

RESPONSE TO A CRISIS

**JAMES MAKHAYA, a combatant of MK, discusses the
November white referendum**

The history of the Nationalist Party is dock-marked with the continuous manoeuvres to consolidate their power and maintain white supremacy — the rule of the few over the black majority.

Whenever their position is seriously threatened they adopt stern measures. Often, as history shows, resorting to open violence and naked repression. But the racist regime does not use only violence. It also deploys its strategies in every other field, stretching from blatant bribery to political blackmail, from naked military aggression to parliamentary 'reforms'.

The recent referendum on the 'new constitution' is merely another tactic used by the present Botha—Malan clique to dam back the rising waters of change. In 1960 the dreams were being threatened by the growing mass political actions. It was in October, 1960, when he called the whites to choose between forming a white republic and remaining under British rule. Verwoerd succeeded in drawing the whites together to form his racist republic where he and his cronies grabbed more power, enabling them to build their reactionary dream — a racist republic. Exercising their power, the Nationalist Party banned the African National Congress and then proceeded to pass more draconian legislation further oppressing the black majority.

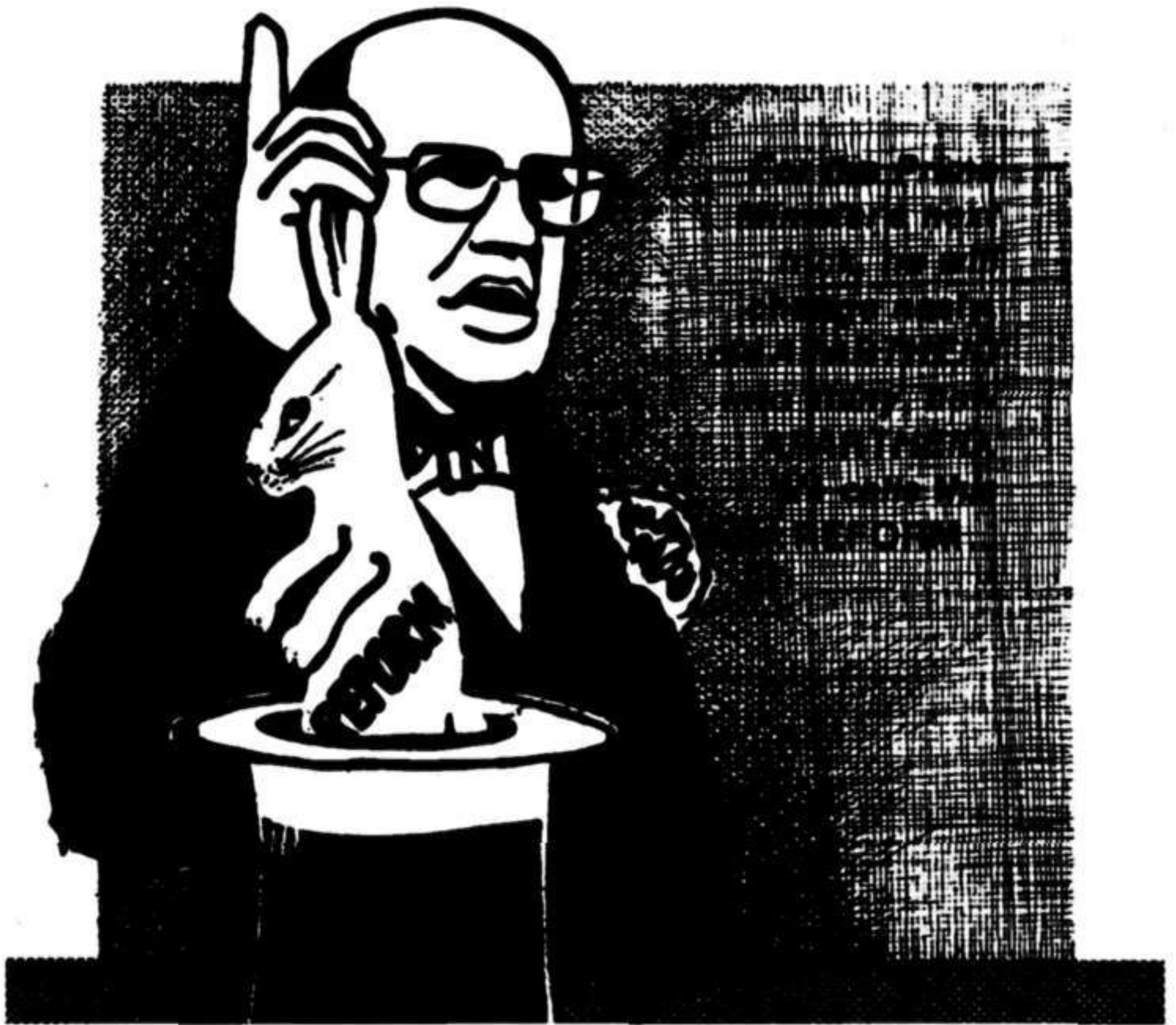
Now, in 1983, Botha and Malan see the storm rising. Apartheid is in a state of crisis — faced with more united mass action, stronger military blows by Umkhonto we Sizwe and disunity in the white community. Thus they have resorted to the referendum tactic once more. This time it is not only to unite the whites, although only the whites will vote, but to bribe the Coloureds and Indians into helping the apartheid regime hold out against inevitable change. The crisis the racist regime is facing cuts deep into the very existence of the minority regime — divisions in parliament are sharpening; white voters are apathetic and disunited; economic pressure due largely to constant industrial unrest has forced the regime to make a loan from the IMF; and massive military spending has helped to deteriorate the situation further. Ironically the apartheid leaders have now turned to the whites requesting their agreement allowing the Coloureds and Indians to join in apartheid rule as more qualified servant-protectors of the monopolists and their profits. Yet at the same time refusing point blank to recognise the right of the black majority to decide their own future.

LANDSLIDE VICTORY?

The final percentage poll at the November referendum was 76 percent, 65 percent voted yes (in favour), 33 percent voted no (against) and a tiny percentage destroyed their vote or in other words spoilt their ballot.

Botha smiled and patted himself on the back. He and his henchmen claimed a landslide victory. But is it such a fantastic favourable turnout?

THE GREAT ILLUSION



First of all 22 percent of the whites did not even bother to vote which is approximately 700,000 voters, i.e. about half the votes cast in favour of the 'new constitution' (1,300,000). These whites who did not vote obviously see nothing better or worse in the 'new constitution'. They were not prepared to vote in favour or against it. Botha's move to draw all the whites together is therefore not a complete victory. Twenty-two percent of his white followers within the white racist republic are not interested in his political gymnastics.

Of those who voted yes there are those who did not want to side with the Conservative Party and other so-called Verkramptes who called for a no vote against the 'new constitution'. Also a large percentage of the yes-voters belong to the monopolist class or its supporters. They feel the 'new constitution' will remove the necessary amount of apartheid so as to allow for more flexibility in production and therefore enable

greater profits and at the same time allow for Coloureds and Indians to be drawn into national service so as to strengthen the already over-worked white security forces. This is an indication of a stronger swing towards welding the monopolists and nationalist capitalists together — not for the betterment of the masses but to make easier the manipulation of money and manpower. Certain features of apartheid have become a spoke in the wheel of developing capitalism. This contradiction, within the system of capitalism itself, must be changed for the maintenance of monopolist power. Not, definitely not in the interest of the masses. For the 'new constitution' does not give the black majority any say in the running of their country. It merely advertises a dazzling bribe for Coloureds and Indians as the price for becoming better servants and protectors of the Botha-Malan regime as well as their blood-sucking national and international cronies.

STATE OF CRISIS

Also to be considered are the 33 percent who voted no. Many of these whites are blatant right-wingers — Nazi-opportunists who are anti-Botha for their own aims. And in no way are they anti-Botha for the upliftment of the African masses. Others, ironically in the same voting group, did so for liberal reasons. Church bodies and liberal organisations, including the Progressive Federal Party, opted to vote against the 'new constitution' as they said it was merely a further strengthening of apartheid.

Botha's landslide victory is not as sure and rock certain as he claims but as we have seen merely reflects the state of crisis in which the racists find themselves today. This state of crisis is not merely brought about by the racists alone but to a greater extent by the struggling black masses who are fighting for their rights, their freedom and their country; by the advancement of the armed struggle by Umkhonto we Sizwe, our people's army; and by the political mobilisation of the masses towards national liberation led by the African National Congress.

The November referendum is a response to a state of crisis. Its results prove that the state of crisis still exists and was not smoothed over by the referendum, nor will it be solved by the planned 'new constitution'.

RESIST WHITE RULE

It does not offer any change, as Botha and his western ideologues claim, but is merely an attempt to maintain power and oppress the African masses further in their own country. The 'new constitution' must not be opposed as something new but as part of the illegal rule of the white minority. We must strengthen our organisations, unite our unions, close ranks and fight for the right to vote for our constitution based on the Freedom Charter to ensure the right to vote for all South Africans in a united South Africa regardless of race, colour, sex or belief.

