

Negotiations and Our Struggle

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Recently the opinions expressed by some leading groups within the racist ruling minority in South Africa about the need to talk with the African National Congress have been given wide coverage by some leading newspapers inside the country. There are those of the former editor of the "Die Beeld", the Nationalist Party mouth-piece in the Transvaal, Vosloo, who was reported by the "Cape Times" saying that the Pretoria racist colonial regime "would one day have to sit at the conference table" with the ANC. According to the "Citizen", Joel Mervis, of the Progressive Federal Party (PFP) is pressing that the talking must be done "now while there is still time." Naturally, these much-publicised opinions are bound to rouse interest in whether our people's vanguard movement, the African National Congress, would go for the idea of negotiations if approached.

To the extent that these opinions and the resultant interest express recognition that the racist policies have already caused great harm both inside South Africa and the whole of Southern Africa and that the ANC is the vital force for the solution of basic problems in our society, they are quite understandable. However, it must immediately be pointed out that the whole question of negotiations, now and in future, does not rest on whether the African National Congress is willing or not. Rather it depends on certain basic issues which we shall attempt to bring out below and which must never be overlooked.

NEGOTIATIONS

Obviously, the first question is the need to have a clear understanding of the process of negotiations. Since the main problem in our society, presently, is the brutal colonial domination of our people by the apartheid regime of the Nationalist Party and their allies, the experience of other countries who have confronted a similar problem will serve us well. For this reason we shall refer to the example of Zimbabwe where the process of negotiations entailed an acceptance

by the British government that:

- (i) it was the colonial power in Zimbabwe;
- (ii) the colonial system is inhuman and must be abolished;
- (iii) Zimbabwe must become an independent country under a government chosen by the people of Zimbabwe.

This was the basis of the negotiations that took place at Lancaster House, London, and were accepted by both parties, Britain and the Patriotic forces in Zimbabwe. Without such a basis there would never have been any negotiations.

RACIST ARROGANCE

True in South Africa, supposing that negotiations were to be held, there would be variations. For example, here the colonial power is internal, that is the Pretoria fascists. Otherwise there would not be much difference. This, the Pretoria racists know too. But could this be what Vosloo and others who share his opinions mean when they speak of Racist South Africa having to talk with the ANC one day? Let us look at facts.

Listed among what Vosloo says would be conditions put on our vanguard organisation, the ANC, as quoted by the "Cape Times" (10.1.81) are the following:-

- (i) that the population of South Africa is 'mixed and unequal'; and
- (ii) that South Africa would be a divided entity and acknowledge the independence of the Transkei, Venda Bophuthatswana and Ciskei.

It takes no analysis to see that this is just foolish racist arrogance and intransigence characteristic of the fascist-colonialist Nationalist Party. This does not merit the attention of our liberation movement.

OPPENHEIMERS

The position of the so-called opposition wing, otherwise co-plotters of, and beneficiaries from, the ghastly crimes perpetrated by the Pretoria rulers on our people, is not different.

Joel Mervis' observation: "recent events have made it clear that the government's general attitude to the political situation is on the wrong foot" shows sense. But he should also have remembered that the Sharpeville Massacre and all racist policies before then meant the same thing. His recognition of

the African National Congress as "the real leaders of the blacks" is very much correct. So too is Frederik van Zyl Slabbert's admission in the racist parliament that "to maintain domination is going to become increasingly difficult and eventually quite impossible." This was in response to racist Premier P.W. Botha's assertion that the policy of Pretoria government remains white domination or white 'self-determination'. But as soon as Piet "Wapen" Botha demanded to know whether Slabbert rejected the idea of sanctions against the apartheid regime the latter replied with a bold "Yes".

This is not surprising. The PFP of Slabbert, Mervis and the rest represents the interests of big business in South Africa like the Anglo-American Cooperation whose Chairman is Harry Oppenheimer. These are people who are closely linked to the imperialist investors and together are bleeding the black workers dry to reap super-profits. That is why they back the Pretoria regime financially, militarily and in many other ways; it safeguards their economic interests. That is why, too, they joined the Afrikaner fascists in gloating over the barbaric murder of our people at Matola by the suicide squads of the racist army.

FEAR OF CHANGE

At the same time the racist policies of their Pretoria watchdogs run contrary to the demands of their capitalist greed in certain respects. For example job reservation prohibits the training and employment of black workers in skilled jobs. The Oppenheimers and their imperialist partners would benefit much from the unpaid labour of skilled black workers who would be hired at lower rates of pay than white workers. But what they fear most is that our oppressed and exploited people will eventually destroy the entire apartheid system and their economic interests will not survive.

Like Harry Oppenheimer's call on the Pretoria regime that it must effect political and social changes within five years to avoid a revolution in South Africa, the urgency in Joel Mervis' call for talks with the ANC "now... while we still have time to manoeuvre" expresses the fear of a real change which our people's liberation struggle will bring about and its consequences on big business. In other words the negotiations wanted by these advocates of 'free enterprise' is an exercise which will lead to such 'changes' as would leave the interests of the exploiters intact. What they want is that we must reduce to naught all the achievements made through our heroic endeavours of the past centuries and decades of bitter struggle against racist colonial domination and imperialist

exploitation. They expect us to betray not only ourselves including hundreds of our outstanding freedom fighters who have laid down their lives for the attainment of our liberation, but also the sacrifices made by the entire peace and freedom-loving people the world over in solidarity with our struggle. Nothing could be more insulting!

R E A S O N S

No doubt the apartheid regime and its 'liberal' partners as well as their imperialist allies know very well that the ANC will never be part to any shady exercise as referred to above. They know, too, that the ANC and our entire fighting people it is leading will never settle for anything short of our demands which are clearly stated in our Freedom Charter. But what are these calls for talks with the ANC all about? This is what we must find out. The Pretoria racists continue to terrorise our peoples in South Africa and Namibia to prolong its colonial domination over us and the brutal exploitation of our labour. The racists can still commit large scale acts of aggression against Southern African states to spread its domination over the whole region to strengthen its position internally and in its capacity as the policeman of imperialism. In spite of all this it is clear that our people are making great advances in our freedom struggle as can be seen in the unchallenged prestige of the African National Congress which includes our people's adherence to the Freedom Charter and growing support for armed struggle. All this spells doom for apartheid.

So, in addition to brute force on which they rely mostly, the racists are now adding the carrot of talks to their propaganda arsenal for countering our liberatory efforts. It is a well-known fact that like all oppressors and exploiters, the racists and their imperialist allies always distort the people's just struggle for liberation by equating it with bloodshed and portraying the vanguard organisation of our people as a force that blindly sticks to violent forms of struggle. To achieve this they spread lies around saying they want to talk to the representatives of the oppressed while laying humiliating conditions which they know will be unacceptable. They would then scream, saying the people's representatives are not prepared for a peaceful settlement. This is the dirty trick which the then Smith regime of Salisbury and the Pretoria regime of Vorster and Botha used against the peoples of Zimbabwe and Namibia in the recent past in an effort to isolate the patriotic forces.

This can also be seen as a ploy aimed at enticing willing elements from the ranks of the oppressed, collaborators, whom the racists would use to implement a Muzorewa or Turnhalle-type of settlement in order to disunite our people and delay our victory. These are the elements which Vosloo referred to as those who would be acting under the 'guiding hand of Nationalist policy'.

Furthermore, the enemy is toying with the idea of negotiations with the purpose of injecting a dangerous illusion amongst our people who are now correctly seeing revolutionary armed struggle as the only means of achieving their liberation, that it is still possible to negotiate with the racists. The effect of this sinister move would be the creation of hesitation among our fighting people.

Certainly all these dirty manoeuvres, like the bantustan system which our people are rejecting and as they have failed in Namibia and Zimbabwe before, will fail even before they are actually carried out. Our people are now moving on a clearly charted path to achieve their liberation by all means at their disposal.

Finally, it must be noted that the possibility of negotiations in the future cannot be ruled out in South Africa. We have seen how Smith had to swallow his "majority rule over my dead body" empty slogan and went to Lancaster House to hold talks with the Patriotic forces. However, this will not come about as a result of change of heart by the Pretoria marauders. This will happen only when our people led by the ANC and our people's army, Umkhonto we Sizwe, have hit the enemy on all fronts so hard that he really cries for talks on terms dictated to him by our entire fighting people represented by their leading organisation, the African National Congress.

What is more, negotiations must never be isolated from the mass offensive of the broad masses of the people, armed actions included, which produce a situation where meaningful negotiations become possible. This also means that negotiations are not and can never be an alternative to the people's revolutionary armed struggle.

Therefore, we must continue to raise our struggle to greater heights, confronting the Pretoria fascist regime on all fronts with an aim of ultimately crushing it and build a new South Africa as we stated at the Congress of the People in 1955, where the Freedom Charter was adopted. This means that we must be vigilant against all the enemy's attempts to divert our attention from our main goal and to weaken our unity.

FORWARD TO A PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENT!