



APDUSA VIEWS

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'PIETERMARITZBURG 2000' — A great leap backward!

**An Analysis of the FRAUD
of REGIONAL solutions
to NATIONAL oppression
and exploitation!**

INTRODUCTION

On 17 February 1987, the "Natal Witness" announced dramatically on its front page :

"CONFERENCE TO PLAN ALL-RACE CITY GOVT."

The aim of the Conference was to :

" . . . create a single Metropolitan Council to administer an area including Pietermaritzburg, Sobantu, Imbali, Edendale, Ashdown, Sweetwaters, Hilton and Howick."

The Conference is to be the first public step in "saving" Pietermaritzburg from bankruptcy, to sort out human relations and other burning problems. The overall project is called "Pietermaritzburg 2000." ("PMB 2000").

Below this eye-catching article is another which states that the bus service run by the City Council and which caters for 70 000 workers may be scrapped unless the Government comes to the rescue. Both articles appear on the same page. The one deals with how to save Pietermaritzburg, while the other describes how the City Council (a major partner in "PMB 2000") intends depriving 70 000 black workers of transport to and from their places of work. The contradiction is glaring. But more important, it symbolises the entire "PMB 2000" project. Democracy in words but racism in deed. Why racism? Can anyone seriously believe that the City Council will initiate any move which will result in the scrapping of a major service enjoyed by the Whites?

WHY "PMB 2000"?

According to the midwives of the project, the purpose is to prepare Pietermaritzburg for the year 2000. This preparation is to cover five key issues or problems.

(a) UNEMPLOYMENT

At present there are about 60 000 unemployed in Pietermaritzburg. In just three years' time 235 000 jobs will have to be found. By the time we come to the year 2000 the number of required jobs will increase to 350 000.

(b) HOUSING

There is a shortage of some 6 500 houses in the borough, i.e., excluding the outlying areas. By the year 2000 the demand would increase to 20 000. If the outlying areas are included, the housing requirement would rise to 55 000 to 65 000 units in the year 2000. This means that between now and the year 2000 about 4 500 houses will have to be built each year.

(c) CITY FINANCES

For some years now, the City Council has been spending more than it has been earning. The idea is to increase revenue by increasing payment of rates and other levies and by attracting investment to the City.

(d) QUALITY OF LIFE

The object here is to improve the quality of life of the citizens. This, they intend doing by preserving "the precious heritage of Pietermaritzburg's Victorian character", to develop more open spaces in the form of parks and sportsfields, to administer the sporting facilities and to eliminate the political issues which divide the various sporting bodies.

(e) HUMAN RELATIONS

This seeks to "improve" the relationship between the various groups and has "its roots in the Natal/KwaZulu strategic policy group". The idea is to set up a body whose decisions will, by agreement with the City Council, be binding on the City Council. That in turn means that the majority of the White voters themselves must agree to the arrangement.

HOW DO WE VIEW THESE FIVE ISSUES OR PROBLEMS?

GENERAL

We do not believe that Pietermaritzburg can solve any of the problems ON IT OWN. To be able to solve a problem we have to first understand the cause of that problem. All five problems are not special or peculiar to Pietermaritzburg. These are the problems found in each and every city, town or village in South Africa. The problems are caused by the way our society or country is run or managed. To put it plainly, all these problems are caused by the racial oppression and economic exploitation of the Black people (African, Indian and Coloured). Unless that root cause is removed there can be no real change. More of this later.

We now deal with each of the key issues or problems.

(a) UNEMPLOYMENT

There is unemployment all over the country. The cause is the mismanagement of the economy by the various governments which ruled this country. Unemployment is directly linked with complex factors like the growth rate of the entire economy, overseas investment, inflation, etc. How is a small city like Pietermaritzburg going to solve a problem which is a NATIONAL one? How is Pietermaritzburg going to provide 350 000 jobs in thirteen years? Jobs don't grow on trees. There has to be massive injection of capital into the city. Factories have to be built and machinery to be purchased. Further, people have to be trained to use and work the equipment. That would then mean technical schools, qualified teachers and instructors. The list is endless.

(b) HOUSING

Again, the housing shortage is a national one. In "APDUSA VIEWS" of May 1986, we stated that for the period 1982 to 1992, the country's housing requirements was 1 792 000 housing units. Where will Pietermaritzburg find the money and the trained manpower to build 4 500 houses per year? Only very large amounts of capital from the government and the giant financial institutions can save the day. But this is based on the assumption that the Government and the money-houses are serious about solving the housing shortage. To date neither has shown any inclination in that direction except by way of token housing.

The question, of course, is why HAS NOT the City Council attended to the housing needs of the people? We know only too well how it tried to "solve" the housing problem. For the Whites, there was abundant land, and solid, well-planned houses are built for them. They had the vote and, therefore, the power to throw out any City Council which did not take care of their needs. For the Blacks there is third grade housing in Imbali, Northdale, Eastwood, etc. We have not forgotten how the City Council, taking advantage of the Group Areas Act, deliberately caused shortage of available land; how by means of releasing bits of land at a time, caused the price of land in Indian areas to rocket to incredible heights. No, we have not forgotten!

Of sinister note is the intention of "PMB 2000" to give priority to Indian and Coloured housing. Priority is always at the expense of somebody or something. In this case it cannot be at the expense of the Whites. They have never had a housing problem to speak of. So, it has to be at the expense of the African people. Again, it is the old trick of divide-and-rule. It is a bribe to the Indian and Coloured people to draw them closer to the Whites and away from the African oppressed.

c) HUMAN RELATIONS

Human relations deals with how people who have differences, great or small, or different interests, get along with one another. There can be no human relations if one section does not regard the other as human beings. We do not have to tell our readers much about this. Life in South Africa is the best teacher. Since 1652 there has only been INHUMAN relations. The Whites were led to believe from childhood that they are the HERRENVOLK (the MASTER RACE). The poison of herrenvolkism has been administered at home, in the schools, in churches, in the sportsfield, in places of work, and wherever else the Whites lived and congregated. Babies are nourished on this poison side-by-side with their mother's milk. The process has gone on unceasingly from birth to death. Where a people have been subjected to relentless bombardment of this kind of propaganda, the ideas contained in that propaganda become, according to psychologists, IMPRINTED IN THE BRAIN and extremely difficult to erase.

How do the midwives of "PMB 2000" propose cleaning up that colossal mess? How do they propose improving relations between luxury-ridden Whites and starving Blacks? Why, the ink was not even dry in the "Natal Witness" announcing "PMB 2000" when that same newspaper reported how certain residents of Hilton signed a petition against a Black priest living in their hallowed area.

Whatever the outcome of this disgraceful Hiltonian incident, the fact of the matter is that it is no more than a tiny fraction of the tip of the iceberg.

Herrenvolkism is a many-faceted disease. One of its manifestations is arrogance and insensitivity. The latest example is the decision of the City Council to invite Arch Sellout Rajbansi to open the sports and civic complex at Khan Road, Pietermaritzburg. Has it forgotten that the vast majority of the oppressed people have rejected the Tricameral system and have branded the Rajbansis as traitors? It is the arrogance of Herrenvolkism that makes the City Council ignore the wishes and feelings of the oppressed people.

And these are the very same people who want to improve human relations!! It is our view that the problems of human relations cannot be solved over cups of tea. The problem is a national one and has to be resolved through political struggle which has to be fought and won. Human pride and dignity, the only basis of human relations, has to be attained through struggle. It cannot be given as a gift. It is only when the people have control of the powerhouse of the country, i.e., central parliament, that the process of improving human relations will begin. One of the first acts of that parliament will be to OUTLAW racialism in any shape or form. The full power of that parliament will be used to erase that brain-imprinting. In schools, and in factories, through the press and television and other forms of mass media, the arduous task of making non-racialism and the equitable sharing of wealth acceptable to the entire population as the noblest of ideals, will begin.

(d) CITY FINANCES

Like the finances of the country as a whole, Pietermaritzburg is facing bankruptcy. The income is there. Rates are increasing yearly. Water and electricity charges have shot up. We pay for refuse removal, taxes for dogs, trading licence fees, and lastly, that most lucrative source of easy money – traffic fines. Where does all the money go to? The problem is that we have no control over those who manage these funds. We cannot elect those who manage our funds. They are not accountable to us. What we do know is that there are clear instances of misuse of public funds. Let us remember how a million rand was spent on the Republic Festival in 1981. Yet the Blacks did not celebrate. It was not their festival. It is not their republic. The republic has brought them no joy. Notwithstanding that, the City Council went ahead to "celebrate". Thus public funds were squandered.

Also in the pipe-line are :

- (i) the 150 years celebration of the founding of Pietermaritzburg. Another million rand binge.
- (ii) R11 million for 1987/88 so "that a major urban design project can be ready for the city's 150th anniversary celebrations next year".
- (iii) underground parking in Churchill Square – another R11 million to be funded by the City Council and the business sector.

And so the endless spending on projects which have nothing to do with the basic needs and demands of the people.

The priorities put forward by the official planners are the priorities of the rich and affluent. We even have different priorities. We are not for a moment saying that the City Orchestra or the Art Gallery and such-like things are unimportant. But where is the sense in inviting a celebrated conductor or pianist to play before an essentially White audience at a cost of thousands of rands when there are starving people within earshot of the music? Where is the sense in spending thousands of rands buying an original painting when people don't have a roof over their heads?

We say that first things must come first. People must eat, wear adequate clothing, have a home which keeps out the elements, have access to medical care and so on.

Unless there is an end to the squandering of public funds and unless there is a rational allocation of funds, "PMB 2000" will grow into "PMB 3000" and they will still be discussing "dynamic financial policies".

(e) QUALITY OF LIFE

Once again there is a sharp difference between the oppressed people and the midwives of "PMB 2000" as to the meaning of "Quality of Life". To them quality of life means things like preserving the "precious Victorian heritage of Pietermaritzburg", more open spaces, co-ordinating sporting activities, etc.

Our conception of Quality of Life begins with the satisfaction of basic needs of life, so that there is no undernourishment, no homelessness, no illiteracy and ignorance, no unemployment, no ill-clad people. Then there must be sufficient time for LEISURE. Leisure is

necessary for the creation and enjoyment of beauty, for meaningful group activity like sport, theatre, dancing and so on.

The oppressed don't care two hoots about THEIR "precious Victorian heritage". That heritage is not OUR heritage. Have the Whites forgotten how completely the oppressed people have been barred from enjoying the fruits of civilisation, let alone "Victorian" culture?

The only involvement of the oppressed in that "Victorian" culture was as semi-serfs – labourers, domestic servants, waiters, etc. When their long day was done, they had to get out and find their way to their locations, hovels and shacks. They were not allowed in those buildings in any other capacity. The only building they did occupy for any length of time was the Burger Street Prison where people used to be hanged in the 1940s. Is it the gallows and dungeon they wish to preserve?

Cultural heritage indeed! In truth, the very name Pietermaritzburg is not acceptable to the oppressed. After all it was named in honour of two Voortrekkers, Piet Retief and Gert Maritz. While the oppressors have much to be grateful for to these two men, their names will never be sung in praise when the oppressed hold their Heroes' Day celebrations.

As for more open spaces, we say that there are far too many open spaces and far too few covered spaces for the oppressed. The oppressed want to see more of ceiling than skies. This means that before we can talk of open spaces, we need more houses, halls, proper bus shelters, schools and clinics.

One has merely to look at a map of Pietermaritzburg to see that the heritage THEY wish to preserve, was designed for the pleasure and enjoyment of the Whites. It is not accidental that the best and biggest parks and gardens are located in the White areas. Sobantu Village, the oldest African township in Pietermaritzburg, has right next to it, not a park, but the City Dump, where all Pietermaritzburg throws its rubbish. But that apparently did not satisfy the Herrenvolk. So, the Sewage Farm was also situated next to Sobantu. In Edendale, a large residential area of the oppressed, instead of the fragrance of fresh flowers, there is the awful stench from the Tannery.

Thus it will be seen that when the midwives of "PMB 2000" talk of "Quality of Life" they are talking on a wave length which is poles apart from that used by the oppressed.

WHO ARE THE MID-WIVES OF "PIETERMARITZBURG 2000"?

At this point in our statement it is necessary to identify the persons behind the Project. This will assist us in seeing more clearly the motives of these people and their seriousness in trying to solve the key problems.

For a start, the "brains" and "inspirers" are all Whites. Not that we have anything against the Whites. But it has an all too familiar ring. Whites in this country have always taken it for granted that they know what is best for the Blacks. And we know where THAT has taken us. It is part of the herrenvolk mentality. It is the arrogance. The whole world knows that THEY are the PROBLEM in the country. How does the problem solve itself?

The leading individuals are:

- (a) RODNEY TROTTER** – in charge of Human Relations. He is an attorney who is deeply involved in the Chamber of Commerce. The latter consists mainly of White businessmen and business houses like OK Bazaars.
- (b) ROBIN PATER** – City Finances is left in his hands. He is the Managing Director of Bruply – a large factory.
- (c) RON GLAISTER** – is in charge of Housing. He is a businessman, architectural draughtsman and a member of the Board of Directors of the Natal Building Society.
- (d) BLACKIE SWART** – heads the Unemployment Action Group. He is an executive member of the Chamber of Industries and a senior executive of Pfizer Laboratories which is a multi-national company.
- (e) REG ZAMIR** – in charge of Quality of Life. He is a director of Hulett's Aluminium and the Institute of Personnel Management.

Trotting at the heels of these captains of industry and commerce are the small-time sellouts of the Indian and Coloured Advisory Councils (Ilac and Clac).

So there we have it. A combination of the capitalists and the sellouts falling over one another to "save" the poor and the unemployed, the homeless and the underfed. Yet it is capitalism which in the mad quest for profit, and the sellouts, in their shameless quest for the thirty pieces of silver, who have been largely responsible for the plight of the people. It is they who now want to create a little piece of heaven in Pietermaritzburg in the midst of a hell which is South Africa. It is much too much!!

WHAT IS REALLY BEHIND "PMB 2000"?

We know that factory owners and the rich businessmen care for only one thing and that thing is PROFIT. And we know what the sellouts are after. Even the children in school know that. What then is the real reason behind this sudden care for long suffering humanity? We can think of quite a few, but the most important ones are:

1. The captains of Industry and Commerce want to do everything in their power to prevent Pietermaritzburg from following the road of Port Elizabeth and other areas where White Commerce was brought to its knees by massive and prolonged Consumer boycotts. The factory owners want to ensure that Pietermaritzburg is not hit by industrial strikes. "PMB 2000" is an offer of the olive branch – traditionally an offer of peace and goodwill. It is a gesture of conciliation, a PROMISE to the oppressed and to the working class, especially. The midwives hope to buy friendship just with words and intention, i.e., at a discount. They hope that when they are unable to deliver the goods, the people will remember the GOOD INTENTIONS and will be satisfied with that. They also hope that when they are unable to fulfill their promises they will be able to blame it on the government. "It is not us. Botha has vetoed the plan."
2. Mr Douglas Irvine, a senior lecturer in Political Science at Natal University who is working closely with the midwives, gives us another interesting reason:

“There are other benefits to be considered. The Conference is bound to attract keen attention, and could provide highly favourable publicity for the city. Also, a general perception that human relations here may be relatively better than elsewhere would make the city all the more attractive for commercial and industrial investment.” (our underlining) (“Natal Witness” – 11 February 1987).

Mr Irvine is saying that the investors must be made to think that Pietermaritzburg is a better place to invest than elsewhere. They must be made to believe that the relationship between worker and capitalist here is good; that the oppressor and the oppressed are able to ignore their differences and can be part of the one project. Mr Irvine is not suggesting that the human relations must be first solved before the investors will pour in their money. No, he is saying that there must be only a “general perception” that human relations are good. By “general perception” he means that there must be an **APPEARANCE** of good human relations, that some attempt is being made, that all interest groups are at least talking.

It is like presenting an impressive balance sheet with cooked up figures to lure the investor into parting with his money.

WHO ARE INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THE CONFERENCE?

Everybody. All interest groups. All shades of opinions. All organisations. It means the Nationalist Party, the discredited and dying NRP, the shamelessly flirtatious PFP, Inkatha, organisations of the liberatory movement, trade unions, the Chambers of Industry and Commerce, the sell-outs and the City Council. The wide range of interests and opinions can do only one thing, namely, convert the Conference into a Circus! Can you imagine the UDF talking about human relations with the Nationalist Party, when so many of their members are in detention or on trial? Can you imagine the representatives of the workers discussing the tragic consequences of unemployment with the directors of SARMCOL? Will Mawu officials talk about the quality of life with the very people who are morally responsible for the murders of Comrade Phineas Sibiya and the other Mpopomeni Comrades? Must we compromise and degrade ourselves in this manner?

We say that it is not possible and the whole scheme is one big confidence trick.

“PMB 2000” IS A GREAT LEAP BACKWARD

For the oppressed people, acceptance of “PMB 2000” in any way will amount to a great leap backward. It will take us back some 50 years. In the old days, political leaders were under the trusteeship of the liberals. Their activities were confined to drawing petitions and sending deputations to the ruling class to plead the cause of the oppressed. Those leaders did not know the first thing about scientific politics. They believed that they could change the hearts of our oppressors by eloquence and reason. They were unaware that the suffering of the people was due to a planned and deliberate system of oppression.

It was in the late thirties and early forties that a section of the leadership was able to study, understand and formulate a system of thinking which amounted to a great leap forward in the struggle. This was a great discovery. Some of the basic ideas of that discovery were:

- 1. The disabilities of the oppressed people, (African, Indian and Coloured) in the form of landlessness, poverty, exploitation, lack of education, etc, flowed directly from their lack of the FRANCHISE, i.e., the right to elect and be elected to the law-making bodies of the land.**
- 2. Oppression must be fought everywhere and in totality. Therefore, for liberation to have any meaning, it must be TOTAL.**
- 3. There can be no SEPARATE SOLUTIONS for the African, Indian and Coloured people. There has to be a single solution.**
- 4. The road to that solution must be the road of political struggle for the control of parliament.**
- 5. There can be no SEPARATE SOLUTIONS for the various classes and groups of workers, peasants, intellectuals, teachers, students, women and other sections of the oppressed people.**
- 6. There can be no separate solutions for the Transvaal, Natal, the Cape or the Orange Free State. There has to be a single solution for the whole country.**

It was from this discovery that political organisations drew up programmes of demands like the Ten Point Programme of the Unity Movement, the Freedom Charter of the Congress Movement and the Azanian Manifesto of the National Forum and Black Consciousness Movement.

It will, therefore, be seen that the invitation to participate in the "PMB 2000" Conference is, in fact, an invitation to abandon that great discovery and to return to the pathetic days of the thirties. We are being asked to believe that in the filthy cesspool of an apartheid-ridden society, we will be able to create a POOL OF CRYSTAL-CLEAR WATER to be known as "Greater Pietermaritzburg". We are being asked to devote all our energies and attention to the creation of the POOL and thereby forget about the rest of the country. This is nothing more than an updated version of divide-and-rule. The basis of the division is not going to be "race" but region.

CONCLUSION

The fraud of regional solutions to our oppression is going to be peddled on an increasing scale. We must not be diverted. The struggle for liberation via the political road has been proved to be the correct road. It is the uncompromising stand of the oppressed people on this point that has thrown the ruling class into disarray. Bribe after bribe to sections of the oppressed has been rejected out of hand. The more the oppressed people reject these bribes, the greater the pressure on the ruling class to come up with better bribes.

The very process of bribery on a national scale is proof that we are on the right road. Why else will the ruling class offer these bribes?

To abandon the national struggle and gamble on regional solutions is the sure road to the quicksands of betrayal.