

PRETORIASTROIKA: WHO BENEFITS?

"It's not easy for us to sit down to negotiate. The problem is many of the youngsters are not really interested in the negotiations. In fact they've become a little bit angry. That is why I say that this chap De Klerk is moving too fast and can create problems for us. We want to educate our people. We want to have time to discuss this matter with them".

The speaker is Walter Sisulu, one of the ANC Seven who were released on October 15, 1989, in an interview reported by the Weekly Mail newspaper on January 26, 1990. His words assumed the ring of prophecy when De Klerk decisively terminated the protracted shadow-boxing between Pretoria and the ANC at 11h00 on Friday February 2, 1990.

Pre-Conditions

De Klerk went as far as meeting most of the "pre-conditions for negotiations" contained in the Harare Declaration: he legalized over 30 formerly banned and restricted organisations including the PAC, the ANC, the BPC and the SACP; he all but lifted the state of emergency and suspended all executions pending revision of the laws on capital punishment. In short, De Klerk turned the political clock back to immediately prior to the Sharpeville Massacre of March 21, 1960.

At 16h15 on Sunday February 11, 1990 de Klerk released Rolihlahla Nelson Mandela, a mortal whose stature had been made to

assume superhuman dimensions. He thus adroitly maintained the political initiative in Pretoria's hands and made a firm bid to divert the struggle for power and liberation into the politics of negotiation under settler colonial overlordship.

The result was predictable: liberation movements (conspicuously the ANC) were caught flat-footed and began making contradictory statements on a daily basis. The Nation was gripped by Mandelamania and many euphorically exclaimed that inkuleleko had come!

On "Network", a news programme run by South African Television, Nelson Mandela stated that negotiations meant compromise not on peripheral issues but on fundamental issues (February 15, 1990). The message was clear: there were no non-negotiables, not even our ownership of Azania!

The mantra of "negotiation pre-conditions", recited so religiously and at the cost of so many Black lives, sounded completely hollow as the pre-conditions were being met. As ANC Secretary-General Alfred Nzo announced on February 16, 1990 that the phase of "talks about talks" with Pretoria had begun (when, in fact, this process had begun as long ago as at least 1984), the "struggle" for a negotiated settlement stood exposed for what it is; capitulation, a sellout of our hopes, dreams and aspirations.

Nzo had already confessed that the ANC's position at any nego-

tiating table was a hopeless one at the ANC National Executive Committee meeting in Lusaka on 18 January 1990: "We must admit that we do not have the capacity within our country in fact to intensify the armed struggle in any meaningful way." So much for Mandela's "threat" in his letter to P W Botha: "The renunciation of violence by either the government or the ANC should not be a precondition but the result of negotiations." (circa January 1989)

Gorbachevism

Responding to the crowns falling in Eastern European state capitalist regimes- which lost the ANC and the SACP its major supporters- the SACP made its revisionism unmistakable in a draft position paper entitled "Has Socialism Failed?" by Joe Slovo. This pathetic paper repeats the tired position that the Eastern European revolts were revolts against Stalinism, (a position supported by F W de Klerk) and touts capitalism in the name of "thorough-going democratic socialism."

The Eastern European governments which have been toppled or reformed wore all fiercely anti-Stalinist and were all capitalist regimes. The crisis in Eastern Europe is really the crisis of Brezhnevism.

The so-called "demise of communism" is really revisionism becoming more openly bourgeois. "Democratic socialism" is a calculatingly eclectic rubric aimed at negating revolution and justifying

a "safe and peaceful" slide into counterfeit socialism- in reality, into capitalism. The SACP wants new faces, new forces in power along with the old ones but no revolutionary overturning of all existing relations and conditions. They want a socialism, even a Communism, with no mass revolutionary upheaval, no overturning of the bourgeoisie by the Proletariat, of the old by the new.

The SACP's "two-stage theory of revolution" has been supplanted by Gorbachev's "new thinking": no revolution at all! As Gorbachevism successfully disorients liberation movements, let us remember that the Rand Revolt of 1984 and its aftermath saw the Black masses establishing their **own** mass movement and self-governing structures. The masses have given such an earthly quality to the idea of liberation that established political organisations have found themselves inadequate to the task of providing proper revolutionary leadership.

The East European revolts were **fine** for the Black Proletariat in Azania: we could only be elated at the magnificent rebellion against a stifling life under state-capitalism calling itself Socialism/Communism. We know that Gorbachev's "reforms" were designed to defuse the revolt, and we sincerely hope that the East European masses will complete the task of totally uprooting the oppressive and exploitative relations of the state-capitalist world.

The pull of Gorbachevism has thus far been successful in diverting the forces opposing state capitalism with disastrous consequences: witness how Solidamosc has assumed responsibility for the very Polish state it has been in revolt against for over three decades, how the Hungarian Federation of Young Demo-

crats (FIDESX) puts its stress on "parliamentary democracy predicated on a market economy", how the National Salvation government in Rumania tries to conceal its complicity in the atrocities of the pro-Western Ceausescu regime and how the Rumanian masses had again to storm the corridors of power on February 18, 1990, how East Germans who realized that the new Krenz regime was protecting and reorganizing Stasis (the State-Security Police) spontaneously took over the Stasis headquarters on January 15, 1990 and how the Czechoslovakian Communist Party's First Secretary Vasil Moko-vita boasts that the Party stands for "a multi-party system, democracy, free enterprise and progressive human values."

At the same time, Gorbachevism has fueled and intensified struggles for national self-determination dating back to the days of Tsarism- notably in the Baltic states and Soviet Central Asia- creating a very real prospect of the break-up of the USSR. With every passing day, Soviet social-imperialism sheds more of its "socialist" disguise and the nomenklatura reveal themselves to be no more than an upbeat version of the old, decrepit Russian Tsars.

Even as "Perestroika I" has failed and "Perestroika II" began with the surrender of the Soviet Communist Party's monopoly of power on February 5, 1990 it is manifest that Gorbachevism represents a worldwide retrogression whose most avid disciple is the fascist F W de Klerk with his policy of pretoriastroika.

The Road Ahead

As the Azanian masses create liberation with their own calloused hands, they must not shrink from venturing into untrodden paths.

They must not look for crutches simply because a new epigone is using the word "democracy" to mean more than one party and another is using the word "unity" to mean absorption into the ANC. We have seen how rapidly the world can change in the space of a month and how quickly power can shatter.

Pretoriastroika is an attempt to give the ghoul of apartheid-capitalism a human face: it is of benefit only to the ruling class and its imperialist backers. It has already succeeded in co-opting significant sections of the broad liberation movement who are terminally infected by the bug of capitulation.

We take inspiration from Joseph Stalin's words: "This cannot go on any longer! And only revolution can put a stop to it!" in his manifesto to the masses (October 1905). We believe that there is a revolutionary current with support and initiative among broad sections of the Azanian masses- in other words, that we have a revolutionary people.

It is in this context that the following response by a Weekly Mail reader to Sisulu's sentiments (quoted above) are remarkable apposite:

"Murphy Morobe is under the illusion that his organisation is responsible for 'generating' the 'mobilisation' which now needs to be converted into 'education' and is afraid that the UDF may not be able to control the Frankenstein which it has created. He should be worrying about something else."

"Even if the Frankenstein is controlled for now, it may spring back to life if material 'reality' does not change. And it may turn out to be as much trouble for an ANC government as it is for the present one, education or not."

- Weekly Mail February 9, 1990