

No 131

Fourth Quarter 1992

# The African Communist

JOURNAL OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY



# RIDING INTO THE SUNSET?



**STRATEGIC DEBATE: Responses to Joe Slovo's paper  
on negotiation strategies and sunset clauses**

---

# Contents

## 1 EDITORIAL NOTES

---

Unfit to govern

## 3 COVER STORY: THE STRATEGIC DEBATE

---

Contributions by:

Pallo Jordan	Page 7
Blade Nzimande	Page 16
Harry Gwala	Page 24
Raymond Suttner	Page 29
Jeremy Cronin	Page 38
ANC Youth League	Page 45
ANC NEC	Page 48



## 54 INTERNATIONAL

---

Negotiations in El Salvador: An interview with the FMLN

## 60 CIVIL SOCIETY

---

Unity and disunity – by Skenjana Roji

## 64 BOOK REVIEW

---

Lionel Forman and the national question – by Brian Bunting

## 73 LETTERS

---

Pik Botha and the 'peace dove'; Not all Marxists are Communists; Let the debate continue

# **The African Communist**

**Published quarterly as a forum for Marxist-Leninist thought  
by the South African Communist Party**

**No. 131 — Fourth Quarter 1992**

**ISSN 0001-9976**

# Unfit to govern



**EDITORIAL NOTES**

**A**t the beginning of this year the ANC-led tripartite alliance called for Constituent Assembly elections in 1992. In fact, we could easily have had South Africa's first one-person one-vote elections by now.

Good progress towards this goal was being made in the CODESA negotiations in the first months of this year. It was precisely this progress that began to frighten De Klerk.

The progress was all the more frightening because the regime's secret opinion polls were showing that Inkatha's ability to win a significant number of black votes was limited, and dropping all the time. Since an NP/IFP alliance was not going to win an election, De Klerk increasingly felt he needed more time to build a National Party that could win black votes in its own right.

This meant delaying progress towards elections. And so the regime deadlocked CODESA 2.

Today De Klerk must be sorely wishing that he hadn't deadlocked!

Since CODESA 2, rather than improving, his own personal popularity and that of his

National Party have deteriorated rapidly and decisively. The NP's black recruitment campaign has largely fizzled out.

Each week brings fresh evidence of deep-seated government corruption and dirty operations. One scandal triggers another. The former security branch of the SA Police is leaking stories about the SADF Military Intelligence, and, in turn, MI is exposing the police.

Colonel Joe Verster, former managing director of the CCB, does his best to implicate General Magnus Malan, ex-Minister of Defence, and now Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, in complicity over the David Webster assassination. Convicted double-murderer and MI agent Ferdi Barnard tries to implicate the regime's top negotiator, Roelf Meyer, in his own underworld of drug-dealers, pimps and prostitutes. And so the muck continues to bubble to the surface.

It is every agent, dirty tricks operative and securocrat for him- and herself as the wheels of the apartheid machine start to fall off.

The more De Klerk puts off elections for a

Constituent Assembly, the deeper he will be in trouble. So far we have only had a glimpse of the rot in government.

Not only is this regime undemocratic, unrepresentative and therefore illegitimate, it now stands exposed as corrupt and deceitful. These people are simply not fit to rule!

So how do we now go forward? Do we simply continue a war of attrition, knowing that, at this rate, the regime in three or five or six years time will be even deeper in crisis?

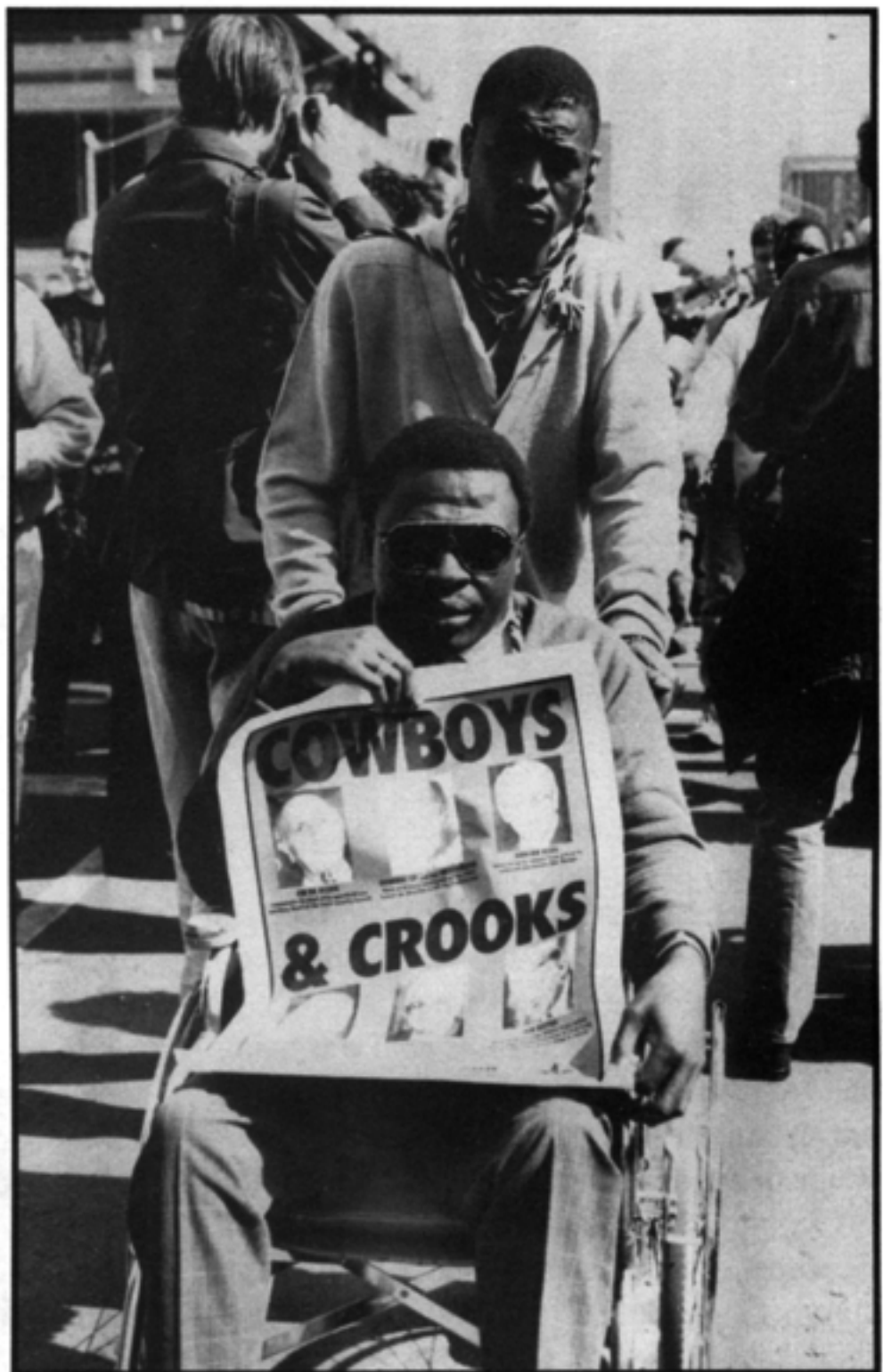
Is it in the interests of our liberation movement, and of our people at large to simply continue regardless?

If this is the only option we are left, then clearly we will exercise that option without fear. But is it the best or even the only option?

This was the question which SACP general secretary Chris Hani recently asked in a keynote address to the Black Management Forum: "Although we have improved our position strategically over the last year, quite dramatically, do we continue the war of attrition indefinitely?"

Answering his own question, Hani said: "We believe that it is absolutely imperative that we now move very rapidly towards a negotiated political settlement, with elections for a Constituent Assembly next year...We need the certainty of an election date. And we need then to build the rest around such a firm date."

The SACP believes that the overwhelming number of South Africans, from all walks of



**COWBOYS AND CROOKS: Two down – how many more to go?**

life, and across a wide spectrum of political opinion, now support the call for elections next year.

"This will go a long way to introducing some purpose and direction," as Hani puts it, "into what is now a very dangerous and drifting situation."

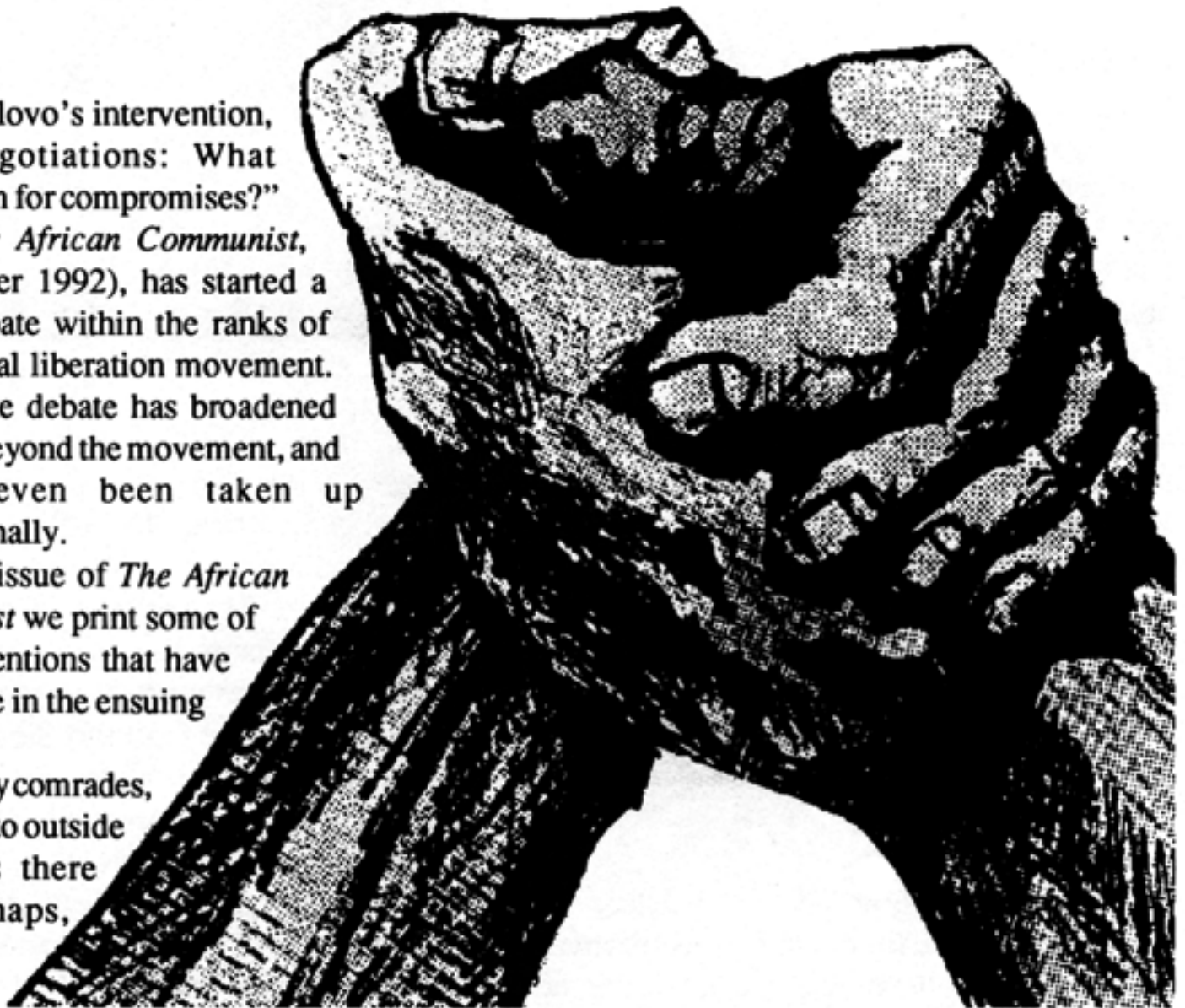
**WE DEMAND: ELECTIONS FOR A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY IN 1993! ♪**

# Negotiations: The strategic debate

**J**oe Slovo's intervention, "Negotiations: What room for compromises?" (*The African Communist*, 3rd Quarter 1992), has started a major debate within the ranks of the national liberation movement. Indeed, the debate has broadened out well beyond the movement, and it has even been taken up internationally.

In this issue of *The African Communist* we print some of the interventions that have been made in the ensuing debate.

To many comrades, as well as to outside observers there are, perhaps,



things which are confusing about this debate.

One issue that worries some is the spectacle of ANC and SACP leaders publicly debating with each other, sometimes in a heated, polemical way.

On this question we believe no apology or bashfulness is required. The strategic questions that are being debated affect all of our futures.

It is, surely, patronising to believe that our activists or the people at large must be fed with a pre-digested line from the top. The debate belongs to the people of South Africa, and not to small committees in head offices.

That does not mean, of course, that leaders should not give leadership. Nor does it mean that unity of strategic purpose is not absolutely desirable. But a false unity, a unity that is simply papered-over differences, a dead unity, a dogmatic unity is no unity at all.

#### **But what is the debate about?**

One common version of the debate is that it is simply a debate between those in favour and those opposed to some kind of power-sharing for a limited period, defined by a "sunset clause". You are supposed to be either for or against.

But the debate is, of course, a lot more complex than this. Anyone trying to read this simple debate (for or against power-sharing) into the papers published here will indeed become confused.

One of the things that makes this debate complex is that there are a number of areas where different comrades are saying very similar things, but where there are mutual suspicions that the apparent agreements are only apparent.

#### **Our strategic objectives**

For instance, Slovo and his most outspoken critics all agree that the fundamental objectives of our struggle have not, and must not be



**SITE OF STRUGGLE: ANC and government**

altered.

But, while Slovo explicitly argues this, his critics believe that he and the ANC Negotiations Commission are, in practice, watering down these objectives. The critics believe that in the interests of negotiating **tactics**, our fundamental **strategic** objectives are being altered.

By contrast, those closer to Slovo, believe that it is the critics who are tending to confuse **tactics** and **strategic goals**, but this time in the other direction. The critics, they argue, are turning longer-term **strategic** objectives (like the complete destruction of apartheid) into immediate **tactical** options.



**negotiators at CODESA 2 earlier this year**

Are one or the other set of suspicions justified?

On this...THE READER MUST DECIDE.

**The place of negotiations in our strategy**

Both Slovo and Jordan, for instance, actually say almost identical things on the place of negotiations within our overall strategy. Both say that negotiations are a more or less significant aspect of our present strategy, but that negotiations are not the whole, nor even the most important aspect.

Once again, however, while Slovo explicitly says this, his critics suspect that he is elevating

negotiations.

They suspect that he is approaching the present period almost exclusively with a negotiations perspective.

By contrast, the critics of the critics think the latter are

- either insincere when they say negotiations are important in the present; or
- that it is THEY, the critics of Slovo, who are elevating negotiations by expecting them to deliver, more or less immediately, on our longer-term strategic goals.

Once again...THE READER NEEDS TO DECIDE.

**Changing the balance of forces**

Everyone involved in the debate is agreeing that the present balance of forces is one in which we have not defeated the regime, but in which we have not been defeated by them either. Everyone also agrees that we must constantly work to change the balance of forces in our favour, and that there are many positive reasons to believe that we can indeed do this. But...

- Slovo and the ANC Negotiations Commission tend to portray the next major breakthrough as lying down the path of a negotiated transition in which democratic elections are central; while...

- At least some of the critics seem to suggest that other, more decisive breakthroughs are both desirable and possible.

Who is right?

Once again...THE READER, or rather THE ACTIVIST READER, or, better still, our various COLLECTIVE FORMATIONS, ENGAGED IN STRUGGLE, MUST DECIDE.

**And what about "sunset clauses" for power-sharing?**

It is obviously important that we debate intelligently and eventually decide, one way or



another, on this suggestion.

But we should not simply reduce the present strategic debate to this issue.

We might ACCEPT the suggestion of "sunset clauses" for entirely the wrong reason. For example, we might advocate a "sunset clause" on power-sharing out of some confused strategic belief that our relationship with the regime is not fundamentally antagonistic.

We might equally REJECT the suggestion of a "sunset clause" for wrong reasons. We might argue, for instance, that: "We will NEVER accept any form of power-sharing". But isn't that exactly what we've been calling for, in one form at least, ever since the Harare Declaration (i.e. an Interim Government of National Unity)? Or, we might argue that "power-sharing is not our strategic objective". But is anyone arguing that it is?

There is right-wing opportunism: elevating tactics into strategic objectives; obscuring the fundamental antagonism between our liberation movement and the apartheid regime.

But there is also a lazy left-wing opportunism: telling the people what they want to hear, even when it isn't the truth; obliterating the difference between strategic objectives and day-to-day tactics.

If we either accept or reject "sunset clauses", but for the wrong reasons, we will be condemned to repeat over and over, on each single tactical point, at each single moment of our struggle, the same strategic debate. The debate between right-wing and lazy-left opportunism is a debate without end. Or rather, it tends to end only when the other side completely outmanoeuvres you.

The present debate is, then, not just an opportunity to discuss the merits and dangers of a power-sharing "sunset clause".

It is, much more, an opportunity to debate strategy in depth. It is an opportunity to develop, collectively, a strategic perspective that steers

our liberation movement past the twin dangers of right-wing and lazy left opportunism.

#### **Some publication notes**

Because it is a living, dynamic debate, it is very difficult to pin it down at a particular moment in time. Interventions have been amended by individuals and collectives. For instance, the original ANC Negotiations Commission document ("Strategic Perspective", October 1992), which partly drew on Slovo's paper, was substantially revised. This revision ("Negotiations: A Strategic Perspective") was adopted by the ANC's National Working Committee on 18 November 1992. This document was then, in turn, revised and adopted by the ANC NEC on 25 November 1992.

We have chosen to print this third, revised version here. But the other interventions published here appeared before this version. Many are, therefore, polemicising with the first document. It is up to the reader to decide to what extent specific criticisms in this case still apply.

Pallo Jordan has also written two similar interventions. The first (which we publish here, "Strategic Debate in the ANC", dated October 1992) presents the argument in a more developed form than the second paper. In Jordan's case we have to chosen to publish this first version.

We have made this decision in part because the second does not change the core argument of the first, and in part because it is Jordan's first version that has received the most public attention (notably in a fairly full, but not complete version published in *New Nation*, 13.11.92).

To assist readers we have, at all times, attempted to cross-reference quotations, particularly in cases where these quotations have been amended out of later versions of papers. ♪

*'Strategic debate in the ANC. A response to Joe Slovo' by...*

# Pallo Jordan

**S**ince the adoption of the document "ANC Strategy and Tactics" by the Morogoro Conference of 1969 the ANC has held the view that the contradiction between the colonised Black majority and the White oppressor state is the most visible and dominant within South Africa. It has further argued that this contradiction cannot be solved by the colonial state "reforming itself out of existence", and consequently, only struggle to overthrow the system of colonial domination could lead to the resolution of this contradiction. Moreover, it has been the ANC view that since the colonial state and the colonised people cannot be spatially separated, there is no possibility of the two co-existing. In the South African context, this necessarily means that the struggle must result in the destruction of the colonial state. This



Z Pallo Jordan

thesis, generally described as the theory of Colonialism of a Special Type (CST), has been the core the ANC-led alliance's strategic approach to the liberation struggle.

There is now a perceptible shift in thinking on these basic strategic questions amongst some of us. This is, in fact, not a thought-out process, let alone the outcome of agreement within the leading bodies of the movement. It is better described as a change of gear

among some of the leadership. They have canvassed their view of the current situation, without benefit of any discussion in the fora of the movement, in public sources. While their right to do this is not in question, the wisdom of such an undertaking at a time when unity is essential for contesting power with the De Klerk regime can be questioned.

This gear change became evident during an

NWC Meeting during the last week of October, when we were called upon to discuss a document titled "Strategic Perspective".

Though the document in question, "Strategic Perspective", in its rhetoric, does not depart from the strategic objectives of the movement, once read it becomes clear that the logic of the paper is a fundamental departure from those objectives. Because there is no explicit statement denoting such a departure, it shall be my task in this paper to demonstrate the departure by dissecting the internal logic of the "Strategic Perspective" document.

### **1. The Stated Premise of the Paper**

The central flaw in the paper is to be found in its fifth section. Here the authors suggest that there is an objective basis for a large degree of cooperation between the De Klerk regime and the ANC-led alliance. According to the authors the basis of such cooperation is the mutual need for each other "to move the peace process forward". They then proceed to assert that a relationship of cooperation and competition has in fact been imposed on the ANC alliance and De Klerk government by circumstances beyond the control of each - by "the balance of forces". I shall return later to this conception of the balance of forces as a pre-ordained reality that seems impervious to human will.

At this point the authors perform what can only be described as a political sleight of hand. At 5.4. they invoke the movement's acceptance of the need for an Interim Government of National Unity (IG) to give credence to a point they want to make in 5.5.<sup>2</sup> suggesting that the IG is premised on the assessment of the "objective character" of the "balance of forces" they have previously presented.

Firstly, the notion of an IG was never premised on a balance of forces that made it a political necessity. The IG derives from our

Harare Declaration. It was refined and subsequently elaborated as an Interim Government of National Unity, without any reference to a so-called balance of forces. It was, from the beginning, regarded as one of the steps to facilitate the transfer of power, which took account of the reality that some form of continuity was inevitable. As originally conceived, it was to govern by decree - in much the same manner as provisional governments in Mozambique, Angola and Zimbabwe had done. To now invoke it by way of substantiation of an insubstantial line of argument is to mislead.

I strongly contest the assertion of an objective basis for cooperation between the regime and the ANC alliance.

There have indeed been situations where such an objective basis for cooperation does exist between a national liberation movement and an incumbent government. Mozambique and Angola were such instances. Those were situations arising from an anti-colonial liberation war at the end of which the colonial power had made the political decision to give up control of the colony. (It does not affect the argument whether this was voluntary or imposed.) Both the national liberation movement and the incumbent government, in such instances wish that the process of disengagement proceeds as swiftly and unimpeded as possible. It is that common interest, for differing motives, that is the objective basis for their cooperation.

In the South African instance this is not the case. No amount of clever word-spinning about disaggregating the immediate from the ultimate objectives can conceal the fundamental reality that the dominant aspect of our relationship with the De Klerk regime is that of opposition. To reduce this to "contradictory elements of cooperation ...and competition..." as if we are discussing a difficult marriage, is not only misleading, but dangerous.

As I see it, the reality is that the regime's objective - however defined - is to retain the essentials of White power - i.e. the accumulated, palpable privileges that the Whites, as a dominant racial group, enjoy in terms ownership and control of the decisive sectors of productive property; domination of the civil service; control over the decisive organs of the state. While quite prepared to make room for Blacks to enter the political domain, the regime is determined to so condition what power the majority acquire that it will frustrate any attempts to tamper with these essentials of White power.

The ANC alliance, on the other hand, has the national liberation of the most oppressed and exploited as its central objective. The realisation of that project necessarily includes the dismemberment of the racist state as one of the priority items on its agenda. In other words, to directly tamper precisely with one of the core institutions sustaining White power. To characterise this fundamental contradiction, this collision of basic interest, as "competition" is to make nonsense of the English language.

Objectively, the relationship between the ANC alliance and the regime is conflictual. This is also not because we desire it, let alone because I say so. The conflictual nature of the relationship is structured by the diametrically opposed interests the two represent. In the case of Angola or Mozambique such diametrical opposition did not dictate no basis for cooperation. In the South African instance it does dictate it because the colonial power shares the same geographical space with us.

### 1.1 The Elevation of Negotiations

Negotiations cannot and will never be a strategy in any political conflict, whether the conflict be between states, classes, nations or oppressor and oppressed. Negotiation is an as-

pect of a strategy.

A tactic, as conventionally understood, is a conjunctural instrument of policy, employed to achieve an objective that is relevant within a set time-frame. For example, the tactic of boycott of a particular institution (like the Tri-Cameral parliament) is determined by the specific set of circumstances in which the movement and the country find themselves, and not by a pre-existing and eternal principle. In a particular context it may be employed, at another moment, depending on circumstance the movement may choose not to employ it.

The attempt to elevate negotiations to the level of strategy is fundamentally flawed and betrays a misunderstanding of negotiations.

To illuminate the point let us look at negotiations in the context of an industrial dispute. Proceeding from the premise that the relationship between employers and workers is fundamentally antagonistic, there are parallels between that situation and the national liberation struggle. The class struggle proceeds both openly and covertly, and it is irrelevant to the argument whether or not there is a conscious striving towards revolution. In general terms, the working class (in all its fractions) strives to improve its bargaining position on the marketplace. The strategy it employs to attain this is to achieve as much control as is possible over the commodity the working class has on offer, its collective labour power.

This strategy itself can, however be broken down into a number of aspects. Regulation of the pace of work and production is one aspect; enforcement of certain codes with respect to the conditions under which the workers labour is another; ensuring that experience and length of service are remunerated is another. Broadly stated, the working class strives to achieve as much control as is attainable over the conditions of its reproduction.

Matters sometimes reach a flashpoint - say a

strike. Both sides to **the** conflict however recognise that, unless **they** have decided to go for the final showdown, **they** must compose their differences. **Negotiation** then is the manner in which these **differences** are composed, and each side chooses to **enter** into negotiations at a moment which it **feels** will give it greatest advantage.

In the course of the negotiations, one or other side may choose to break them off, as a means of enhancing its bargaining position. That - the breaking off, or resumption of negotiations - is a tactic; the negotiations themselves are not. The negotiations feature as an aspect of the strategy being pursued by the working class (or a section thereof) in a particular dispute with the employers. They can never be a strategy, any more than strike action can be a strategy, or working to rule can be a strategy, or factory occupations can be a strategy.

Though there are similarities, the national liberation struggle diverges from the above in that it is explicitly about the striving for power. Moreover, since a transfer of power to the oppressed cannot co-exist with the retention of power by the oppressor, it is a final showdown. Historically the ANC's strategy was to **harness every conceivable instrument of struggle into a multi-pronged offensive which would draw the broadest front of opposition to the apartheid regime into active struggle**. In these terms the ANC always posed its objective as the seizure of power, not in the poetic sense of the Storming of the Bastille, but in the sense of taking power against the will of the oppressor. At no time, since 1969, did the ANC ever elevate any one of the prongs above the others, though it was understood that there would be moments when one or other prong might acquire a higher profile than the others. (For example, during the 1984-86 mass uprisings, when mass struggle acquired a profile

over and above the others.) It was understood that the thrust of ANC strategy was to knit these prongs together, through mutual reinforcement, so as to merge them into one huge current, culminating in the overthrow of the racist regime. Each of the prongs would make a contribution, though at a specific crisis point one of them would prove decisive.

Even while we pursued the four pillars of our strategy, the ANC never excluded negotiations as an aspect of its strategy. The movement had repeatedly argued that at some point negotiations must inevitably arise, even if merely to receive the surrender of enemy. When they seriously came on to the agenda - beginning with the soundings from prison and the various contracts with the regime - the ANC said negotiations are a terrain of struggle, no different from the others. Implicit in this was the understanding that negotiations is neither a tactic nor a strategy but an aspect of strategy. As such, its relative weight is far lower than that of the four major prongs of strategy. They feature as a subsidiary means for the realisation of the objectives pursued through strategy. Hence, the ANC never saw any contradiction between negotiations and waging the armed struggle. Which is what "Strategic Perspective" implies! Equally, we saw no contradiction between continuing either underground work or mass political mobilisation and negotiations.

However, there is a crucial difference between the analogous industrial dispute and the national liberation struggle. Industrial disputes - including any negotiations they entail - are waged in a manner that will enable both sides to co-exist, as antagonists to be sure, but to co-exist nonetheless. In the case of the national liberation struggle, one or other party to the dispute must go under. **Negotiations, in such a situation, are not aimed at composing differences, but are aimed at the liquidation**

of one of the antagonists as a factor in politics. This crucial distinction, in turn, should determine the alliance's entire approach to negotiations.

1.2 The manner in which the document poses the issue at section 2, "Negotiations the preferred option of the liberation movement" is indicative of the utter confusion of the authors. Here they confuse non-violent struggle with negotiations. The ANC alliance resorted to arms when all avenues of non-violent struggle vanished, not when the possibility for negotiations vanished.

The unstated premise (that non-violent struggle and negotiations are synonymous) not only raises negotiations to the strategy, but by so doing suggests that everything else, all other prongs and aspects of strategy, must merge into this dominant thrust, negotiations, to which they are all subordinated.

This has far-reaching consequences for the ANC's entire approach to the liberation struggle which require examination in depth.

What we are encountering is in fact a fundamental revision of the ANC's conception of struggle as consisting of mutually supportive prongs and replacing that with a conception of a hierarchy (like a series of terraces), one of which will provide the breakthrough to success. Thus, the other prongs support this one, which, because of primacy over the rest, must be preserved at all costs.

The danger concealed beneath the fine words of the authors of "Strategic Perspective" is that by elevating one aspect of strategy above the others, the ANC would in fact be stripped of crucial instruments of policy. The logic of a

hierarchy is that certain aspects of strategy necessarily recede in importance. These may, therefore, either be dropped or relegated to a lesser role maintained merely as a hedge against contingencies. That aspect which has acquired (or rather has been attributed) primacy, on the other hand, in turn requires the greatest investment in time, effort, talent and perhaps even finance.

The unwarranted elevation of negotiations to the ANC's primary strategy has the unfortunate



'Negotiations are aimed at the liquidation of one of the antagonists as a factor in politics'

outcome of re-orienting the movement away from confrontation with the enemy to a search for common ground. "Strategic Perspective" exudes a desperation to discover such common ground at all costs. Rather than discovering ways of enhancing the growing confidence of the mass of the oppressed as the agency of their own liberation, it advises the ANC to discover new ways of facilitating communication between its leadership and the regime. Amazingly, this is seen

as a "breakthrough". "Breakthrough" into what? One may well ask!

The harm this can inflict on the movement is already evidenced by the confused signals which have emanated from the NEC - its oscillation between militancy and complacency.

### 1.3 Trapping Our Victories in the Jaws of Defeat

It would seem we all agree that it was the combined impact of the many prongs of ANC strategy that compelled the enemy to seek negotiations. Quite correctly, we claim that as a victory! We proceeded from there and said the challenge facing the ANC was to skilfully employ negotiations to expedite the transfer of power from the enemy. This has been a process

characterised by an ebb and flow, forwards and backwards. (The suspension of negotiations in 1991, followed by a successful CODESA 1 in December 1991; the deadlock at CODESA 2; the suspension of talks after Boipatong; etc). We have, however, been able to marshal both internal pressure, through mass mobilisation, which has in turn generated international pressures, plus the pressure arising from this indecisive inter-regnum (e.g. a continuing investors' strike) to force the regime to yield. Thus we characterised our unprecedented mass action as a victory. Its immediate outcome was the Record of Understanding, which objectively regarded was the ANC compelling the De Klerk regime to accept our terms. Once again we said this was a victory. Its immediate fruits were the release of some of the remaining and most prominent political prisoners. We correctly claimed that too as a victory.

Important to recognise in the context of these most recent victories is that De Klerk could quite easily have denied us these by taking formative action himself. He has consequently been seen by his constituents and his allies as submitting to the ANC alliance's agenda.

There is consensus in the NWC that the ANC alliance can win at the negotiating table only that which it has secured through struggle. In other words, the struggle, which continues with negotiations as one of its aspects, is the factor in determining the balance of forces - leave aside whether these are tactical or strategic shifts.

It is this movement that stands at the head of a series of victories, which every NWC member claims to recognise, which is now being advised to act in the following manner:

1.3.1 The regime has put forward a Constitutional Plan that seeks to make power-sharing mandatory and coalition governments, in which it has a decisive voice, constitutionally com-

pulsory. The "Strategic Perspective" document advises that we comply, not in terms of a constitution but by accommodating the regime for a while - three years, five years, ten years?

1.3.2 The regime wishes to retain its security services, shield them against possible prosecution now or in the future, integrate the members of MK (and possibly APLA) as subordinates and as secondary factors in the security services. The "Strategic Perspective" advises us to comply.

1.3.3. The regime wants to retain the essentials of the colonial administration it has run since 1910, to provide sheltered employment for incompetent and badly trained Afrikaners and other Whites from the lower middle strata, continue with feather-bedding and grossly inflated, wasteful bureaucracies (in triplicate to boot!), permit them to waste, squander and embezzle taxpayers' monies. Such strategically placed persons would also have the capacity to thwart every democratic reform the democratic state wishes to implement. The "Strategic Perspective" advises us to comply.

1.3.4. The regime would like the boundaries, powers and the configuration of future regions to be determined outside the Constituent Assembly. Its purpose is to try to ensure that it can gerry-mander boundaries that will advantage it and its allies. The "Strategic Perspective" says we should accommodate them.

1.4 There appears to be a deep-seated pessimism that runs through the entire document. True, as the document says, we have not defeated the regime. **But neither has the regime defeated us!** The thrust of the document suggests that we are suing for the best terms we can get from a victorious enemy.

1.5 To be generous, the authors appear charmingly ignorant of the history of the 20th century. These measures, which would amount to capitulation to some of the core objectives pursued by the regime at this time, we are

advised to adopt as a hedge against the destabilisation of democracy by the SADF, SAP and the racist civil service. That there are people who fondly imagine that the appetites of repressive armies and police forces can be stilled by appeasement is alarming. If, as the authors seem to fear, the officer corps and ranks of the SADF and SAP are likely to be opponents of a democratic order, I would have thought that underlined the need to have them vacate these strategically important posts as soon as possible. The gravest danger to a transition and the democratic order is precisely such potential fifth columnists. Had the government of the Spanish Republic been firmer in its attitude to Franco to begin with, there is the great likelihood that he could never have been emboldened to make his coup! The history of this century is literally strewn with similar examples - every repressive military formation that has been coddled by the democratic forces has not had its teeth drawn, instead it has taken courage from such leniency.

Conceptual confusion runs through this section of the document as well. I find it alarming that the authors seem to think that the motivating factor in the action of potentially subversive civil servants is their individual pensions, job security and perks. A first year sociology student knows that the actions of a corporate body do not reflect the individual wills of its members; that the actions of a class or a dominant racial, or ethnic group are not the arithmetical aggregate of the wills of its members. That being the case, it is foolhardy to imagine that a democratic state will contain subversion by the racist civil service by giving guarantees about pensions, job security and perks. If they act they will act as a corporate body, on behalf of their perceived interest as a group and appeals to individual benefits accruing from loyalty will be seen for what they are - attempts at bribery to desert their side.

The authors also seem to have no appreciation of the feather-bedding and wastefulness of the incumbent regime. The dictates of austerity alone - leave aside politics - would compel a democratic state to take a very sharp axe to the bloated bureaucracy which the regime created to make comfortable jobs for Afrikaner sons and daughters. A single example: The creation of one education system, something a democratic regime will ignore at its peril, alone would immediately render three parallel bureaucracies redundant! The entire machinery of "Native administration"; "Coloured administration"; "Indian administration", etc. will also disappear.

Setting the politics aside, how can the ANC alliance give assurances about the continuity of the existing civil service?

Once we factor in considerations of competence, honesty, public service ethos, and loyalty to the democratic political order the case becomes hopeless. The imperatives of good government - which our posters boldly proclaim our people should vote for - would dictate that we take another very sharp axe to the racist civil service!

## **2. The Issue of Violence**

I have often questioned the realistic prospect of the regime embarking on serious negotiations, in the full realisation that their inevitable result must be the loss of power. I have consequently insisted that the alliance must take seriously De Klerk's words that he seeks to reach an accommodation about sharing power, and not to surrender power.

In other words, the regime would like to arrive at a formula that would make possible the co-existence of CST and democracy. I am, consistent with ANC strategic thinking up till now, convinced that such co-existence is impossible. That democracy requires the uprooting of CST.



De Klerk's strategy - a mix of reformism, coupled with the systematic destabilisation of the ANC alliance - has as its immediate objective rendering the ANC too weak to resist such a compromise. There is ample evidence that the SADF, the overt and covert security services, assisted by a range of irregulars and freelance auxiliaries, have been assigned the task of continuing the counter-insurgency war. Contrary to what some, including the authors of "Strategic Perspective" appear to think, there is no contradiction between reformism and the "informal repression" that the De Klerk regime is employing. We are not by this suggesting that each and every cabinet member knows the operational details of the strategy, but it is clear that its broad parameters are the outcome of collective decision. De Klerk's demonstrated unwillingness to do anything to stop the violence can have no other explanation.

The authors, inexplicably, treat the SADF and SAP as if these are autonomous players and not parts of the state machinery De Klerk uses against us. I cannot decide whether this is yet another instance of conceptual confusion or a deeper malaise. I do not suggest that specific agencies of the state lack the capacity to act independently and in defiance of the political masters.

But at this point in time, there is nothing to suggest either that the SADF or SAP is acting in this fashion, or that they entertain the ambition to act in such a manner.

The De Klerk regime obviously has not come to terms with the inevitable outcome of serious negotiations. It has not arrived at the seminal political decision that it must give up

power. The violence betrays that; its negotiations position betrays that; its clinging to its alliance with the IFP betrays that.

### 3. Happy Trails to You, or Riding into the Sunset Together?

It has been suggested by one of the sources of inspiration of "Strategic Perspective" that the sort of compromises the movement should make are such as will not undermine its strategic objectives or subvert the achievement of national liberation.

I have already indicated, and it would seem many agree, that the ANC alliance and the regime both decided to explore the path of negotiations, but with diametrically opposed immediate and long-term objectives. It is my contention also that this opposition is rooted in the fundamental contradiction of our society.

The national liberation project includes not only the creation of a democratic state, but crucially, the dismember-

ment of the racist state. The central components of this state are its coercive arms - the army, police, law courts, the prisons; and its persuasive arm - the civil administration, civil service, the state ideological apparatus (like SABC, schools, etc). It is precisely these organs of White minority state power that we are now being told should not be tampered with, so as to enable the liberation movement and the regime to ride blissfully into the sunset together. (Images of Roy Rogers fill our tearful eyes!)

Such an option, I submit, will permanently block the path to any meaningful change in this country. We would, by choosing such a course, do two things. We would keep in place a civil



'We must take seriously De Klerk's words that he will discuss sharing power - not surrendering power'

service that has no interest in serving the mass of the oppressed who are the ANC's constituency; a civil service that will do everything to undermine the democratic government. At the same time we would be keeping under arms the agency that can ensure that the democratic forces dare not touch that civil service when its disloyalty is uncovered. A national liberation movement that did that would not be riding into the sunset, it would be building its own funeral pyre! Not only does that option lead to a dead-end, it is suicidal!

Negotiations are a key aspect of ANC strategy at this time. Within their context we have employed various tactics, both to keep the process on course and to pressure the regime.

No one in the ANC wants to see them fail.

While we will not get at the table what we have not won on other fronts, we should be equally careful not give away what we have won on these fronts at the negotiating table. I fear "Strategic Perspective" is a prescription to do that. This attempt to revise the ANC's strategic perspective and these latter notions form a composite whole, linked by a radically misguided conception of what is possible in the present. It must resolve itself in a perspective that projects or accommodates the piecemeal eradication of the substantive elements of CST - a reformist perspective!

Unfortunately, it does not work. Look at the history of social democracy! ❧

Footnotes

1. Jordan is referring here, and throughout, to the first document with this title drafted by the ANC Negotiations Commission, dated October 1992 [ed].
2. 5.4 and 5.5 refer to paragraphs in the ANC Negotiations Commission paper. These paragraphs no longer appear in the ANC NEC paper [ed].

## *Win a trip to China!*

Answer the question below and complete the entry form. Detach the entry form and send it, with R10 entry fee, to the SACP, PO Box 1027, Johannesburg 2000. All cheques and postal orders must be made payable to the SACP. Entries must reach us by 5 April 1993.

### COMPETITION ENTRY FORM

PLEASE PRINT IN BLOCK LETTERS

**Question:** In which country is the world's longest wall?

**Answer:** .....

**Name:** .....

**Address:** .....

.....

**Home phone:** ..... **Work phone:** .....

**I agree to abide by the rules of the competition**

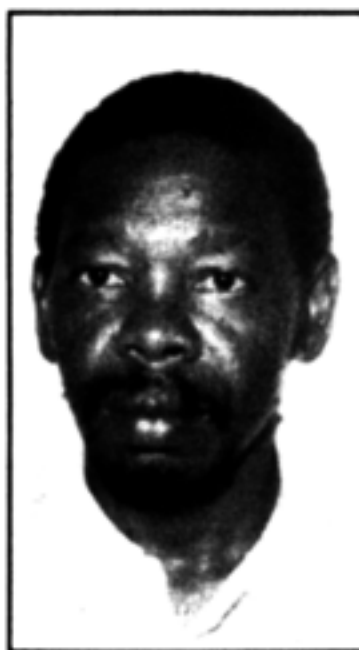
**Signature:** .....

*'Let us take the people with us: A reply to Joe Slovo' by...*

# Blade Nzimande

**T**he contribution by Comrade Slovo on the question of negotiations is to be welcomed, firstly, because it opens the debate on some of the tricky aspects of the negotiations process, thereby contributing towards making the process more transparent than it has been; secondly, it raises and contributes towards a theoretical framework within which to conceptualise the negotiations process. However, as I argue below, Slovo's theoretical framework is far from adequate<sup>1</sup>.

Comrade Slovo's entry point to the theorisation of negotiations is the question of compromises. Given the sensitive nature of this issue, there might be a temptation to assess Slovo's contribution primarily from an emotional angle. I will attempt to engage some of the fundamental issues raised by Slovo, rather than merely expressing horror at the compro-



Blade Nzimande

mises he suggests the movement should and could make.

Important as Slovo's contribution is, it suffers from some major omissions and problematic assumptions, both stated and unstated. As a result of his failure to develop an adequate theoretical framework, Slovo does not appreciate the extreme danger in the type of compromises he suggests.

### **Theorising negotiations**

Slovo attempts to theorise negotiations from the point of view of the negotiations process itself rather than from the wider basis of theorising our struggle and the current conjuncture. If our strategic perspective and line is that negotiations are a site of struggle, and that the process should be mass-driven, then our theoretical starting point cannot be negotiations per se. Whilst it is

important to reflect on the negotiations process as such, this should be within the wider context of our strategy and tactics. Our strategic objective is the transfer of power to the people, and it is within this that any discussion around negotiations should be located. Slovo's failure to start from this angle makes his contribution rather technical as will be demonstrated shortly.

In order to lay the basis for an approach to negotiations by our Party, and the liberation movement as a whole, we should be clear about the strategic objectives of the enemy as well as our own strategic approach to democratic transformation. The process our struggle has entered is not new in national liberation struggles. Vilas, a Latin American academic and activist, points to a process of democratic transitions initiated by previously repressive regimes in an attempt to defeat revolutions in their countries. According to Vilas, in the context of Latin America, these democratic transitions' are "*...those non-revolutionary processes whereby some military dictatorships in South America have given ground on question of political regimes based on the principle of universal suffrage*"<sup>2</sup>. Vilas identifies some key characteristics of these democratic transitions, including restricting the process of political change to the institutional sphere in the strictest sense. Most important about such 'transitions' is that: "*they do not project into the economic sphere, nor do they provide a framework for any substantial changes in the level of access of subordinate groups to socio-economic resources - by income redistribution, creating employment, improving living conditions, etc.*"<sup>3</sup>

Secondly, the power bases - for example the army - of the reforming regime are left untouched, and limits are placed on cracking down on prosecuting perpetrators of crimes against revolutionary movements. Vilas further points out that in such transitions, the old

regime tries to project itself as the liberator of the very masses it has oppressed and continues to oppress. This is usually done through projecting a political figure as a democrat and new saviour of the political situation in the country.

Whilst such situations are not a carbon-copy of what is happening in South Africa, it is clear that the De Klerk regime has taken more than a page from these examples. The ascendancy of De Klerk and attempts to project him as the liberator, a reasonable man and a man of democracy is a reflection of the attempts by the South African ruling class to defeat our revolution. Imperialism has backed this strategy by providing space and credibility for De Klerk internationally. Central to this strategy is an attempt to introduce constitutional changes in such a way that the economic base of the ruling class remains untouched. In fact, the aim of the political changes is to secure a firmer basis for capital accumulation under new conditions. The vicious attack on the ANC's economic programme - whose basis is the Freedom Charter - is aimed at discrediting any alternatives to a 'free market' economy; thereby securing the economic programme of the ruling bloc as the only credible alternative. Concretely, the regime is engaged in widespread unilateral restructuring in education, health, the economy, and so on, in order to put in place institutional arrangements a democratic government would find difficult to reverse.

Located within this strategy, albeit uncomfortably, is the protection and entrenchment of white minority privilege. A classic example here is the transformation of white state schools into semi-private (Model C) schools. Key decision-making powers are handed to these schools such that it is white parents who decide on curriculum, admissions and overall management of the schools. Such an arrangement will place it more and more beyond the means

of not only the black but also the white working class. This is a contradiction which permeates throughout unilateral restructuring and which increasingly alienates the white working class and sections of the white middle class who have been enjoying sheltered employment in the public service. It is for this reason that these sectors of the white community are increasingly attracted to the ultra-right organisations, which promise the 'heaven and earth' of Verwoerdian apartheid. This shows the sharpening contradiction between the regime's attempts to secure white privilege across classes and a political settlement that will lay a firmer foundation for accumulation.

Central to the whole strategy of the ruling class to defeat our revolution is the waging of low intensity warfare against the ANC and its allies. The viciousness of this strategy and its detailed implementation, so meticulously described by our General Secretary, Chris Hani<sup>4</sup>, serves to underline the brutal determination of the regime to destroy the tripartite alliance on the ground.

In all cases of limited democratisation by repressive regimes there is absolute determination to tightly control the process from above. This is done in order to ensure that, whatever the outcome of the constitutional negotiation process, it must at all costs favour the ruling class and the old regime. A classic example of this control from above is the unilateral restructuring and the regime's determination to use the negotiation process to boost the legitimacy of apartheid institutions. The fact that the regime wants negotiated settlements to be approved by the tricameral parliament and, obvi-

ously, the bantustan parliaments as well, forces us into a tacit recognition of these institutions. Furthermore, it gives such institutions a key role to play in the process. De Klerk's arrogance that he will not allow the ANC to dictate the pace in a Constituent Assembly - even regardless of an election outcome - serves to underline the fact that the regime has a conception of the negotiating process as resulting in limited democratisation only.

Carefully managed, and depending on the

strategy and tactics of the national liberation movement at this point in time, this process of limited democratisation in South Africa could lead to demobilisation of the mass organisations and the people as a whole, leading to the isolation and weakening of the national liberation movement. To a certain degree, there is an element of this in South Africa at the moment. A few examples might suffice here. The apartheid regime has tried by all means to depoliticise



'The regime has tried to institutionalise the struggle through mechanisms like Codesa'

civic and socio-economic issues resulting in a weakened mass democratic movement. This has been done by attempting to separate civic and socio-economic issues from political-constitutional questions, which might have the effect of depoliticising civic and trade union struggles and channelling political struggles through the negotiations process only. The regime understands full well that these civic, trade union, and socio-economic struggles were the engine of our struggle in the 1980's. The regime has also tried to institutionalise struggles through mechanisms (for example, CODESA) created between it and the major components of the national liberation movement, and then discredits any mass struggles outside, claiming

that they are undermining the negotiations process. The privatisation of key social services is also aimed at creating a rupture between the nature of white minority rule and the provision of services like education, health, and housing.

The above serves to illustrate one very important point, that the ruling class and the De Klerk regime are engaged in new strategies to completely defeat the liberation movement. If this fails, then at least the ruling class should effectively have a veto power in any new constitutional dispensation, so as to protect its interests. In other words, for the ruling class, the negotiations are not about handing over power, but about keeping power, albeit using a different route. In fact, the regime well understands and has implemented our own strategic perspective of treating negotiations as a site of struggle. The regime knows very well that its aims of keeping power and protecting the base for capital accumulation will not be fought for and won at the table, but through the spilling of blood in our townships and residential areas, through unilateral restructuring of all facets of life, through maximum and strategic deployment of its surrogates in the bantustans, and through a sustained ideological offensive against the political and economic programme of the tripartite alliance.

These points serve to illustrate problematic areas in Comrade Slovo's contribution. Firstly, any attempts at theorisation of the above is not only inadequate, but obscures the wider determinants of the negotiations process itself. Secondly, any move or gesture on our part must always be assessed against the strategic objectives of the enemy. Comrade Slovo understands this, but unfortunately the types of compromises he proposes and the manner in which he proposes that these should be made, are premised on the assumption that the regime will appreciate a gesture on our part, seeing it

as a gesture of goodwill. Slovo states that the sunset clauses he is proposing would create the possibility of a major positive breakthrough in the negotiating process. Maybe so, but this has to be demonstrated rather than merely hoped for. We have already learnt some bitter lessons about compromises. Our suspension of armed action must already have taught us some lessons about the type of enemy we are dealing with. At roughly the same time as we suspended armed action, the regime intensified the brutal slaying of our people in the townships, rural areas, and on trains. We therefore have to seriously question proposed compromises that are not weighed up against the strategic objectives of the enemy.

#### **Negotiations as a site struggle**

Nevertheless, the regime's strategies are always contested, with their course of development being determined by the balance of forces at different conjunctures of the struggle. The regime can succeed with its own designs only if the national liberation movement is weak, and therefore cannot impose its own advanced alternatives.

The national liberation movement responded to the post-February 1990 developments quite correctly by adopting the strategic perspective of the transfer of power to the people, and within this, seeing negotiations as a site of struggle. The content of this strategic perspective, I would argue, is threefold. Firstly it enabled the national liberation movement to relate its own unbanning not to being a break with the past but a continuation of a long process of national democratic revolution under new conditions. Secondly, it kept the strategic objective of the transfer of power to the people in place whilst at the same time engaging the regime in negotiations. This would act as a guarantee that the national liberation movement would not allow the struggle to be quar-

antined within the negotiations process, but even more important, it would ensure that the mass struggle drives the process itself.

Thirdly, this perspective, if translated into a coherent political programme, would ensure that, if negotiations collapse, the struggle itself will be so advanced that other avenues of achieving the strategic objective would remain open. It would allow tactical flexibility, such that the movement could negotiate with the regime whilst at the same time not ruling out the possibility of rapidly setting in place a strategic path towards a seizure of power if negotiations fail.

The breakdown of CODESA 2 and our programme of mass action gave us an opportunity to re-connect with our people in struggle after having adopted what was essentially a 'tap approach' to negotiations and mass struggle. In other words, the rolling mass action enabled us to correct our mistakes and then drew us back to our main strategic perspective.

Against the above analysis, the main weaknesses of Slovo's approach are revealed.

### **A self-fulfilling prophecy**

The first major weakness in Slovo's theorisation is that of focusing primarily on our failure to dislocate the regime, thereby being forced to take the negotiations route. Whilst this failure is true and needs to be pointed out, Slovo simply succumbs to this scenario and does not take up the most important question of how we build up capacity to force outcomes favourable to a thorough national democratic transformation.

The reasons Slovo advances to justify his approach to negotiations are all based on the weakness of the liberation movement and hardly tackle its strengths and how we can build on these. For example, he deduces four main points about the negotiations process from an analysis of the balance of forces. Firstly he

argues that, since the outcome of the negotiations process will be less than perfect, compromise is unavoidable. Whilst this is true, Slovo does not tackle the question of how we can improve the capacity of the negotiations process to deliver within the context of our strategic framework for negotiations. Similarly the second point on counterrevolution, though legitimate, is taken as a *fait accompli* without exploring the question of the role of mass struggle in minimising this threat. The main reason Slovo advances such an approach to negotiations is because, in developing his scenario, the masses are absent and, instead, the issue becomes primarily that of trade-offs between negotiators, constrained by the logic of the negotiations process.

It is in this way that Slovo's approach becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: because we are weak and have already compromised, we might as well compromise further. Because negotiations will deliver less, we might as well aim for less. There is nothing wrong in realistically assessing our weaknesses, but what is problematic is to undertake such an assessment purely on the basis of these weaknesses without exploring how we can qualitatively change the balance of forces.

### **One-sidedness**

Due to Slovo's failure to locate his contribution within our strategic approach to negotiations, the issues are treated in an extremely one-sided manner. This one-sidedness arises out of the total absence of the role of the masses in the negotiations process. In his article he is primarily concerned with the freedom that should be given to negotiators to negotiate on and enter into agreements, without being concerned about the reverse process of accountability to the constituency and the role that our constituency should play. In fact, the key question facing the national liberation movement in

general, and our Party in particular, is how to ensure that the rolling mass action sets in place a continuous process linking our constituency directly to the negotiations process.

It is very strange that, whilst our strategic perspective is that of negotiations being a site of struggle, we are so silent about the kind of mechanisms, processes and structures that should be put in place to ensure that the negotiations process is driven from below. Once a process where the masses play a central role in negotiations is set in motion, the question of compromises becomes secondary. The question of when and how to compromise is only a headache if the negotiators are detached from the people. In fact, the success of the rolling mass action will only be fully realised once negotiations resume and the involvement of the masses in the negotiations process. One would have expected that this would have been uppermost in Slovo's mind, yet the way he casts the issues mirrors the mistakes of the CODESA process, where negotiators were quietly hidden at the World Trade Centre, away from the people.

Slovo asserts that it is not conducive to negotiations to have to consult with the whole organisation on every such concession. This is true, but it becomes less of a problem if structures are in place such that the constituency is part of every stage of the process. It is within such a context that it is decided as to which compromises are qualitative and which are quantitative. The question is who decides on the type of compromises, and how? Compromises are not abstractly qualitative or quantitative. What seems quantitative can become qualitative against the background of the package as a whole and the development of events in the country.

For Slovo to say that the passion generated by our 70% concession on the issue of majorities in a Constituent Assembly was totally mis-

placed, is to miss the point entirely. In as much as our constituency was justifiably perturbed by this, the reaction was also a reflection of a deeper problem, that of the absence of adequate consultative process between the negotiators and the constituency. Instead of regarding this reaction as misplaced, we should find a way to deal with such problems in future.

The one-sidedness of Slovo's contribution is also reflected in his being concerned only with addressing the fears of the ruling class and the white minority. The aspirations and fears of our people hardly feature. The sooner we address this issue correctly, the better are our prospects of achieving a decisive advance in our struggle. For too long we have been concerned with the fears of the minority at the expense of the aspirations and fears of the majority. Paramount amongst these is the fear of a sell-out; the birth of deformed democracy; no improvement in socio-economic conditions; and even worse, the emergence of a repressive 'power-sharing' regime. The sooner we concern ourselves with these the firmer a foundation for liberation we lay. We cannot continue to take the majority of the people for granted.

Even more disturbing in Slovo's approach is the bland assertion that the kinds of compromises he is talking about will lead to the liberation movement occupying the moral high ground. It is time we interrogate, problematise and be brutally frank about this moral high ground. There is a fundamental contradiction between the morality of our constituency and that of the ruling class and its imperialist backers. Whilst it is important to occupy the moral high ground all round this is, in most cases, impossible. In fact, at every turn in the development revolutionary struggle, revolutionary organisations are faced with a choice between the morality of the masses and that of the ruling class and imperialism. We are pressurised from both sides. The ruling class and imperialism



always put pressure on us to moderate our programmes (eg. nationalisation). In doing so (occupying the moral high ground as defined by the ruling class), we may win the favour of the ruling class but alienate, demoralise and confuse our rank and file, and as such we would be occupying the moral low ground in so far as our people are concerned. In tackling the issue of a high moral ground it is important that we uncompromisingly take the people with us. Because, after all, they are the only mass contingent that will take us to liberation. The question of a moral high ground can also be dealt with in the context of a mass-driven negotiations process. This is not an issue to be judged by the negotiators alone.

#### **Majority rule**

It is important to examine Slovo's proposal for a compulsory power-sharing arrangement with the National Party even if the liberation movement has decisively won an election. A power-sharing arrangement should not be a pre-determined arrangement but an outcome of the balance of forces at the time of reaching a settlement. Our immediate goal should be the total defeat of the National Party and the apartheid regime, and in so doing, we should not aim at any power-sharing arrangement whatsoever. At the same time, we must not rule out such an eventuality. There are irreconcilable differences between the objectives of the white ruling bloc in South Africa and the national liberation movement. The first step towards the total abolition of apartheid is the total and decisive defeat of the National Party, which is our immediate enemy in terms of national democratic transformation.

There are many other issues which are unclear in Slovo's approach to power-sharing. Does he mean that we would willingly allow an executive with the National Party and its constituency having a veto power in terms of

running the country? If so, then our goal of liberating this country will be postponed for a very long time. If not, what is the point of a power-sharing arrangement? It is also not clear why such an offer is being made now. Slovo seems to be resigned to the fact that the new government will be controlled by apartheid officials.

We need to discuss ways and means of dealing with this situation, other than just presenting one option, that of power-sharing.

In as much as the regime is preparing itself to hold a democratic government at ransom through, amongst other things, the current unilateral restructuring, we should be doing the same by preparing ourselves to deal with sabotage by apartheid officials, counterrevolution and to quickly create a new army and police force.

Our stance therefore should be to uncompromisingly and unashamedly aim at majority rule. If we decisively defeat the Nationalist Party and its surrogates in a democratic election, let them become the opposition or disappear from the face of a democratic South Africa.

#### **Our approach to negotiations: the people shall govern!**

In the light of the above, what should our approach to negotiations be? It should be rooted in our perspective of transfer of power to the people and negotiations as a site of struggle. Within this framework, the key tasks facing the national liberation movement are:

- i. The immediate creation of structures, mechanisms and processes for speedy and effective consultation between the negotiators and our constituency. This must be more than simply briefing sessions. An arrangement must be made for our constituency to be effectively involved in overseeing and directing the negotiations process. As part of this process, we

should assist and encourage the regional structures of the tripartite alliance to facilitate continuous interaction on the negotiations process with grassroots structures.

ii. The linkage between mass struggles at regional and national level and the negotiations process also requires carefully planned preparations and processes.

iii. We should, without delay, be renewing our mandate through discussions through our structures on our bottom line, paying particular attention to local meetings and discussions. By so doing, our constituency will fully understand and be able to contribute to our overall demands and bottom line at the table. This should have preceded any major bilateral or multi-lateral discussions with the regime. An ideal opportunity to undertake this process would be the ANC and SACP regional congresses taking place between now and the end of the year.

iv. Any agreement on a complete package at the negotiations table should be provisional until ratified by a special consultative conference of the entire tripartite alliance.

v. We should also set in motion co-ordinated and focused processes on how to deal with the probable outcomes Slovo is talking about. For example, the rapid restructuring of the public service, the creation of a new army and police force, and overall structures that will ensure that in the quickest and shortest possible time we implement the very first clause of the Freedom Charter: 'The people shall govern'.

This emphasis on the masses is not a rhetorical exercise. What must be emphasised is that the reason why a mass-driven transition process is important is that the nature of the state emerging out of this will be dependent on the type of transition undertaken. The way power is transferred affects the manner in which power is exercised thereafter.

A mass-driven transition process would lay a better foundation for real democracy, whereas a bureaucratic transition (a pact between elites) will lead to an undemocratic and reactionary post-apartheid regime.

The above, in my view, would constitute an approach to negotiations which is line with our own strategic framework. ♪

## Notes

1. This contribution has benefitted greatly from discussions and debates in the Regional Congress of the SACP in the Natal Midlands, held between 9-11 October 1992 in Pietermaritzburg, as well as the Special Meeting of the Central Committee of the SACP held on 15 October 1992. However the views stated here do not reflect the official position of any of these structures.

2. Vilas, C (1989) "Revolution and Democracy in Latin America" in *The Socialist Register*, 1989, p.40.

3. *ibid.*

4. See "Just how possible is peace?" address by SACP General Secretary Chris Hani, *African Communist*, 3rd Quarter, 1992.

*'Negotiations as presented by Joe Slovo.' A response from...*

# Harry Gwala

**C**omrade Slovo opens his discussion paper with: "The starting point" and asks the question: "Why are we negotiating?"<sup>1</sup> He then goes on to explain that by the end of the 80's the ruling class could no longer rule in the old way, while the liberation movement could not seize power and that we were therefore not dealing with a defeated enemy.

From this premise comrade Slovo advances what he calls a "theoretical framework". Theory is defined, by Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary as: "The analysis of a set of facts in their relation to one another". If this is the premise from which Comrade Slovo and I commence then we must say that our facts should be the objective conditions prevailing at a certain time in history. From this it should be clear, therefore, that theory must be complemented with prac-



Harry Gwala

tice, otherwise such theory will be sterile.

Comrade Slovo tells us that: "We, (my emphasis) are negotiating because towards the end of the 80's 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" (p36). He does not explain who this "We" is and where this decision was

taken. We are not aware of any meeting where the oppressed masses of South Africa spoke in such despair and began saying: "The apartheid power bloc was ... genuinely seeking some break with the past". For the oppressed know that apartheid's power bloc, built on colonialism, is the maintenance of the means of production and the instruments of coercion that will protect these means of production. This is,

to quote cde Slovo, their "bottom line".

Comrade Slovo's paper immediately goes on to talk of the "conjuncture of the balance of forces". Unfortunately, cde Slovo does not go deep into this in order to allow the reader to make his or her own assessment.

He does not go into the examination of the strength of the opposing forces.

Comrade Slovo rightly says, "in my mind, there was certainly never a prospect of forcing the regime's unconditional surrender across the table", he then says that, for this reason, "the negotiating table is neither the sole terrain of the struggle for power nor the place where it reaches its culminating point. In other words, negotiations is only a part, and not the whole, of the struggle for real people's power" (p36).

What should be clear to us is what I mentioned earlier about objective conditions, time and place. We are living at a time far different from the 40's and 50's. We are dealing with very articulate masses today, who are enriched by their own experiences in the struggle and guided by the experiences of other struggling masses throughout the world. As early as the 50's our people were talking about freedom in our lifetime and had slogans reflecting this freedom. The very Freedom Charter is a reflection of what the people understood by freedom.

### **Opposing forces**

We cannot theorise in abstract. We are not talking about abstract democracy. We can also not generalise about the word **people**. That is why right from the beginning I spoke of concept and context. In this country we have two principal forces. **The ruling class** that controls the means of production, the state apparatus and the instruments that condition people's minds. In our country it is the white community which enjoys this monopoly. On the other hand, there is the vast majority of our people who are oppressed, exploited and discrimi-

nated against. This is known as white domination. It dates back from the era of colonisation and culminated in what came to be known as **apartheid**. This constitutes the primary contradiction in this country and gives rise to suspicions from both sides.

Right from the beginning the oppressed have never ruled out negotiations. The birth of the African National Congress saw negotiating deputations going to Britain. The 1920's up until the 40's were marked by deputations and presentations of memoranda to the commissions of inquiry set up by the state. Trade Unions are masters of this art of negotiations: Negotiations and struggle are not mutually exclusive.

It would be difficult to have a yard-stick for any balance of forces since this depends on a number of factors. In South Africa we can safely say that we have travelled a long way from passivity marked by deputations and memoranda to the active involvement of the people themselves. The pursuit of the struggle through non-violent action was not a principle but a strategy applicable at a certain period in our struggle. The intensification of the struggle resulting in the banning of our organisations and the struggle reaching the stage of armed conflict, reflected a stage in the struggle for liberation.

1976 and mass mobilisation culminating in the formation of the United Democratic Front was also a stage in our struggle. Indeed, the people rendered apartheid unable to govern. The dream for people's power was more realistic than ever before. Lines were clearly drawn. There was apartheid on the one side, reflected in National Party rule together with its surrogates, and the people on the other side led by the liberation movement. Internationally big capital supported the apartheid regime because of their vested interests, while the democratic forces supported the struggling masses of South

Africa. In all this the decisive contradiction was the internal contradiction in this country.

The balance of forces must therefore be seen in the light of what happened hitherto and should not be judged by this or that incident as we often do with the mass action. The mass action itself must be understood in its proper context.

The present mass action is not a key to the unlocking of deadlocks which once done must then be discarded for negotiations. Mass action is inherent in any struggle of the oppressed and is always intended to advance that struggle. Mass action assumes different forms. Insurrection being one of these forms. But this form is not something abstract which can just be theorised. It is determined by the weakness of the enemy, among other things, and the readiness of the people to carry it out. This presupposes an advanced leadership, the people having reached one and only one conclusion - that their only way out is the armed seizure of power: and the ability of the people to carry this out. Hence the warning: "Don't play with insurrection".

While the apartheid regime has got its apparatus of coercion still intact the base of this coercion - the economic base - is very much rattled. As a result of the intensification of the struggle, the ruling class has split into many factions, some of them extreme right with nazi manifestations. A National Party government has, after all its arrogance, been humbled into negotiating. All of this is because of the resilience of the people and the energy to go on fighting, and this energy is still abundant. The present mass action of the people and their demand for power are clear proof of this.

### **Compromises**

Today there is talk in some circles that mass action should only be used to break deadlocks so that a stage for negotiations is set.

By contrast, in countries like China and Vietnam the progressive forces engaged in armed struggle to achieve their independence. But they never ceased to talk at some stages of their struggle. However, this did not do away with their armed activities. Even in Tsarist Russia, the Bolsheviks, revolutionaries as they were, did not hesitate to negotiate when they felt it necessary to do so. In South Africa negotiations have always been part of our struggle. It was the enemy that always turned down this offer. Entering the Native Representative Council in the 30's was both a compromise and negotiating. However when this process became redundant people abandoned it.

In entering into the present negotiating it was not the people who compromised themselves but it was the apartheid regime that compromised itself since it had vowed never to talk to "terrorists". However it would be folly for the liberation movement to imagine that the enemy has suddenly seen reason. It is all a political struggle and must be viewed in the light of strategy and tactics of the struggle, not a change of heart.

We must start from clearly drawn "bottom-lines". The bottom-line of the oppressed African masses is the liberation of the African people. The bottom-line of the ruling class is to retain monopoly of the country's wealth and the coercive state machinery which would safeguard this wealth. Hence the so called protection of minority rights. Any compromises must be seen in this light.

The question may well arise: Have the people themselves made any compromise? The answer is - yes, we have. We have suspended the seizure of power for a negotiated settlement. We have also compromised on regionalism. The very fact that in CODESA there are puppet bodies like bantustans and some organisations that only exist in name was in itself

a big compromise. What the people want must not be covered in high sounding theories that boggle the mind, but we must engage in simple theories that reflect the true situation.

Comrade Slovo tells us that the immediate outcome of the negotiating process will inevitably be less than perfect but that, if it is strategically acceptable, then a degree of compromise will be unavoidable. This postulate leaves out the actual forces involved and negotiations seem to depend on the skill of the negotiators. Such a postulate, which cuts out the masses of the oppressed, becomes more concerned with what the right-wing would do as if the right-wing has suddenly come up to the surface. In the National Party we are dealing with the right-wing. The right-wing in this country is distinguished by tendencies rather than substance.

Comrade Slovo talks of pre-empting the objectives of the counter-revolution and reducing its base. When Allende in Chile won his popular democracy he advanced the same reasoning but it was that right wing with the aid of big capital which kicked his government out of power. In Portugal, while the people won a political vote, power remained in the hands of big capital and the army. The people were faced with the situation where they had constitutional power, while the actual economic and military power remained in the hands of the ruling class. Hence an empty democracy. What in fact cde Slovo is advancing is what was advanced by Palmiro Togliatti in Italy and Maurice Thorez in France and failed dismally in both countries. This was revisionism which went under the name of Euro-Communism.

They came up with this theory when they felt that socialism and revolution were in a far, distant future. Comrade Joe Slovo also reasons in the same way. But what about the people? The people reason differently.

Although it is difficult to locate cde Slovo when he wrote this article, the fact that it appeared in *The African Communist* gives the impression that he wrote it not only as a member of the Party but as its National Chairman. Despite the fact that he said it was his indi-

vidual effort, it still remains that it was his effort as the National Chairman of the Party and we can't escape the conclusion that it is the voice of the Party. Because of this, the article must be critically examined.

Where is the class basis of this analysis? What are the class forces in this country? What is the character of our national liberation struggle? What is the mainstay of our revolution? In dealing with crucial matters of our time we can-

not talk as if these things do not exist. Overlooking them leads us to very dangerous conclusions. We find such things as "moral high ground". But the question is never posed: The morality of which class, and whose high ground? We are told that negotiations are "clearly a key element or stage in the struggle process towards full and genuine liberation". The oppressed will never agree with this because it subjects all forms of other struggle to this so-called key element or stage. This marks the point of departure from those who regard negotiations as a product of struggle and another terrain of struggle. The key element is the struggle itself and negotiations must be subjected to the struggle.



'The strength and ability of the contenders for power will determine the fate of this country'

Cde Slovo has put his hopes in negotiations and advises us that: "we can realistically project the possibility of an outcome for the negotiating process which would result in the liberation movement occupying **significantly more favourable heights** (my emphasis) from which to advance" (p37).

This overlooks the "bottom lines" of the ruling class and the fact that we are engaged in a struggle against an enemy with entrenched interests. History is full of examples where the goal posts have been shifted. The case of the Communist Party of France is a lesson no communist should forget. Comrade Cachin was elected president in 1946 but the ruling class then altered the rules of the game so that the Party lost all other subsequent elections.

We see De Klerk playing similar games in this country. To theorise about beautiful constitutions and many "ifs" will not change the rules of the liberation struggle. In China communists negotiated with Chiang Kaishek. In 1946 they even offered him presidency but those negotiations broke down and the war went on. In Vietnam negotiations carried on for years until the Americans were driven out in 1975. These empirical comparisons do not mean that the situation will be the same in South Africa. But the liberation struggles in the rest of Africa can in no way be our guide since these were against colonial masters far way in Europe. Here, we are dealing with colonialism right in our midst. Conditions here are those of

socio-economic transformation where political power must encompass the dissolution of the present structures of coercion. Without state power as distinct from constitutional power this cannot be realised.

Comrade Slovo has spent time on power sharing and thinks it is a desirability. But no explanation is given to us why from the beginning of the Union in 1910 in South Africa the winner took all; and why in Western Europe the winning party forms the government. All this is accepted as a model of democracy.

The answer here is that it is because the majority in this country are Africans who under the leadership of the liberation movement would win the elections. Therefore power must not slip from white hands. In other words it will be an aborted democracy built on expediency.

Comrade Slovo goes on to show how much he is silent on the fears of the majority in this country. Negotiations must not reconcile the oppressed to neo-apartheid dressed in the robes of a new constitution. George Bernard Shaw says: "The road to hell is paved with good intentions".

It is not the good intentions of the negotiators and their ability to talk that will determine the fate of this country, important as this part of the struggle may be. But it will be the strength and the ability of the contenders in the struggle that, in the final analysis, will determine the fate of this country. Any political expediency will lead to disaster. ♪

#### Notes

1. See Joe Slovo, 'Negotiations: What room for compromises?', *The African Communist*, 3rd quarter 1992, p.36

*'Ensuring stable transition to democratic power' by...*

# Raymond Suttner

**A**t the centre of all debates in South Africa is the question of power. The key moment that has been identified as inaugurating the beginning of people's power, is what has been called the 'transfer of power to the people.' A number of problems now appear to lie in this formulation. In the first place, such a 'transfer of power' to a liberation movement does not necessarily lead to empowerment of the people on the ground. The aspirations of the masses may be treated as having been realised through their representatives occupying offices of power, irrespective of how such power is used.

The experience of Eastern Europe and much of Africa has made South African democrats aware of this problem, though it has not yet been embraced in a comprehensive theorisation



Raymond Suttner

of the question of 'transfer of power' or even the wider question of transition and transformation

Another reason why the concept of transfer of power is defective is that it portrays a transfer of a thing, that instead of being used by one set of people, is now used by another, in their interests. Power is seen as a stick directed towards one direction rather than another. Criticising such an approach, Poulantzas correctly remarks:

*"To take or capture state power is not simply to lay hands on part of the state machinery in order to replace it with a second power. Power is not a quantifiable substance held by the state that must be taken out of its hands, but rather a series of relations among the various social classes....The State is neither a thing-*



*instrument that may be taken away, nor a fortress that may be penetrated by means of a wooden horse, nor yet a safe that may be cracked by burglary: it is the heart of the exercise of political power."*<sup>1</sup>

Our conception of power has, in the past, tended to view the taking and wielding of power as a single decisive moment. This is premised on state power being the key 'site' or 'instrument' of power, and that capturing of the state or displacing it with one's own state settles all else.<sup>2</sup>

We need to move away from an understanding of the struggle for power as one where we struggle to control and use an instrument, towards one where the masses are empowered and through new positions of strength disempower the oppressors in various ways. This is an ongoing struggle in the state and in various areas where relations of power exist, where the masses empower themselves, neutralise contending forces and gradually break down patterns of domination and reconstitute relationships of power in a manner that serves popular interests

Even at the level of the state, in the present conjuncture, we inherit a hostile civil service and security forces. This means that they cannot be used to further democratic transformation and that they may, instead, use their positions to frustrate such transformation.

But the further problem is that power is exercised in a number of sites inside and outside the state and there is no automatic succumbing of those occupying these other arenas of power to the goals of a national democratic revolution

We then have the situation that we may assume office but simultaneously not be able to wield much power.

We need, then, to recognise that the question of empowering or the self-empowering of ordinary people and using state power to assist in

this, is not fully achieved through one massive onslaught on the state. We are talking of a process that may include a number of decisive moments.

It is also not a process whose inception need wait for the transfer of power at the level of the state and there are indeed areas where the process of empowerment has already begun through mass struggle and organisation. This ought not to be something separate from the processes of engagement and transformation.

If we consider power as embracing a number of relations, our own power is already being embodied in a number of forms of mass struggle and organisation, which must remain a decisive element in a democratic transition.

We are also talking of an approach that entails engaging a number of terrains of power—the state but also the sites of economic power, cultural, educational, health, media, law, etc., etc. When we engage such structures we do so through a combination of negotiations and mass struggle.

Prior to 1990 the opportunities for relating to the enemy were mainly confrontational or collaborationist. We now engage the enemy in a number of terrains which entail an element of negotiations. The fact that we relate to the enemy in this way does not mean the contradictions between us are removed. When a union wins recognition and the bosses negotiate with the workers, labour and capital are united in a relationship, while simultaneously standing in contradiction to one another.

Where an agreement emerges from this relationship it never removes the fundamental contradictions between the two sides. Consequently the agreement itself becomes the basis for further struggles. Because of these contradictory objectives, in the case of capital to maximise profits and in the case of labour to maximise the wage package and improve working conditions, the objectives of both parties

are never fully realised at the table.

The negotiating table, in any such situation, is merely one site where these contradictions are addressed. In order to ensure that one or other side succeeds in realising more of its goals than the other, it is necessary to use one's strength.

It is essential for the forces of liberation to rely on more than the power of logic, and that is why we organise ourselves to tilt the balance of forces on the ground in our favour. It is said that any agreement reflects our power on the ground. It is possible, however, that this may not be the case, and this is certainly the case if our mass power is passive and if our constituency is the equivalent of 'soldiers in barracks'.

The power that we command, through the actions of our membership and the masses in general must be registered in any agreement. But we need to do more than that. We need to relate to all the elements of the present terrain in such a way as to direct the process.

This includes the international terrain. We need to engage in diplomatic efforts that build the broadest possible international consensus behind our efforts-to achieve multi-party democracy, freedom of political activity and peace. We need to make efforts to ensure that the world as a whole sees us as the most reliable repository of these agreed values. At the same time, we need to consolidate South-South relations -with the states that, together with us, will find themselves in contradiction with imperialism in their efforts to go beyond formal political liberty and ensure a better life for all their citizens.



'Agreements reached in negotiations must themselves become sites of struggle'

This process includes winning and maintaining the 'moral high-ground' with these forces<sup>3</sup>. This cannot be counterposed to retaining the support of our people. One of the reasons for the international solidarity behind our struggle has been, in the past, that we have been seen as the force that was in the right, that we represented a just cause. Especially now, with a unipolar world, we have to ensure that De Klerk's use of the language of liberation does not change that understanding in any way.

The regime understands very well that negotiations are a site of struggle. In backing its demands, it deploys the power of the military and secret forces to undermine democratic goals and organisation. It engages in diplomacy aimed at depicting itself as the only player capable of managing the transition, and the force best able to guarantee the future of capital. It engages in unilateral restructuring with a view to denuding a future democratic state of resources with which it can address socio-economic aspirations. It engages in numerous other projects aimed at establishing its hegemony

over the process of transition, in particular its control of the public media and its influence over the media in general.

The question that we now face is, given that we have unchanged goals based on the Freedom Charter, unchanged compared with pre-1990, unchanged from the period prior to the suspension of armed action, how do we realise these?

How do we achieve a successful transition to democratic rule in the current conjuncture, a form of democracy that does not close off further advance towards deeper empower-

ment at all levels?

This question is answered in relation to two factors, firstly our own power to advance our demands and secondly, our capacity to neutralise the forces that may destabilise or frustrate this process, in particular the forces of counterrevolution.

Cde Joe Slovo's contribution is valuable in taking some of the compromises that are being suggested within our ranks and limiting them in a way that is unlikely to frustrate democratic objectives. But it is still not adequately argued that compromises should be advanced at all. At this point in time, is it tactically desirable for us to see, as a starting point for taking the process forward, the advancing of compromises? Secondly, we need to ask, whether such compromises would in fact have the effect of advancing the process towards democracy.

The problem with comrade Slovo's approach is that he abstracts one possible element of this process, one possible intervention, compromise, addressed to the National Party, out of the total context. We need to be asking ourselves in the context of a successful transition to a democratic order: how can the masses drive this process, and ensure that it reaches this goal, and that they are in fact empowered, and those who resist democracy are disempowered? What steps do we need to take against those who want to divert or frustrate or completely derail the process?

The problem is not purely one of compromise. An offer to the other side or to an element of that side, cannot float freely, independent of an overall conception of how we see things unfolding. We need to ask what a particular intervention will do, in terms of the reactions of various relevant parties. We cannot assume that a particular offer will have one or other effect. We need to ask ourselves what the potential variables in behaviour of those to whom such an offer is directed, may be.

In the same way we need to ask ourselves dispassionately, what we do to neutralise civil servants and security forces who may destabilise a future democracy.<sup>4</sup> We need to ask ourselves, if we decide to guarantee their pensions, whether such measures should necessarily be embraced within a package *offered to the National Party* and also try to envisage the type of reaction they would evoke, which is by no means obvious.

In regard to the question of with whom a deal should be struck, it is not obvious that *the NP* should be offered guarantees to civil servants. If we consider this a necessary measure, should we ourselves not offer it directly to such civil servants and **not allow the NP to continue to be the dispenser of patronage to whites?**

We need also to map out a scenario of possible problems and possible reactions to measures that we take to solve them. If we offer a power sharing arrangement to the NP, is this necessarily a measure that will control the security forces better? I am not saying that it is not, but we need to ask whether voluntarily retaining the NP close to the centres of state power means that they will use their access to the security forces and other civil servants to stabilise or destabilise.

But the key question to ask is whether concessions to civil servants and security forces will necessarily contain or discourage their willingness to engage in counterrevolution. It could, in fact, be argued on the basis, say, of the Chilean experience, that concessions in such a situation may embolden them towards the counterrevolutionary road. Ralph Miliband writes that the Allende regime:

*"appears to have sought to buy the [military's] support and good will by conciliation and concessions, right up to the time of the coup, notwithstanding the ever-growing evidence of the military's hostility...."*<sup>5</sup>

*"Allende believed in conciliation because he feared the result of a confrontation. But because he believed that the Left was bound to be defeated in any such confrontation, he had to pursue with ever-greater desperation his policy of conciliation; but the more he pursued that policy, the greater grew the assurance and boldness of his opponents...."*<sup>6</sup>

The development of such scenarios should also include the reaction of our people. In the past, most obviously in the case of the suspension of armed action, we made certain decisions without taking adequate account of the reaction of our membership. If there is a sense on the part of our membership that something is a 'sell out' it can create a sense of bitterness and distrust, as may well have happened after the signing of the Pretoria Minute. This type of dissatisfaction can also be exploited and must be avoided by properly understanding how people would relate to such a step, and that they do not see us making endless attempts to meet the fears of the other side, without adequately and speedily addressing their own aspirations.<sup>7</sup>

The best way of avoiding this, may be, and here we can also draw from the Chilean experience, to actively involve the masses in any plan to foil counterrevolution. A buying off of top civil servants/security services may have merit. That needs fuller discussion. But that is not a substitute for carrying our mass power into this area, using the masses as the main guarantor of the transition. Miliband remarks that :

*"Moreover, and crucially, a policy of conciliation of the regime's opponents held*

*the grave risk of discouraging and demobilizing its supporters.....*

*"Even as late as the end of June 1973, when the abortive military coup was launched, popular willingness to mobilize against would-be putschists was by all accounts higher than at any time since Allende's assumption of the presidency. This was probably the last moment at which a change of course might have been possible—and it was also, in a sense, the moment of truth for the regime: a choice was made, namely that the President would continue to try to conciliate and he did go on to make concession after concession to the military's demands."*<sup>8</sup>



*'Buying off top security officials may have merit. But it is not a substitute for carrying our mass power into this area'*

Insofar as the masses of South Africa have been able to make SA ungovernable, ought we not to place some reliance on them to ensure that SA remains governable during a transition, rather than on buying off those who have an interest in destabilising?

The partial character of Slovo's contribution is that it is not made within such a context mapping out the transition and the possible variables that can undermine it. The

narrow focus on compromise cuts off alternative options for ensuring the stability of a transition.

**Character of the conjuncture: The inadequacy of the Nzimande/Gwala and other attacks on Slovo**

Whatever the limitations on the scope of Slovo's approach, his contribution has evoked criticism and debate that has brought into the open some of the doubts that people have about a strategy that includes negotiations as a route to power. This also indicates that we require

greater clarity on our understanding of the current conjuncture and the possibilities that it opens up.

In Slovo's contribution he made the initial characterisation of the current conjuncture as follows:

*"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."*<sup>9</sup>

The only problem that one might have with this formulation is what is meant by the regime 'genuinely seeking some break with the past.'<sup>10</sup> It needs to be clear that the meaning consistent with reality is that there is a recognition to move (on the side of the regime) but it is not towards the same destination as we have in mind.<sup>11</sup>

Slovo says that this conjuncture, which he argues 'continues to reflect current reality', provides a classical scenario which placed the possibility of negotiations on the agenda.

Slovo correctly concludes that this conjuncture meant that the regime was not suing for surrender and he makes the important remarks:

*"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 people's power."*<sup>12</sup>

What, then, can we expect negotiations to yield along this path to people's power?

*"It [negotiations] 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*

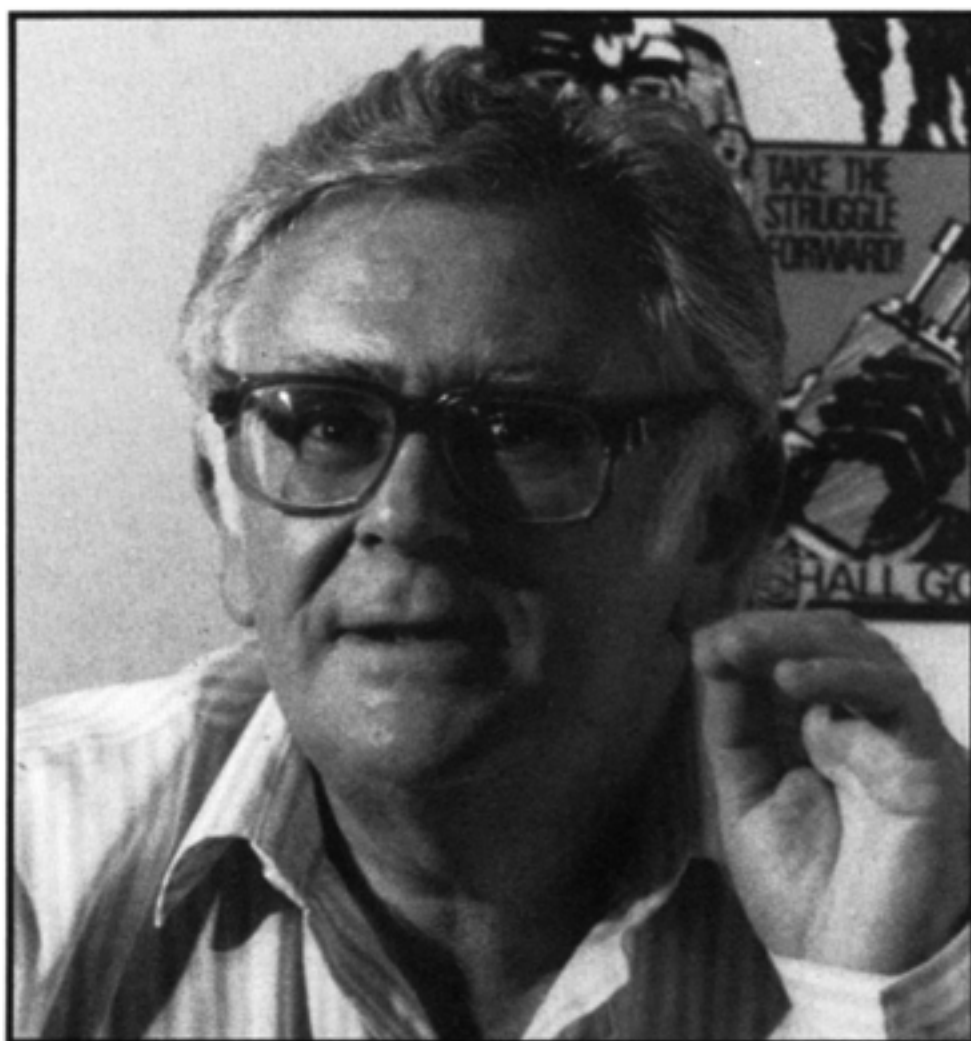
*about a radically transformed political framework in which the struggle for the achievement of the main objectives of the national democratic revolution will be contested in conditions far more favourable to the liberation forces than they are now."*<sup>13</sup>

What is striking about the attacks on Slovo's article is that they reveal a very important divergence over the notion of transition. While the just quoted passage from Slovo acknowledges the process as entailing a number of key moments, Nzimande, Gwala and Jordan clearly locate their approach within a notion where one decisive break replaces apartheid power with 'our power'. It is important that we see this as the beginning of a debate that is crucial to our struggle.

Blade Nzimande entitles his attack on Slovo's paper, 'Let us take the people with us'. The implication is that Slovo does not intend this. Whatever disagreements one may have with his paper, Slovo clearly intends precisely to take the people with him. Thus he qualifies his suggestions by saying *"subject to proper consultation with our constituency, the compromises touched upon here are both reasonable and conducive to a speedier transformation."*<sup>14</sup>

But for the sake of the present argument, let us take as given that no settlement will stick unless it has popular backing. Furthermore, no settlement will satisfy our people's aspirations unless it is part of an ongoing process of empowerment and transformation. We are aiming not merely at 'taking the people with us' but having them drive a process which brings them democratic power in all spheres of their lives.

An impression that one is left with in Nzimande's contribution and also that of Cde Gwala is that there is an ambivalence about entering the terrain of negotiations. The negotiations option is treated as a defeat or a result



**Joe Slovo: Negotiation 'holds out the possibility of bringing about a radically transformed political framework'**

of defeat in armed struggle, our failure at a particular moment to successfully mount an armed struggle. Negotiations are, therefore, entered into reluctantly, though we reserve the right to go for the 'real option', should it prove possible over time:

*"It [the strategic perspective of the transfer of power] would allow tactical flexibility, such that the movement could negotiate with the regime whilst at the same time not ruling out the possibility of rapidly setting in place a strategic path towards a seizure of power if negotiations fail."<sup>15</sup>*

The problem with this approach is that it does not recognise the opening up of the negotiations terrain as a victory wrested reluctantly from the regime. Comrade Thabo Mbeki is correct when he says:

*"It is only when the prospect of any*

*peaceful settlement vanished that we resorted to arms, while for the regime, it was the failure of arms that imposed the obligation to concede the need for negotiations."<sup>16</sup>*

This is not to say that the regime does not intend using this terrain to try to co-opt us or divert us from our objectives. But this does not detract from the fact that we forced them to concede this space to us.

The negotiations terrain needs to be understood as part of a new conjuncture created as a result of our power. It also has to be understood as the swiftest route to democratic goals, especially if we combine negotiations with mass action to qualitatively change the balance of forces in our favour.

It needs to be understood as quite a different thing to mount the type of action that changes not just the balance of forces, but **the character of the conjuncture** (as we did in the late 1980s), for example in such a way as to put insurrection on the agenda. Whether that would be a step forward or not is also open to question.

If the present conjuncture is correctly characterised by Slovo, is it right to say that he "succumbs"<sup>17</sup> to these conditions and that we could instead hedge our bets and pursue negotiations while simultaneously, prepare for total defeat of the enemy/seizure of power?

That is what Nzimande appears to be advocating when he says :

*"Our immediate goal should be the total defeat of the National Party and the apartheid regime, and in so doing we should not aim at any power-sharing arrangement whatsoever... The first step towards the total*

*abolition of apartheid is the total and decisive defeat of the National Party, which is our immediate enemy in terms of national democratic transformation.*'<sup>18</sup>

If we could unilaterally impose our will, maybe we would do so. But given the reality of the situation, is such a 'total defeat' possible? What exactly does Nzimande mean by a 'total defeat'?

In the present context a negotiated solution, as opposed to an imposed solution, would in its result bear something of the power of both parties, i.e. assuming that the power of the ANC is overwhelming, it will still embrace in an agreement with the NP something that qualifies the total objectives of the ANC. It will in some way reflect elements of the interests of the other side.

Nzimande rejects this by the assertion of a goal, without any indication of how it can be realised:

*"If we decisively defeat the Nationalist Party and its surrogates in a democratic election, let them become the opposition or disappear from the face of a democratic South Africa."*<sup>19</sup>

Is it that simple to translate this goal into reality? Given that the NP and its allies may command substantial powers of destabilisation do we not have to ask ourselves whether a temporary power-sharing arrangement will possibly prevent counterrevolution [though as indicated, I do not accept this as self-evident] and more importantly if they disappear from the 'face of democratic South Africa', what exactly does this mean? Are they to be eliminated? Are they to be excluded from the constitutional order? Are they not then invited to engage in counterrevolution?

No amount of phraseology about being uncompromising is a substitute for a concrete analysis of the actual difficulties and possibilities on the ground. Thus Nzimande's 'approach

to negotiations' called 'the people shall govern!' is not an approach. It is not a strategy nor a tactic. It is a statement of an aspiration. The question is how popular power drives the process, and this is only partially dealt with by reference to consultation, linkage of mass struggles to negotiations, etc. It is also a question of how that power leads to a democratic result that we can defend. Nzimande does not address this beyond generalisations. His conclusion is:

*"A mass driven transition process would lay a better foundation for real democracy, whereas a bureaucratic transition (a pact between elites) will lead to an undemocratic and reactionary post-apartheid regime."*<sup>20</sup>

This invites a number of questions: Who is advocating pacts between elites as an alternative to a mass-driven process? It does not seem to be Slovo's approach and it is generally not admitted to be anyone's approach in the movement.<sup>21</sup>

More importantly, what is the way in which a mass driven process can secure a successful negotiated solution? Nzimande does not offer assistance. Consultation is not a strategy, it is part of a successful conduct of a strategy for a democratic transition. It is not in itself a manifestation of power and in regard to power, where does Nzimande see it lie?

### **Seizure of power**

One gets the repeated impression not only that negotiations is a poor cousin of seizure of power, but that its result will be something less thoroughgoing. It invites the question, if there is something different envisaged between negotiated transfer and a seizure, is it not that seizure is insurrectionary? If so, is the current situation favourable towards such an approach? Do we have the capacity? By holding out the possibility are we not diverting resources and aspirations away from the most likely path

towards a democratic order? By embarking on an insurrectionary path might we not in fact be inviting counterrevolutionary defeat?

Should we not be concentrating on defending and expanding the present terrain if it does hold out the possibility of the swiftest route towards our destination?

In short, by holding out insurrectionary possibilities or an absolute victory, if only by innuendo, is one arming or disarming? In prin-

ciple, one must accept that arguing for insurrection where it has little hope of success, is just as disarming as arguing for pacifism in the face of an armed attack.

It is a millenarian response, it is an opiate appropriate to the weak who concentrate their hopes on an otherworldly solution. As Marxists, we should be grappling with the real possibilities on this earth on which we find ourselves. ♪

## References

<sup>1</sup> Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 1978 pp 257-8

<sup>2</sup> In this context, we need to re-examine Lenin's writings on both the state and democracy. cf eg. Alan Hunt 'Taking Democracy Seriously' in Alan Hunt (ed) *Marxism and Democracy*. 1980, p7 ff

<sup>3</sup> cf. the criticism of Slovo's reference to the moral high ground in Blade Nzimande p.21.

<sup>4</sup> cf Blade Nzimande in his critique of Slovo, 'Let us take the people with us: a reply to Slovo' is not of great assistance when he writes:

"Slovo seems to be resigned to the fact that the new government will be controlled by apartheid officials. We need to discuss ways and means of dealing with this situation, other than just presenting one option, that of power-sharing. In as much as the regime is preparing itself to hold a democratic government at ransom through, amongst other things, the current unilateral restructuring, we should be doing the same by preparing ourselves to deal with sabotage by apartheid officials, counterrevolution and how to quickly create a new army and police force." p.22. The question is how?

cf also Pallo Jordan 'Strategic Debate in the ANC': 'If... the officer corps and ranks of the SADF and SAP are likely to be opponents of a democratic order, I would have thought that underlined the need to have them vacate these strategically important posts as soon as possible. The gravest danger to a transition and the democratic order is precisely such potential fifth columnists.' p.13. Again, the problem is whether it is so simple to remove them and secondly, if possible, what happens to them? Are they left to become a counterrevolutionary force?

<sup>5</sup> Ralph Miliband, 'The Coup in Chile', 1973, *Socialist Register*, p451 and 469

<sup>6</sup> p470

<sup>7</sup> '[T]here are dangers of an ultra-left counterrevolution whose social base could be the poverty, disaffection and frustrated aspirations of the people. The dangers of an ultra-left counterrevolution, exploiting the dissatisfaction and demoralisation of our people is equally explosive [to that of a rightwing counterrevolution-RS]' - 'Summary of the discussions by the Natal Midlands Region on the SACP's approach to negotiations', 20 October 1992 p2-3

<sup>8</sup> p 471

<sup>9</sup> p 36. Emphasis in original

<sup>10</sup> This formulation is indeed attacked by Jordan and others

<sup>11</sup> cf Jeremy Cronin, 'The boat, the tap and the Leipzig way' (1992) *The African Communist*, 3rd Quarter, p41 and 43). See also P Jordan, 'Strategic debate in the ANC'

<sup>12</sup> p 36

<sup>13</sup> p 37. Emphasis in original

<sup>14</sup> p 40

<sup>15</sup> Nzimande, p.20. It is true that this does not directly say that we should prefer seizure, but in the context of the overall tenor of the article this is strongly implied

<sup>16</sup> *Mayibuye*, November 1992 p9. cf. in contrast, Gwala: 'Right from the beginning the oppressed have never ruled out negotiations' p.25. (my emphasis)

<sup>17</sup> Nzimande p20

<sup>18</sup> p22

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*

<sup>20</sup> p23

<sup>21</sup> Though it is that of Van Zyl Slabbert (see e.g. his book, *The Quest for Democracy*, 1992), and it is the basis on which some elements in the leadership have sometimes sought to conduct negotiations. cf. Cronin op cit.



*'Dreaming of the final showdown: A reply to Jordan & Nzimande' by...*

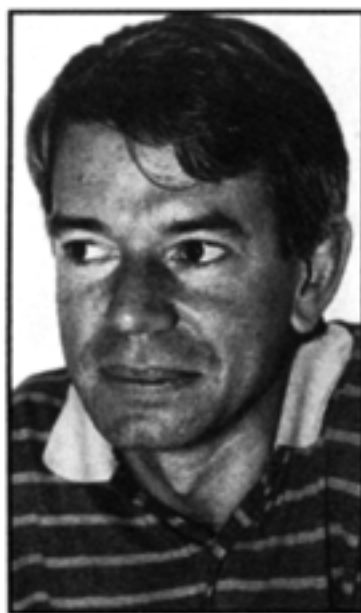
# Jeremy Cronin

**I**n this paper I will look at the underlying logic of recent interventions by cdes Pallo Jordan ("Strategic Debate in the ANC"), and Blade Nzimande ("Let us take the people with us: a reply to Slovo").

My intention here is not to elaborate tactical options for the present. In general, I am in agreement with the detailed suggestions made by cde Joe Slovo ("What room for compromise?") and by the document from the ANC Negotiations Commission ("Strategic Perspective"). Insofar as there is a major shortcoming in these documents it is that they only (of course deliberately) deal with a **negotiations** strategy. They do not present an overall strategy, a point to which I shall return briefly at the end.

## **A threat of opportunism?**

Is there a threat of opportunism in our ranks?



Jeremy Cronin

It would be surprising if there were not. Opportunism always hangs over any revolutionary movement. In a period like our own, in which the regime is relatively strong, but in which there are real prospects and many temptations dangling before our own leadership (whether it is national, regional or even branch leadership), opportunism is likely to be a factor.

Opportunism is, essentially, the abandonment of one's basic goals, in the interests of short-term gains, whether those gains are collective, or just personal.

The main merit of the interventions of Jordan and Nzimande lies in their reasserting the fundamental goal of the ANC-led alliance (a national democratic revolution), and our fundamental strategic approach to that goal (a multi-pronged strategy according to Jordan; a

mass-driven struggle according to Nzimande).

But what characterises both interventions is a fundamental silence about **how** concretely, specifically, we move from the present situation towards our fundamental goal. Their attempt to defend our movement against opportunism is, therefore, virtually useless. Unless we are able to offer a principled, revolutionary perspective on the correct tactics and strategy for the present, we will leave the field wide open to the regime, to its allies and (if there are such) to our own opportunists.

This weakness in the interventions of Jordan and Nzimande is not accidental. It is deeply rooted in the whole logic of their approach.

#### **Jordan: negotiations - a strategy or a tactic?**

Pallo Jordan's intervention contains many useful insights. In particular (and completely in line with Slovo, as it happens) he correctly characterises negotiations as neither a tactic nor a strategy but "**an aspect of strategy**" (p.9). Later he adds that "Negotiations are a key aspect of ANC strategy at this time." (p.15)

This kind of characterisation is a step forward from both:

- the detractors of negotiation who treat it as a defeat for ourselves, or as a more or less cynical tactic while we prepare for a seizure of power (a view encouraged in Nzimande's paper, see p.20); and
- those who tend to erect negotiation into virtually the sum total of our strategy, and who seek, therefore, to preserve the present negotiations almost at any price.

But Jordan fails to be consistent with his own valuable characterisation of negotiations.

#### **Industrial negotiations and political negotiations - Is there a fundamental difference?**

Jordan develops at some length the example of industrial, work-place struggles to illustrate some general points about negotiations and

struggle. He develops parallels between industrial negotiations and our present political negotiations. But, in the end he wishes to argue that there is an important difference. In the case of industrial struggle, he tells us:

*"Matters sometimes reach a flashpoint - say a strike. Both sides to the conflict however recognise that, unless they have decided to go for the final showdown, they must compose their differences. Negotiation then is the manner in which these differences are composed, and each side chooses to enter into negotiations at a moment which it feels will give it greatest advantage."* (pp. 9-10)

All of this is absolutely correct. Curiously, what Jordan is perfectly capable of grasping for this level of struggle and negotiation, he is incapable of carrying over into the present political negotiations. In fact, he insists on a fundamental difference:

*"In the case of the national liberation struggle, one or other party to the dispute must go under. Negotiations, in such a situation, are not aimed at composing differences, but are aimed at the liquidation of one of the antagonists as a factor in politics."* (pp. 10-11)

In order to argue this difference between shop-floor negotiations and the present political negotiations one of three equally incorrect assumptions must be made:

- either, one, the relationship between workers and bosses is not inherently contradictory;
- or, two, the present political negotiations in South Africa are the "final showdown";
- and that is because, three, the immediate aim of political negotiations should also be our overall aim ("political liquidation" of our opponent).

Let us look at each of these in turn.

[1] If, as opposed to the inherently **contradictory** relationship between our NLM and the apartheid ruling bloc, the struggle between

workers and capitalist bosses were merely and inherently **competitive**, then obviously there would be a decisive difference between the two kinds of negotiations. Jordan himself correctly agrees that this "free market" view of capitalism is absolutely wrong (see p9).

The contradiction between the working class and capital is not ultimately resolvable within the capitalist mode of production. Jordan's argument that our national liberation struggle is "*explicitly about the striving for power*" (p.10) whereas this is often not explicit in factory floor struggles, is neither here nor there. In fact, Jordan argues that proletarian shop floor struggles are about "achieving as much control as is attainable over the conditions of its reproduction" (p.9). Is struggle for control, not a struggle for power?

If this can't be the reason for the difference between these two kinds of negotiations then perhaps the difference is that

[2] as opposed to industrial negotiations, the present political negotiations are "the final showdown" between the two main antagonists. Unfortunately this is simply not true. Obviously, the present political negotiations are of a much greater potential significance, a great deal more swings on them, than on the average industrial negotiations. But are they, realistically, "the final showdown"?

This second false assumption is made possible only if:

[3] the present political negotiations are simply confused with THE strategy, rather than being seen as an aspect of our overall strategy to defeat the apartheid ruling bloc. In other words, only if you conceive the immediate objective, and the immediate possibility inherent in the political negotiations to be our ultimate objective ("liquidation" of our opponent), could you believe that the negotiations were "the final showdown". To make this error is to confuse an **aspect** of our strategy (negotia-

tions) with the overall strategy itself.

This is the irony of Jordan's intervention. One of his most fruitful points is, as we have seen, precisely his argument against such an elevation of negotiations. But it is just such an implicit elevation, that underpins much of his argument.

The present negotiating process holds out the very real prospect of democratic elections for a sovereign constituent assembly. These elections will probably mark a very important qualitative shift in the balance of forces. But neither the elections, nor the CA, nor the resulting democratic constitution (assuming all of this happens) will mark the "final showdown" with the political and structural legacy of the apartheid state. Winning elections gives you the right to rule, but not the power.

To affirm this basic truth is not to recommend abandonment (or "adjustment") of the overall strategic goals of national liberation. Nor is it to recommend the abandonment of the present negotiations. But unless we recognise this basic truth, we will be elevating negotiations no less dangerously than the opportunism Jordan intends to criticise.

### **The logic of the "final showdown"**

When he discusses shop-floor struggle, Jordan captures accurately enough struggle as a process, and negotiations as part of that process. He is perfectly capable of conceptualising struggle as, very often, a "war of position" ("*each side chooses to enter into negotiations at a moment which it feels will give it greatest advantage.*")

In other words, in a struggle between two fundamentally antagonistic forces, struggle at each moment is not necessarily a matter of all-or-nothing. The two forces might actually, as he shows, temporarily "compose their differences", each side hoping to improve its advantage, its strategic initiative.

But when he shifts to our national liberation struggle, for some reason, Jordan can no longer think like this. He shifts into a "final showdown" mentality, an "all-or-nothing" logic.

I am not arguing that there are never all-or-nothing moments in political struggle. But if you are not in a final showdown, it is absolutely unhelpful to strategise as if you were. Above all, you leave the door wide open to the very opportunism you are trying to counter.

Why? Because you are unable to chart a concrete, specific course between the here-and-now and your ultimate objective. The all-or-nothing approach, when it is not an all-or-nothing moment, means that all you can offer is next to nothing.

**Nzimande - hypeing it up**

Nzimande is an even greater victim of this "final showdown", "all-or-nothing" logic. At the heart of this logic is the tendency to confuse ultimate objectives with immediate possibilities.

Now, Nzimande knows very well that in the coming year or two we are not about to have the "final showdown". But this admission is something that the logic of his position finds hard to swallow. He is quick to castigate others who face up to this basic fact, and he easily implies that facing up to this fact is an abandonment of all revolutionary principles. But how, then, does he deal with the coming period himself?

The only way in which he can project into the short-term future is by greatly hypeing up the possibilities:

*"Our immediate goal should be the total defeat of the National Party and the apartheid regime...The first step towards*

*the total abolition of apartheid is the total and decisive defeat of the National Party...If we decisively defeat the National Party and its surrogates in a democratic election let them become the opposition or disappear from the face of a democratic South Africa."* (p.22 - my emphases, JC)

Everything is "total", "decisive" and, above all, "immediate".

One is reminded of Engels: *"What childish innocence it is to present one's own impatience as a theoretically convincing argument!"*



'Nzimande knows very well that in the coming year or two we are not about to have the "final showdown"'

("Programme of the Blanquist Communards"). One is also reminded of Lenin's sharp rebuke of the "infantile 'Leftists'" of his time who, he said, *"have mistaken their desire, their politico-ideological attitude, for objective reality";* who *"have naively mistaken subjective 'rejection' of a reactionary institution for its actual destruction by the combined operation of a number of objective factors."*

There are many ways in which Nzimande's hypeed-up, all-or-nothing approach dis-

torts his vision. I would like to deal with two fairly typical examples, the one relates to armed struggle, and the other to the question of the "moral high ground".

**Armed struggle**

Jordan remarks, in the course of his paper, on the tendency for some comrades to "confuse non-violent struggle with negotiations" (p.11). He is, of course, absolutely right that the two things are not identical (until 1961 negotiations were hardly a central feature of our entirely non-violent struggle; in Vietnam the armed struggle and negotiations continued to-

gether).

But the converse also applies - the abandonment or collapse of negotiations does not necessarily imply a return to armed struggle. If there is a tendency to simply equate negotiations with non-violent struggle, there is an even greater tendency to equate failed negotiations with a return to armed struggle, with a "going back to the bush".

Nzimande does not quite make this assertion, but he comes close to it, when he calls for:

*"tactical flexibility, such that the movement could negotiate with the regime whilst at the same time not ruling out the possibility of rapidly setting in place a strategic path towards a seizure of power if negotiations fail."* (p.22)

In general, although neither Jordan nor Nzimande is particularly guilty of this, there is a major tendency in our ranks to confuse:

- the need for effective self-defence structures, with
- the strategic deployment of violence (armed struggle), with
- an insurrectionary strategy for the seizure of power, with
- the need for a coherent military strategy.

Although these four things may connect up, they are absolutely not the same thing at all. You may wage armed struggle, for instance, with the strategic objective of forcing the other side to negotiate with you. Effective, and well armed self-defence structure are perfectly compatible with the suspension of armed struggle. A coherent military strategy may have nothing to do with waging armed struggle, etc.

If Jordan and Nzimande are not specifically guilty of these conflation, they at least flirt with strategic options in this general direction without asking any of the hard questions.

### **Moral high ground**

The practical bankruptcy of the all-or-nothing

approach is perhaps best illustrated in what Nzimande has to say about the struggle for the "moral high ground":

*"There is a fundamental contradiction between the morality of our constituency and that of the ruling class and its imperialist backers. Whilst it is important to occupy the moral high ground all around, this is in most cases impossible."* (p.21)

Of course there is a fundamental moral contradiction between our enemies and ourselves. Of course all manner of opportunisms might be "justified" in the pursuit of the "moral high ground". But that does not make a principled pursuit of the moral high ground either wrong or, "in most cases", futile.

In the first place, we need to remember that many black working people in our country do not necessarily share completely or even partly our own broad moral perspective. Millions within our own natural constituency are under the influence of a range of backward, corrupt or reactionary moral outlooks. The struggle for "moral high ground" is not a struggle to win Ken Owen's approval, it is a struggle to win moral hegemony.

The struggle to occupy "moral high ground" can also serve to divide those who are, in principle, opposed to us. Indeed, this near "impossibility" (if we are to believe Nzimande) is precisely what our national liberation movement achieved consistently on the international front, and for a protracted period of some two decades. Occupying international moral high ground did not mean that Thatcher and Reagan suddenly became enthusiastic backers of full anti-apartheid sanctions. But it did mean that their unceasing attempts to sabotage and undermine sanctions were embarrassing to themselves.

It is also precisely because we occupied the moral high ground internationally on the issue of the release of all our political prisoners, and

on the issue of who deadlocked CODESA 2, that international (and specifically imperialist) pressure was maintained on De Klerk. Together with mass action, it was this pressure that produced the September 26 summit breakthrough.

### **The tactics of 'sheer negation'**

Occupying the "moral high ground" is not about trading moral principles, it is about making the morality and general aspirations of the national democratic movement hegemonic. It is precisely this kind of hegemonic project that the all-or-nothing logic cannot begin to grasp. It cannot think moral leadership, it can only think "liquidation", "smashing", "disappearing off the face of the earth".

In other words, it can only think in terms of what Lenin called "the tactics of the sheer negation". This, incidentally, also might explain why "consulting the people" is virtually the only practical step that Nzimande can recommend.

We certainly must consult every step of the way. But as we all know, shouting "Viva MK!" or "Death to De Klerk" at a rally is a lot more popular than asking sober questions about the state of MK, or our ability to defeat the apartheid regime in one fell swoop.

As Lenin remarks *"I have repeatedly observed something similar to this in the history of the Bolshevik Party...it is easier to approach the masses with tactics of the sheer negation. This, however, is not an argument to prove the correctness of such tactics."*

### **A counter counter-revolutionary strategy**

I said at the beginning that the major shortcoming in the interventions of Slovo and the ANC Negotiations Commission was their one-sided (but deliberate) focus on a negotiations strategy, rather than on an overall strategy. In the latter document under paragraph 6, for in-

stance, all that is suggested to minimise the threat to stability and democracy is the possibility of addressing "job security, pensions and a general amnesty" for incumbent security forces and civil servants.

Of course, a counter counter-revolutionary strategy would have to develop a much wider range of strategic and tactical options, appropriate to a whole range of different potential institutional and social bases for counter-revolution. The struggle for the "moral high ground" is, incidentally, one significant component of such a strategy, in which we might hope to win over tens of thousands of black police and soldiers. But there are many other components, besides those suggested by the Negotiations Commission.

Having said that, let me return, finally, to the all-or-nothing logic. For here, once more, we find just how unhelpful is this logic for any practical politics. Criticising paragraph 6 of the Negotiations Commission document Jordan tells us:

*"I find it alarming that the authors seem to think that the motivating factor in the action of potentially subversive civil servants is their individual pensions, job security and perks...If they act they will act as a corporate body, on behalf of their perceived interest as a group..." (p.13)*

Why? They may, or they may not. In the absence of the physical capacity on our part simply to smash the apartheid state apparatus, we have to do everything to "dismember" it (Jordan's term). This will require a diverse and multi-pronged strategy, including the ongoing development of our mass power outside of the state; the rapid promotion of progressive, black officers; the general restructuring of the armed forces with the long-term objective of complete demilitarisation of our society; and some of the measures (amnesty, pensions, etc.) suggested by the Negotiations Commission. Com-

bined pressures and carrots might indeed either persuade, tempt or compel potential counter-revolutionaries to become atomised individuals, not an organised corporate body.

It is absolutely characteristic of the logic of "all-or-nothing" that it is at once grossly over-optimistic about what we can achieve, more or less immediately, in one fell swoop, and profoundly pessimistic about what we can achieve in a protracted struggle.

The all-or-nothing approach wishes away apartheid structures. But because this wishing away does not happen for real, the approach can only dream.

It dreams, not of "riding into the sunset together" with De Klerk, of course, but of an equally romantic film-script. Revolution becomes, not a difficult and often protracted process, but an event, a show-down, OK Corral, High Noon and...a loud bang. ♫

**Read**

**MAYIBUYE**

Journal of the ANC

**You need to know**

**Only R33 for 11 issues**

**Available at book stores and news stands**

To subscribe, send a cheque or postal order to  
**MAYIBUYE, Subscriptions, PO Box 61884, Marshalltown, 2107**  
☎ 011-330-7087

*'Summary of ideas on negotiations and the way forward', by...*

# ANC Youth League

**T**he past few weeks have seen renewed debating effort within the ANC on questions of negotiations and forward movement to a democratic, united non-sexist and non-racial South Africa.

The debates have been sharpened by two contributions - a discussion document of the ANC Negotiations Commission that is entitled "Strategic Perspective" and the well publicised document by Joe Slovo on possible compromises (we stress that neither of the two documents represents ANC policy).

This is displayed by the degree of criticism both documents attracted from within and outside the ranks of the movement.

The two documents are closely related, they both make suggestions for compromises whose intention is to achieve:



a) a breakthrough in negotiations.

b) the demobilisation of counter-revolutionary threats and the defence of democratic gains.

The compromises are based on the premise that there exist a balance of forces in the country

which compels the liberation movement to consider these alternatives. Considered in their detail, the compromises entail:

- some form of power-sharing with the National Party.
- reaching an understanding with the security establishment (the SAP and the SADF) and the white civil service through the National Party whose cumulative effect is to leave these power structures intact; even post-apartheid.
- entering into some form of bilateral agreement with the regime on the question of regions - an



emotive and crucial issue which the liberation movement has always correctly described as the province of the Constituent Assembly.

The ANC Youth League is not persuaded that the suggested compromises will yield any breakthrough, if anything, they remove fundamental requisite elements of what, in the terms of national liberation, would be known as a breakthrough.

A study of the short record of negotiations does not give evidence that we have made any gains by making compromises, instead we have suffered set-backs. When the ANC suspended armed struggle in August 1990, the response of the South African government was to escalate violence against the ANC and the black people in general. This is but one example amongst many. What emerges consistently in the conduct of the regime in the negotiations is its tendency to perceive compromises to be a sign of weakness. Furthermore, there cannot be said to be a glimmer of good faith in the way the regime has been negotiating.

There is more evidence which points to the fact that all the breakthroughs we have made so far have been as a result of unrelenting struggles. This not only relates to constitutional negotiations, but to even other forms of negotiations. The recognition of SADTU, the suspension of retrenchment of coloured teachers in the House of Representatives' Department of Education and Culture, the reinstatement of dismissed hospital workers by TPA, and of course the celebrated Record of Understanding, are examples of victories that have been brought about by struggle in the face of fierce and, in most cases, violent opposition from the regime. This is the regime we are today told has common objectives with the national liberation movement.

Let us remind ourselves of positions of the regime hardly a year and half ago:

- it rejected an interim government out of hand;

- it rejected the idea of a democratically elected constitution-making-body;
- it arrogantly held the view that there were no political prisoners in SA;
- it said no to international involvement in the resolution of the South African conflict.

#### **Where is the regime today?**

Nobody will convince us that the ground so far covered in relation to the above four issues has been facilitated by generous concessions by the liberation movement. It has been the intensification of our struggle.

The other intended objective for suggesting the mooted package is to neutralise what is perceived as a counter-revolutionary threat, whose main base is supposed to be the SADF, the SAP and the white civil service.

This position leads to the following questions:

- Is it true that counter-revolution can be neutralised by making the suggested concessions? Isn't this proposal an over-simplification to a point of neglecting the ideological and political designs of any counter-revolutionary threat? If this is recognised, then the suggested compromises are not only problematic, but could lead to a major strategic perversion, given the nature of the proposals.

- Untampered with or barely tampered with security forces will effectively impose the ideological designs of counter-revolution. In fact, the SADF, the SAP and the SA civil service have the capacity, if not partially or totally dismembered, to turn the Constituent Assembly into a paper churning institution.

- Is it indeed true that counter-revolution will of necessity emerge from the security establishment and the civil service?

The history of third world revolutions points to a tendency where counter-revolution has the indigenous population as its major source of personnel. In this regard the proposals are

deficient in not making suggestions on formations that are today already behaving in a counter revolutionary fashion – Inkatha and the other repressive bantustan regimes.

Counter-revolution has always fed on opportunistic elements which, prior to transferral of power, would have been perceived to have been on the side of the people. The South African struggle is fraught with such examples. The PAC, AZAPO and the other fringe organisations are stars in this category.

• Is it true that possibilities of counter-revolution will be arrested by entering into an agreement with the National Party *per se*?

Recent events point to a disintegration of what used to be the ruling bloc and dispersal of potentially counter-revolutionary elements. This, however, does not suggest a minimalisation of the counter-revolutionary possibility.

The primary objection to the proposed moves is centred on the capacity of these proposals to abort democratic change. Carefully couched in these suggestions is the comparison of Interim Government to power-sharing.

We do not agree that by accepting the notion of Interim Government for the period of transition, the ANC has accepted the notion of power-sharing *per se*. Shared power with the National Party, which has the cumulative effect of denying the winner of democratic elections the right to form a government and throw the loser into the opposition, is completely distinguishable from a multi-party IG whose main task is to take the country into a democratic order.

Similarly, the gestures of reconciliation which liberation movements have made in other countries by including former foes into a new government cannot be equated to power-sharing either.

The reason for this is that the prerogative has always been and should be with the winner of elections to decide who should be included in

power structures.

The ANC Youth League is critical of and opposed to a negotiations approach that is premised on compromises being the catalyst for forward movement. This has the attendant danger of elevating negotiations to the key strategic answer towards the attainment of our goals and not part of a whole whose primary element is the masses of the people. The view of the Youth League is that, as we (the alliance) have ably demonstrated in the past few months, 'mass struggles of the people are the key to breaking deadlocks or logjams in negotiations and advancing our goals.

It is through struggle that the threat of counter-revolution should be weakened. It is not pieces of paper and carefully crafted agreements that are going to defend the revolution, but the masses of people of South Africa. The counter-revolution that is ravaging Natal and the PWV is not going to be appeased by pious declarations by the President of the ANC. Its resolve is to crush him, his organisation, and his people so that it can achieve its ideological objective, the retention of the status quo. Our people are defending themselves by physically repulsing this onslaught and waging the struggle for democracy.

In addition to escalating struggle, greater unity of the anti-apartheid forces is necessary. The reconvening of the Durban PF to achieve maximum unity of the oppressed and thereby reduce the base from which this feared counter revolution may recruit is therefore paramount.

The mass struggles and consolidated unity of all oppressed should be complemented by an intensified campaign of international solidarity with democratic positions. The last Security Council decisions are an example of the extent to which the international community can take action if consistently and consciously mobilised. ♪

*'Negotiations: A strategic perspective' – 25 November 1992*

# ANC NEC paper

**T**he strategic perspective of the ANC is the transfer of power from the white minority regime to the people as a whole. This will usher in a new era characterised by the complete eradication of the system of apartheid, fundamental socio-economic transformation, peace and stability for all our people. The basic principle underpinning this new order is democratic majority rule.



## **1. Balance of forces**

By the end of the eighties, the strategic balance of forces was characterised by:

1.1 The liberation movement enjoyed many advantages over the regime, both internally and internationally. All the pillars of the struggle had grown from strength to strength:

- a very high level of mass mobilisation and mass defiance had rendered apartheid un-

workable;

- the building of the underground had laid a basis for exercising political leadership and was laying a basis for an intensification of the armed struggle;

- the world was united against apartheid.

1.2 At the same time the liberation movement faced certain objective weaknesses:

- changes in Southern Africa were making it increasingly difficult

for the ANC in the conduct of struggle;

- there was no longer a visible intensification of the armed struggle;

- the international community was making renewed attempts to impose a settlement plan.

1.3 The crisis in Eastern Europe, and the resultant change in the relations between world powers brought the issue of a negotiated resolution of regional conflicts to the fore - in this context, South Africa was not going to be

treated as an exception. Importantly, these changes also exerted new pressures on the regime to fall in line with the emerging international "culture" of multi-party democracy.

1.4 The apartheid power bloc was no longer able to rule in the old way. Its policies of repression and reform had failed dismally; and it faced an ever-deepening socio-economic crisis. At the same time the liberation movement did not have the immediate capacity to overthrow the regime.

1.5 All these factors set the stage for a negotiated resolution of the South African conflict. The regime was forced to unban the ANC and other organisations, release Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, acknowledge the defeat of the apartheid ideology, and seek negotiations with the liberation movement. This constituted a major strategic retreat for the regime and a victory for the democratic forces.

## 2. Shifts in the balance of forces

2.1 The balance of forces is not static. In this phase of the negotiations:

- The regime strives to undermine and weaken the liberation movement through its strategy of Low Intensity Conflict and the beginnings of counter-revolutionary warfare;
- The liberation movement seeks to weaken the capacity of the regime to act against the people and broaden the space for free political activity through a combination of mass mobilisation, international pressure and self-defence.

2.2 In the recent period:

- The De Klerk regime has suffered a renewed crisis of legitimacy. It continues to fail to win the allegiance of the majority;
- The regime's camp stands more divided than it ever was since the unbanning of the ANC: its unpatriotic front with some bantustans has collapsed; it is increasingly losing the loyalty of the civil service and important elements in the security forces, many of whom are drifting

to the extreme right-wing camp; in the October special session of the tri-cameral parliament, it failed to secure the support of a single other party outside itself; leading members of the party and government continue to jump ship for reasons of "fatigue", "depression" and "disillusionment";

- the regime has lost all ability to arrest the unprecedented socio-economic decline, growing unemployment among both black and white, the general social disintegration and spiralling crime.

However:

- the regime still commands vast state and other military resources;
- it continues to enjoy the support of powerful economic forces;
- objectively, the counter-revolutionary violence and the growing potential of long-term counter-revolutionary instability acts as a resource for the regime.

2.3 Also in the recent period:

- the ANC has established itself as a legal national political organisation;
- it commands the support of the majority of South Africa;
- the liberation movement enjoys the capacity to mobilise large-scale mass action;
- it is able to influence and mobilise the international community.

However:

- the liberation movement suffers many organisational weaknesses;
- it does not command significant military and financial resources;
- it is unable to militarily defeat the counter-revolutionary movement or adequately defend the people.

2.4 As a result of mass action and negotiations, some progress has been made in the recent period. Some examples of these are: the CODESA Declaration of Intent (which establishes national consensus on the broad direc-

tion in which the political process should unfold); the Record of Understanding; and broad consensus on the need for an Interim Government and Constituent Assembly. Though the regime has succeeded in delaying the transition, there remains a groundswell of support within society as a whole for a speedy resolution of the political and socio-economic problems.

2.5 In this context, the liberation movement is faced with various options:

a) resumption of the armed struggle and the perspective of revolutionary seizure of power;

b) mass action and international pressure, within the broad context of negotiations, until the balance of forces is shifted to such an extent that we secure a negotiated surrender from the regime;

c) a negotiations process combined with mass action and international pressure which takes into account the need to combat counter-revolutionary forces and at the same time uses phases in the transition to qualitatively change the balance of forces in order to secure a thorough-going democratic transformation.

2.6 These options should be weighed against the following background:

2.6.1 The ANC's National Conference resolved, after weighing various factors - including the possibility of a negotiated resolution of the South African conflict and the objective situation outlined in Section 1 above - that the option of armed seizure of power was neither preferable nor viable at that juncture. The current situation does not warrant a review of this decision of National Conference.

2.6.2 An approach that aims to secure a negotiated surrender from the regime will entail a protracted process with tremendous cost to the people and the country.

2.7 Taking into account:

- the capacity of the liberation movement;
- the capacity of the regime to endlessly delay

while consolidating its hold onto power and restructuring in order to undermine future democratic transformation;

- the cost to the people and the country of a protracted negotiations process;

- the need to as urgently as possible address the dire socio-economic needs of the people;

- and the need to prevent a further consolidation of the counter-revolutionary forces;

the third option, (c), is the most viable and preferable.

2.8 The liberation movement, however, should guard against being captive to a given approach. A combination of factors, including the conduct of the regime may dictate a need to revisit our approach. Apart from the first two options, this may also include a much more enhanced role for the international community in the negotiations process.

### **3. Negotiations: the preferred option of the liberation movement.**

3.1 A peaceful political settlement has always been the first option of the liberation movement. It was only when the prospect of any peaceful settlement vanished that we adopted the perspective of an armed revolutionary seizure of power. On the other hand, for the regime, it was a failure of arms that imposed the obligation to concede the need for a political settlement.

3.2 Negotiations therefore represent a victory for the democratic movement and a defeat for the forces of apartheid.

3.3 Consequently, it must remain one of our strategic tasks to continue to draw the regime onto the terrain of free political activity, peaceful democratic action and genuine negotiations.

3.4 Delays in the process of peaceful transformation are not in the interests of the masses, who seek liberation now, and do not enhance our possibilities to effect the transformation to

genuine democracy as effectively and as speedily as we should.

#### **4. Phases of the Democratic Revolution**

4.1 Our strategic perspective should take into account that the Democratic Revolution – for the attainment of majority rule – will proceed in various phases. Our possibilities relevant to each phase should not be pursued in a manner that produces defeats later because of a failure to recognise the dialectical inter-connection between various phases.

4.2 This strategic perspective should recognise the following phases, each one of which has its regularities and objective and subjective demands:

**PHASE 1:** The period prior to the establishment of the Transitional Executive Council. (In this phase we should aim to: secure an agreement on free and fair election, Interim Government and Constituent Assembly; stop unilateral restructuring; broaden the space for free political activity; and, address the issue of violence).

**PHASE 2:** The period from the establishment of the Transitional Executive Council leading up to the election of the Constituent Assembly and the establishment of an Interim Government of National Unity. (In this phase we should aim to: consolidate peace through joint control over all armed forces; ensure free and fair elections; and mobilise for a decisive victory in the elections.)

**PHASE 3:** The period of the drafting and adoption of the new constitution by the Constituent Assembly. (In this phase we should aim to: establish an Interim Government in which the ANC would be a major player; adopt a new democratic constitution; and, start addressing the socio-economic problems facing the country).

**PHASE 4:** The period of the phasing in of the new constitution, which will include the re-

structuring of the state machinery and the general dismantling of the system of apartheid.

**PHASE 5:** The period of the consolidation of the process of democratic transformation and reconstruction.

4.3 At all stages, we should consider carefully the balance of forces, how to change the balance, and therefore place ourselves in a position in which we can determine the correct path to follow to further the process of democratic change. In this context, the broad masses should play a decisive role. The process must be mass-driven.

4.4 The balance of forces, our specific objectives and our long-term goals would at each stage dictate the need to: enter into specific, and perhaps changing, alliances; and, make certain compromises in order to protect and advance this process.

#### **5. Goals of the National Liberation Struggle and our immediate objectives.**

5.1 The fundamental goal of the National Liberation Struggle is the transfer of power to the people as a whole and the establishment of a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society. This should not be confused with the immediate objectives we set for ourselves in each phase of the transition. At the same time we should ensure that the immediate objectives we pursue do not have the effect of blocking our longer-term goals.

5.2 The objectives we set, and can attain in each phase, will depend on the balance of forces.

5.3 We must ensure that in entering a new phase (eg. the establishment of an Interim Government) the balance of forces is transformed qualitatively in favour of the Democratic Movement. Negotiations can therefore result in the possibility of bringing about a radically transformed political framework (i.e. changing the conjuncture) in which the struggle

for the achievement of the strategic perspectives of the National Democratic Revolution will be advanced in more favourable conditions.

5.4 In setting objectives for the present round of negotiations, we must bear in mind that in the main one would not achieve at the table that which one cannot achieve on the ground. Depending on the balance of forces, we might not gain everything we set out to achieve. However, positions we adopt should be informed by our longer term objectives. Our correct assessment of the balance of forces, the support of the masses and good negotiating tactics should ensure that our gains constitute a decisive leap forward.

5.5 In setting objectives today, our strategy should not focus narrowly on only the initial establishment of democracy, but also (and perhaps more importantly), on how to nurture, develop and consolidate that democracy. Our strategy must at once also focus on ensuring that the new democracy is not undermined.

5.6 Our broad objectives for the first two phases (as distinct from longer-term goals) should therefore be:

5.6.1 The establishment of a democratic constitution-making process.

5.6.2 Ending the National Party's monopoly of political power.

5.6.3 Ensuring a continuing link between democracy and socio-economic empowerment.

5.6.4 Minimising the threat to stability and the democratic process.

## **6. Engaging the National Party regime**

6.1 The objective reality imposes a central role for the ANC and the NP in the transition. The ANC is the custodian of the peace process - while, the NP is the party in power. Using various forms of struggle we must ensure that the regime accepts movement forward in the

process.

6.2 This means that the balance of forces has forced onto the South African political situation a relationship between the African National Congress and the National Party characterised by:

- in the first place conflict, in so far as the regime attempts to block the transition; and,
- secondly, constructive interaction in pursuit of agreements the regime has been forced to enter into.

6.3 How to manage this contradiction is one of our challenges of leadership.

## **7. The need for a government of national unity**

7.1 We have already won the demand for an Interim Government of National Unity.

7.2 However, we also need to accept the fact that even after the adoption of a new constitution, the balance of forces, and the interests of the country as a whole may still require of us to consider the establishment of a government of National Unity - provided that it does not delay or obstruct the process of orderly transition to majority rule and that the parties that have lost the elections will not be able to paralyse the functioning of government. This is fundamentally different from an approach to power-sharing which entrenches veto powers for minority parties.

7.3 Some objectives of a Government of National Unity:

7.3.1 Stability during the period of transition to full democracy: the enemies of democracy will try to destabilise the new government and make democracy unworkable.

7.3.2 Commitment to and responsibility for the process: we should seek, especially in the early stages, to commit all parties to actively take part in the process of dismantling apartheid, building democracy and promoting development in the interest of all.

## **8. Laying the basis to minimise the threat to stability and democracy**

8.1 The new democratic government would need to adopt a wide range of measures in order to minimise the potential threat to the new democracy. However, some of these measures may have to be part and parcel of a negotiated settlement. The new government will also need to take into account the need to employ the talents and capacities of all South Africans, as well as the time it will take to implement an urgent programme of advancing the skills of those who have, all along, been deprived.

8.2 Strategic forces we need to consider right now are the SADF, SAP, all other armed formations and the civil service in general. If the transition to democracy affects the interests of individuals in these institutions wholly and purely negatively, then they would serve as fertile ground from which the destabilisers would recruit.

8.3 Not only do these forces have vast potential to destabilise a fledgling democracy in the future, but as importantly, they have the potential to delay the transition for a lengthy period of time or even make serious attempts to subvert the transition.

8.4 A democratic government will need to restructure the civil service and the security forces in order to ensure that:

- they are professional, competent and accountable;
- they are representative of society as a whole (including through the application of the principle of affirmative action);
- they serve the interests of democracy; and
- the size of these institutions is determined by the objective needs of the country.

In this process it may be necessary to address the question of job security, retrenchment packages and a general amnesty based on disclosure

and justice, at some stage as part of a negotiated settlement. These measures will need to apply to all armed formations and sections of civil service. However, the availability of resources and experiences of other countries need to be taken into account.

8.5 It is also necessary to consider other potential counter-revolutionary forces and find ways of engaging them and their mass base in the national effort to build a democratic society.

8.6 One of the basic guarantees to stability will be the implementation of development programmes to meet the legitimate needs and aspirations of the majority of South Africans. This places a serious responsibility on the ANC to determine priorities and possibilities for democratic socio-economic transformation.

## **9. Reaching the negotiated settlement**

9.1 Some elements of the final negotiated settlement would take the form of multi-lateral (CODESA type) agreements. Other elements of the settlement package would take the form of bilateral agreements between the ANC and the NP - such agreements would bind the two parties.

9.2 The thorny question of the powers, functions and boundaries of regions in a new South Africa may be an issue on which we would enter into bilateral discussion with the NP and other parties, and seek to reach an understanding which the parties would pursue in the Constituent Assembly.

9.3 The question of a Government of National Unity after the adoption of a new constitution, and the future of members of the security forces and the civil service could be dealt with through direct engagement with these forces, as part of a bilateral agreement or in multi-lateral agreements. ♪



# Negotiations in El Salvador



**INTERNATIONAL**

**I**n January 1992 the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the government of El Salvador signed a comprehensive Peace Agreement in Mexico. The Peace Agreement involves ceasefire arrangements and the reintegration of the FMLN into the normal political and social life of the country. It also involves far-reaching military, police, judicial and socio-economic reforms and measures to promote human rights. The agreement envisages democratic elections in March 1994.

Raul Llarull, a member of the FMLN Political-Diplomatic Commission, and FMLN representative in Canada, recently spoke to *The African Communist*.

**AC: Compared with our own South African Peace Accord and CODESA negotiations, the Salvadorean Peace Agreement pays much more attention to military reform and to the substantial restructuring of armed forces.**

Raoul Llarull: This is a question that has to do with the essence of the matter, and also with the roots of the war. Salvadorean society has been suffering under military dictatorship for around 60 years. In that period there have been very

short interludes in which the military retreated briefly from direct involvement in government, while still in fact governing the country. So the 60 years of military dictatorship have militarised our society, the psychology of the society is a military one.

For many years the democratic parties in El Salvador tried, through elections, to participate in normal politics. In fact, we actually won elections, twice. And twice the elections were stolen from us. The popular protests that followed were heavily repressed, with many people being massacred. Ours was a history of repression and exile. The armed struggle began because the masses themselves had exhausted the struggle for democratic rights by other means.

What we are talking about now is attacking the roots of the problem and that, for us, means talking about the army. That is what the agreement is all about. The key word in all of this is DEMILITARISATION of our society.

We have to reduce the army to a "civilised" sort of army, cutting down the elite battalions, and a security apparatus that reaches into every aspect of our lives. The regular armed forces have around 300,000 people. There are three



**CEASEFIRE: FMLN supporters gather in San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador, on February 1 this year after the peace accord was signed with the Salvadoran government**

police forces. There is the army and it has several elite battalions. Then you have to include the rural patrols, the urban patrols, the civilian guards, the municipal police. In addition to this, every business man, every senior retired army officer, every landowner has his own small army to secure a region, to act as bodyguards for the family, to look after the house.

When you talk about all of this then you have, well I don't know, perhaps half a million people under arms. The total population of Salvador is only 6 million.

**AC: What was the size of your own forces?**

RL: We had an estimated 70,000 people in total within our ranks. Of those, something like 10,000 were armed combatants in the peoples' army, END (which stands for the National Army for Democracy).

The FMLN is a politico-military structure with a people's army organised as a regular army. And this regular army, from our side, is the army that is being demobilised.

**AC: And the state army, is it being reformed but not demobilised?**

RL: No, it is being demobilised.

First of all there are the rapid deployment battalions, there are five of them. These are counter-insurgency forces. Each one has its own barracks, each one is an army within an army. Then we have up to three police forces, the National Police, the Treasury Police and the National Guard. These three are, in fact, military police.

The National Guard, which is the equivalent of the old Somozist National Guard in Nicaragua, is very much the symbol of the terror in El Salvador. It was created in the 1930s as part of the forces of the dictatorship to protect the rural areas - originally - to protect the interests of the oligarchy. In time it became

notorious for repression.

Today this National Guard no longer exists. Its barracks, a huge structure, a symbol in itself of the repression in the country, is today empty.

The Treasury Police in recent times has been an intelligence service. In fact, the three police forces all operated as intelligence agencies, dividing the FMLN up amongst them, for the purpose. The Treasury Police, for instance, was the one dedicated to the Communist Party.

The National Police, according to the agreements, is the only police force still allowed to function in the country, on a temporary basis, while we establish a new National Civilian Police. It will be, as the agreement states, a police of a new type, it will include former combatants of the FMLN but cannot include members of the armed forces, and cannot include members of the National Police. It will be regulated very much by the whole question of human rights. You will not even be allowed to apply to join this new police if you have any record of human rights violations.

To create such a police, we also have to create an Academy for that police, to form the officers of this new police force. This is part of the Peace Agreements. It is not just a question of excluding human rights offenders. We have actually to transform the whole way of thinking about a police force, away from an organ of repression to a force that serves the people.

So we are talking about amputating a whole series of limbs of the existing army. There is real demobilisation. These people, just as much as the former combatants of the FMLN, have to be integrated into civilian life.

**AC: Presumably this is where the socio-economic aspects of the Peace Agreements come in?**

RL: Yes, we think the key question is the land question. It is the key factor for effective demobilisation and demilitarisation. Our combatants and the members of the army come

in the great majority from rural areas, from the peasantry. So if we want a demobilisation as a path towards peace, we have to be sure that these people have land. That is one factor that has been very much at the centre of things in the last 9 months since the cease-fire.

As far as redistributing land, there are two main categories. The first is state-owned land. The second is privately owned land over 245 hectares. Both state-owned land and land over 245 hectares were already assigned, back in 1983, for redistribution by the Duarte government. This was part of their propaganda effort in the context of their overall low intensity war strategy.

In practice, some state-owned land was redistributed. But the private land over 245 hectares was never touched.

In the course of the war, in the areas under FMLN control, the local population occupied and used the land. In effect they became the new owners of the land, because the former owners fled the area. We are right now negotiating on much of this land.

But we are not, and this is something we repeat a great deal, we are NOT negotiating the land issue for the benefit of the FMLN. Our combatants must get exactly the same thing as everyone else.

But it is also not just a question of land redistribution. It is not enough for a former FMLN or government combatant, or anyone else, just to receive a piece of land. For them to be able to compete effectively with the big landowners, they need flexible loans, raw materials, seeds, all the facilities for export and import - all these are part of the negotiations as well.

But there are still sectors in our society that think history can be reversed. The extreme right within and outside of the government is doing everything to block the implementation of the land redistribution agreements.

**AC: This brings us to the big question. We know, of course, that sometimes history CAN be reversed. How do you ensure that agreements are actually implemented?**

RL: There are several aspects to this.

In the first place, there are the formal guarantees written into the agreements. The agreements provide for a number of verification channels to assess the fulfilment of deadlines. The first formal channel is the United Nations, or the international community through the UN. Every time an agreement is not fulfilled, or there is an accumulation of delays in the fulfilment of the agreement, we have (and the government also has) the opportunity to present the case to the Security Council, to the Special Representative for El Salvador. We have used these channels three times already in the last 9 months, to try to counteract the attempt by right-wing sectors to undermine the agreements.

The second provision is within the country, the Commission for the Consolidation of Peace (COPAZ), and there is also a Ceasefire Commission.

Then there is another mechanism. This is the people themselves. It is the people who are, in effect, the major guarantee for the implementation of the agreements. We have already demonstrated this in practice. The first crisis in the implementation of the Peace Agreements around demobilisation occurred when the government tried to play a trick. The government sent a Bill to the Legislative Assembly formally demobilising certain forces as agreed, particularly the National Guard and the Treasury Guard. But at the same time the government introduced a proposal for the creation of two new forces.

In practice, the only thing they were doing was to change the uniform and the name of the original forces.

Popular resistance was immediate. The government had the first proof that such a

manoeuvre would not be tolerated. The unions mobilised, the teachers union, the state employees, the national federation of unions, immediately called for protest actions against the government's proposals. The people took over the Treasury Police barracks, and it is empty today.

At the same time, the FMLN took the case to the United Nations, and this crisis was then resolved through these international channels, but, as a result of popular, internal pressure. This is why we say that popular involvement is our main weapon to ensure the implementation of the agreements.

**AC: Could you give us some idea of the composition and character of the FMLN?**

RL: The FMLN was formed in 1980 and it consists of five political parties: the Communist Party of El Salvador; the FPL, the Popular Liberation Forces; the NR, National Resistance; the ERP, the Popular Revolutionary Army; and the PRTC, the Revolutionary Workers' Party of Central America.

These are the five founding parties of the FMLN. Each one had its own armed force. And throughout the war we were working as five separate formations, co-ordinating our strategies and tactics. Our armed forces were, towards the end of the war, eventually unified within a single army, the National Army for Democracy (END), to which I have already referred.

We have a General Command, represented by one member (usually the general secretary) of each party. This has given a unique blend to the FMLN, an extraordinary diversity of socialist tendencies.

**AC: So are the five parties all socialist parties?**

RL: Yes, essentially, with variations. It was our diversity that provided our creativity during the war. Both militarily, but also politically,

because we look at reality from different points of view, we can address issues in more creative ways. Today we still have these five separate organisations, but we are moving towards becoming a new party - the FMLN political party.

**AC: Could you give us a general idea of the diverse ideological backgrounds out of which the five different components of the FMLN emerged?**

RL: The Communist Party (of which I am a member) is the oldest, it was formed in 1930, and for about 40 years we were the only organised force on the left. The Party participated in the insurrection of 1932, known in history as the "big massacre", over 30,000 people were killed in a matter of days. Farabundo Marti, after whom the FMLN is named, was one of the leaders of this insurrection.

The FPL split from the Party in the 1970s, and it was one of the first forces to advocate the armed struggle. The Party had its own Military Commission long before this, but because of ideological differences within the Party, and specifically because of reformist views in some quarters, it was slower to actually implement the armed struggle.

**AC: What ideological traditions did the FPL draw on, Guevarist Ideas?**

RL: Partly, the ideas of Che had an influence, but more Maoist revolutionary theory, I would say...But it would be far too schematic to present the FPL as "Maoist" in its origins.

The ERP, for its part, emerged out of a mix of Christians and revolutionary student movements based on the campuses in the 70s. They emerged out of the mass movement of the 1970s.

The NR was split, with a similar background.

The PRTC also has a similar background more or less as the ERP, but with a much more

consistent internationalist point of view. That is why it calls itself a revolutionary party of Central America. It draws upon long traditions within our region, traditions of joint anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle which go back to the 19th century.

It should also be mentioned that one force that has had a very strong and positive influence within the FMLN, and on all its constituents, including the Communist Party, is Latin American Liberation Theology. Many Christians in our country were faster in catching up with history than many Marxists.

**AC: You have this rich diversity within the FMLN, but now you are moving towards forming a single party, obviously with elections in March 1994 coming up. How will you preserve the advantages of diversity within a single party?**

RL: At the moment within the FMLN we are discussing a new constitution. In fact, this has been a long, long discussion. At the beginning of the war, even before the launch of the FMLN, we were arguing in public debates against each other. We called each other "ultra-leftists", "reformists", "negotiators", and so on. This was the infancy of our struggle. We overcame this stage...thanks to the enemy.

We formed the FMLN in 1980, and around 1985 we tried to force our unity. This was one of our big mistakes.

We thought that having fought together for about five years, and doing it not that badly (having by then defeated three different strategic projects of the enemy), we thought that by then we could completely unify our forces. But we had to drop the attempt. We realised it couldn't just be a forced, mechanical process. Reality had to merge our forces.

We learnt from that experience that we functioned best within our own identities, while co-ordinating our work, as much as possible. We said our objective was to achieve power,

not to have a unified party. In fact, Marxist theory never said there must be one party in order to achieve the revolution. That view was mechanically accepted later, of course, because of certain historical experiences in some parts of the world. We are challenging that.

Although the discussion within our ranks continues, I believe the FMLN will be a single party with different organised tendencies inside it. This diversity has enabled us to face, very successfully, the twelve years of war. And it is the key factor, in our view, for the coming period, which is not a period of the election so much, as the period for overall democratic transformation.

We need to build a party of the next century. We say this against the backdrop where, world-wide, the political party as an institution is in crisis. And I am not talking parties of the left only, but parties across the spectrum and all over the world. The crisis has happened because the party as institution has failed to develop at the same fast pace as the technological revolution. It is a revolution which has produced much greater social diversity than was around at the beginning of this century or even in the 1950s. The diversity within a future FMLN political party will better equip us to relate effectively to our social base.

Finally, we must, as we put it, "socialise" the party. That means taking the party much closer to the people, and cutting down drastically on the number of party functionaries at the centre. In the past, with the vanguard party, it was regarded as an honour to be admitted to party membership.

In practice, that often meant that the honour lay in being recognised by the functionaries, by the leadership. I believe increasingly we need to invert this reality.

The real honour should be to be recognised by a grass-roots community as a leader. That should be the real honour. ♪

# Unity and disunity

SKENJANA ROJI responds to recent contributions on the nature of civil society, arguing that there is unity and disunity between liberal democracy and socialist democracy

**T**he question of transfer of power from the minority to the majority is no longer just a theoretical notion in our country. It is one of extreme strategic and tactical urgency.

Therein lies the political and ideological significance of the article by Nzimande and Sikhosana, "Civil society and democracy" (*The African Communist*, no.128). Without any doubt, the comrades have succeeded in putting to the fore a useful dimension in the crucial debate on the basic question of the revolution.

I agree with the authors that, in the debate on democracy, it has become fashionable in many left circles to counterpose the role of civil society, on the one hand, with that of the state and political parties, on the other. As if the two aspects were mutually exclusive. Yet, conversely, in their critical response to this trend, Nzimande and Sikhosana have, in my view, actually gravitated to the other extreme. They have collapsed the role of civil society on the one hand, and that of political parties and the state on the other, as if they were the same.

Furthermore, in their examination of the relationship between liberal democracy and

socialist democracy, they have failed to capture the dialectical interconnection between the two. They project the relationship in a manner that suggests that the two categories are absolute opposites. It is on the relationship between liberal democracy and socialist democracy that I would like to take issue with the comrades.

Between liberal democracy and socialist democracy lies unity and disunity.

First the case of unity. Civil liberties are a significant nodal link in the chain of social development. They appeared on the historical stage as a result of accumulated struggle by popular forces against reaction and obscurantism. They were ushered in by the great French Revolution, which was fought under the stirring slogans of Liberty, Freedom and Equality. In a very real sense these rights and freedoms belong to the people. It is no accident that Marxism drew most of its early inspiration from this revolution.

Now for the disunity. The contradiction between liberal democracy and socialist democracy resides in the fact that the bourgeoisie, which was in the vanguard of the French

Revolution, "betrays its own self...betrays the cause of liberty...is incapable of being consistently democratic." (Lenin, *The Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*). In short, the bourgeois class subverted and perverted civil liberties to serve its class interests of exploitation and oppression. Freedom of speech for the people was turned upside down to mean freedom of speech for the bourgeoisie.

In regard to the contradiction between liberal democracy and socialist democracy, there are two extremes against which we must guard. On the one hand, the right wing in the pro-democracy movement insists that the struggle should not go beyond the bounds of liberal democracy. They say freedom of speech, or freedom from hunger can be attained within the confines of liberal democracy underpinned by capitalism, or some distorted version of social democracy. They see no revolutionary need for negating capitalism and the state machine that serves it. I have in mind organisations like the Democratic Party, IDASA, etc.

On the other hand, the far left sees absolutely no revolutionary significance or potential in liberal democracy. The far left contends that we must destroy everything associated with the past because it is intrinsically reactionary, that we must build a new society out of the ashes of the old.

Both approaches, in my view, miss the real issue. In their conceptualisation of the inter-connection between liberal democracy and socialist democracy Nzimande and Sikhosana are, of course, closer to this second approach.

The contradiction between liberal democ-

racy and socialist democracy is graphically laid bare in this passage from the 1991 SACP Draft Manifesto: "...how meaningful is the basic right to vote if you are dying of hunger? How meaningful is the same freedom when media conglomerates (Argus, Times Media, Perskor and Naspers) control between them almost 90% of all daily and weekly newspapers sold in our country?"

What is the way forward? How do we resolve the seeming contradiction between continuity and discontinuity in liberal democracy?

It is imperative that civil liberties be unshackled from the fetters of the political, economic and ideological stranglehold of the exploiter class. This can only be achieved once

the working class assumes political, economic and ideological power, under the leadership of a vanguard rooted in the working class, and in alliance with other labouring social forces.

*"Socialism was meant to go beyond the achievements of the great bourgeois revolutions of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, not fall behind them. Socialism was meant to greatly extend the frontiers of freedom, to embody and surpass the clas-*

*sical liberal civil liberties."* (SACP Draft Manifesto).

The debate on the relationship between liberal democracy and socialist democracy is not only relevant insofar as our long term objective of building socialism is concerned. It is also crucial in our understanding of democracy in the current phase of our struggle. And in this regard we need to think of democracy within our liberation movement, as well as in society as a whole.

---

To be real and  
meaningful,  
democracy must  
derive from the fabric  
of organs of popular  
representation in the  
political, economic  
and cultural life of  
society

---



We speak of representative democracy and participatory democracy. Our members elect their representatives to leadership positions of the liberation movement at all levels in regular elections. Has this representative democracy within our organisations given real content to full democratic participation by ordinary members?

We must answer this question honestly, remembering the political tragedy of many African countries where many a progressive movement failed to cross the threshold between representative democracy and participatory democracy. The cancer of bureaucracy began to eat into the body politic of the revolutionary movements and countries of socialist orientation.

With the advent of CODESA, a tendency began to emerge within the liberation movement to shift participatory democracy towards the back-burner. Our people felt locked out of the processes unfolding in the corridors of the World Trade Centre. This led to confusion, misinformation, demoralisation and, to some extent, demobilisation.

One the main achievements of this year's campaign of mass action was the successful

reassertion of the tendency towards participatory democracy. We Marxists know full well that it is not the brilliance and actions of outstanding individuals, but the creative activity of the masses of the people that is the real locomotive of history.

Inner-party and inner-movement participatory democracy must be guarded jealously. We know that present struggles shape the future. Put in another way, charity begins at home. How will it be possible for a movement that was not sensitive to problems of participatory democracy within its own ranks be custodian of the same democracy when in power?

Our view needs to be asserted at all times that one-person one-vote, in regular elections within a multi-party system will be a fundamental victory by our people. Such a victory would constitute the achievement of representative democracy, which the majority of our people are denied today. However, we stand for more profound political transformation than popular representation on its own. Democracy, to be real and meaningful, must derive from the fabric of organs of popular representation in the political, economic and cultural life of society. ♪

# Build your own library!

## NEW! NEW! NEW!

	SA price	Overseas
• BUILDING WORKERS' POWER FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE The Manifesto of the SACP, as adopted at the 8th Party Congress, December 1991	R3,00	\$3,00
• SACP CONSTITUTION The constitution of the SACP, as adopted at the 8th Party Congress, December 1991	R3,00	\$3,00
• THE RED FLAG IN SOUTH AFRICA An illustrated popular history of the SACP, from 1921 to 1991	R5,00	\$5,00
• UNDERSTANDING HISTORY An illustrated basic guide to historical materialism	R5,00	\$5,00
• THE RED FLAG VIDEO Interviews on the future of socialism	R50,00	\$35,00
• MAY DAY POSTER	R5,00	\$5,00
• 70th ANNIVERSARY POSTER	R5,00	\$5,00

## OTHER PUBLICATIONS

• UMSEBENZI back copies (each)	R3,00	\$3,00
• AFRICAN COMMUNIST back copies (each)	R8,00	\$8,00
• HAS SOCIALISM FAILED? by Joe Slovo	R3,00	\$3,00
• THE PATH TO POWER	R3,00	\$3,00
• 50 FIGHTING YEARS by A Lerumo	R35,00	\$30,00
• MOSES KOTANE by Brian Bunting	R50,00	\$30,00
• SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNISTS SPEAK (Compiled by Brian Bunting)	R50,00	\$30,00
• THE ROAD TO SOUTH AFRICAN FREEDOM	R3,00	\$3,00
• PHILOSOPHY AND CLASS STRUGGLE	R3,00	\$3,00
• A DISTANT CLAP OF THUNDER	R3,00	\$3,00
• SEVENTY YEARS OF WORKERS POWER	R3,00	\$3,00
• THE SA WORKING CLASS AND THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC STRUGGLE by Joe Slovo	R3,00	\$3,00
• AFRICAN COMMUNIST Contents and index (from 1959 to 1988)	R35,00	\$35,00

## SOUTH AFRICAN PRICES EXCLUDE POSTAGE

ALL OVERSEAS PRICES SEA MAIL

Send orders to:

**INKULULEKO PUBLICATIONS**

**PO Box 1027, Johannesburg 2000**

or phone Indres Naidoo on (011) 836-6867



# Lionel Forman and the national question



**BOOK REVIEW**

Review by BRIAN BUNTING

**L**ionel Forman, described in the preface to this book by Jack and Ray Simons as "an outstanding freedom fighter and man of many parts - youth leader, lawyer, editor, militant activist, historian and committed communist", died after an open-heart operation in Cape Town on October 19, 1959. He was only 31 years old. Thirty three years later this 230-page tribute gives some indication of the tremendous amount of work and thought Lionel crammed into those 31 years.

Since childhood he had suffered from a serious heart condition following a bout of rheumatic fever at the age of five. But far from allowing himself to be crippled by this disability, if anything it stimulated his enthusiasm for life and filled him with a determination to squeeze into the years remaining to him as much as, if not more than, most people achieve in a conventional lifetime.

He joined the Young Communist League while he was still at school, and later graduated to full membership of the Communist Party, making ever more insightful contributions to its publications, debates and the general hectic round of its activities. The banning of the Communist Party of South Africa in 1950 came at the very time in his life when he was

***A Trumpet from the Housetops, The Selected Writings of Lionel Forman, edited by Sadie Forman and Andre Odendaal, published by the Mayibuye Centre, University of Western Cape, in association with Zed Books, London; Ohio University Press, Athens, Ohio; and David Phillip, Cape Town***

beginning to make his most profound contribution to Marxist thinking and historiography in South Africa, particularly in relation to the national question. While he disregarded most of the provisions of the Suppression of Communism Act, on the grounds that its definition of communism bore no relation to what he believed in, yet he found the legal constraint preventing him from speaking openly on a Communist Party platform excessively irksome.

Which explains the title of this book. Lying on his hospital bed just before his operation, while the pre-med was beginning to take effect, he sent a letter to his wife Sadie saying:

*"If this doesn't come off you're not to mourn for me. I'm going without the slightest fear of death and if I did it will not hurt me at all, except the thought that it will hurt you...If there is any meeting of friends, what*

*I want said there clearly and unequivocally is. All his adult life he tried to be a good communist...Now I am legally safe as houses, I want it trumpeted from the housetops, Lionel Forman believed in communism for South Africa with a burning passion till the day he died, and in all his adult years that passion never once diminished..."*

The book is divided into five parts, and life being what it is, there is inevitably some overlapping, and it is not always clear why some of his pieces are included in one section and not another. The first part, labelled "A People's History", contains the text of a number of articles he wrote for the *New Age/Advance* series of papers, later published as pamphlets under the titles *Black and White in South African History* and *Chapters in the History of the March to Freedom*. There are also a number of other pieces on the history of the liberation movement which he hoped one day to expand into a full-scale study of the relationship between national and class struggle in South African history.

Part Two comprises extracts from his section of the book on the Treason Trial which he wrote jointly with Solly Sachs. Lionel was a brilliant journalist and his witty weekly exposures of the nonsense of the Treason Trial were eagerly awaited by readers of *New Age* during this period.

Part Three is something of a catch-all. The first section comprises extracts from an autobiographical "Book for Karl" which he wrote while studying in

England in 1953 before returning to South Africa after completing a two-year stint at the headquarters of the International Union of Students in Prague. The second section consists of a number of articles on the international scene which he wrote under the pseudonym "Commentator" for *Advance* (one of the successors of the banned *Guardian*). The third section reflects Forman's impatience with the lack of public discussion of socialism and the issues which cried out for debate after the death of Stalin, the 20th Congress of the CPSU and the 1956 events in Hungary - an impatience which led him and Sadie to produce a cyclostyled pamphlet called *The South African Socialist Review* in March 1958 - an enterprise restricted to one issue because the underground Communist Party was planning the publication of its own journal, *The African Communist*, the first issue of which saw the light of day the following year, in the very month of Lionel's death, October 1959.



Lionel Forman

Part Four includes a number of initiatives launched by Forman to get debate going on the national question. It includes exchanges in discussion and correspondence with Jack Simons, Fred Carne-son (writing under the pseudonym John McGrath in the British journal *Marxism Today*), and the Soviet scholar II Potekhin.

Part Five consists of the text of Lionel's last letter to Sadie and a number of tributes from former comrades and friends and the leaders of political organisations with which he had worked.

The whole book brings out the very essence of Lionel's personality - his extraordinary fecundity and productivity, his all-embracing interest in everything relating to the human condition, his inventiveness and initiative, his drive to get things done which sometimes led him to throw caution to the winds but was wholly consistent with his courage and independence of mind. His insistence on his right to self-expression often brought him into trouble with the Party establishment, but he argued strongly for freedom to debate and his loyalty to the Party never wavered.

Running through all Forman's writing was his feeling that the movement as a whole, and the Party in particular as the vanguard of the working class, had not paid enough attention to the national question, had not developed a consistent Marxist line on the relationship between national and class struggle, and that unless they did so, the movement would be led astray and the aims of the struggle for national liberation would not be achieved. In his contribution to the 1954 Cape Town Forum Club symposium on the national question he said:

*"When we talk of the 'National Question' we sometimes incorrectly pose the problem as being one of the choice between two different viewpoints. On the one hand, you can see the struggle for liberation as being essentially a class struggle, with the proletariat of all national groups fighting the capitalists of all national groups. Or, on the other hand, you can have all the people of the oppressed nationality, whatever their class, pitted against the dominant national group as a whole.*

*"I don't think there will be anyone here who will not agree that for South Africa neither approach is by itself completely correct - that the correct path to liberation is by means of joining together into one unity the many forces opposed to the South African*

*ruling class, of welding together into one the struggle against capitalism and the struggle for national liberation."* (p.180)

The problem was to decide whether there were any nations in South Africa. Forman accepted Stalin's definition of a nation which he set out in his 1913 treatise on Marxism and the National Question. "Stalin's definition", wrote Forman in 1958, "involving common territory, language, culture and economy...has been tested in practice through the years, and found to serve its purpose so well that it has been accepted universally by communists as the starting point of all discussions on the question." (Forman, p.208)

For the record, Stalin defined a nation as follows: "A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture." (*Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, Lawrence and Wishart 1936, p.8).

Forman was fascinated by the attempt to apply this definition to South Africa. He concluded that while there were several communities in South Africa which fulfilled some of the criteria in Stalin's definition, none of them were full nations. They were aspirant nations (he used the Russian term 'narodnost' borrowed from Potekhin to signify 'pre-nation').

*"I think the majority of communities which have a common language and psychology in South Africa are not full nations, but national groups. That is, I think they are aspirant nations, lacking their own territory and economic cohesion, but aspiring to achieve these."* (p.183).

This applied equally to Zulu, Xhosa, Afrikaner, Coloured, Indian or any other national group one might advance for consideration. It was not enough for a community to share a territory or economy with others; it had to have its own territory and economy, because

---

central to the Marxist conception of national identity was the possibility of secession.

Marxists acknowledge the duty to assist nations to preserve and develop their languages and cultural traditions, but more than that, to free themselves from foreign domination, and control their own destinies without interference. Lenin insisted over and over again that the right to secession was central to the Marxist conception of nationhood. For a country like the Soviet Union, comprising so many different nations and republics this presented something of a problem. Lenin's reply was that the Communist Party would continue to oppose secession and fight for the preservation of the Soviet Union as a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; but if any nation, by way of a referendum or representative parliamentary decision, opted for separation from the USSR, that choice would have to be respected.

Quoting the Freedom Charter that "*South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white. Our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities*", Forman said that a South African nation would not develop until these conditions had been achieved. He considered that a number of different nations would come into being in South Africa and that "*they will flower and prosper before they merge into one. A single African nation in South Africa is likely to develop before a single South African nation does. And similarly it seems likely that Zulu, Basotho and other nations will develop before they merge into a single African nation in South Africa.*" (p.192)

This analysis led Forman to some questionable conclusions. He denied the Afrikaners the status of a nation because, not only did they not have a single national market (though they shared one with others), but they also did not have a "normal" class structure, being com-

posed largely of professionals and salaried officials, government servants who manned the enormous repressive apparatus, and a working class consisting essentially of supervisors of African labour. "*For analogous reasons to the Afrikaners, the English, the Coloured and Indians fail to qualify as nations. When freedom is won, the Afrikaners and other national groups, if they so desire, will, no doubt, obtain the opportunity to develop into nations, being given the essential territorial basis for such development, as has happened in the USSR and China.*" (p.195)

However, Forman says the Afrikaners could straighten out their class structure and qualify as a nation, albeit dispersed throughout South Africa, if they were prepared to incorporate Afrikaans-speaking Coloureds, "*probably Afrikanerdom's richest national asset.*" This would also enable the Afrikaans nation (including the Coloureds) to acquire "*their own territory, i.e. a territory where they constitute the majority of the population, in a part of the Western Province.*" (p.89) (One wonders how Verwoerd or the founders of Orania in the Cape today would react to that thought!)

Similarly Forman held out the prospect of national development for other groups. The Zulus have a common territory in Natal, in a substantial portion of which they are an overwhelming majority. They have a common language and culture, but there is as yet no single Zulu market because the government has strangled Zulu economic development. "*There is no doubt, however, that this stifling of the Zulu nation will not endure, and that the Zulus are on the threshold of true nationhood...Other 'pre-nations' in a position similar to the Zulus are the Basotho, the Xhosas, the Swazis, the Tswana, etc.*" He considered that in certain circumstances progressives might even accord to a pre-nation the right to self-determination, presumably including the right to secession

(p.195).

Forman was indignant that his ideas on the development of nations should be compared with the Nationalist government's bantustan programme. He pointed out that the right to self-determination could not be exercised under the conditions of apartheid segregation and repression. The ANC had long had as part of its standing policy the demand for self-determination, and the oppressed national groups in South Africa had made it clear they wished to determine their own destinies within the framework of a united South African state.

Forman was advancing his theories before the phenomena of Buthelezi, Mangope and their ilk had manifested themselves in their true colours. It was also before the SACP had propounded its concept of "colonialism of a special type" as part of its 1962 Programme analysis, and proposed solution to the national problem. Yet as early as 1954, in his contribution to the Forum Club symposium on the national question, already referred to above, Jack Simons had drawn attention to some factors which Forman seemed to have overlooked. Simons said:

*"The special features of South African nationalism arise from the combination of an imperialism and its dependent colony in a single political and geographical region. The large, permanently established European population attempts to dominate the rest of the population in typical colonial fashion, while the various national groups have interacted and fused in a manner closely resembling the integration that takes place in multi-national societies such as developed in Europe.*

*"Because of the colour bar on the one hand and the high degree of interaction between the national groups on the other, the oppressed nationalities do not raise the demands characteristic of national*

*movements in European history or in the colonies. They do not demand 'cultural autonomy' or 'self determination' or 'secession'. In fact, these concepts are regarded with doubt and even hostility, because they resemble outwardly the 'ideology' of the racialists who use them to mask and justify race oppression."* (p.186)

Discussing the background to the adoption of the Native Republic resolution by the Comintern in 1928, Forman says that, although the CPSA had made great advances and contributed greatly to raising the level of political consciousness of the people, it had failed to develop a correct policy in relation to the national movement. It tended to see the struggle in terms only of the mobilisation of the proletariat and the organisation of the trade unions, *"and not pay proper attention to the fact that the overwhelming majority of the South African people were not proletarianised and could not be reached by the slogans of the African class struggle."* (pp.77-8)

This is not strictly accurate. The Party, even in the days of the International Socialist League, had been in constant contact with the national movements. Party members had frequently spoken on ANC and ICU platforms, and had invited Africans to speak on their platforms. While, for obvious reasons, the Party had concentrated on the working class and the trade unions (it regarded the organised proletariat as the vanguard of the revolution), it was very conscious of the need to mobilise the African masses countrywide. Its failure to develop a correct policy in relation to the national movements (a fault which was partly corrected by the Native Republic resolution and the ensuing Comintern directives) was at least in part due to the failure of the national movement up to that time to reveal its potential. In his address to the Comintern Congress in Moscow on August 20, 1928, the South African delegate,

SP Bunting said:

*"The existing 'nationalist' movement for equality, etc. only demands the same things as the Communist movement (proletarian and agrarian) does, with the extra stimulus supplied by the national or race patriotism - but from observation of facts we believe the class stimulus is a greater stimulus even to the native masses, it has actually stimulated greater sacrifices and devotion already...The CP is itself the actual or potential leader of the native national movement; it makes all the national demands that the national body makes, and of course much more, and it can 'control' nationalism with a view to developing its maximum fighting strength. It can and will respond to the entire struggle of all the oppressed of South Africa, natives in particular."*

Summarising the Party's achievement up to that point, Bunting said: *"Our work among the native masses, our chief activity, conducted so far mainly as a working class movement (although an agrarian movement will be developed as fast as we can get contact especially with the distant and not easily accessible native reserves) is limited only by our ability to cope with it."*

Pointing out that of the Party's 1,750 members 1,600 were African, Bunting added:

*"As for the native nationalist movement, we pay it a good deal of attention and whenever we see any life in it we apply United Front tactics as per the draft colonial thesis...Native workers and some peasants are pouring into the Party in preference to joining the purely native bodies, whether national or industrial, which have fallen into the hands of the bourgeoisie."*

Nevertheless it was a fact that many African party members, including figures like Kotane, Nzula, Marks, Mofutsanyana, were members of the ANC as well as the Party. Forman says

that, because of the Party's attitude towards the ANC at about this time *"there was no question of communists working to build and strengthen the ANC."* (p.80) This was not correct, either before or after the passing of the Native Republic resolution, and in fact in the late 1930s it was Communist Party members in the Transvaal who breathed new life into the ANC at a time when it was beginning to lose impetus.

Forman refers to the Comintern directive to the South African Party to promote the slogan: *"Down with the British and Afrikaner Imperialists. Drive out the Imperialists. Complete and immediate national independence for the people of South Africa. For the voluntary uniting of the African nations in a Federation of Independent Native Republics. The establishment of a workers' and peasants' government. Full guarantees of the rights of all national minorities, for the Coloured, Indian and White toiling masses."* Forman says that in the Party's weakened state after the 1931 expulsions and internal conflicts, and with the national organisations virtually non-existent, this call for the right of self-determination of the "Zulu, Basotho, etc. nations" died stillborn. *"There is no record of its having been discussed in the Party, nor any sign that it made any impact on the national organisations."* (p.81)

Information has come to light since then to show that at a meeting of the Central Committee of the CPSA in December 1931 Molly Wolton proposed *"the substitution of our slogan Federation of Independent Native Republics for the previous slogan of a South African Independent Native Republic."* The slogan of a Federation of Independent Native Republics, she said, was based on the experience of the Soviet Union, which had more tribes than South Africa, and which had shown that only in this way could the Communist Party gain the confidence of the masses. *"We must show them that we have no intention of imposing any one*



tribe, but instead grant them independence and even fight for their independence." Only by working for a Federation of Independent Native Republics could the CP gain "the fullest unity of all native tribes living in South Africa to fight against imperialism."

The new slogan was argued over by the delegates at the Central Committee meeting. Edwin Mofutsanyana and John Gomas supported it, Nchie opposed it. Supporters and opponents cut across colour lines, but eventually the slogan was adopted as official South African Party policy and remained in force until the threat of fascism and war in the late thirties swept the whole Native Republic issue into the background and placed the burning need to form an anti-fascist, anti-war front at the top of the Party agenda.

There is no doubt that the increasing urbanisation and industrialisation of South Africa and the steady drift of Africans to the towns, both as migratory labourers and as more long-term squatters and settlers, has affected the national consciousness of the African people. It was one of the factors that brought the African people together to form the ANC in 1912. The call for unity issued by Dr Seme at the time stressed:

*"The demon of racialism, the aberrations of the Xhosa-Fingo raids, the animosity that exists between Zulus and Tsongas, the Basotho and every other Native, must be buried and forgotten...We are one people."*

Because of the nature of South African colonialism, the national and class struggles were inextricably intertwined. Forman himself points out how after the opening of the diamond fields in 1870 "men were transformed from Zulu, Xhosa or Basotho tribesmen into African workers. Members of a myriad of separate tribes came for the first time to see themselves as a single brotherhood united by their common economic interest." (p.193) But he argued that

*"Theirs was not a working-class consciousness, but an African working-class consciousness" because of the operation of the colour bar.*

National oppression in South Africa, he argued, took a different form from that in Europe, where it was designed to hamper the emergence of a bourgeois class in the oppressed nation. In South Africa the oppressive laws were designed, not so much to shackle the African bourgeoisie, which hardly existed, but to ensure the enslavement of the African worker.

*"For this reason, the African worker, when he fights the pass laws and all other oppressive chains, is fighting directly in his own class interests against the capitalist class; for this reason the national movement is not merely the movement of a bourgeois class attempting to arise, but a movement putting forward urgent class demands of the African proletariat." (p.87)*

Forman was making these comments in the course of his critique of the Programme of the CPSA adopted at its last legal conference in January 1950. Though he described that Programme as the most profound yet produced by the Party, especially in its analysis of the national question, he still felt it tended to "underestimate and underemphasise the revolutionary character of the national struggle." From that time onwards, until the time of his death, there was no public discussion of the national question in terms of Marxist theory by the underground Party.

The SACP only held its first congress in 1953 and the first issue of *The African Communist* appeared only in October 1959, and even then its first two issues did not disclose that it was the official organ of the SACP, a fact announced only in its third issue dated September 1960. It was not until the SACP's Programme *The Road to South African Freedom* appeared after its adoption by the fifth

national congress of the Party in 1962 that the Party's view of the relationship between the struggle for the national democratic revolution and the struggle for socialism was again made available for open discussion.

Forman in his last years complained of the failure of the liberation movement to address the national question, and we have already referred to his individual attempt to get a dis-

cussion going on the need for socialism. Some may find his writings on these questions in the book under review a bit dated, but in fact they are only so because they relate to a context which has greatly changed since he put pen to paper. But all who read this book will find their minds focused again on problems which are too often swept under the carpet and not talked about either because we think, wrongly, that we know all the answers, or because in fact they are still urgent problems

which we are afraid to handle because they are still too hot.

FW De Klerk, speaking at Winburg on October 9, 1992, at a function to mark the town's 150th anniversary, offered what was described in the press as "an apology for the apartheid dream". For too long, said De Klerk, "we clung to a dream of separated nation states when it was already clear that it could not succeed sufficiently". The National Party had strayed and this had led to discrimination. "For this we are sorry. That is why we are working for a new dispensation."

He now champions, he says, "regional government" because this will eliminate the possibility of domination. South Africans had to "build a nation - on the cornerstone of justice for all". (*Cape Times*, 10.10.92).

At the very time of his speaking, bantustan leaders like Buthelezi, Mangope and their counterparts in right-wing Afrikanerdom are stressing their refusal to be part of any one nation,

and insisting on their right to secede from South Africa in the interests of national self-determination for their respective nations. CODESA never really got down to discussing the question of nations or nationhood. The Declaration of Intent adopted by CODESA proclaimed vaguely its intention to "bring about an undivided South Africa under one nation sharing a common citizenship, patriotism and loyalty", without making any attempt to define what it meant by "one nation". Nor has the ques-

"The question of the formation of nations in modern Africa is a difficult one. The main danger in its solution is dogmatism and flatness of thought. African nations are formed in quite new conditions, in conditions of struggle of two social systems and the collapse of colonialism.

There are no grounds to doubt in the scientific trustworthiness of the statements by Lenin and Stalin about a nation, but they must be applied with a creative spirit." (Potekhin, 1959, in a letter to Fred Carneson arising out of a discussion with Forman and others in the pages of *Marxism Today*.

See Forman's book, p.211)

tion of language been sorted out.

Nor are the liberatory movements themselves more specific. In its introductory handbook *Joining the ANC*, the ANC says it is fighting to "bring about a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa. Then we shall build and consolidate one nation of equal citizens." (p.10) But again there is no discussion of what constitutes a nation.

Nor is recent SACP literature any more specific. The 1962 Programme merely states: "The historic task of the Communist Party is the abolition of the capitalist system, and

*through socialist transformation of the economy of the country, to attain a classless Communist society."*

The Manifesto adopted at the 8th Congress of the Party in 1991 is silent on the national question except in so far as it pledges to support the struggle for national liberation and to "take the lead in combating racism, tribalism, regionalism, chauvinism, sexism and all forms of narrow nationalism."

But what about broad nationalism, progressive nationalism? What is it based on, what

does it hope to achieve, and how? How has national consciousness changed, if at all, in the main urban centres where all sections of the black people have been largely proletarianised? Are we ever going to have nations, or ultimately one South African nation?

If Forman's pioneering work on these issues stimulates more of us to ask and answer questions about the contribution which Marxist thinking on the national question can make to our struggle, we may find our difficulties in charting the way forward greatly eased. ♪

## SUBSCRIBE TO THE AFRICAN COMMUNIST & UMSEBENZI

**Subscribe to:**

■ African Communist – R22 per year

■ Umsebenzi – R10 per year

**Prices exclude postage**

**Name** .....

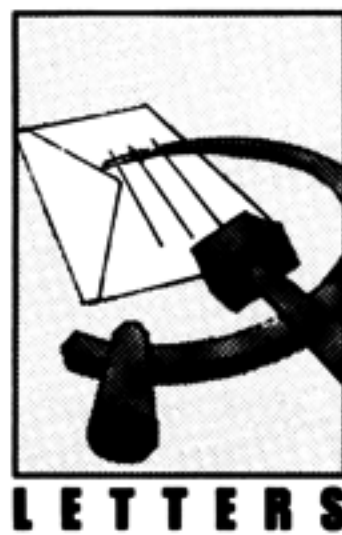
**Address** .....

.....

.....

**Send money  
& details to:  
INKULULEKO  
PUBLICATIONS  
PO Box 1027  
Johannesburg 2000  
or phone Indres Naidoo  
on (011) 836-6867**

# Pik Botha the 'peace dove'



It is clear that the National Party government has a two-pronged strategy in handling the crisis they are facing both in the region as well as here at home. This involves, on the one hand, presenting themselves as the "peace brokers" to their allies, and, on the other, destabilising their opponents. No wonder, then, that Pik Botha has been moving in and out of Angola and holding meetings with Mozambique's President Chissano in Rome.

After the victory at Cuito Cuanavale the apartheid regime realised the might of the liberation movement. The regime was left with no option but to offer a "piece-meal" settlement, believing their own propaganda that SWAPO would lose elections. The forces of progress proved them wrong.

The same has happened in Angola. MPLA has won the elections. In Mozambique, while smiling with President Chissano in Rome, the



apartheid regime is disrupting the people in the rural areas so as to create a base for the forces of reaction. Again, we will prove their propaganda false when FRELIMO wins whatever elections are eventually held.

There is a lesson in all of this for us here at home. We can see Pik's agenda at work in the Natal and

PWV areas. Labelled as "ethnic violence" between Zulus and Xhosas, this lie can only be believed by those who are spreading it. They want to reduce this violence against the majority of our people to ANC/Inkatha clashes.

This is also a calculated move to give the impression that Inkatha is a massive force, so that Buthelezi has an equal say during the transitional phased.

Look at Savimbi - now demanding that he governs a certain part of Angola, even though he was defeated decisively in the elections. — **Sicelo Thuso Dhlomo, Hazeldean, Cape Town**

## Not all Marxists are Communists

Dear comrade,

I wish comrades Blade Nzimande and Mpume Sikhosana could agree with me that Gramsci attempted a non-Leninist revolutionary strategy.

Their assertion that Gramsci was not inconsistent with Marx and Engels does not hold any water in the 21st century.

The *African Communist* must not be restricted by Marx and Engels. Lenin refused to be restricted by Marx. One must not be superstitious, one must have new interpretations, new viewpoints and creativity.

Marx located civil society in the economic base. Civil society according to Gramsci assumes a mere superstructural character (see JM Piote).

Nzimande and Sikhosana argue that either "...Gramsci was not a Marxist or Mayekiso is not." I would prefer to say that, though Marx was a Communist, not all Marxists are Communists; not all Communists are Marxists; and not all who are labelled Communist are Communist.

Yours in the struggle – **Pilani Mpinga, Cala, Transkei**

## Let the debate continue

Revolutionary greetings,

It is refreshing to read articles such as "Civil Society and Democracy" by Blade Nzimande and Mpume Sikhosana (*AC*, 1st quarter 1992).

With the current crisis in the international Communist movement, some comrades have tended to shy away from long-held positions of Marxism-Leninism.

I accept that it is scientific and historically correct to review positions from time to time. Changing positions (and perhaps dropping "old concepts" and the coining of new ones) must

not, however, be a result of unscrupulous shyness, but of principled and correct scientific analyses of historical events.

The debate on socialism and democracy is a healthy one and it must be continued from within and without the Party. Pluralism of opinions and diversity of views is not a sign of weakness. It is an expression of inner-Party democracy. Such healthy debates can only strengthen the Party.

Yours in struggle – **Nell Zumana c/o ANC Mission, Kampala, Uganda.**

# **INKULULEKO PUBLICATIONS**

Distributors of The African Communist

PO Box 1027, Johannesburg 2000. Phone (011) 836-6867

## **SUBSCRIPTION RATES**

- **SOUTH AFRICA**

All enquiries to The South African Communist Party, PO Box 1027, Johannesburg 2000

- **AFRICA, EUROPE AND ASIA**

£12 per year including postage surface mail. £18 per year airmail

- **NORTH AMERICA**

\$24 per year including postage surface mail. \$36 per year airmail

# WHERE TO CONTACT THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY



## **HEAD OFFICE**

2nd Floor, National Acceptance House,  
13 Rissik Street, Johannesburg

Send mail to:

PO Box 1027, Johannesburg 2000

Phone: (011) 836-6425, 836-6867 or  
836-6437/8.

Fax: (011) 836-8366 or 838-2816

## **PWV**

Room 501, 5th Floor, CNA House,  
corner Commissioner & Rissik Streets,  
Johannesburg 2001

Phone: (011) 834-4657 or 834-4665.

Fax: (011) 834-6161

## **WESTERN TRANSVAAL**

Room 8, Second Floor Berman Centre,  
cnr Plein & Voortrekker Street, Klerksdorp

Send mail to: PO Box 11581, Klerksdorp 2570

Phone: (018) 462-1395

Fax: (018) 462-6996

## **EASTERN TRANSVAAL**

Twin City Shop No 83, Van Riebeeck Avenue,  
Middelburg 1050

Phone (0136) 51217/651711

Fax (0136) 51737

## **BLOEMFONTEIN DISTRICT**

PO Box 3686, Bloemfontein

Phone: (051) 30-5136. Fax: (051) 47-5657

## **KIMBERLEY DISTRICT**

Room 29, Potgieters Building, 17 Market St.

Send mail to: PO Box 2444, Kimberley 8300

Phone: (0531) 3-1458

Fax: (0531) 3-1590

## **WESTERN CAPE**

Office 8, Community House, 41 Salt River  
Road, Salt River, Cape Town 7925

Phone: (021) 448-7908. Fax: (021) 47-7167

## **EASTERN CAPE**

Room 22, Co-operative Centre,

50 Pearl Road, Korsten, Port Elizabeth

Phone: (041) 41-5106

Fax: (041) 41-1242

## **TRANSKEI**

22 Victoria Street, Umtata 5100

Phone/Fax: (0471) 311745

## **BORDER**

King's Theatre, Macleans Square,  
King William's Town

Send mail to:

PO Box 2962, King William's Town 5600

Phone (0433) 25357/25374.

Fax: (0433) 22673

## **SOUTHERN NATAL**

4 Bigden House,

505-7 Smith Street,

Durban 4001

Phone (031) 305-6186/7

Fax (031) 304-1822

## **NATAL MIDLANDS**

207 Scotts Theatre Building,

Theatre Lane,

Pietermaritzburg

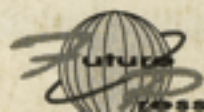
Send mail to:

PO Box 3466, Pietermaritzburg 3200

Phone (0331) 94-5168/9

Fax (0331) 42-1190

Produced by the SACP, PO Box 1027, Johannesburg 2000



SA May Road, Fordsburg, 2092, Johannesburg. PO Box 10249, Johannesburg, 2000.  
Telephone: (011) 834 7034, Pager: (011) 331 9291/10, (011) 331 8001/3, Code: 21275, Fax: (011) 836 6166