, and because cde Ronnie Kasrils (who happens to be ANC national campaigns organiser - but also a leading SACP member) led the break-out from the stadium. All of this certainly added fuel to the fire. But, in fact, the anti-communist twist to the propaganda was in place a good 24 hours before the march took place - see the front-page of *Rapport* on September 6.

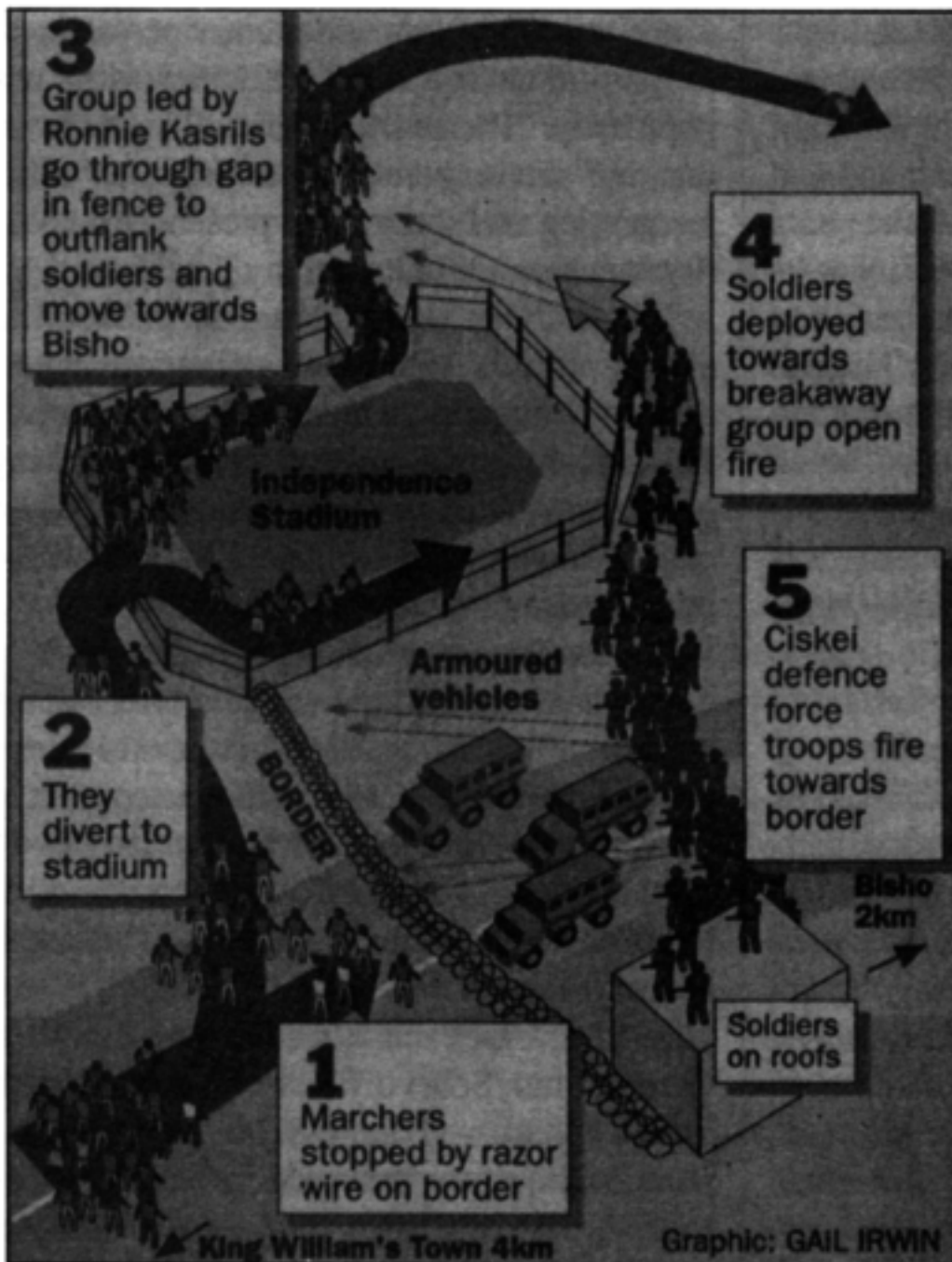
■ REASONS FOR THE MARCH

Why the march, why the crisis in the Ciskei?

Much of the media commentary, like the NP's interventions, has portrayed the Bisho massacre as an isolated incident. This obscures the fact that the massacre was an extreme manifestation of ongoing repression in the Ciskei. This repression is not merely some generalised consequence of the bantustan system. The administration of Oupa Gqozo, which replaced that of Sebe in 1990, is a particularly vicious administration. It has been, and is still involved in continual atrocities and murders throughout Ciskei.

The crisis in the Ciskei and the inability of De Klerk to resolve it peacefully, is itself a manifestation of a deeper political bankruptcy of the apartheid regime. It shows the apartheid regime's incapacity to build allies whose existence is not dependent on flagrant and widespread violation of human rights.

For a brief period at the beginning of his



sensation, a few salient issues need to be noted:

• **SADF control.** When one refers to the actions of the Ciskei Defence Force it is not mere rhetoric to speak of these being SADF controlled. Virtually all the top echelons of the Ciskei Defence Force are filled by seconded or former SADF officials. In the words of an ANC memorandum:

“Ciskei security forces, including the Ciskei Defence Force under the control of Brigadier Marius Oelschig, the Ciskei police under the control of General JJ Viktor [formerly of Vlakplaas and implicated in CCB activities-RS], and military intelligence under the control of Colonel Ockert Swanepoel, have been the central component in fomenting of the ...situation of violence, and they have aided other forces such as the ADM [African Democratic Movement - a paper organisation, set up in the wake of Gqozo’s increasing unpopularity, on the model of Inkatha - RS]

How The Star portrayed the Bisho massacre. One crucial element is incorrect – the position of the soldiers in point 4, who were actually waiting in concealed ambush formation in front of the hole in the fence, to ensure they were able to shoot directly at the breakaway group

rule, and ironically Gqozo came to power on the crest of widespread anti-Sebe mass action, there were harmonious relations between the Gqozo administration and the ANC. But since this brief honeymoon, the period of Gqozo’s rule has been characterised by massive violence against communities; the **de facto** banning of the ANC and all political activity by the organisation; and the reimposition of unpopular pseudo-tribal structures.

Without any attempt at an exhaustive pre-

and headmen in pursuing acts of violence and intimidation against ANC members. In these actions they themselves have been guided by other forces. The ANC submits to this conference that the activities of the Ciskei security forces are orchestrated by members of the South African Defence Force, who have directed and even controlled the current Ciskei regime from its inception.”⁴

SADF control has increased rather than diminished with Gqozo’s growing isolation. This

control has reached into the cabinet itself. Gqozo has dismissed a total of 23 cabinet ministers. This has left the administration almost entirely in the hands of seconded and ex-South African government officials.

The implementation of low intensity warfare in the Ciskei region has been easier to conceal than in a place like the Reef. There is only one major daily newspaper in the area and very few correspondents for other media. Much of the area where atrocities are perpetrated is rural. The scale of the terror perpetrated in this region has consequently not received adequate attention.

• **Denial of freedom of political activity and violence:** To all intents and purposes the ANC is banned in the Ciskei. According to an ANC submission to an IDASA organised conference on 4 September 1992:

*"It is evident that a systematic policy to prevent the ANC from operating legally in Ciskei is being pursued by the Ciskei administration and security forces. The chief magistrate in Alice, Mr Mxesibe, has informed us that magistrates throughout Ciskei have been given instructions to refuse permits for any march. This was confirmed by the Middledrift magistrate who said that he had received documentation to this effect. In the last month a number of marches and rallies which were planned as peaceful demonstrations have been forcefully broken up..."*⁵

"There is a concerted campaign of harassment, intimidation and what can only be referred to as state terrorism, waged by the Ciskei security forces, in conjunction with headmen and ADM members."

Specific Ciskeian security legislation has been used to enforce the denial of free political activity, even though it has been declared by the courts to be contrary to the Ciskei's own Bill of Rights.⁶

The scale of violence perpetrated by the

Ciskeian security forces has been increasing in proportion to Gqozo's rapidly increasing unpopularity. There is hardly a village or town that has not experienced killings, assaults, teargassing and the regular presence of security forces.

It is clear that hit squads are operating on an extensive scale. Residents of various areas, such as Komga, have reported the presence of Zulu-speaking and other non-Xhosa speaking people staying in camps in the vicinity. When enquiries were made to the authorities, these people were removed from the area.⁷

• **The headman system:** In the early stages of the Gqozo administration there were good relations with ANC and local civic structures. But one of the key factors leading to conflict in the region has been the acrimony that developed between Gqozo and local structures, following his reinstatement of the hated headman system.

In most cases those installed as headmen were former Sebe officials associated with oppression as well as graft.⁸ Many were imposed without any democratic process whatsoever, against the clear opposition of the people.

Not only were these headmen intended to replace local community structures, but it was made compulsory for people to go via the headmen for all dealings with the Ciskeian administration, for example, in regard to pensions, disability grants, death certificates, and matters of concern to business-people.

The reimposition of the headman system was not merely a retrogressive step aimed to re-establish what the Gqozo coup purported to sweep away with the previous Sebe administration, but manifested a clear invasion of free political activity.

Secondly, the maintenance of the headman system has been at gunpoint and has led to continual conflict and harassment of our people.

• **Was the march unnecessary?** Amongst

many who question the necessity of the march, has been Max du Preez, editor of *Vrye Weekblad*. He suggests that the ANC could only have justified the march had there been no alternative. The imminent reincorporation of the bantustans, via negotiations was such an alternative, he argues. All that was required was some patience, perhaps waiting a year. This he acknowledges is 'frustrating' for those who suffer under Gqozo, but he asks whether a delay of 'a year' should not have been weighed against the lives lost.

Unfortunately, du Preez only presents part of the problem. In the first place, the Ciskei administration, like that of Bophuthatswana, has not unequivocally accepted reincorporation at Codesa. While paying lip-service to reincorporation, De Klerk's negotiators were happy to let the obduracy of Ciskei and Bophuthatswana remain a stumbling block in the negotiations. The assumption, therefore, of some plain sailing, negotiated reincorporation is a myth.

This argument leaves aside the additional question which is obviously more pressing for people in the region, that they might well be killed before a year is over, even assuming that du Preez's "be patient" projections are correct.

■ ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE MARCH

The march on Bisho was a response to a crisis in people's lives, resulting from the violence of the Gqozo administration. But it was also a major organisational achievement to harness and mobilise the popular anger, through various local structures.

The march on Bisho was an achievement in terms of the functioning of the tripartite alliance at a regional level. The alliance also worked well with the South African National Civic Organisation, other community organisations and the churches. In this respect, important work has been done towards the re-

establishment of the broad democratic front of forces that constituted the Mass Democratic Movement prior to February 1990.

A significant factor that is overlooked by many outside observers is that the Gqozo administration was regarded as an obstacle to peace not only by the broad democratic forces, but also by business interests in the region, who at the very least acquiesced in attempts to get rid of Gqozo.¹⁰

The march of September 7 was preceded by mobilisation of the whole region, visits by regional and national leaders to villages in all corners of the region, as well as to factories. There was no need to whip up emotions. The people themselves, young and old, men and women, all had a clear demand: Gqozo had to go. In abstract political terms this was a call for freedom of political activity - but in a practical sense the eviction of Gqozo meant the same thing.

The march on Bisho can be seen as a high point in the campaign of mass political activity, the re-linking of the masses with the ANC leadership. The people of the region and the organisation responded to their anguish by declaring the march on Bisho a national campaign. This won us much support.

The march on Bisho, whatever its tragic consequences, has forced the whole question of the bantustans high up onto the agenda. While paying lip-service to a united South Africa, De Klerk has been happy to let this sore fester on. He will now no longer be able to twiddle his thumbs on this burning issue. Lack of progress to bring freedom of political activity and reincorporation might seem like an abstract constitutional issue at the World Trade Centre, but for the people living in Ciskei, KwaZulu, QwaQwa and Bophuthatswana it is a real crisis. Despite all the disinformation and counter-propaganda, the Bisho march has underlined that.

Strategic and tactical issues in relation to the march

The initiative for the march against the Gqozo administration came from the people living under that administration. These included people living in Bisho itself, who on the night before the march were singing within hearing of the 'head of state': 'UGqozo uyayishiya lendawo' [Gqozo is leaving this place/vacating his seat of power.]

But it may and must be asked whether the decision to make this a national campaign resulted in appropriate and thorough strategic and tactical planning.

■ OUR MISTAKES

The alliance correctly identified the question of freedom of political activity in the Ciskei, with a march on Bisho, as a national campaign. But was it really treated as a *national* campaign? What does it mean to treat it as a national and not merely a regional one? To what extent did national structures of the entire alliance assist in this campaign? At the very least one can argue that there was very little propaganda in support of this campaign at a national and international level. At the level of personnel, could there not have been greater national support?

The timing of the march may have contributed to this, and the date may have been too early. Consultations between the Border alliance and some leaders from the national level led to the selection of September 7 because it coincided with the day of De Klerk's conference on federalism. Was this an adequate reason for choosing that date?

It has been remarked that a key factor that should have been taken into account in deciding on the date was when the UN monitors would be deployed (in the event they only arrived after the march). Whether their presence, however desirable, would have deterred

a massacre is open to question.

But one should ask whether the failure to make this a truly national and international campaign was partly a result of the rush in preparation. It occurred just over a month after the previous march on Bisho. Very little time was left to approach other regions to send contingents, although contingents did come from immediately neighbouring regions. Very little time was allowed for supportive actions, such as occupation of Ciskeian consulates, etc.

Possibly related to the rush, but an independent point of criticism, is that there was no clarity as to the objective of the campaign. *Nor was there clarity as to the strategy and tactics to be employed to realise this objective.*

Sometimes we spoke of the campaign as being for free political activity. But how was that to be achieved? The Border region's letter to De Klerk immediately prior to the march places the onus on him to remove Gqozo. What would we have done had De Klerk ignored our demands, while we occupied Bisho?

But a lot of our statements suggested that we would occupy Bisho and thereby remove Gqozo. That seemed to be the understanding of a lot of activists and leadership of the alliance - at every level. And this was expected to set in train a domino effect with Mangope next and Buthelezi following. This was stated by a number of leaders.

Freedom of political activity or the removal of Gqozo required a strategy, a series of planned actions aimed at realising our objectives. This had not been clearly elaborated. We were not clear what we would do in Bisho. There was talk of a people's assembly. There was also an expectation that sections of the security forces and civil service would join us. Would we then have removed Gqozo? What would we have done then?

Even on the day before the march these questions had not been answered nor was there

real debate.

We had raised the temperature in the country, we had put De Klerk under pressure, we had suggested that he would have to choose between his puppet falling, followed by others, or drown our peaceful action in blood. *We underestimated his willingness to choose bloodshed.* We underestimated the bankruptcy of the regime, its limited political choices and in so doing we committed a very costly error.

Should we have listened to the Democratic Party which warned that the march would provoke bloodshed? I prefer to answer this question from another angle. What the DP was trying to do was carve out for itself a place in the "middle ground" through attacking mass action. Unwittingly, this played into the hands of the generals in Pretoria who read their statements to mean: "Do your damndest, after the event we'll point fingers at the ANC-alliance and not at you." Our error was not that we failed to listen to the DP. Our error was that we underestimated the impact of their opportunism on Pretoria's low intensity warfare strategists.

We were encouraged in these errors because we based ourselves partly on the experience of the August march, where brinkmanship led to negotiations, which in turn led to a retreat on the other side. In the course of the August march we had to consider the possibility of our retreating rather than being mowed down. On the second march we never even got the chance to talk.

But had we had better intelligence perhaps we could have foreseen the unfolding of events. It is now clear that journalists had information for two days before the event that pointed to preparations for a massacre. It is clear that journalists knew much about the deployment of forces that we ought to have known.

This was not secret information obtainable only through conspiratorial methods, but in-

formation available through using normal press contacts.

We had very good intelligence on troop movements and political tendencies within the armed forces for some weeks leading up to the massacre, but **in the last days when Pretoria appears to have stepped in on a large scale, we seem to have lost track of what was happening.** This was not merely because Pretoria stepped in more boldly. It was because our national intelligence was not being deployed in the campaign. It did not have connections with ordinary journalists that could have provided the type of information needed for us to make adequate decisions. A campaign, whose success depended on adequate intelligence, did not appear to involve ANC national intelligence at all.

If some of our planning was inadequate, in other respects it was over-elaborate. Despite all our experience of mass marches, in some of our planning we forgot that a crowd of some 100,000 on a mass march cannot be manoeuvred like a highly mobile army unit.

The march set off with a plan to divide into two columns. As it proceeded this did not seem possible. The marshals were having great difficulty controlling the massive numbers in any case.

A group sent ahead to reconnoitre reported that there was a gap in the fence of the Bisho stadium through which it would be possible to move towards the central business district of Bisho, with a view to occupying it. A strategising committee, established by the Border alliance, supplemented by national leaders, took the decision to go through the gap. The decision was taken after very brief consideration. It was taken without the type of information that was available to people other than those who took the decision. It was taken in good faith - but it was a serious error. It led us straight into a well prepared ambush.

As with Boipatong, the regime immediately tried to lie its way out of trouble. ANC people were alleged to have shot first, but there were too many journalists present, who themselves came under fire, along with the National Peace Accord representatives, for that account to hold.

But in the heat of the moment and in subsequent days, some of our statements fed into the counter-attack that was to have most effect. Some of our statements created an impression of taking casualties lightly, of a willingness to use force recklessly, of a willingness to dispense with negotiations.

• **The character of the propaganda counter-attack:** It has been indicated that the regime's attempt to deflect blame towards the ANC alliance and particularly the SACP has met a sympathetic response amongst sections of the media and political commentators like van Zyl Slabbert and Max du Preez. What is important to understand is that Bisho is merely an occasion that is being used for a more general strategy. Its broad components are:

• To suggest that there are two ANC's. An ANC (mass action) which means basically communists, who have never really accepted negotiations, and an ANC (negotiations), whose proponents have never really been in favour of mass action;

• The ANC needs to resolve this contradiction if it is to pursue negotiations successfully. Mandela in particular has to be freed from the "millstone" of communist influence, so that he can get on with negotiations and make the necessary compromises.

The weakness of this counter-attack is that it ignores one simple fact - the people, who, for writers like Slabbert, are merely a troublesome element periodically intruding to prevent deals being struck.

Unfortunately for Slabbert, the people of the

Border region and others suffering under apartheid throughout the country are not prepared to be passive spectators. They have an interest in the type of settlement that is reached in this country and they intend to influence that process.

The willingness of communists to associate themselves with mass action is depicted as an attempt to sabotage what is called a 'successful transition to democracy'. It is precisely because of a commitment to democracy that the ANC and the SACP must continue, unashamedly, to link themselves with the most downtrodden, help empower them, help them to feel that the new South Africa in the making is primarily made by their own power.

Way forward

It is crucial, in our pursuit of free political activity in the bantustans and the country in general, that we draw proper lessons from the Bisho massacre and do not repeat any of our errors.

In the face of the current onslaught against the SACP and mass action, it is essential that the alliance as a whole follows the example of our Border comrades. Their answer is to strengthen the alliance through continued unity in action. Not only must it be strengthened, but it must be broadened and the unity of all democratic organisations must be built and consolidated.

We need to ensure that the gains of the Ciskei campaign are not lost, that we continue to consolidate and deepen the links forged on the ground in that region and through mass action throughout the country. We also need, in regard to the bantustans, to use the results of this campaign to ensure that the question of free political activity remains high on the political agenda

There is no doubt that the frankness of this evaluation will be grasped at by some enemies

of the SACP. That is the risk we take in drawing lessons for ourselves. We have to do this if we are to remain true to the essentially humanistic quality of our beliefs.

We must expect the attacks on the Party to increase. Bisho is merely an episode in that regard. While we did make errors, the reason for the attacks on us are not so much these errors, but what is considered to be our real crime - that we continue to stand with the people.

The De Klerk regime needs to understand

that this will remain a fact of South African life. We are not going to abandon the people who live in the little villages whose names do not even appear on Pretoria's maps.

We shall honour the memory of those who died in Bisho, those who died to end the violence of Gqozo.

We shall do this best by harnessing the power of the people - throughout the country - to hasten the demise of all the crooks and murderers, of the central government and its host of little tyrants. ♪

Endnotes

1. *Representations on behalf of the ANC, SACP and COSATU for the Goldstone Commission of Inquiry into the Bisho Massacre*, 23 September 1992, p.18.
2. *Ibid.* pp.19-21.
3. Many South African newspapers fell into line with this theme. See, for example, the following newspapers immediately after the massacre: *Sunday Times*, *Sunday Star*, *Sunday Tribune*, *Rapport*, *Vrye Weekblad* (through its editor Max du Preez and an interview with van Zyl Slabbert), *Sowetan*, *Cape Times*, and *Business Day*. It is interesting to note that the political commentaries written in various editorial offices often gave a very different political slant to that given by their reporters on the ground in Bisho.
4. See *ANC submission on the nature and causes of violence in Ciskei, and proposals for the resolution of violence and the creation of a climate for free political activity*, September 4, 1992, p.2.
5. *Ibid.*, pp.1-2. The document goes on to list various examples.
6. *Ibid.*, p.1.
7. *Office of the Secretary General. Background to the Bisho Massacre. Briefing Document*, ANC Department of Information and Publicity, September 8 1992, p.2.
8. *ANC submission*, p.6.
9. *Vrye Weekblad*, September 11, 1992.
10. Comrade 'Soks' Sokupa, president of the ANC Border region, remarks in an interview in the forthcoming October issue of *Mayibuye*: "At the Border Peace Conference in July last year, a whole number of organisations came together, including business and churches. This started a broad campaign. The political statement that came out of the conference was that Gqozo and the Ciskei administration are stumbling blocks to free political activity."

Pretoria's men in Ciskei

By VUMILE NGCULA

The disinformation campaign that followed the Bisho massacre has tried to exempt the De Klerk government from any blame. Those behind the campaign either have very short memories, or they expect the rest of us to be extraordinarily gullible.

Just last year, in February, Brigadier Gqozo issued a statement that an agreement had been reached between the Ciskei government and the South African government. This agreement allowed Pretoria to appoint key ministers in the Ciskei government, and also senior officers in the Ciskei army and police.

As far as the Ciskei security forces were concerned this agreement simply formalised what had, until then, in any case been a reality. Until the new agreement a CCB front company, International Research was virtually running Ciskei security. At its head was Anton Nieuwoudt, a colonel in the South African Defence Force. Nieuwoudt has also been linked to the secret SADF Hippo Camp in northern Namibia. This is the camp at which Inkatha assassination teams are alleged to have been trained.

Working with Nieuwoudt were **Ted Brassels** and **Clive Brink**. Brassels was a major in the SADF, based in East London and as staff

officer at the SADF's Group 8 headquarters in the 1980s. He also served as East London's deputy mayor in the 1970s. Clive Brink is attached to Military Intelligence (MI) and acted as the unit's technical man.

These three were netting between R130 000 - R140 000 a year with full benefits from Gqozo. In September 1990 they bought BMWs at R190 000 each and requested that they be given registration numbers that would not be easy to remember.

After the shake-up last year, Gqozo's government and security force command structure were beefed up with a whole range of secondments from the SADF. At present:

- **The Finance Minister** in the Ciskei is **Vice Admiral William Bekker**, seconded from the South African Navy;
- **The Commissioner of Ciskei Police** is a seconded officer from the South African Police, **General Johan Viktor**. Viktor was once in charge of police operations in Soweto. He has been mentioned by Captain Dirk Coetzee as a former commander of Vlakplaas, the notorious hit squad training base. Viktor was seen and photographed at the Bisho massacre.
- **The Head of the Ciskei Defence Force** is **Brigadier Marius ("Mo") Oelschig**. Oelschig

has an extensive record in special operations and "low intensity" war. He was in Luanda, Angola in 1975. After the South African military attache staff in Angola were forced to leave in that year, he stayed behind to do covert, anti-MPLA work. He was at Cuito Cuanavale and in the so-called operational area in Namibia. He was one of the founders of the notorious Koevoet in 1979. According to the German magazine, *Top Secret*, it was to Oelschig that the head of the SADF Department of Military Intelligence, General CJ "Joffel" van der Westhuizen despatched a signal to use all force and "all means necessary" to crush the Bisho march

- Oelschig's second in command is also a seconded officer from Pretoria - **Colonel Dirk van der Bank**.

- **The Chief of the CDF's Military Intelligence** is yet another secondment from the SADF. He is **Colonel Ockert Swanepoel**, and his deputy, likewise, is a seconded SADF officer, **Chris Hendrik Nel**.

- **The Chief of Staff - Operations** and the person who was in direct command of the forces who opened fire at the Bisho massacre is **Colonel Horst Schubesberger**. He was previously a training officer in the CDF. Of Austrian origin, he served as an NCO in the Austrian army until 1963 and later he was an officer in the Austrian Territorial Army. In 1978 he joined the Rhodesian Army and became the commander of the Rhodesian Guard Force with the rank of



Former Vlakplaas chief Brigadier JJ Viktor, now head of the Ciskei police

major. From 1980-1983 he served as commander of 35 Infantry Battalion in the Zimbabwean National Army. Schubesberger has admitted that it was he who gave the orders to shoot at Bisho, but only after he had obtained directives "from a higher authority".

- On the Friday before the Monday massacre Schubesberger was seen surveying the place of the shooting with **Colonel Jaco Roussouw**. Roussouw was a Selous Scout in the former Rhodesia.

The command structures of the Ciskei security forces are absolutely dominated, then, by white officers most of whom have murky, covert war backgrounds. Most of them are also still directly on the Pretoria payroll, serving as seconded officers.

There are a number of other murky personalities in the Ciskei equation. Among them are those involved in the "African Democratic Movement" (an attempt to give Gqozo a civilian political party). The secretary

general of the ADM is Basie Oosthuysen, a man with strong SADF MI links. He headed an MI front company called Dynamic Teaching in East London.

The SABC and government supporting newspapers have tried to present the Bisho massacre as yet another variant of "black on black violence", as yet another massacre in which Pretoria is an innocent bystander. Even a brief consideration of the command structures of the Ciskeian security and political machineries tells a very different story. ♪

SABC and the massacre

While Gqozo was murdering peaceful marchers, the SABC was murdering the truth.

The ambush at Bisho was part of an integrated plan to turn, politically, our own tripartite alliance mass action campaign against us. Gqozo's SADF-commanded soldiers were just one element of that plan. Another most important element was the SABC.

The Campaign for Open Media (COM) has been monitoring the SABC for the last several months. The following are extracts from the COM report on SABC news coverage of the Bisho massacre. The report was compiled by COM media researcher, Bronwyn Keene-Young.

Monday's coverage of the Bisho massacre was characterised by an attempt by SABC to underplay the violent action undertaken by the Ciskei soldiers and create the impression that the ANC carried the ultimate blame for the entire incident.

TV 1 6pm news

In the 6pm news bulletin, without saying that troops had fired on protesters, the TV1 newsreader said, over footage of the shootings: "From the pictures it's obvious how difficult it

was to determine exactly where the shots were coming from." It seems ludicrous to suggest that such intense fire could possibly be coming from any direction other than the Ciskeian defence force. In any case, it had already been widely established by then that the automatic fire originated from the Ciskei security forces.

Before saying that journalists at the scene were unanimous that the shooting was started by Ciskei forces, the newsreader stated that the ANC and Ciskei have accused each other of the shooting. This is characteristic of SABC coverage of violence in which it creates a story out of allegations and counter-allegations without attempting to access independent opinion or provide a context of background information for the allegations.

In the Bisho case, it became clear from subsequent news broadcasts that the SABC did not desire to present independent viewpoints as this would have portrayed the Ciskei security forces in a negative light and fostered sympathy for the ANC. It thus chose to preserve a measure of viewer ignorance by confusing details of the event and relying on party-political accusations as initial information.

This view is supported by further examples.

While the newsreader was describing the shootings, a shot of a revolver lying in the dust was shown while the accompanying voice-over stated: "Ciskei's defence force chief claims his troops had returned the fire of a group of marchers who had attacked his men." The shot of the revolver was not contextualised or explained. It could have been lying anywhere and carried by any person.

TV 1 8pm news - setting the context

The SABC's approach to the massacre became even more evident in the 8pm headlines: "Talle mense is dood in 'n bloedige botsing teen die Ciskei se weermag en oprukkende ANC ondersteuners." ("Scores of people were killed in a bloody clash between the Ciskei army and riotous ANC supporters.")

The first sentence of the news item itself went as follows: "Die regering het 'n kompanjie soldate in Ciskei ontplooi om nywerhede te beskerm en plundering te voorkom na vandag se voorval waarin 23 mense dood is. Die kantoor van die Staats President sê die stap word gedoen met inagneming van die veiligheidstoestand in Ciskei en met die toestemming van die land se regering." ("The government has deployed a company of soldiers in Ciskei to protect industries and to prevent plundering after today's incident in which 23 people were killed. The office of the State President said the step was taken in light of the security situation in Ciskei and with the agreement of the country's government.")

By beginning the news item in such a manner the SABC criminalised the very people who were victims of the massacre. Its first concern was to inform the public of measures taken by the state president to protect business in the Ciskei. This represents a total disregard for the tragedy in terms of the loss of life. It also clearly reveals the SABC's agenda to underplay the notion of "massacre" and rather emphasise

the concept of "disobedience", specifically disobedience attributed to the ANC.

The item went on to mention the number of dead and injured. But it did not, at this stage, even hint at who was responsible for the shooting. It then described the terms of agreement for the march and during this implied that the ANC marchers were armed by saying that according to the court order, no weapons would be permitted. The newsreader then reported a statement made by the ANC Border representative, Andrew Hendricks, that the marchers would be going to Bisho and not just to the stadium.

This was the context set up by the TV 1 news, BEFORE any footage of the actual march was shown. It had emphasised the terms of agreements and reported that the ANC intended to break them. In addition it described the shooting as a general consequence of the march. The SABC created a framework for the story which presented the victims of the massacre as the perpetrators, and the perpetrators as victims.

TV1 8pm - telling the story

After creating this framework the 8pm news finally went over to presenting the march. Firstly, it is noteworthy that the SABC reported an inordinately low figure for the march turnout. Independent radio stations and newspapers put the number of marchers at between 60 000 and 80 000. TV 1's reporter stated that there were 20 000 - a large divergence from the other estimated figures.

After describing the incident, the 8pm bulletin then reported Brigadier Oupa Gqozo's accusations that someone in the crowd had fired first. Then, as in the 6pm bulletin, a shot of a revolver in the dust was shown with the voice-over: "Hy sê verder dat in die stormloop, een soldaat van die Ciskei se weermag doodgeskiet is." ("He added that in the charge, one soldier of the Ciskei army was shot dead.")

The ANC's version of the shooting incident was not reported at all. However, live sound extracts from three different government officials were broadcast, all blaming the ANC and mass action for the shootings. The ANC received only one live sound extract on the news bulletin. This was a short interview with Steve Tshwete during the sit-in at the South African embassy, alleging that the government was involved in the massacre. This interview cut immediately to an interview with Hernus Kriel expressing his disbelief at and denial of Tshwete's accusations. It was followed by "reaction" to the events from the ANC and PAC, and concluded with the responses of two parties condemning the ANC action - the Conservative Party and the Democratic Party.

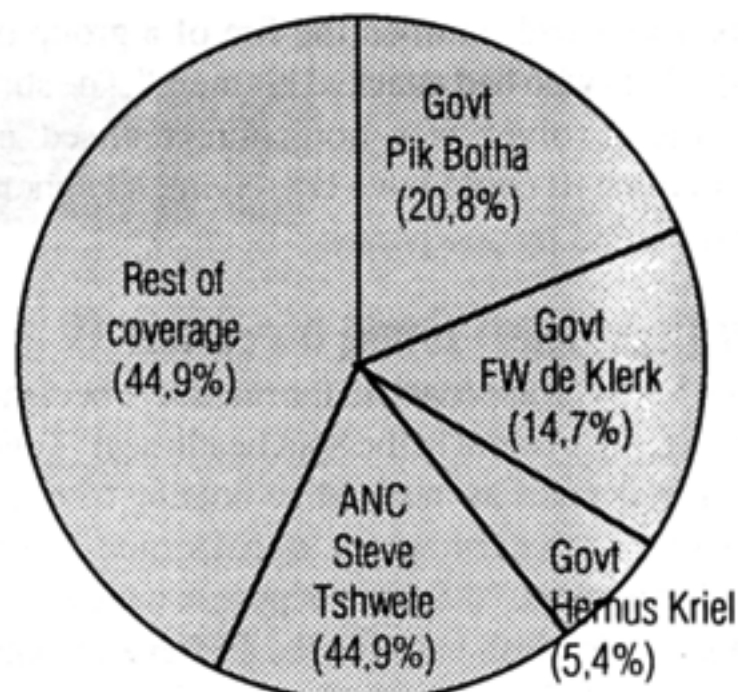
The ANC was not officially approached by the SABC, despite the fact that various spokespersons had been available for comment since late afternoon (as evidenced by Radio 702 news, for instance). What is more, various other salient facts, many of which were crucial to the adequate understanding of events, had been excluded from the 8pm bulletin. The most important was that journalists on the scene had unanimously agreed that the marchers were unarmed. It is disturbing that SABC journalists were the only ones who believed the marchers were armed, or at least implied it by using particular footage in conjunction with particular statements.

The SABC did not report that National Peace Committee chairman John Hall had stated that no warning shots were fired. There was a brief 34 second interview with Dr Antonie Gildenhuys of the National Peace Accord, in which a sweeping reference was made to this effect, but the central importance of Hall's statement was disregarded by SABC news.

Agenda

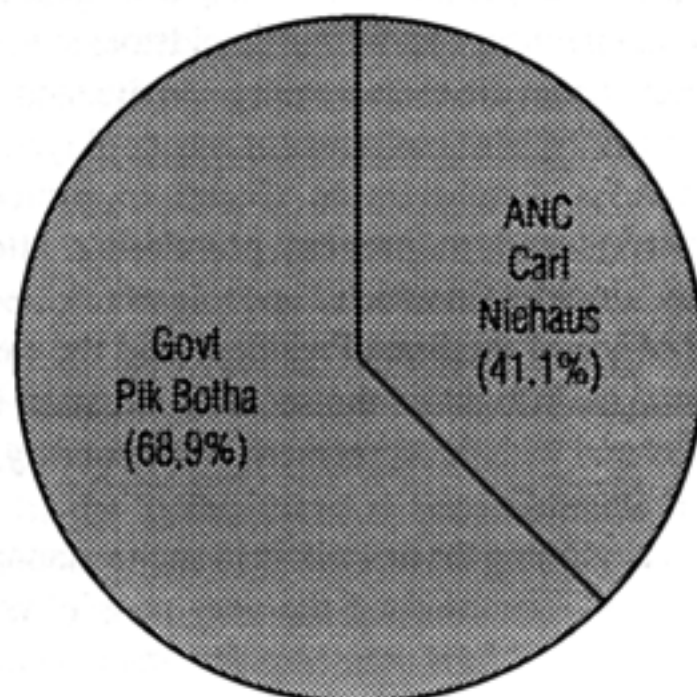
The Agenda news magazine immediately after

MURDERING THE TRUTH



CCV 7pm coverage of Bisho massacre

Live sound given to parties - 7 September 1992



Agenda interviews on Bisho massacre

Breakdown of time - 7 September 1992

the 8pm news revealed unabashed partisanship towards the government. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pik Botha followed ANC spokesperson, Carl Niehaus. Botha was, therefore, able to reply to Niehaus's statements without the ANC representative being present to defend himself. Botha also received more time and more favourable questions from the interviewer. While Niehaus was challenged on the ANC's decision to march on the Ciskei, Botha was merely asked for information on the government's reaction and "where to now" questions. This provided him with plenty of time to castigate the ANC, uninterrupted by the interviewer. It also presented the government as a neutral rational force in the turmoil surrounding the killings, while not challenging it on its position with regard to its links to the homelands.

It may seem superficial to apply statistics to a fluid situation like a television interview but it is worth pointing out that in Niehaus's five minute interview, he was asked eight questions and was interrupted twice. Botha received just over seven uninterrupted minutes and during that time was presented with only six questions.

Radio Algoa

(TV 1 coverage of Bisho on the day of the massacre was only surpassed in its level of distortion by Radio Algoa, a regional SABC radio station.)

The following extract is taken from an SABC Radio Algoa reporter...who filed this report about an hour after the shootings:

"...Later, when it calmed down slightly one could gather that what had happened was that a group had broken out of the stadium and rushed Ciskeian soldiers firing as they came. The Ciskeian soldiers then acted in self-defence and shot back. Later reports came through that cars had driven into the stadium and that weapons had been dished out to people."

CCV 7pm News

While the coverage on CCV news improved on the day after the massacre, its initial reports presented remarkable bias towards the government and Ciskei's points of view. This is unusual as CCV coverage generally tends to be more impartial than TV1 news. 41% of the total time given to the Bisho incident was devoted to live sound statements from South African government officials. The ANC received only 14% of the total in an interview with Steve Tshwete.

TV1 News coverage in the following days

During the three days following the Bisho massacre, interviews or press conferences involving government officials or Brigadier Gqozo presented them in a medium close-up, with them dominating the frame. However, at Mandela's press conference, he was filmed from a distance and other people at the table were included in the frame. This presented a distraction in the camera which affected the impact of his statement. It also diminished his visual status during the press conference, whereas the close-ups given, especially to De Klerk, enhanced his physical status and projected him "into the living room".

On the day following the massacre protest marches held around the country were glanced over by TV1 news and no live sound extracts from any of the march leaders were broadcast. Reports on these marches were followed by a "stinging attack from the Ministry of Justice, the National Party and the IFP." The statements from these organisations were then read out.

Statements and reaction to the incident by the following organisations were entirely ignored:

- **South African Communist Party** spokesman Essop Pahad: "the soldiers and others who committed these murders have to be brought to book."

• **COSATU** spokesman Neil Coleman: "sickening and nauseating the state president can imply that the unprovoked shooting of peaceful demonstrators was justified because certain guidelines were allegedly not adhered to."

• **SA Council of Churches** - called on the South African and Ciskeian governments to hold a referendum on Ciskeian leadership.

• **Rhema Ministries** founder the **Rev Ray McCauley** appealed to Brigadier Gqozo to allow church leaders to intervene.

• **AZAPO** president Pandelani Nefolovhodwe: the killings were "done with the assistance and full knowledge of the South African regime."

Nor were statements from these organisations and personalities broadcast the following day either, while reaction criticising the ANC and mass action was reported from the Conservative Party, the *Herstigste Nasionale Party* and various church groupings in South Africa - with the SA Council of Churches statements conspicuously absent.

Conclusion of COM's monitoring

SABC's failure as a public broadcaster has glaringly revealed itself in two ways during its coverage of the Bisho massacre. Firstly, and most obviously, it has continued to misrepresent the ANC and its allies in their programme of mass action, while extracting maximum positive publicity for the government and assuring it of an information laager from which to defend its image. Such selective reporting has characterised SABC news for a long time.

What is more disturbing, however, is the extent to which the SABC is prepared to go to achieve these ideological objectives. Over the past few months, it has followed a trend of reporting violence as a series of allegations and

counter-allegations. The reasons behind the violence have never been investigated beyond party political rhetoric. The SABC has provided a platform for political parties and security forces who, in their broadcast speeches, contravene the principles of the National Peace Accord, time and time again.

Such outbursts of intolerant rhetoric are not newsworthy in themselves, nor are they informative. However, these parties take full advantage of public occasions to deliver invective, fully aware that if it involves ANC- or Communist-bashing, it is bound to be carried by TV news.

Not only does this indicate a severe lack of responsible journalism by the public broadcasters, it also raises questions about the SABC's position in relation to violence in general. The following is an extract from Principle 1.9 of the National Peace Accord:

"It is clear that violence and intimidation declines when it is investigated and when the background and reasons for it are exposed and given media attention. There is, therefore, need for an effective instrument to do that."

If the SABC continues to misinform the public or withhold information on issues such as international dissatisfaction with events here, it is unlikely that its audience, especially the white population will come to terms with the need for change.

With each successive threat to the local and international image of the government - from the Goniwe murder signal, through the Boipatong massacre and the Gluckman revelations, to our present crisis - SABC television and radio increasingly reveal themselves as no more than an electioneering mechanism for the South African government and a dismal failure as a public broadcaster. ♪

Bisho and the anti-Communist campaign

SACP Central Committee statement – Johannesburg, September 13, 1992

The SACP Central Committee, meeting in Johannesburg on September 12-13, discussed the present political situation and the intense anti-Communist propaganda campaign currently being waged by the De Klerk regime and its surrogates in the media.

The anti-Communist hysteria is in direct proportion to, and a consequence of, the growing mass popularity and effectiveness of our Party. The De Klerk regime expected the SACP to wither away into insignificance after the crisis in Eastern Europe. This hope has been utterly confounded. Everywhere in mass action throughout the length and breadth of our country these past three months, the red flag of our party has been in evidence. The hostility of the present anti-Communist attack is a measure of De Klerk's fury.

In assessing the past three months, the Central Committee noted the very significant shift in the balance of forces in favour of the broad liberation movement. This shift is due notably to the three months of rolling mass action for peace and democracy throughout our country. The very pressure of mass struggle is forcing out into the light of day growing evidence of the government's direct complicity in unleashing strategically co-ordinated violence against the people. The apartheid regime is daily running out of political options and the personal credibility of FW De Klerk is now in

terminal decline.

The Central Committee salutes the millions of South Africans who have taken part in the mass action campaigns. We call upon them to intensify the struggle for a Constituent Assembly, an Interim Government of national unity and for the extension of free political activity to every corner of our country.

The Central Committee assessed the Bisho massacre. Each day brings fresh evidence that the massacre was a deliberately planned ambush, not a panicky reaction.

- The CDF troops were carefully concealed and deployed in ambush formation behind a break in the fence;
- These troops were armed for an ambush and not for crowd control;
- The ambush was rehearsed two days before. What is more, there is strong reason to believe that, while the triggers were pulled in Bisho, the plot was hatched in Pretoria:
- The heavy SAP escort of the marchers mysteriously faded away, and its commanding officer was whisked off by helicopter just minutes before the massacre, only to return soon after the firing.
- The CDF is commanded by numerous seconded SADF officers on Pretoria's payroll;
- According to an international intelligence monitoring publication there was an SADF Department of Military Intelligence signal from Pretoria ordering the massacre.

On top of all this, there is at least one more element pointing to a major conspiracy: the present, highly orchestrated anti-SACP media campaign around the massacre began, not on Monday 7 September (the day of the massacre) but exactly 24 hours earlier in the regime supporting Sunday newspaper, *Rapport*.

The SACP Central Committee extends its heartfelt condolences to the families of those murdered by Gqozo's SADF-commanded forces. We also express our deepest sympathy with the hundreds of wounded, including at least three of our comrades who are now paralysed for life.

The Central Committee salutes the numerous unsung heroes of Bisho - the marshals (at least two of whom died), who risked their lives under fire to rescue wounded; the young comrade who protected the ANC secretary general, shielding comrade Ramaphosa with his own body; those who remained to the last in the stadium to ensure safe evacuation; the journalists who had the courage to witness the event and bring back the truth; and many, many more.

The SACP Central Committee also salutes the leadership of the tripartite alliance who led the march to Bisho. Among them were Communists and non-Communists, black and white. They included comrades Chris Hani, Cyril Ramaphosa, John Gomomo, Ronnie Kasrils, Harry Gwala, Wilton Mkwayi, Elias Motsoaledi, Andrew Mlangeni, Steve Tshwete, Moses Mayekiso, Getrude Shope, Jeff Radebe, Raymond Suttner, Skenjana Roji, Silumka Sokupa, Lucille Meyer, Tony Yengeni, David Ndawonde, Linda Mti, Tokyo Sexwale, and others.

We reject with contempt suggestions that the leadership of the tripartite alliance used people as cannon fodder. Unlike FW De Klerk, who hides his deeds behind proxy and shadowy covert forces, our leadership courageously led

from the front and in broad daylight. It was they who found themselves directly in the firing line. We also reject with contempt the attempt to attribute to Communists, and in particular to white Communists, decisions that were at all times collective and tri-partite in character. Those making these insinuations reveal their own innate bigotry and racism.

The loss of a single life, the maiming of a single body is a terrible blow. Each death means yet another family deprived of a breadwinner, a parent's hug, or a child's laughter. We must, and shall never forget these basic human facts.

But those who, from the comfort of white suburbs and newspaper editorial offices, urge patience and passivity on our people choose to forget. They choose to forget that each day, before and after the Bisho massacre, our people are killed in their beds, fields, in taxis and trains by war-lords, petty tyrants and covert forces. If you are patient you might be killed. If you are active you might be killed. The people of Ciskei and everywhere in our country have come to understand one simple truth - if you want peace, you have to struggle for justice.

The SACP reaffirms its commitment to a negotiated settlement. We strongly endorse the ANC National Working Committee decision not to proceed with a bilateral summit until FW De Klerk has provided a satisfactory response to the 14 demands, and also until he takes concrete steps to reduce violence emanating from notorious hostels, to ban the public display of weapons, to rein in his proxy forces and to release political prisoners.

Despite the latest tragedy, the SACP views the future with confidence. We have no doubt that the organised power of our people in numerous democratic formations, under the overall leadership of the ANC/SACP/COSATU alliance, will take decisive steps towards freedom in the period that lies ahead. ♪

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I agree to abide by the rules of the competition

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Negotiations: What room for compromise?

JOE SLOVO opens the debate on a negotiations strategy

Sooner or later we will be back at the negotiating table. I believe that it is urgent to arm ourselves with a more adequate theoretical framework within which to determine our approaches. Some of our responses have been too ad hoc and have sometimes been influenced by a passing mood and a passion generated by an event or a particularly outrageous pronouncement by the other side.

The starting point for developing a framework within which to approach some larger questions in the negotiating process, is to answer the question: **why are we negotiating?** We are negotiating because towards the end of the 80s we concluded that, as a result of its escalating crisis, the apartheid power bloc was no longer able to continue ruling in the old way and was genuinely seeking some break with the past. At the same time, we were clearly **not dealing with a defeated enemy** and an early revolutionary seizure of power by the liberation movement could not be realistically posed.

Author's note: The views set out here are purely my own individual contribution. They do not reflect at the moment the collective thinking of our alliance or any of its constituents.

This conjuncture of the balance of forces (which continues to reflect current reality) provided a classical scenario which placed the possibility of negotiations on the agenda. And we correctly initiated the whole process in which the ANC was accepted as the major negotiating adversary.

But what could we expect to achieve in the light of the balance of forces and the historical truism that no ruling class ever gives up all its power voluntarily? There was certainly never a prospect of forcing the regime's unconditional surrender across the table. It follows that the negotiating table is neither the sole terrain of the struggle for power nor the place where it will reach its culminating point. In other words, negotiations is only a part, and not the whole, of the struggle for real people's power.

It should also be clear that the possibility for and the relative success of negotiations have little to do with mutual trust, or good faith, or some special chemistry between leaders. We are negotiating with the regime because an objective balance of forces makes this a feasible political strategy. Negotiations that are based on vague psychological criteria are bound to mislead and falter. Of course, where there is

some reciprocal trust, then that is a bonus.

What then is the more precise place of negotiations in the liberation contest? It is clearly a **key element or a stage** in the struggle process towards full and genuine liberation. It is a key element because it holds out the possibility of bringing about a radically transformed political framework in which the struggle for the achievement of the main objectives of the national democratic revolution will be contested in conditions far more favourable to the liberation forces than they are now.

In other words, we can realistically project the possibility of an outcome for the negotiating process which will result in the liberation movement occupying significantly more favourable heights from which to advance. This will clearly be the case if, among other things, the tri-cameral parliament is replaced by a democratically elected sovereign body and executive power is led by elected representatives of the majority. If this comes about, the balance of forces will obviously have been qualitatively transformed in our favour.

Four considerations flow from the above analysis:

- Firstly, the **immediate outcome** of the negotiating process will inevitably be **less than perfect** when measured against our long-term liberation objectives. If such an outcome is unacceptable then we should cease raising false expectations by persisting with negotiations. On the other hand, if it is strategically acceptable then a **degree of compromise will be unavoidable**. And we must not fear to be up-front about this reality with our mass political constituency.



- Secondly, we should not underestimate the danger of the counter-revolution in the period following a major transformation. The extreme right will target sections of the white community, in particular the incumbents (hundreds of thousands) in the civil service, army and police who fear for their jobs and for their economic future. Precisely because racism gave them a monopoly of skills and experience, their potential for destabilising a newly born democracy is enormous. Hence, in addressing areas of compromise, we should also consider measures which will help pre-empt the objectives of the counter-revolution and reduce its base.

- Thirdly, the key test for the acceptability of a compromise is that it does not **permanently block a future advance to non-racial democratic rule in its full connotation**. Therefore, to avoid such a compromise we must have bottom-lines from which there can be no retreat even if it means abandoning the negotiating table and adopting other options. Here too we must be up-front about where we stand.

- Fourthly, to test the acceptability of a negotiated agreement, we need to **weigh up the package as a whole** and not get bogged down in its individual elements. For example, the passion generated towards the lead-up to CODESA-2 by our 70% concession on the special majority required in the Constituent Assembly was totally misplaced. Had our package as a whole been accepted we would have scored a most positive advance in the negotiating process. Its rejection by the regime indisputably left us in occupation of the moral high ground.

In regard to the above considerations, it is

necessary to emphasise that we should not allow the necessary bargaining postures within the negotiating process to inhibit us from taking our membership (and therefore inevitably, the whole public) into our confidence in relation to **seminal strategic perspectives.**

The argument that we should keep the other side in the dark, especially when it comes to possible compromises, has a valid place in the art of negotiations. But it becomes both harmful and counter-productive when it also keeps our support base in the dark in really vital areas; it will eventually attract charges of "sell-out" and departures from accountability.

Bottom-lines

Our negotiating team should be given the following mandate:

a. The future constitution must be adopted by a democratically elected sovereign constitution making body (CMB), representing all inhabitants of our 1910 borders and arriving at decisions democratically without a veto by any other body.

b. The only limitation on the sovereignty of the CMB will be a required adherence to the principles of CODESA's Declaration of Intent and such other **general constitutional principles** which the key actors agree should be binding. **This does not include the powers and functions of future regions which must be determined by the CMB.**

c. Effective structures must be put in place which will ensure a free and fair election.

d. Acceptable time-frames must be provided for the whole process as well as acceptable dead-lock breaking mechanisms in constitution making.

e. The tri-cameral parliament and its executive arm must be automatically dissolved upon the election of the CMB which shall also have ordinary legislative functions during the interim.

f. The legislative instrument which makes provision for constitutional continuity and which empowers the CMB must not have the effect of substituting CODESA for the CMB in the adoption of the constitution.

Quantitative Compromises

We must distinguish between what I choose to call **qualitative compromises** which imply a surrender of the whole or part of a substantive demand and **quantitative compromises** which allow for a degree of elasticity within otherwise fixed parameters.

Quantitative compromises should not be problematic although, even here, we have experienced tendencies to confuse detail with substance and to demand mechanical adherence to a mandate through thick and thin. Our negotiators should, for example, have flexible space to decide in the hurly-burly of negotiations whether (as part of a bargaining package) to concede 9 months in place of 6 months as a time-scale for the holding of elections to the CMB.

It is not conducive to effective negotiations to demand a reference back to the whole organisation on every such concession. As long as the concession does not, in substance, conflict with a key bottom-line mandate, some immediate flexibility is permissible. Indeed, **without such flexibility our negotiators would be seriously disadvantaged.**

Qualitative Compromises

Qualitative compromises do not arise in the course of the give and take of day to day negotiations. They constitute a clear departure from major policy positions. After obtaining a mandate we made concessions on a number of such positions including the following:

We conceded special majorities for constitution making and the Bill of Rights, and special regional involvement in the determi-



Mandela and De Klerk: Some concessions could situate us indisputably in the high moral ground

nation of the final boundaries, powers and functions of future regions. We also agreed to a process whereby the illegal and illegitimate tri-cameral parliament will “empower” the CMB through a legislative instrument. We also offered a power-sharing executive during the period between elections to the CMB and the adoption of the constitution.

In determining whether it is permissible to make any further qualitative compromises we need to focus on some of the issues which have loomed large in the regime’s positions. **Among the positions on which a retreat on our part would be impermissible are the following:**

a. a minority veto of any sort in the constitution making process as a whole, either through a minority-loaded second chamber or some other device.

b. the entrenchment of **compulsory power-sharing** as a permanent feature of a future constitution.

c. the determination by the **negotiating forum and not the CMB of the permanent boundaries, powers and functions of regions** and (linked with this) whether the future South Africa should be a unitary or federal state.

d. binding the CMB in such a way that a future democratic state would be **constitutionally prevented permanently** from effectively intervening to advance the process of redressing the racially accumulated imbalances in all spheres of life.

Compromises of the above sort are unacceptable because they would permanently block a future advance to non-racial democratic rule in its full connotation.

There are, however, certain retreats from previously held positions which would create the possibility of a major positive breakthrough in the negotiating process without permanently hampering real democratic advance. Let me at once grasp the nettle and specify some areas in which compromise may be considered as part of an acceptable settlement package.

a. a "sunset" clause in the new constitution which would provide for compulsory power-sharing for a fixed number of years in the period immediately following the adoption of the constitution. This would be subject to proportional representation in the executive combined with decision-making procedures which would not paralyse its functioning.

b. as already emphasised, the constitutionally entrenched boundaries, powers and functions of regions is the exclusive province of the CMB. It is, however, imperative that we immediately elaborate our own policy positions on future regions in all essential detail. Without, therefore, in any way impinging on the sovereignty of the CMB, is it unprincipled to attempt to reach a bilateral understanding between the two main parties to the negotiations on positions in relation to regional powers, etc., that both main parties commit themselves to support in the CMB?

c. There are two other categories which lend themselves to publicly committed agreements which do not have the status of constitutional principles binding on the CMB. These are:

i. **General Amnesty.** We must continue to insist that there is no link between this issue and the release of political prisoners and that, in any case, the decision must be left to an interim government of national unity. But this should not prevent us from indicating now that, as part of such a government, we will support a general amnesty in which those seeking to benefit will disclose in full those activities for which they require an amnesty.

The proclamation of such a future general amnesty could be the subject of a bilateral agreement which would spell out all the conditions under which we would give our support (cut-off dates, establishing who did what, etc.).

ii. **An approach to the restructuring of the Civil Service (including the SAP and the SADF) which takes into account existing contracts and/or provides for retirement compensation.**

This area too could be the subject of negotiated bilateral commitments, perhaps excluding those categories of unilateral appointments and promotions carried out with an eye to the post-apartheid structure.

I am of the view that, subject to a package which would include the "bottom-lines" set out above, and subject to proper consultation with our constituency, the compromises touched upon here are both permissible and conducive to a speedier democratic transformation.

They are permissible because they will not permanently block the advance to real democracy. They are conducive to a positive break-through in the negotiation process because they address, in a principled way, some of the basic and more immediate fears and insecurities of our adversary and its constituency.

In particular, the prospect of a period of power-sharing, a shared vision of the future regional dispensation, some security for existing incumbents in the civil service, and undertakings which will promote reconciliation, will make it exceedingly difficult for the other side to continue blocking the transformation.

As a bonus, these concessions would situate us indisputably in the moral high-ground and weaken the capacity of the more extreme hard-liners within the regime's camp to block an early agreement. ♪

The boat, the tap and the Leipzig way

JEREMY CRONIN offers a critique of some strategic assumptions in our ranks'

PART ONE **Introduction**

The ANC-led alliance has not developed an adequate strategy for struggle in the post-February 1990 situation. In place of a single, clear strategy there have been several inadequate and conflicting approaches. These approaches have not themselves ever been fully elaborated for the new situation. Instead they have tended to exist as more or less implicit strategic assumptions that reveal themselves in conflicting tactical interventions and confusing signals that we send to our constituency (and, indeed, to the other side).

In criticising these various strategic positions, I am not trying to suggest that they represent, in any way, organised, ideological factions or platforms within our ranks. On the contrary, most of us at one time or another, and often in the course of the same political intervention, drift now into one, now into another of these strategic frameworks.

In order to **begin** to develop an adequate strategic approach to the post-February 1990 situation, it is essential to render more visible and then critique these conflicting assump-

tions. It is this double task that I undertake in the first part of this paper.

I want to argue, a little schematically (but I hope usefully), that there are at present basically three kinds of strategic outlook informing our national liberation movement. Each of these outlooks answers in its own way the core question in the new situation: "How do we democratise South Africa?" or, as it is often put, "How will the transfer of power to the people be effected?"

STRATEGIC OUTLOOK ONE: **"DON'T ROCK THE BOAT"**

Whether this position is actually held by anyone within our movement is itself the subject of controversy. Since the purpose of this paper is not to conduct an ideological witch-hunt I prefer to leave the question open. Let us just say, for the moment, that this kind of strategic outlook is constantly being proffered to our movement as advice (and dangled as a temptation). The position has recently been developed with great coherence by Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert in his book, *The Quest for Democracy. South Africa in transition*.



MASS ACTION: Not just a tap to be turned off and on according to progress at CODESA

Essentially this strategic position sees the path to democratisation as depending primarily upon negotiated pacts between elites. Elites “deliver” their constituencies. The job of constituencies is “to be delivered”.

The greatest threat to democratisation comes from “radicals” to the right and left. It comes from “irrational fears” on the right, and “unrealistic expectations”, “utopian dreams” that confuse democracy with equality on the left. This latter is what Slabbert describes graphically as “the burden of democracy”. Mass action, in this strategic framework, obviously belongs to the category of “rocking the boat”.

This perspective is grounded on the assumption that there is essentially a strategic convergence between responsible leaders on the side of both the regime and the national liberation movement. This “moderate centre” must be allowed to congeal, it must be given the space and time to get on with the task.

This perspective doesn’t argue that there are NO differences between these elites - but the differences are essentially competitive differences. They can be resolved through rational “bargaining”.

Clearly this strategic outlook is thoroughly elitist. It is also thoroughly reformist, believing

that the differences between the capitalist-oriented ruling bloc and the national liberation movement are essentially non-antagonistic. It is a competition between different constituencies that can be ameliorated through elite bargaining and reforms dispensed from above.

There is, of course, a sliver of truth in this position, otherwise all negotiations would be futile or merely a trick either on their or our part. There is, indeed, an **extremely limited** strategic convergence of interest between leading elements of the ruling bloc and the liberation movement. The all-round crisis of apartheid has finally forced leading elements in the ruling bloc (and they have carried with them **for the moment** a significant constituency - see the white referendum) to undertake the risky business (for them) of moving away from constitutionally entrenched white minority rule.

We share this objective. But, as Raymond Suttner puts it, while both sides want to move away from X, WE want to get to Y, while the regime wants to move to X1. The strategic convergence is confined, then, strictly to the need to move away from X. There is no common vision on the direction and character of the move. There is a small consensus on departure, but no consensus whatsoever on destination.

It is this **extremely limited** strategic convergence that nevertheless provides us with an important window of opportunity. If we fail to engage actively with this opportunity, using an all-round strategy, we risk allowing the regime to steer the process to X1, to a new point of stability for them. X1 would be a point of stability that entrenches existing powers and privileges in a new constitutional form.

But in actively engaging on the terrain of negotiations we must never fall into the illusion of strategy 1. If we imagine that there is a more substantive convergence of interest, the

end result is inevitable. We will converge on the regime's destination (X1).

This "don't rock the boat" strategic outlook has already been extensively criticised (Ben Molapo, "Manufacturing a reformist ANC", *The African Communist*, Second Quarter, 1991). However this critique failed at the time to notice the differences and limitations of other more militant positions being advanced within our movement in opposition to strategy 1. The importance of making these latter distinctions has now become much more apparent. This brings us to:

STRATEGIC OUTLOOK TWO: "TURNING ON THE TAP"

This second strategic outlook is, in effect, a militant version of the first. Like the first it tends to conceive of elite negotiations as the royal road to "the transfer of power to the people". But, unlike the first, it doesn't rule out militant struggles, including mass struggle.

However, struggle is essentially envisaged as a weapon "to bring the other side to its senses", "to produce a change of heart". In other words, struggle is unleashed in order to achieve what the first strategy assumes to be already unproblematically the case (the other side shares the same strategic outlook as us). Struggle in strategy 2 is not about the self-empowerment of the working masses. Instead, struggle is rather more narrowly seen as empowering the negotiators so that they can bestow upon the people their liberation.

Struggle, including mass struggle, is then essentially a tap to be turned off and on according to perceived progress or otherwise at CODESA. "We have deadlocked at CODESA therefore we are **launching mass action**". "Mass action will continue **until** our demands at CODESA are met".

This kind of strategic outlook has, incidentally, a long lineage within our movement (and

the original Molapo article should therefore have been more vigilant in this regard). Throughout the course of our armed struggle, for instance, this kind of strategic assumption (the armed struggle is designed to "bring the other side to its senses") co-existed contradictorily with other strategic perspectives (the armed struggle as one component in a general strategy to build popular power for the overthrow of the regime and for the ensuing process of national democratic transformation).

In criticising the "turning on the tap" outlook I am NOT arguing that it is wrong to coordinate mass struggles so that they impact upon the negotiations process. What I am criticising is strategy 2's elitist and instrumentalist (the masses as a tap) conception of struggle. What is more, it is liable to have reformist consequences, not least because it continually disempowers popular struggles particularly when the tap is supposed to be off. This disempowerment means that each time the tap is turned on again it is liable to be less and less effective (and more and more resentful).

It is possible, perhaps a little mechanically, to map onto strategies 1 and 2 assumptions about the unfolding character of the national liberation movement. For strategy 1 the ANC is, essentially, a **government in waiting** (with some emphasis on the word "waiting", albeit impatiently). The temptation of strategy 1 is, therefore, likely to be particularly alluring to some in our ranks who are beginning to see themselves as future bureaucrats. If and when the ANC becomes the government, the proponents of the "don't rock the boat" line will become even more vociferous.

Strategy 2, for its part, is often significantly linked with the argument that "mass action is justified in the present because the majority of our people do not yet have the vote". This points forward to the kind of medium term

conception of the national liberation movement that is implicit in strategy 2. It begins to suggest that soon the national liberation movement must transform itself narrowly into an **electoral machine**. Once more, mass action will be confined to periodic spurts, this time in elections - yet another version of turning the tap off and on.

STRATEGY THREE: "THE LEIPZIG WAY"

This third position, unlike the first two, is NOT in my view flawed in principle. It does not (at least not necessarily) have an elitist and therefore ultimately reformist conception of struggle.

Essentially this is the perspective of a mass uprising that builds dual power, that overthrows an incumbent regime and replaces it with the emergent organs of popular power. It is a perspective in which the people transfer power to themselves in an insurrectionary moment. This strategic position received its clearest elaboration in the Party's 1989 programme (*The Path to Power*).

At least as a strategic inclination it has never entirely disappeared in the post-February 1990 period from the consciousness and hopes of our broad national liberation movement activist ranks. But it is now enjoying a significant resurgence of popularity as a result of utter dissatisfaction with the preceding two strategic outlooks, particularly after the deadlock at CODESA.

As I have said, I have no principled objection to this third outlook. The critical question is: **HOW REALISTIC IS THIS OPTION?**

The question is not a question about preferences. It is a question that belongs not to the domain of "politics as the art of the possible" (a phrase that reformists and revolutionary romantics both seize upon in their own way). It is a question that must be confronted from the perspective of "politics as the science of the probable".

This means that we must deal with South African insurrectionary prospects in terms of the dynamic balance of forces (international, regional and national). I will not attempt to do that here in any elaborate form, I will simply make some general observations.

Comrades have been invoking the 1989 examples from eastern Europe of massive and ongoing city centre demonstrations (in Leipzig, Prague, and elsewhere) which acted as the engine for the rapid demise of regimes. It is entirely valid to be invoking these examples:

- to underline that those who are presently condemning mass action in our country were the first to salute it when it occurred in eastern Europe; and
- to illustrate the capacity of mass action to play a role in sweeping regimes out of power **WHEN** the balance of forces is favourable, and also **IF** incumbent regimes are sufficiently sensitive to questions of legitimacy and popular support (i.e. actually have a heart that can be changed).

This last assertion points to a major qualification that needs to be made immediately in regard to the Leipzig and Prague examples:

The examples are often evoked in our own present situation from a basically insurrectionary perspective. But were the mass 1989 demonstrations in these cities **insurrections**? I do not believe that they were. They belonged much more to the domain of symbolic "protest" (rather than "power") politics.

What dramatically changed the balance of **power** in these societies was, of course, the external factor, the crisis in the Soviet Union and the abandonment of the Brezhnev Doctrine (a doctrine "justifying" Soviet armed intervention in eastern Europe). With the exception of events in Romania, the mass gatherings were largely symbolic demonstrations of the illegitimacy of the incumbent governments. They created the space for elites to bargain

over transitional processes. Unlike Petrograd in October 1917, for instance, these were not mass acts of popular self-empowerment. Events post-1989 in Germany, in Czechoslovakia, etc., amply underline this point.

In short, although comrades here in South Africa are invoking these events with a strategy 3 perspective in mind, the examples belong, if anything, to a strategy 2 framework.

But, leaving aside the debate over how to understand events in eastern Europe in 1989, can we **make** and (just as important) can we **defend** and sustain the gains of a real insurrection here in South Africa in the foreseeable future?

It was never going to be an easy task. In the decade of the 1990s it has become immensely more difficult for us, and this has to do primarily with the impact of external factors upon our own internal situation.

Internationally, as we know, there has been a very rapid and absolutely radical change in the balance of forces. It was essentially this fundamental change that allowed mass demonstrations in Leipzig and Prague to act as catalysts for the rapid demise of governments. But the world balance of forces that encouraged and sustained mass propelled negotiated transition there, is more or less an entirely unfavourable balance for us here.

Within South Africa the single greatest obstacle to a successful popular uprising remains the relatively coherent and relatively powerful repressive machinery of the apartheid regime. Above all, in its commanding heights and in its overwhelming numbers (in the case of the SADF) it remains an essentially white repressive machinery. The prospects of strategic sections of the repressive machinery coming over to the side of a popular uprising in significant numbers remains remote.

However, in the second half of the 1980s within the wider **regional** terrain of struggle

significant strategic trends manifested themselves. A notable shift in the balance of conventional forces began to occur, specifically in southern Angola. Cuban forces acquired air superiority. Suddenly the conventional armed force equation began to take on a very different character. There were some prospects that the SADF would become bogged down, overstretched, and that increasing white citizen force losses would effect its morale and coherence. It was against this immediate background that the Party elaborated its 1989 programme.

But political progress since then, notably the settlement in Angola and Namibia, has paradoxically relieved the pressures on the SADF. Today, there are almost certainly more guns in the hands of the popular masses of our country than ever before. But we are further (and we were arguably never that close) from insurrection now than we were three or four years ago.

I am saying all of this because I believe it is true. My objective is certainly not to spread demoralisation or to argue for less militancy. On the contrary, I believe that there are very real prospects for a major breakthrough, opening the way for a continuous revolutionary process of national democratic transformation, a process of ongoing transfer of power. But such a breakthrough also requires a clear strategy based on a realistic and revolutionary engagement with the new terrain on which we are struggling. This is a theme that will be developed in the second part of this paper.

In concluding my critique of what I have called strategy 3, I would like to make two final points:

1. We must be careful not to fetishise mass insurrection, or see it as the only possible revolutionary way (on this see Lenin, *Left-Wing Communism an Infantile Disorder*). While this form of revolutionary breakthrough may well be the most decisive, a mass uprising

that successfully overthrows an incumbent regime in no way guarantees that power will be transferred to the masses who rise up. (I will come back to the point in a moment).

2. Our present political situation is neither on the brink of an insurrectionary moment, nor is it blocked (which is not the same thing as being static) as it was through much of the past three decades. We are now living in an extremely fluid political conjuncture. In this situation there are particular dangers and weaknesses in propagating a strategy whose medium term success is at best uncertain. It does not help us to engage effectively, as revolutionaries, with the present. And for this reason it fails to provide an effective strategic counter to the elitist and reformist strategies we have labelled one and two above.

In this regard, we should perhaps distinguish between a couple of variants of strategy 3. These variants are distinguished by their time-frames:

[A] A fairly widespread grass-roots activist version sees insurrection as just around the corner. "Give us one more push", "to hell with the Peace Accord, to hell with CODESA, and to hell with suspension of the armed struggle". At a leadership level we sometimes encourage this perspective without perhaps so intending or believing. With this version of strategy 3, a version that sees insurrection as forever always just six months away, we end up doing exactly what strategy 2 does. Strategy 2 oversells what is "just about to emerge from CODESA" (and in similar fashion it will oversell what will emerge from elections). Strategy 2 and the insurrection-is-just-around-the-corner version of strategy 3 both constantly wind the masses up, only to disappoint them every six months.

[B] There is a more open-ended version of the insurrectionary perspective. This is the view that it is hard to predict when it may occur. An accumulation of factors can result in

a sudden insurrectionary moment. We must conduct struggle in such a way as not to close off this option. We must be maximally poised to exploit it.

Advocates of this open-ended version often refer to Lenin's well-known assertion that insurrections are not narrow conspiracies. But Lenin's statement (he borrows it from Marx) needs to be located in its proper context. Lenin was essentially defending himself (in September 1917) against those who were accusing him of "Blanquism" - that is approaching the revolution as a tight, elite conspiracy (more like a coup than a mass uprising).

Lenin's point is that the **conditions** in which an insurrection might be successfully carried through cannot themselves be planned. He had in mind massive social dislocations, a huge wave of mass uprisings, a generalised paralysis of the incumbent regime and favourable international circumstances. All of these factors were beginning to be present in September 1917 in Russia. But at the same time, and this is the real thrust of his polemic here, Lenin is scathing about those who see insurrection as entirely spontaneous, as something that can just be left to the whims of history. Once the conditions for an insurrection exist, he writes, "to refuse to treat insurrection as an **art** is a betrayal of Marxism and a betrayal of the revolution." ("Marxism and Insurrection. A letter to the Central Committee of the RSDLP(B)" *Marxism and Insurrection. A letter to the central committee of the RSDLP(B)*, September 13-14, 1917, *Selected Works*, vol.2)

Lenin certainly never neglected the critical **planning component** of the insurrection, indeed the Bolshevik party that Lenin led in October 1917 was a relatively efficient and seasoned conspiratorial machinery. It was Lenin who had fought, in an earlier period, to greatly improve its effectivity, as a formation of "professional revolutionaries".

In our present strategic debates, the second, open-ended time frame approach to insurrection may well not be wrong. Its open-endedness (like many religious beliefs and certain brands of Trotskyism) makes it hard to say quite when, if ever, it could be proved wrong. But it is this very open-endedness which makes it unhelpful in sharpening tactical and strategic choices in the present.

This points to the greatest danger inherent in strategy 3 in general (whether in its A or B versions). Because insurrection is improbable in the short to medium term and because an insurrectionary logic tends to be one of disengagement from the negotiations process, it is liable to open the way to the regime and reformists of all kinds steering the process of transformation. In other words, this, the most militant of the three strategies we have considered, is liable to end us up in exactly the same place that strategy 1 will take us - X1, the regime's desired objective.

THE ZIG-ZAGS OF THE ANC-LED ALLIANCE SINCE FEBRUARY 1990

It is the unresolved co-existence of three inadequate strategic outlooks within our national liberation movement that accounts for many of the problems that we have experienced since February 1990.

In the first part of 1990 it was suggested that we were negotiating with the regime because De Klerk was "a man of integrity" (a strategy 1 kind of perspective). Inevitably the situation on the ground (particularly with the upsurge of violence from August of that year) disproved strategy 1. In the eyes of the communities directly affected by the violence this disproving was never very plausibly argued away by invoking a "third force" (which implied De Klerk didn't really know). In the eyes of affected townships and the majority of our grassroots cadres the violence was widely and cor-

rectly seen to be low intensity warfare waged against our people by the FIRST force itself.

Our cadres and supporters blamed the August suspension of the armed struggle for their sense of defenselessness and tried to counterpose a more or less spontaneous strategy 3 type of view (particularly at the December 1990 ANC consultative conference).

In April 1991 the ANC leadership issued an open letter ultimatum to De Klerk to end the violence, to release political prisoners and ensure the return of exiles or face a suspension of talks about talks. The ultimatum was well received by the majority of movement activists and it was generally only a few of those inclined to strategy 1 who were unhappy (it "rocked the boat"). The ultimatum temporarily helped to resolve the growing rift between the rank and file and the negotiators. But it was never clear whether the ultimatum was part of a strategy 2 outlook, or part of something different.

Despite the ultimatum and the non-fulfilment of its preconditions, within months the tug of negotiations proved too strong.

So, in July 1991 the ANC NEC elaborated the "strategic shift" - that is, the violence, the non-release of prisoners were all subordinated to the bigger question. It was not this or that particular precondition that was the immediate obstacle to change but the regime itself. And so it was back to negotiations. We were going to move to an interim government as quickly as possible.

Whatever its own inherent merits or otherwise, this "strategic shift" also served to paper over the division between the three strategic outlooks within our movement. Proponents of all three positions welcomed the "strategic shift", and each interpreted it in their own way. The proponents of strategy 1 breathed a sigh of relief that negotiations were once more "back on track". "Good sense" had prevailed, the

negotiations should never have been suspended.

Proponents of strategy 2 saw themselves going back to the negotiating table strengthened ("you see what a bit of pressure can do"). In this case it was not so much mass pressure, as psychological pressure on the other side that was deemed to have done the trick. Like strategy 1 proponents, proponents of strategy 2 now tended to be over-optimistic about the possibilities of rapidly negotiating an interim government.

For their part, supporters of strategy 3 welcomed the July 1991 shift, and read into the statement that "the regime itself is the immediate obstacle" insurrectionary intentions.

Needless to say the apparent unity of July 1991 quickly evaporated under the pressure of reality itself.

I will resist the temptation here to catalogue the ongoing impact of these conflicting ideological tendencies on our movement over the past months. The essential point is that we need a real unity of strategic purpose not an apparent unity. Only a realistic, revolutionary, mass based strategy can serve to do this. The three strategic outlooks I have critiqued in this paper fail, in differing degrees and in different ways, in this respect.

Part 2

SOME NOTES TOWARDS A MORE ADEQUATE STRATEGY

It is easier to criticise than it is to elaborate a coherent strategy. What has already been said, however, begins to underline, by contrast with the positions I have tried to criticise, the key features that must be embodied in a correct strategy for the present situation.

I believe that such a strategy needs to have three essential features - it needs to be able to **combine a REVOLUTIONARY perspective and practice with an active and effective engagement on the terrain of NEGOTIATIONS;**

and it needs to orient us correctly in regard to our ORGANISATIONAL tasks.

It is important to stress the need for a revolutionary approach, not because it is part of popular rhetoric to do so, but because, as we have often said, national liberation requires a real national democratic REVOLUTION. Moreover, in a period in which negotiations loom large, reformism is an ever-present danger.

But what, then, do I mean by "revolutionary" in our present context?

A revolutionary approach must be based on the perspective that:

1. A successful national democratic transformation will essentially be a process of self-empowerment by the popular masses spearheaded by the working class. The process of transformation must be one that is propelled, monitored and defended from the base.

2. While partial and limited areas of consensus may occur between the national liberation movement and the ruling bloc (making negotiations possible), there is a fundamental, long-term, antagonistic contradiction between the primary class forces on the respective sides.

On the basis of these two basic principles it follows that, while the concrete situation might be one in which a more or less total and rapid transfer of political power is not (unfortunately) feasible, this does not mean that the process of national democratic transformation has to be conceived in nar-

row reformist terms. On the contrary, a narrow reformism will simply block and undermine national democratic transformation. Such a transformation process cannot be approached as a slow, incremental winning of partial reforms. That would be to try to climb a greased pole. For every desperate inch we move up, we would forever be sliding two feet down. The pole itself has to be transformed.

Put another way, while a struggle for reforms is not in itself wrong or necessarily reformist, a strategy based on the simple accumulation of reforms is. The process of transformation must be one of both reforms and qualitative breaks, significant if (alas) still partial ruptures. What will be critical in this process is our ability to actively and energetically use the platform of each of these breaks (eg. phase one



The Russian Revolution: Lenin warned that once conditions for an insurrection exist, 'to refuse to treat insurrection as an art is a betrayal of Marxism and a betrayal of the revolution'

interim arrangements, or constituent assembly elections) to develop our mass striking capacity and to deepen the momentum towards our fuller objectives.

Related directly to this is the fact that the actual detail of negotiated arrangements, as important as it may be, is less important than ensuring we carry a mobilised, organised mass constituency into and through the process of constitutional negotiations, and onwards. A far-reaching negotiated arrangement that leaves the broad masses confused, demoralised and alienated in the longer term is actually worse than a less adequate negotiations arrangement in which our people remain well organised and mobilised. The ideal, of course, is to achieve both a significant negotiations breakthrough and maintain mass momentum.

This means achieving a difficult balance between effective mobilisation to achieve at least partial breaks, while not raising unrealistic (and therefore ultimately demobilising) expectations about what any particular breakthrough might deliver.

Mass struggle

But how is this to be achieved? To answer this question we need to understand more clearly the nature of mass struggle. In the first place, there is a tendency to think of mass struggle simply as organised events - a march or a rally. As important as these can be, we need to remember that mass struggle is not simply the invention of political organisations or activ-

ists. To survive from one day to the next in a township, on the factory floor, in a village in the devastated countryside, requires struggle. Struggle is the bread our people eat daily, often, of course, in individualised, incoherent and desperate ways. It is the task of political and democratic sectoral organisations, not to invent struggle, but to organise and collectivise it, to give it purpose and direction.

In giving purpose and direction to the daily struggles of our people it is crucial that we find the correct balance between bringing our mass power to bear directly on the developing nego-



CIVIC ISSUES: If we neglect wider areas - like culture or sports - if we demobilise or lose contact with civics, or youth organisations, in favour of tighter insurrectionary structures we will not sustain mass struggles

tations process. In other words, Strategy 2 (turning on the tap) is not wholly wrong. It is indeed critical that we co-ordinate our principal weapons - mass support (plus other factors like international solidarity) - so that we bring them to bear effectively upon the negotiations process. But we must not confine or inhibit mass struggle to this purpose. Instead we need to encourage and facilitate a thousand and one local initiatives, local struggles against the numerous injustices our people suffer.

It is this continuous, unabating mass struggle

on the ground that will provide an ongoing momentum through the ups and downs, from one partial breakthrough to the next. It is this kind of dual approach to mass struggle (strategically and nationally directed on the one hand, rolling and relatively spontaneous on the other) that we are beginning to develop more adequately in the current tripartite programme of action.

I have tried to develop a perspective on the transfer of political (and of course other) power as a **process** (rather than an event). It is a process marked by a series of partial but significant breaks. After the first elections under a new democratic constitution, the newly elected national assembly with its executive and the people at large will still have to deal, in struggle, with other networks of political power. I am thinking, for instance, of the hugely problematic security forces and bureaucracy that will be inherited from the apartheid state and which will not simply change their character because there has been a democratic election. The cultural, economic and social legacy of decades of apartheid and centuries of colonialism will require an even more protracted mass struggle.

Organisational requirements

To grasp these realities is to understand the kind of organisational strategic orientation we require right now. It is not wrong to prepare the ANC to govern, and to govern effectively. This imposes numerous organisational demands upon us - in particular policy development and the training of future administrators, future defence force officers, future managers of public sector enterprises, and so on.

It is also not wrong to give considerable attention to the ability of the ANC to contest elections effectively. We have much to learn on this front, and very probably not much time.

But it would be absolutely wrong to prioritise

the government-in-waiting role, or the election-machine role for the ANC over and above what remains its absolutely central task: namely, to be a broad, mass-based national liberation movement. Unless the ANC is first and foremost an effective liberation movement, leading struggles on the ground over the next twenty years and more, it will fail as a government and it will ultimately lose its base and subsequent elections.

The struggle for national liberation, for national democratic transformation, is not just a struggle against an incumbent, apartheid regime. We need to move away from an understanding of mass struggle as simply opposition to an undemocratic government. When we have a democratically elected government, mass mobilisation will be just as essential, but now, amongst other things, to enable the implementation of its popular mandate.

The struggle against illiteracy, for instance, if we are to learn anything from the enormous achievements of the Cuban Revolution on this score, will require mass mobilisation and mass campaigning. In the struggle against illiteracy we will need to deploy all our hard-earned campaign skills - good slogans, leaflets and banners, mass mobilisational rallies, and the deployment, for instance, of tens of thousands of students into the rural areas during their vacations. There are countless other examples of areas where we will need mass mobilisation in the post-apartheid period - a predictable one being the struggle to defend democratic economic policies against the International Monetary Fund.

To make these points in 1992 is not an irrelevancy or a diversion from our main organisational challenges, as some comrades argue. To understand what we are pursuing and what we are up against, should tell us what kind of liberation movement we are trying to build, right now.

A further organisational implication of this is that, apart from consolidating our national political formations (ANC, SACP), we need also to rebuild and reawaken the web of relatively independent mass democratic formations and struggles that characterised the 1980s. It is here that the tendency to throw everything into the preparations for an insurrectionary "moment" is unhelpful, however well intentioned. The revolutionary perspective before us demands an ability to be able to sustain, over a long period, mass struggles and mass mobilisation. If we neglect wider areas - like culture or sports - if we demobilise or lose contact with civics, or youth organisations, in favour of tighter insurrectionary structures we will not sustain mass struggles.

Representative and participatory democracy

This organisational point brings me directly to the kind of democratic dispensation we should be trying to build. It was one thing for the Bolsheviks to make errors in their heroic and pioneering revolution. We cannot allow ourselves to simply and unthinkingly repeat those errors. The particular error I have in mind was the identification of "representative" democracy with "bourgeois" democracy, and the contrasting of it with "direct" (i.e. "soviet") democracy, which was held to be "proletarian".

With this logic it was perfectly natural for the Bolsheviks to dissolve the Constituent Assembly, a form of representative democracy after all. (I am not suggesting this was the only or even the principal reason for the dissolution of that particular Constituent Assembly). It was also not illogical that a one-party system should be installed. But the outcome of these developments was not the withering away of the state and the flowering of popular power, as Lenin had hoped. The outcome was the exact opposite. The bureaucracy flourished, and popular power withered. The single party, the

state bureaucracy and the soviets, which had originally been dynamic, grass-roots, multi-party organs of popular struggle, all collapsed into each other. Or rather, the bureaucracy swallowed the rest.

It was Rosa Luxemburg who, at the time, made the point that without multi-party, representative democracy, the vibrancy of the institutions of direct (or participatory) democracy, namely the soviets, would wither away:

"In place of the representative bodies created by general, popular elections, Lenin and Trotsky have laid down the soviets as the only true representation of the labouring masses. But with the repression of political life in the land as a whole, life in the soviets must also become more and more crippled. Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy remains as the active element." (Rosa Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution*, Ann Arbor 1961, p.71 - first published 1917/8).

The kind of democracy that we should be struggling for in a future South Africa is one that combines:

- **representative democracy** - the demand for which has, after all, been a longstanding tradition within our struggle - "One person one vote". The demand for representative democracy is also central to our key demand in the present situation, namely for an elected Constituent Assembly; with
- **participatory or direct democracy** - which, again, has emerged as a powerful tradition within our struggle, particularly in the course of the 1980s. Organs of direct democracy include our various sectoral formations (trade unions, civics, youth, women, educational and religious mass democratic formations, etc.). Such organs also include street committees,

self defence units and locals.

But it is for a **combination**, not a confusion, of these two forms of democracy that we must struggle. In other words, we should not confuse democratic civics with democratically elected local government. We should not confuse self defence units, which must continue to exist, and which must be given public funds and training in a future South Africa, with a democratically accountable, non-racial and therefore fundamentally restructured police force. We should not confuse the democratic managers of public sector industries with the trade unions operating in these industries.

A future democratic government should include, then, democratically elected representatives at national and local level and a state machinery that is answerable both to the elected representatives of the people AND to the various formations of participatory democracy.

At the local level, to borrow just one example from a recent proposal by Thozamile Botha, elected local government representatives would have to put their policy suggestions before "local people's assemblies" at the core of which would be the civics, or, in rural areas, village committees.²

Conclusion

I have tried to show in both Parts 1 and 2 how the way in which we approach the immediate period of transition is deeply intertwined with our medium and longer-term strategic perspective on the character and content of democratisation itself. And, in turn, these two questions inform the other critical strategic question: what kind of organisations do we need to build right now?

On this last question, once more, and by contrast with the position I have just elaborated, we find a paradoxical convergence among the three strategies I critiqued in Part 1. All three have a tendency to fall into one or another

variant of statism.

Strategy one tends to over-invest in the ANC as government- (that is, bureaucracy-) in-waiting. Strategy two is likely to over-invest in the ANC as an electoral machine, that is to conceive of national liberation as essentially a parliamentary task.

Strategy three falls into another statist deviation, it tends to conflate:

- mass democratic and sectoral formations (that is, popular formations within civil society);
- political party and national liberation structures (structures that are intermediary between civil society and the state); and
- future representative and administrative/repressive state structures.

The recent article by Blade Nzimande and Mpume Sikhosana, ("Civil society and democracy")³ epitomises this kind of conflation. It is a conflation in which all three levels are stirred together into one stew and called "organs of people's power". Of course, all three "levels" do not exist in real life independently of each other. But the fact that they are all dialectical moments within a single social formation is no reason whatsoever to confuse them either organisationally, tactically or strategically.

Unfortunately, as with the other brands of statism, experience suggests that this kind of conflation has a habit of transferring power to a bureaucratic stratum, and not to the people at all.

Not that I believe that we are about to give birth in South Africa to a Stalinist state bureaucracy (as Pallo Jordan seems at times to warn⁴). A much more real danger lies in the formation of a neo-colonial (of a special type, no doubt) state bureaucratic stratum. This would be a stratum that, pursuing Strategy 1 to its fullest, would use access to state structures and its ability to "deliver" a majority constituency, to negotiate with local white and international capital a place in the sun for its own factional

interests. This might well happen, but it is not pre-ordained.

We stand on the threshold of what is potentially a significant transitional process of democratisation.

There are some important factors in our favour. Many of these relate to the semi-peripheral position of South Africa within the world system, and the consequent contradictions that flow from our grossly uneven development. We have a ruling bloc in deep crisis, unable to rule in the old way.

We have, like a number of other semi-peripheral social formations, a large industrial proletariat, which actually constitutes the largest class force in our country.

We have a broad popular movement that has more than 15 years of continuous mass struggle immediately behind it. We have tens of thousands of revolutionary cadres developed in this period.

We can throw away our advantages in strategic confusion. We can disarm ourselves. But we certainly do not have to! ♪

Endnotes

1. Part one of this paper was originally presented to an extended central committee meeting of the SACP. A few, largely minor alterations to the original have been made.
2. Thozamile Botha, "Civil Society: The case of civics as autonomous organs of grassroots participation", in *Local Government and Planning for a Democratic South Africa*, CDS, UWC, 1991.
3. *The African Communist*, no.128, 1st Quarter 1992.
4. Pallo Jordan, "Has Socialism Failed? The South African Debate", in *Southern Africa Report*, January 1992, p.11-16. Actually Jordan tends to conflate the problem of neo-colonial, state bureaucratic strata, typical of many post-independence African societies, with the relatively distinct phenomenon of a Stalinist state bureaucratic stratum. The former is a very real danger in our situation (see strategies 1 and 2). On the other hand, the objective chances of a Stalinist state bureaucracy emerging in our country are more or less remote, which is not to deny that there might be Stalinist tendencies or aspirations around, but that is a different matter.

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RUSSIA **Moves to** **relaunch CPSU**



INTERNATIONAL

The turmoil in the former Soviet Union continues. In Russia Yeltsin and his acting Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar are piloting the economy into hyper-inflation. In Georgia, the foreign minister and "democratic" darling of the West, Eduard Shevardnadze, has been implicated in the forced annexation of Abkhazia. In Tajikistan there has been a fundamentalist counter-revolution armed and supported by the feudalist forces who are turning Afghanistan into a bloodbath. There has been a plot to sell off the rich resources of the Kurile Islands for Japanese loans and investments. And the catalogue continues.

Against this background two significant political events are scheduled for October 1992.

On October 24 the Second All People's Veche (Town Hall Meeting) will assemble in Moscow. The appeal for the assembly, addressed to all sections of the population, calls upon workers and farmers to resist expropriation of state enterprises and farms through privatisation and selling of land. It urges working youth and students to defend their socialist right to free higher education and to jobs.

Also in October an important step will be taken to re-establish a renovated Communist Party of the Soviet Union. A draft programme

has been published for the 20th conference of the CPSU, and the aim of this conference is to lay the groundwork for convening the 29th Congress of the party.

There will certainly be sharp debate on many points in the draft programme, not least on the character and causes of the crisis. The draft attributes the crisis primarily to the overall tight state control of the means of production and political life, resulting in internal contradictions.

The draft declares: "The CPSU of Gorbachev and Yeltsin, Yakovlev and Shevardnadze no longer exists. But the CPSU of millions of Communists dedicated to the ideals of social justice is alive!" Among its main points, it calls for a return to the socialist path; for a rebirth of the USSR; the defence and strengthening of soviet power as popular power; a united economic space and economic links between Republics, regions and enterprises; regulation of the economy with flexible use of the market and without overcentralised management; no selling of enterprises to foreign companies; no privatisation of peoples' enterprises; all-peoples' property of land and the means of production as the basis of the economy; making incitement of national enmity and propa-

ganda for national chauvinism serious state crimes; establishment of the CPSU as a mass political organisation based on scientific socialism and adherence to Marxism-Leninism; renovation of the Party's organisation and methods of work; reaffirmation of democratic centralism, but with a broadening of the rights of lower bodies.

The draft commits the Party to struggling for power along constitutional lines, in elections. At the same time, it will use all methods of mass action, including strikes, against privatisation.

It regards regaining the confidence of workers as its main task. It will struggle against mass layoffs, and, together with the Komsomols (Young Communist League) concentrate upon the youth and students fighting for their needs.

The party will work for a united front of all

left, national democratic and patriotic forces. It regards as crucial the strengthening of the party's theoretical work.

Reviving and renovating the CPSU will be a difficult and complex process. Many former members hold the entire former central committee responsible for the collapse of the party.

According to the Mike Davidow (*People's Weekly World* correspondent in Moscow) this is "unfortunate because it lumps together dedicated Communists with the renegades and the deserters".

A section of the party's membership and leadership is grouped in several national Communist Parties, and there is no question that their work has mainly been responsible for the upsurge in mass activity this year.

However the mass of the former CPSU membership is today unattached and waiting. ♪

LATIN AMERICA

Daniel Ortega: 'The mass struggle lives'

Capitalism has no chance of presenting itself as an alternative to the peoples of the developing countries, especially in Latin America. This was stressed in a recent interview (in *Neues Deutschland*, Berlin) by Daniel Ortega, general secretary of Nicaragua's Sandino National Liberation Front (FSLN) and until 1990 president of Nicaragua.

Ortega agrees that the collapse of the socialist system in eastern Europe was a severe blow to the world movement for democracy and liberation. But he emphasises that the struggle

is continuing and will continue regardless.

"When the Nicaraguan revolution won in 1979, we received great help from the Soviet Union and eastern Europe. We are very grateful for that because it was aid without strings."

"We got weapons to defend ourselves," the FSLN leader says. "But above all we got economic aid from the socialist countries in order to make our plans a reality."

"The collapse of East Europe has caused damage world-wide and has made the international struggle for democracy much more dif-

ficult than before," Ortega says. "In the developed capitalist countries, the 'North', fascist movements are growing. In the United Nations the US is enforcing its military hegemony."

The FSLN general secretary says: "Imperialism with its 'free market' policy is trying to tell us that socialism was never possible and has no right to exist. Only capitalism has the right to live, they tell us, but in a totally unrestrained, savage form. They want to put such intense pressure on us that our minds, our very souls, are turned inside-out and we abandon all hope, in order to force us to renounce socialism."

"But socialism lives. It is there still, in China, Cuba, Vietnam and also in our socialist gains in Nicaragua that we are defending today."

"I believe that the attempt to portray capitalism as an alternative does not stand a chance with the peoples of the 'South', the developing countries. Of course it is different in East Europe in this first moment, when people have only had the experience of socialism and are just now discovering the capitalist consumer society."

"But capitalism has no chance in Latin

America because people here know very well what it is, no matter what finery it dresses itself up in," Ortega explains. "The fall of socialism in East Europe in no way impairs the necessity for change in Latin America - whether one calls the change 'socialism' or whatever. Deep-going democratic transformations in the social, economic and political aspects of life are on the order of the day, and this is the gut feeling rooted in human beings in Latin America."

The Sandinista leader praises the struggle of the peoples. "In Latin America the mass struggle lives," he says. "Right now the blockade against Cuba has been broken. Cuba is part of Latin America and it cannot be isolated as it was in the 1960s. Latin America is the spearhead of the peoples of the developing countries against the hegemony of the US."

"Despite the collapse in East Europe a force is coming into being in the developing countries that is steadily more conscious and battleworthy."

"The striving for unity around a socialist alternative is growing despite very different national conditions." ♪

Cuban solidarity in India

Huge rallies have been held throughout India to show solidarity with Cuba. Among the latest was one in Madras, capital of Tamil Nadu state, in south-east India.

Attending the rally were leading trade unionists, party officials and well known film stars, musicians and other cultural figures. Cuban diplomat Victor Ramirez Pena was presented with cheques and receipts representing two months' collections of money, food-grains and medicines from workers and peasants all over the state.

At the rally Karunanidhi, a major Tamil cultural figure, compared the United States to an elephant and Cuba to an angusam, the sharp metal prod used to control the beast by Indian elephant drivers! ♪

Don't push porridge down throats!

An interview with ERNEST MANDEL

Ernest Mandel is a renowned economic and political theorist. A leading member of the united secretariat of the Fourth International, Mandel has devoted his life to defending the revolutionary legacy of Leon Trotsky. He is the author of numerous books, the most recent in English is *Power and Money. A Marxist Theory of Bureaucracy* (Verso). During a recent visit to South Africa Mandel spoke to *The African Communist*.

The African Communist: Cde Mandel, we'd like to plunge you directly into a current debate within our own country. We are thinking of the demand for an Interim Government - should we, or should we not advance such a demand? We ask this question because there are forces on the left, notably some trotskyist groupings, that are absolutely opposed to transitional, power-sharing arrangements. Their opposition is certainly not groundless. The regime's agenda is precisely to detach the leadership of the ANC-led alliance from its mass base. One way of doing this would be to lure our formations into co-responsibility for governing without any real power.

On the other hand, all left forces in our country seem to agree on the demand for a democratically-elected Constituent Assembly.

How do you hold elections for a CA with the present regime acting as a major player and referee? What executive authority exists during the period of the CA's proceedings? It is in this context that the ANC, SACP and our allies have been putting forward the demand for an Interim Government.

So what do you think?

Mandel: On South Africa I am going to say nothing. But I will put the answer rather in an historical framework.

First point, this debate has been with the international labour movement for a long, long time. It started already in the 90s of the past century. In order to answer this problem, which is a difficult one, we have to approach it from exactly the opposite point of view. We have to approach it NOT from the point of view of: "Should we or shouldn't we try to occupy, get, grasp some elements of power?"

In Belgium, my country, Vandervelde [Emile, 1866-1938], the leader of the socialist party and once chairperson of the Second Socialist International, used a formula which by and large expresses (he was a clever lawyer) the philosophy underlying the wrong way of approaching this issue. He said we should strive for every little bit of power we can get

inside the state, but we should not confuse these bits of power with state power as such.

That is more or less the philosophy behind the wrong way of approaching the question. That was said nearly one hundred years ago, so you see it's nothing really new.

I would reverse the whole question. And reversing it is exactly what, in its best traditions, the international labour movement did. This is what it did in the periods when it was at its strongest (and not by accident), in terms of its mass influence and mass clout, first as mass socialist parties, and later as mass communist parties. They reversed the whole question.

They began from a number of key issues which, in the eyes of the masses, were seen as capable of changing their lives for the better. What these issues are at any particular time is, of course, still a question of political analysis and judgement, and it's possible to be disastrously wrong. But generally speaking, if you are a mass party, if you have enough roots, it's difficult to be wrong. The right path is obvious.

In other words, they approached the question not by asking what will be the effects on the power structure? Not by asking will our demands best be realised before or after we take power? No. That will be left to practice to show. Instead, their approach was to plunge directly into struggle, for instance, in regard to the 8-hour working day.

It started in Germany and then throughout the International Socialist movement in the 80s and 90s of the last century. They didn't ask the question will we realise the 8-hour working day only under a socialist government, only after the overthrow of capitalism? Or before that in the transition period of dual power? No.

In actual fact you had different concrete variants in the world as to how it was realised. It was a good issue, a legitimate demand, and it was seen as such by millions of workers who went along.

Then again in the 1930s, under conditions of terrible misery and mass unemployment, a similar fight was conducted with tremendous success, at least in France, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Spain and, to a lesser extent, in Britain and the United States. This time the struggle was for a further reduction of the working week, 40 hours, and a reduction of the overall work-load, in order to get more people em-

ployed. Then again, the question was not posed would this be voted by parliament in law, would it be imposed by class struggle, with a general strike?

Again there were national variants. In some cases it was major strike action. In Spain it was imposed by the revolution, but never mind, that was not the key question.

The key question is that these were legitimate goals, under-

stood by millions if not tens of millions of workers throughout the world. The rule, and Lenin quoted it many times, was coined by that genius tactician Napoleon Bonaparte: "On s'engage, puis on voit" - "You start the struggle, and then you see".

It's no use having in advance some schema (for instance, of power-sharing or not power-sharing) to which you subordinate the struggle. No. You conduct the struggle, then you see under what relation of forces and under what conditions your demands can be realised.

So I would say that is the real problem today, including in South Africa. You see what are the key issues, which are the issues of mass interest for millions of exploited and oppressed, you



Ernest Mandel

start the struggle. From there the rest follows. What you should not do is subordinate these struggles to a specific schema.

I can give you many examples of the disastrous effects of such an approach in the history of the international labour movement.

In Russia, this is now completely forgotten, in 1917 the REAL opposition between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks was not at all between those who wanted dictatorship and those who wanted democracy, that's a total mystification of history. It was an opposition between a struggle oriented approach and a schematic approach. In Russia millions of workers, soldiers and peasants had very specific goals. They wanted to stop the war, immediately. They wanted land to be distributed, immediately. And they wanted to end the economic sabotage of the capitalists, and therefore they wanted workers' control.

The Bolsheviks won essentially because they followed the wishes and needs of these millions of people. And the Mensheviks, completely the opposite to Lenin, said the popular demands were politically impossible and undesirable. They asserted that you cannot stop the war immediately because, if you do, international capital will withdraw from Russia and you will have economic chaos, you will have to continue some kind of collaboration with international capital. They argued that Russia was not ready for socialism. They argued that the great mass of workers didn't understand the need for the development of the productive forces, that objective conditions were not ripe, etc., etc.

But these abstract questions were not the issue. The issue was that people wanted peace, land and no lay-offs in the factories. That was the issue.

So there you have two completely different strategic approaches. On the one hand you give precedence to supporting struggles for the im-

mediate needs of the masses as they see them. Or, on the other hand, you go from pre-conceived schema.

The latter, for me, is similar to stalinism and many social-democrats and neo-social democrats. They try to make people happy against their own wishes. But you can't. You can't push the porridge down their throats, because they'll spit it out sooner or later. They have to move from their own experience, and you have to convince them. If it takes a lot of time, well, it can't be helped. There is no other way. That's why we have to be for socialist democracy, basically, because you can't make people happy against their own will. Any attempt to impose something on people, including the way to socialism, will lead to failure.

AC: If you were to single out the greatest weakness of socialism today, what would it be?

Mandel: Perhaps it would be the question of moral authority. If you look back to previous decades you will understand to what extent things have deteriorated in the present.

Sacco and Vanzetti in the United States were two comrades condemned to the electric chair and later executed (in 1927) by the American bourgeoisie. They were two anarchists, who had nothing to do with communism, in fact they were hostile to communism. But the communist movement at the time, and without a moment's hesitation, organised a world-wide, a splendid defence campaign. There was no problem whether they were anarchists or not. They were just victims of injustice. The movement identified with the struggle against injustice

Stalinism destroyed that, and that has been a terrible retreat. But the social democrats were co-responsible for the moral retreat of socialism. It was a general retreat. A general decline of the moral authority of socialism. That's probably the one single greatest weakness of

the socialist movement during the last decade. The masses are sceptical, they think socialists and communists are dishonest, that they don't apply their principles in practice. Of course, soviet bureaucracy is the worst example. But some of the west European socialist democratic bureaucracies are not much better. If anything, because of the bigger resources they have had in their capitalist countries, they have been more corrupt than the soviet bureaucracy

But that's not the point, I mean, generally there is no moral authority any more. In fact it's worse than a loss of moral authority, the masses consider socialists to be self-seeking, dishonest people. So the one big, big, big change we have to apply (it's not easy, but it's easier than all the other things, because this depends on us) is to bring our political practice and even our personal practice into strict conformity with our principles. Don't take people for fools, they notice. If this effort is undertaken in one country, two, three, four countries, the element of moral authority will come back to the labour movement.

Think of Che Guevara. You can say anything you want against his strategy of rural guerrilla warfare on a continental scale, really it's a wrong strategy. But nobody, nobody, nobody in the world doubts the personal integrity and the extraordinary moral standard of Che. You can't hide these facts, hmm?

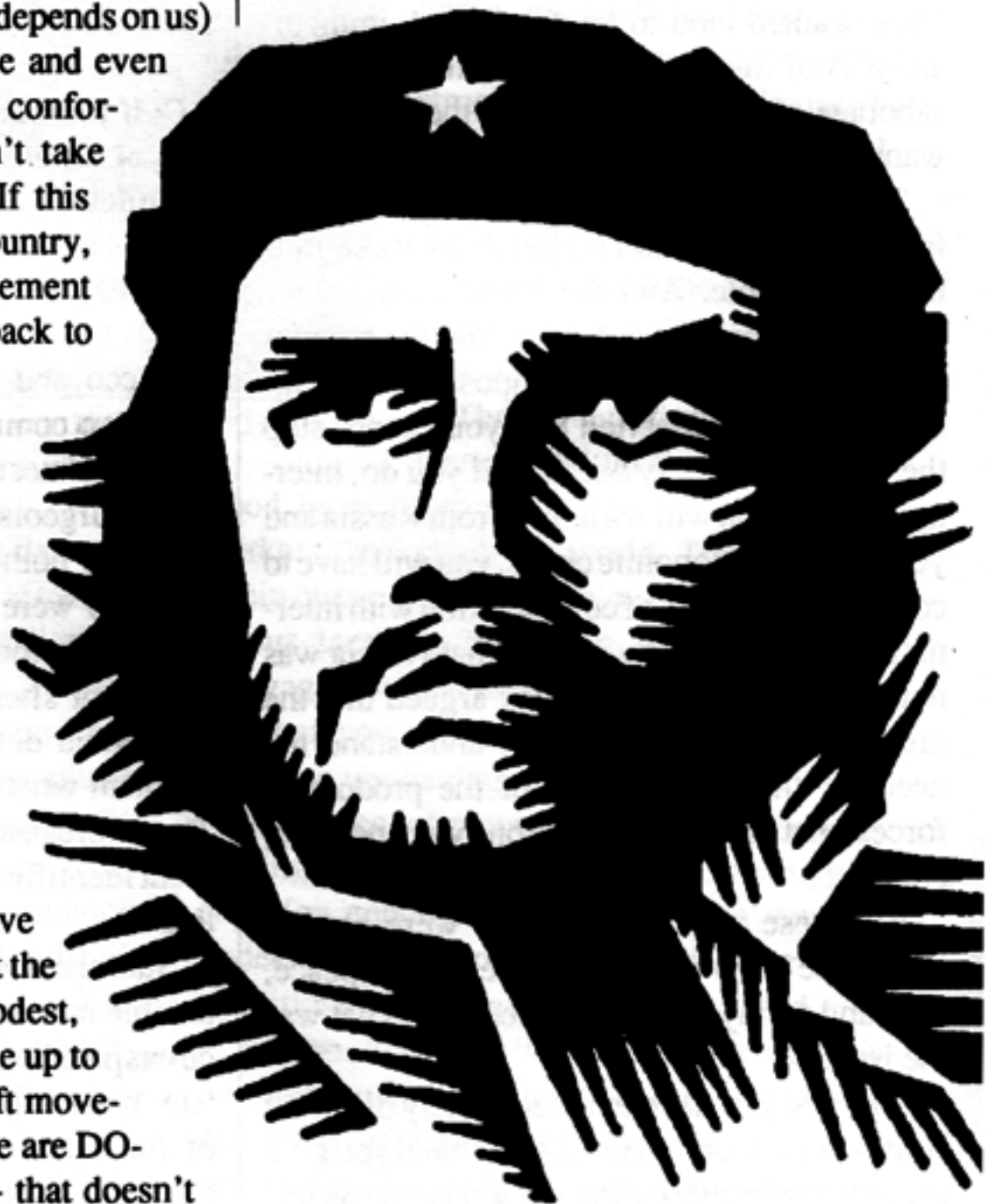
So, I don't say you should have many Che Guevaras. That's not the point. You can be much more modest, on a much smaller level, but live up to your principles. Let's have a left movement that says: Look at what we are DOING (not what we are saying - that doesn't

convince anybody).

AC: What is the balance sheet of trotskyism itself? Have there not been many negative tendencies? Perhaps these tendencies are themselves the result of stalinist persecution, the natural reaction of forces that feel themselves to be isolated and besieged.

In particular we ask this question because much of what you have been saying would seem very "untrotskyist" to the readers of The African Communist. For instance, you have invoked Bonaparte's famous maxim: "Engage in struggle, and THEN see".

This approach is absolutely at variance with the practice of many self-proclaimed followers



of Trotsky here in our country. Our experience of trotskyism has been almost exactly the opposite. Instead of engagement there has been continuous disengagement from the terrain of mass struggle. And the justification given for this disengagement has tended to be (to use your own terms again) "abstract schema" of all kinds. What, if anything, in trotskyism might account for this?

Mandel: Today world-wide Trotsky's movement is small, but stronger than at any time in its history. I don't want to abuse the opportunity you give me to advance a lot of details about membership and so on, that's neither here nor there. But in a whole series of countries in the world, some fifteen (it's not important the exact figure), we are now a recognised component of the labour movement and of the new social movements. In these countries we have a capacity of intervening in mass struggles, of taking initiatives.

But that is not what we want to be. We feel the need for something much bigger than ever before. Because of the internationalisation of capital, there is the need for a workers' MASS international. And WE are not a mass international. We are most probably one of the components of such a future formation. So we strive for the regrouping of revolutionists on a national and international scale. We support all initiatives in that direction. And we take some of the initiatives ourselves - although we don't believe that our own efforts will cut too much ice, hmm? But we do what we can.

At the same time we notice, because that is also a fact of life, that today as things are (I don't gloat over this, I regret it), but today we are the only existing international working class political formation capable of taking up international issues.

As long as there is no other organisation operating on this field we will continue as the Fourth International, because we don't give up

a small tool as long as you don't have a better one in your hand. When it exists, wonderful. But today no better exists.

Did Trotsky's movement make mistakes? Yes. Obviously it has. Has Trotsky made mistakes? Yes, he has. Everybody makes mistakes. There are no infallible popes in this world. We are critical of some of the mistakes of Trotsky, which more or less coincided with those of Lenin in that period. We consider the years between the end of 1919 through 1921 bleak years in the history of communism, bleak years in the history of Lenin, bleak years in the history of Trotsky.

These were years in which, contrary to his own tradition, Trotsky espoused the theory and practice of substitutionism [substituting the party for the working class].

The practice of substitutionism perhaps one can even excuse it, hmm? The working class of Russia was reduced drastically at the time by death, famine and economic dislocation due to the civil war. But the theoretical justification was awful, and it has had disastrous, long-term effects. It was corrected, first by Lenin I must say. Contrary to a legend, Lenin was quicker than Trotsky to realise the terrible consequences of bureaucratisation in Soviet Russia. Trotsky came around a little bit later.

So, these were bleak years. The justification of substitutionism by the theory that the working class is corrupt, declassé, or unable to exercise power, because that's what it really amounts to, was completely contrary to the marxist tradition, completely contrary to what Lenin or Trotsky themselves wrote before and after these years.

It has created havoc and we have to make a complete break with all the elements of that deviation.

We have also had in Trotsky's movement a strange thing. The history of trotskyism and the Fourth International is very clear and it has

been marked by its origins. It is true that, as a result of isolation, there has been dogmatism and some of the things you have mentioned. But that's not the main point.

The main point is that, in the historical development of trotskyism, there was an ongoing reaction to what we considered to be the basic mistakes of the official communist parties. If you look at the history of the successive stages of that criticism you will see that one period, and here the chronology is decisive, played a key role.

Most of the trotskyist cadres, there were some exceptions, rose as a reaction to what I would call roughly the post-1935, the fourth period of stalinism, the Peoples Front opportunist deviation of the communist parties.

This means that, contrary to Trotsky himself, they did not make a thorough and complete break with the practice and theory of third period stalinism, of ultra-left stalinism, of the period 1929 to 1934.

And that particular origin has moulded a certain type of trotskyist cadre and trotskyist approach to working class politics. It is a tendency to consider the right-wing deviation as much worse than the ultra-left deviation.

Now, if I were to make the historical balance sheet I would say that both the right-wing and ultra-left deviations are equally harmful.

I wouldn't say one is more harmful than the other. It depends on the practical circumstances

and issues. Of course, in many countries the third, ultra-left period of stalinism had no impact because the communist parties were weak. But if you look at the most formidable challenge of the time, which was the fight against Hitler in Germany, you cannot say this ultra-leftism had no impact. Historically it had a disastrous impact, disastrous.

If you look at the Soviet Union, the same thing is true. The period of the ultra-left deviation was the period of forced collectivisation of agriculture, whose horror was absolutely without equal in what followed, except for the mass purges.

So I would place both the right-wing and ultra-left deviations on the same level. I would not say that the third period was better than the fourth period.

We should fight a parallel struggle against both sectarianism and opportunism. Those are two sides of the same medal.

But I would like to end on an optimistic note. In the last 20 or 25 years, in many (many but not the majority) of countries in the world, we have overcome the effects of our origins.

We have overcome these tendencies by moderate growth, by better social composition (it's just not true, as some people still say, that we are essentially a student or petty bourgeois movement) and, above all, by strong and permanent involvement in mass struggle.

Mass struggle, that's the essential. ♪

THEY SAID IT

OUT OF REACH: "I thought we are to inherit the new South Africa - all of us, including we the illiterate blacks and also these stupid boers at these factories in Alberton. But none of us understand the debates." - an old man from Kathlehong township commenting on SABC coverage of the CODESA negotiations.

Quoted by Ivy Matsepe Casaburri, "The Great Challenge", paper delivered to the Ruth First Memorial Colloquium, UWC 17.8.92.

'Civil society' and democracy: A rejoinder

BLADE NZIMANDE and MPUME SIKHOSANA
continue the debate on the role and nature of civil society

The aim of this rejoinder is to engage some of the replies to our original piece, published and unpublished. Since the most substantial reply has been that by Mayekiso, the bulk of this rejoinder will engage that reply.¹

It is clear in our reading of Mayekiso's response to our article that he has either not done a systematic and thorough survey of classical Marxist literature on the subject of 'civil society' or he has misunderstood what the classics say. This is apparent from the kinds of conclusions he draws after 'surveying' the classics on this question. Our response shall only be limited to an illustration of the inaccuracies in some of his conclusions about Marx and Gramsci and to correct mis-representations of our views before we expose the naivete of his latest invention - a 'working class civil society'.

There are a number of issues that we would have liked to take up with Mayekiso. Due to space we are going to focus our response on his notion of a 'working class civil society', a notion on which the rest of his argument is based.

Firstly, Mayekiso is simply wrong to assert that there is no single conception of the class

character of civil society in the classics. One must make a distinction between differing Marxian conceptions of civil society and differing conceptions of the class character of civil society. Mayekiso is not even aware that he is actually introducing a theoretical confusion here. The reason why this is a confusion is that in the classics there is a consensus on at least the class character of 'civil society'. For Marx and Engels 'civil society' is born out of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. We would in fact even argue that 'civil society' is specific to the epoch of capitalism. By its very nature, contested as it is, 'civil society' is primarily, under capitalist society, in the service of the bourgeoisie. It is the manner in which capitalist exploitation takes place in the era of the rule of the bourgeoisie. This is exactly the same point that Gramsci made in his discussion of hegemony. It is only when the working class becomes hegemonic in society that a revolution becomes possible, and whose consumation produces new relations that cannot simply be characterised as the changing of relations between state and 'civil society'.

Let us make a brief review of Marx and Gramsci's works to further illustrate that: i. There is no contradiction in their understand-

ing of the concept although there is a difference in emphasis, and ii. in both, 'civil society' and the state are inseparably linked.

The concept of 'civil society' in Marx and Engels

Whilst the use of the concept 'civil society' is drawn from the Hegelian tradition, it does not follow (as Mayekiso suggests) that Marx's analytical and theoretical deployment of the concept is Hegelian (where 'civil society' and the 'state' are distinct). Marx's entry point in his *Early Works* is the reversal of what Hegel says, by pointing out that the real theatre of history is not the state but 'civil society' itself. The first thing that Marx does is to historicise this separation between political society and 'civil society', and he firmly traces this separation to the advent of bourgeois society. In his *Early Works* he explains the separation in the following manner:

The abstraction of the state as such belongs only to the modern time, because the abstraction of private life also belongs only to modern times. The abstraction of the political state is a modern product... In the Middle Ages there were serfs, feudal property, corporations of trade and of learned men, etc. This means that in the Middle Ages property, trade, society and men were political; the material content of the state was delimited by its form; each private sphere had a political character or was a political sphere or politics formed the character of the private sphere. In the Middle Ages the political constitution was the constitution of private property, but only because the constitution of private property was the political constitution. In the Middle Ages the people's life and the state's life were identical. Man was the real principle of the state, but it was unfree man. So it is the democracy of unfreedom, perfected alienation. The

abstract, reflected opposition only begins with the modern world. The Middle Ages embodied the real dualism, and the modern time the abstract dualism...²

A number of points become clearer here as to what Marx at this stage understood 'civil society' to be. Firstly, 'civil society' was born out of bourgeois revolutions as part of the freeing of the capitalist productive forces. Secondly, the birth of civil liberties come with bourgeois society. But these liberties do not constitute, according to early Marx, human emancipation and full freedom. Because already at this stage Marx was fully aware of the abstract nature of this dualism in modern bourgeois society. He referred to this dualism as abstract in the sense that the state poses as separate from 'civil society', and 'civil society' poses as an autonomous sphere where people could pursue their own interests without any hindrances. In other words, the separation of 'civil society' and the 'state' is an embodiment of human alienation and more sophisticated forms of the institutionalisation of capitalist exploitation throughout society. This separation also serves to mask the true nature and basis of exploitation in modern bourgeois societies. What Marx is pointing out here is that the 'freer' bourgeois society seems to be, the more exploitative it becomes. This is what we understand to be the essence of the separation between 'civil society' and the 'state', according to Marx. It is for the above reasons for instance that we are extremely perturbed by the uncritical and romantic celebration of 'civil society' by the South African Left.

Horn says, "...I am not convinced that, having found problems with Glaser and Swilling's analysis of civil society and democracy, we have therefore to conclude that civil society is an inherently liberal or bourgeois concept, to be avoided at all costs by Marxists".³ Whilst

Horn does not clarify why she believes the current usage of 'civil society' is not a liberal bourgeois one - other than perhaps a new faith by the South African Left - we want to make it clear that our conclusions about the concept are not based on the critique of Glaser and Swilling but on Marx and Engels' works who demonstrate clearly that 'civil society' emerged out of the bourgeois revolutions as a precondition for the consolidation of capital accumulation. This separation was a precondition for the liberation of serfs as well as the creation of the modern proletariat free to sell its labour. Civil liberties were born out of this necessity for the first time in the history of human societies. Prior to that there was no such separation. However, the birth of civil liberties, and Marx was fully aware of this, marked the new conditions for the emerging proletariat under which it was to be made available to the vagaries of capital accumulation in bourgeois societies. In fact, it is the separation of 'civil society' from the state that delivers the classes oppressed under feudalism as the proletariat under capitalism. This gives 'civil society' four of its most important characteristics: i) It was a new form under which capitalist exploitation was to be maximised; ii) 'civil society' is specific to the epoch of capitalism; iii) the separation between 'civil society' and 'political society', whose institutional expression was the state, was the basis of exploitation under capitalism in the same way as slavery and feudalism was to slaves and serfs; and iv) 'civil society' can only exist where there is 'political society' (or the state), and not just only the state, but an oppressive capitalist state. That is why Marx spoke of the dissolution of both the state and 'civil society' and not of reabsorption as Bobbio argues⁴.

Although Marx in his early works refers to this distinction, it seems as if he is already sceptical of the formulation that the two spheres

are actually separate. At this stage Marx seems to have been using 'civil society' in a descriptive sense rather than an analytical sense ie. taking its separation from political society as a given, an outcome of bourgeois society. However it is very clear from the above quotation that he was already giving an indication of how property relations, even in modern bourgeois society, are the foundation of 'civil society'.

What still remains unclear at this stage is whether this separation, which Marx acknowledges, is real or apparent. According to what Marx says, ie abstract dualism, we would argue that the separation is both real and apparent. It is real in so far as it is an expression of the actual liberation of serfs and turning them into modern citizens with voting rights. But at the same time it is apparent in that the separation between 'civil society' and the political society does not abolish inequalities based on property. It is important to quote Marx in full in his essay *On the Jewish Question* to illustrate this point:

And yet the political annulment of private property has not only not abolished private property, it actually presupposes it. The state does away with difference in birth, class, education, and profession in its own manner when it declares birth, class, education, and profession to be unpolitical differences, when it summons every member of the people to an equal participation in popular sovereignty without taking the difference into consideration, when it treats all elements of the people's real life from the point of view of the state. Nevertheless the state still allows private property, education, and profession to have an effect in their own manner, that is as private property, as education, as profession, and make their particular natures felt.⁵

Whilst the state, especially as embodied in bourgeois constitutions, claims to have abol-

ished class, property and other social distinctions, by giving 'equal' status to all its citizens irrespective of these qualities, in actual fact the state is an embodiment of these distinctions in 'civil society'. From the above quotation it can also be concluded that Marx was becoming acutely aware of how bourgeois political institutions reify 'civil society' into a 'private sphere'. Such reification is projected ideologically in the separation of the political state from 'civil society'. Already, we would argue, from these early works Marx begins to anticipate the dissolution of this separation with the dissolution of bourgeois society. In fact he makes the following conclusion in *On the Jewish Question*:

*The actual individual man must take the abstract citizen back into himself and, as an individual man in his empirical life, in his individual work and individual relationships become a species-being; man must recognise his own forces as social forces, organise them, and thus no longer separate social forces from himself in the form of political forces. Only when this has been achieved will human emancipation be completed.*⁶

Our understanding of Marx's use of the concept is that from his very early works it is clear that a full understanding of 'civil society' will lead to the analysis of property relations. In other words, it is not by chance that Marx moves to economic studies, rather it is a further development of the analysis of the basis of 'civil society'. It is not his study of the capitalist economy that makes him discover the real nature of 'civil society', but it is his study of 'civil society' that leads him to unpack the 'hidden abode' of 'civil society' as the real motor of history. It is this particular understanding that leads Marx to a materialist analysis and grasp of the state as simultaneously acting above society and an institutional expression of relations in ('civil') society.

From the above assertion we would then argue that at this early stage, the term 'civil society' is only used in order to show that to make the separation is a fragmented view of society. Already in this text he is laying the foundations for his later works and a more proper conceptualisation of what has been referred to as 'civil society'. The following quotation is evidence of this:

*Civil society embraces the whole material intercourse of individuals within a definite stage of the development of productive forces. It embraces the whole commercial and industrial life of a given stage and, in so far, transcends the state and the nation, though, on the other hand again, it must assert itself in its foreign relations as nationality, and inwardly must organise itself as state*⁷

We have also been accused by a number of people in various presentations of our paper that we have used Marx and Engels' works in a theological sense, and that we are relying too much on Marx's early works. In responding to these criticisms we need to ask what the basis of all Marxism is, is it not Marx and Engels' works in particular? Besides we find Marx and Engels as relevant today as they were during the 19th century and even more so for on the question under discussion. This is not to suggest blind acceptance of everything that Marx and Engels say. We want to argue, however, that the cornerstone of Marxism is Marx and Engels' analysis and explanation of capitalist society and that communism offers the highest form of human emancipation. Any departure from this should be accepted as an abandonment of Marxism as a revolutionary science. As Marx explains that the ideological separation of 'civil society' and the state was a necessary precondition for class exploitation, his critique of 'civil society' forms the basis of his analysis of bourgeois societies. If Marx and

Engels's works are no longer the theoretical foundations of Marxism this has to be argued and demonstrated. Similarly if Marx's early works are not useful at all, this also has to be demonstrated. In fact such criticisms of our work and usage of Marx and Engels seems to confirm our worst fears about the usage of the notion of 'civil society' by sections of the South African Left, that this is a prelude to the abandonment of Marxism and the socialist project. In fact such bland assertions about Marx and Engels, without any argumentation, are unMarxist to say the least!

'Civil society' in Gramsci's works

As we have already mentioned it is erroneous for Mayekiso to say that Gramsci understood 'civil society' to be only superstructural. It is argued here that in order to fully comprehend Gramsci's usage of the term one needs to understand the context within which he was using it. Gramsci's primary concern, particularly in his *Prison Notebooks*, is the understanding of the question of contestation over state power. It is in this context for instance that he comes up with his concept of **hegemony**. We find this to be Gramsci's central concern, and even his understanding of the role of the state, intellectuals and the Party is firmly grounded in this concept.

Like Marx, Gramsci sees 'civil society' as the theatre of struggle and a terrain where real power is contested and in no way does he understand 'civil society' to be only superstructural. He compares 'civil society' to the trenches in modern warfare:

... in the case of the most advanced States ... 'civil society' has become a very complex structure and one which is resistant to the catastrophic 'incursions' of the immediate economic element (crises, depressions, etc). The superstructures of (our emphasis) civil society are like the trenches of modern war-

fare. In war it would sometimes happen that a fierce artillery attack, seemed to have destroyed the enemy's entire defensive system, whereas in fact it had only destroyed the outer perimeter; and at the moment of their advance and attack the assailants would find themselves confronted by a line of defence which was still effective⁸

When Gramsci says, "The superstructures of civil society..." it further illustrates the point that in Gramsci 'civil society' is not only superstructural. However there is a new element that Gramsci introduces to the concept of 'civil society' ie. its resistance to change even in the face of serious political and economic changes or crises. It is not only the resilience of 'civil society' per se that he refers to here, but is pointing to a more fundamental phenomenon ie. the dominant group's hold over institutions of society, even if only ideologically, in spite of crises and changes.

Given the above, one would assume that Gramsci had a dualistic understanding of bourgeois society, as consisting of a 'resilient', sometimes 'autonomous' 'civil society', and repressive political society, when in fact he is merely illustrating the different ways in which a ruling class exercises power. In the light of the above we will still assert that Gramsci uses this distinction as a methodological rather than a structural or organic distinction, in order to demonstrate how hegemony operates, as Gramsci himself makes the point.

The main problem with Mayekiso's interpretation of Gramsci is that it is part of the emerging reformist reading of Gramsci's works on 'civil society' in South Africa, which is heavily influenced by Bobbio's interpretation of Gramsci. For instance Mayekiso's assertion that "...civil society interrelates dialectically with class divisions at the level of economic production and with the class state...", implies that class relations are external to 'civil soci-

ety'. It is absurd, to say the least, that Gramsci would have asserted that, on the one hand 'civil society' is the theatre of struggle, and at the same time conceive of 'civil society' as only super-structural and devoid of economic class divisions. Otherwise what is the basis of such struggles in capitalist society?

We want to reiterate (and demonstrate since we are accused of digging up isolated quotations) that Gramsci's use of the concept is not inconsistent with the critique of the early Marx and Engels. Whilst Mayekiso fails to illustrate convincingly how he arrived at

the conclusion to the contrary, he can only manage to say that the contradiction lies in that "...for the young Marx, civil society embraces both the economic base as well as aspects of the superstructure...**By contrast** (our emphasis), Gramsci tends explicitly to locate civil society in the superstructure."⁹ Marx understood the connectedness of the economic base and the superstructures, but Marx became more interested in the mode of production and property relations in capitalist society (the material or economic base of 'civil society') and the state (a superstructure of 'civil society'). Gramsci's works, without any contradiction to Marx, focused on the superstructures of 'civil society' because this is where hegemony is achieved and this was his main concern. It is erroneous to conclude (when Gramsci says "What we can do, for the moment, is to fix two major superstructural 'levels': the one that can be called 'civil society'... and that of 'political society' or the 'state'.") that Gramsci understood 'civil society' to be **only** superstructural. If it is so then either Gramsci was not a Marxist or Mayekiso is not. We challenge Mayekiso in this regard to pro-



Gramsci: Not inconsistent with Marx or Engels

vide evidence on why Gramsci regarded 'civil society' as only superstructural.

'Working class civil society' or working class hegemony?

Given the above we would therefore argue that Mayekiso's notion of 'working class civil society' is not only theoretically unsustainable, but it is also **ideological**. In summary there are four main reasons why we say so.

Firstly, Mayekiso does not answer our most serious charge against protagonists of 'civil society', ie, the failure to relate

the question of 'civil society' to the struggle for state and political power. Mayekiso simply re-asserts the same liberal arguments about 'civil society' and then tries to give these arguments some revolutionary respectability by simply adding 'working class' to 'civil society'. Mayekiso seems to think that a class analysis of civil society is undertaken if one prefixes 'civil society' with 'working class'. He precisely does this in order to avoid class analy-

sis.

He avoids class analysis by his very problematic assertion that "...it is clear in South Africa that the most developed organs of civil society serve the bourgeoisie: their chambers of business, their wealthy Johannesburg northern suburbs ratepayers associations, their parent-teachers associations, their sports clubs, heritage foundations, cultural associations, and so forth." He then continues to say, organs of 'civil society' **do** include bourgeois organisations and institutions but "For working class people...the organs of civil society include civic associations, trade unions, the women's groups, youth groups, churches, burial societies, and other organisations, formal and infor-

mal, that represent the interests of poor and working people."¹⁰ In this scenario then how does a 'working class civil society' come about? Again, even in his latter formulation, it can be demonstrated quite easily that civics, women's groups, burial societies, and even trade unions are not always in the broader working class interests and at worst are not always progressive.

Secondly, building socialism is a working class political project. It is anomalous that Mayekiso argues for a 'working class civil society' without ever relating this to the question of contestation of state power which the bourgeoisie presently wields to oppress the working class in particular. Having shown the bourgeois roots of a 'civil society' separate from the state, the naivete of a 'working class civil society' becomes obvious. In fact this is where the ideological nature of this notion becomes clearer.

To even contemplate using the notion of 'working class civil society' shows the extent to which bourgeois ideology of separating 'civil society' and the state has been successful under capitalism, even with some of our own comrades. This notion is ideological in the Marxian sense. According to Marx and Engels bourgeois ideology is not a fictional presentation of reality but is rooted in material relations and conditions prevailing in society; yet bourgeois ideology is an inverted representation of that reality.

The working class struggle is not about the seizure or transformation of 'civil society' into a working class 'civil society', as Mayekiso's argument imply, but it is about the fundamental transformation of capitalist society. Such transformation also implies that the distinction between the state and 'civil society' must progressively disappear, since such a distinction is the embodiment of the alienation, exploitation and oppression of the working class under capitalism.

Thirdly, whilst Mayekiso agrees that the classics are consistent in seeing 'civil society' as a contested terrain, he continues to talk about two 'civil societies' - working class and bourgeois 'civil societies', as if 'civil society' can be owned by one particular class. We would rather talk about working class hegemony in society.

Lastly, and perhaps the most serious problem with Mayekiso's argument is that he approaches the task of building democracy only from the perspective of township civic organisations. Whilst this approach is understandable coming from an activist in civic organisations, it should never be presented as the totality of the tasks involved in building democracy.

For communists, the task is not to look at the working class only in relation to its role in 'civil society' - another implication of the notion of 'working class civil society' - but to be equally concerned with state power and the attainment of a proletarian state. ♪

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Tribute to Comrade 'Mdidiyeli' Fani Jiba

By the Petros Jobane Branch, SACP, East London

Fani Johannes Jiba, SACP Transkei regional chairperson, died tragically in an unexplained shooting incident on June 3 1992. Comrade Jiba, known as "Mdidiyeli Mbambo" in MK ranks, was buried in Cambridge, East London on June 21.

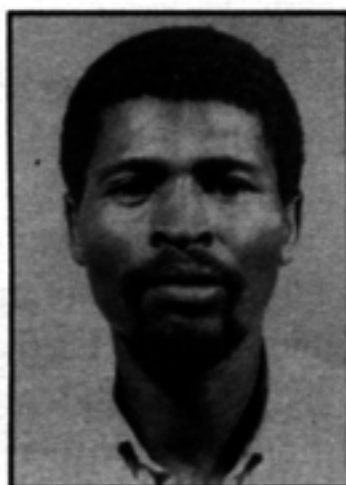
The Petros Jobane Branch remembers comrade Jiba as a clear example of how a communist should be - he loved his family, community and country.

He first became involved in struggle while still at school. As a high school student he was detained in 1977. Continual harassment by the South African security police made it impossible for him to finish matric at school. But he studied privately while working in Johannesburg.

In 1980 Mdidiyeli left the country to join MK in Angola. He was recruited into the SACP and rose through the ranks of MK to become Political Instructor. Later he was appointed Camp Commissar.

"Comrade Commissar", as he was known to new recruits, received training in the German Democratic Republic and he completed two separate political courses in the Soviet Union.

He returned to South Africa in September 1991 and immediately got down to work. He was elected SACP chairperson in the Transkei region. But he also served as a political educator in Cambridge, East London, where his family lives. He was instru-



mental in building our Petros Jobane Branch of the Party. He would visit our branch monthly and would hold political discussions with us.

We are proud to record that even his funeral was turned into a victory for the Cambridge township community:

- In the past people from our township have had to travel more than 30 kilometres to Duncan Village to get to a

cemetery for blacks. On the eve of comrade Jiba's funeral we sent an SACP and civics delegation to see the local municipality. We demanded that they allocate a site for the people of Cambridge in the town cemetery. We won this demand.

And so, for the first time, beginning with comrade Jiba's funeral, we buried a black person in the town cemetery. The whole town came to a standstill as a full military procession went down to the graveyard.

- The delegation to the municipality also won another victory. On the night of the vigil the street lights of our township were switched on after almost 2 years without lights!

Our Party's 8th national congress took a resolution that communists should identify and address community issues. In honouring our fallen comrade, we, the Petros Jobane SACP branch have tried to live up to that resolution and to the revolutionary example of our Commissar. ✊

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