

UMSEBENZI



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Back to Basics

FIGHT FOR PEOPLE'S POWER!

"It is time for the SACP and for working class formations within the ANC-led alliance to reassert themselves with confidence and optimism."

This was the message delivered to the FAWU national congress by Charles Nqakula, SACP general secretary.

"Left and working class forces WITHIN the ANC-led alliance must transform the present mood of confusion among the rank and file of the broad mass movement.

"Instead of feeding the sense of confusion with more complaints and moaning, with talk about breaking the alliance – let us point the way forward. It is the historic responsibility of working class formations to galvanise our National Liberation Movement."

Comrade Charles highlighted four tasks:

- ⊕ We must claim our victories, but without exaggeration;
- ⊕ We must go back to the basics of our national liberation struggle, but without dogmatism;
- ⊕ We must reaffirm that socialism is the future, while understanding how to build for socialism in the



present;

- ⊕ We must develop a concrete and embracing programme for reconstruction that enables the ANC to win elections, but which carries us way beyond April 27 1994.

FORWARD TO PEOPLE'S POWER

For 19 days, between May 17 and June 5, Eastern Transvaal communities maintained a consumer boycott of white shops.

According to the SA Chamber of Business the boycott knocked sales by 70-80%.

The actions quickly brought regional and local authorities and white interest groups to the negotiating table.

The boycott was called in the wake of the assassination of comrade Chris Hani. The main issues of the boycott were:

- to register the anger of hundreds of thousands of people in the region at cde Chris's slaying;
- an early announcement of an election date and a speedy transition to democracy;
- local and regional demands.

In other words, the boycott combined national political demands with local grassroots issues. This combination had a lot to do with the success of the campaign.

Careful preparations

Another reason for the success was the careful preparations made in the weeks before.

Based on previous experience, it was decided to do more than just exempt all black businesses from the boycott. Every effort was made to actively involve African and Indian business people in the campaign. Meetings were arranged with black businesses, including taxi associations.

Senior members of the tripartite alliance were deployed throughout the 16 zones of the region to mobilise for the boycott.

Consumer Boycott Committees (CBCs) were established. They consisted of representatives from the alliance and mass democratic structures, and from black business and taxi associations. The tasks of the CBCs were, amongst other things, to identify exempted outlets that could provide:

- basic commodities, daily necessities (bread, eggs, medicines, etc.);
- supplies to black businesses, taverns and spaza shops;

MASS DRIVEN NEGOTIATIONS:

Lessons from E.Tvl Consumer Boycott

- supplies of vegetables and fruit to hawkers;

- petrol, servicing and spare parts for taxis and for the community in general.

The CBCs also had the responsibility of monitoring the boycott.

Engaging the white community

Originally, the alliance had planned to target the businesses of extreme right-wingers in the white community. The object was to isolate the most reactionary forces. However, we found we lacked information about the white community. We didn't know who was who.

This, in itself, reflects the situation in the Eastern Transvaal, where baasskap has remained deeply entrenched. There has been virtually no engagement, no talking between the townships and the white communities.

The boycott has begun to reverse this. Right from the start, the boycott organisers kept their doors open. They were always prepared to engage business-people and local authorities in discussion. By the second week the white business community was calling for meetings in dozens of localities.

The boycott organisers took the decision to engage organised business, the provincial authorities and the security forces, on a regional basis.

On June 5, the ANC/SACP/COSATU alliance met with SACOB, the Sakekamer, the Afrikaans Handelsinstituut, Eskom, the Transvaal Provincial Administration, the Regional Services Council, and the SADF and SAP.

Breakthrough

The meeting was a major breakthrough. A joint statement agreed on:

- joint action to ensure a speedy

transition to democracy;

- security forces and government to take firm action against security force members and others interfering with free political activity;

- a joint tripartite alliance/SADF delegation to verify the de-electrification of the SA/Mozambique border fence. An investigation on humane border controls is also to be established;

- the phasing out of the inhumane bucket system, still prevalent in a number of townships in the region. This system is to be replaced with flushing toilets. Joint alliance and RSC subcommittees will be established to oversee this process;

- reactivating steps to establish a Regional Economic Forum.

It has also been agreed that review meetings will occur every 60 days to assess progress in all these areas.

June 16

The agreements were soon put to the test. On June 16 two comrades were tragically shot by the security forces in Piet Retief during a peaceful June 16 march. The community has demanded the replacement of the local SAP station commander, Pretorius. For the first time in the region the SAP has been forced to agree to this demand.

Lessons of the boycott

When we speak of a "mass driven negotiations process", we tend to think only of national campaigns focussed on the multi-party negotiations at the World Trade Centre. The Eastern Transvaal consumer boycott shows how it is possible (and necessary) to combine national demands with winnable local demands.

Negotiations and transformation are not only national, top-down processes.

THE PEOPLE MUST OWN THE TRANSITION PROCESS!

Back to Basics

➔ From page 1

(Charles Nqakula's speech)

Let us claim our victories

The present world and national situation means that many important popular victories are likely to be partial, not outright. The De Klerk regime also has a deliberate strategy to hide our own victories from us.

For three years before the release of comrade Mandela, the regime was spreading stories about his imminent release. They hoped that, when it eventually happened, it would be an anticlimax. They even hoped they would look like the liberators.

This was a deliberate strategy carefully deployed over three years. In this case the strategy largely failed. We successfully claimed our victory.

But the regime's strategy has not been abandoned. On Friday July 2 we won an historic victory. April 27 1994 was agreed upon as the date for the first ever one-person one-vote elections in our country. But this major victory seemed like an anticlimax. We have been expecting this for months.

BUT IT IS A REAL VICTORY and we must claim it.

It is not just an election date, but also a date within a process that we, as the ANC-led tripartite, championed from the beginning. It is an election for a Constituent Assembly. This is OUR scenario – not the CP's or the IFP's, not the PAC's, not originally the DP's and certainly not the NP's.

But, although it is a real victory, we must not exaggerate. It is still largely on paper, a free and fair election is still far from guaranteed. An election will mark an important STEP in the national democratic revolution, but not its completion.

Which is why we say we must also get:

Back to Basics

In the last three years we have had to

adjust tactically to a new national and global situation. In countries where the Left and the Liberation Movements have failed to engage with a negotiated transition, they have tended to be side-lined, leaving the field wide open to neo-liberal forces of all kinds.

But our necessary tactical adaptations must in no way confuse us about our strategic objectives and our basic principles.

The Freedom Charter remains absolutely relevant. We are still engaged in a national democratic revolution. We are still struggling against a colonialism of a special type. Constitutionally we will begin to abolish CST in the coming years, but CST is not just a constitution – it is a system, a structure and a terrible legacy. A long hard struggle lies ahead.

And in this struggle the leading role of the working class (asserted at the ANC's Morogoro conference in 1969) remains absolutely critical.

Socialism

The collapse in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union has had a profound impact on our broad mass movement – not just on communists. The SACP and other working class formations have a special responsibility to lead our people out of the resulting confusion and loss of direction.

The collapse takes nothing away from our ongoing criticism of capitalism. Capitalism remains profoundly corrupt, irrational and oppressive. Socialism is the future. But we need to be building positions of strength for socialism right now in the present.

Which means, amongst other things...

A Reconstruction Programme

In 1955 the Left made an indelible mark on our broad liberation movement. With the Freedom Charter a broad vision was laid down. The Left achieved this, not as



"It is time for the SACP and working class formations within the ANC-led alliance to reassert themselves with confidence and optimism."

Charles Nqakula

a caucus or a cabal manipulating the ANC from within.

The Freedom Charter was won as the liberation movement's programme, because the Charter emerged from unleashing a popular process, a mass based programme – the collection of hundreds of thousands of basic demands from ordinary working people throughout our country.

In 1993 we must begin to achieve a similar result.

We need to elaborate a concrete programme for reconstructing our society. This programme must emerge from mass struggles, mass formations, mass involvement. This reconstruction programme is not a replacement for the Freedom Charter. It must be its concretisation.

Reconstruction is not socialism. But we must turn it into the path to socialism.

Socialism is the future... let us begin to build it, right now in the present.

SOCIALISM IS THE FUTURE – BUILD IT NOW!

UMSEBENZI STUDY SERIES

NEGOTIATED TRANSITIONS

Part One:

The South African transition in a world context



The present negotiated transition in South Africa is not an exception. Similar transitions from undemocratic systems towards greater democracy have happened, and are happening in many parts of the world. Negotiated transitions of this kind have become very common since the beginning of the 1980s.

In particular, the South African transition resembles transitions in a number of other third world capitalist countries. These are countries like El Salvador, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Argentine, and the Philippines. Like South Africa, these are countries in which a strong popular movement has been challenging an authoritarian regime.

There are also many other transition processes from which we can learn. These include Namibia and Zimbabwe; Portugal, Spain and Greece; the negotiated settlement and elections in Nicaragua; the stalled transition in South Korea; and the processes under way in eastern Europe.

As South African revolutionaries we need to study all of these transition processes. The South African ruling bloc and especially its imperialist advisors certainly have made a

close study of all these transitions. Our opponents have elaborate theories about transitions. They have well developed think-tanks, funding agencies, and all kinds of institutes for "democracy". They convene countless local and international seminars and workshops.

We need to understand the other side's agenda and theories (see Part 2), and we need to develop our own understanding of these transitions.

The first question we need to ask is:

Why are these transitions happening?

Each country has its own character and dynamics. But the large number of transitions that have been happening world-wide in the last ten years point to some general, underlying causes.

These include:

1. A switch in imperialist strategies.

The political defeat in Vietnam of US imperialism in the early 1970s, led to a major strategic re-think in Washington. The despatch of a huge US army to Vietnam in the 1960s had failed to defeat the Vietnamese national liberation movement. Increasing numbers of US conscripts were dying. A mass US and international

anti-war movement developed. In 1973 the US conceded defeat and retreated.

But US imperialism did not abandon its plans for world domination. The new strategy involved "low intensity warfare". In other words, the extensive use of local dictators and of local proxy forces. In Vietnam, they called this the "Vietnamisation" of the war.

The policy involved massive political and military support for many local strong-men to serve imperialist interests in their regions – the Shah of Iran in the Middle East; the Vorster and PW Botha apartheid regime in southern Africa; Somoza in Central America; Marcos in the Philippines; Thieu in Indochina; Pinochet and other bloody generals in the southern cone of South America, etc.

These local imperialist policemen meant that Washington did not have to despatch hundreds of thousands of its own conscripts to die in distant countries. It also meant that the terrible bloodshed inflicted by these regimes could be presented as "local rivalry", "ethnic conflict", or "black on black" violence.

But these local regimes themselves proved unstable. They became the

BUILD A PEOPLE'S WORLD ORDER ...



targets of growing mass and guerrilla movements. Many (like Thieu in Vietnam, the Shah in Iran, and Somoza in Nicaragua) collapsed in the face of popular revolutions.

So, without abandoning "low intensity warfare", the imperialists made a further strategic shift. They began encouraging transitions to "democracy" in third world countries. They progressively withdrew full support from their own dictators, or pressured them to "reform", while building pro-imperialist "centrist" political alliances. The strategy was to blunt the edge of national liberation movements and mass struggles.

2. Changes in the world capitalist system

These changes in imperialist politico-military strategy were also closely connected to major changes in the world capitalist system. From the early 1970s the capitalist system became increasingly global and transnational in character.

Imperialist control has been exerted increasingly through financial mechanisms imposed by bodies like the IMF (the International Monetary Fund), the World Bank, and GATT (General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs).

"Democratisation" in the 3rd World has often been motivated by the belief in imperialist circles that elected centrist (or even left) governments would have more legitimacy in imposing the bitter pill of structural adjustment programmes on their own people. These programmes involve such things as dropping local trade barriers to imperialist operations,

privatising local industries, devaluing the local currency, and cutting back government spending on social programmes. All are designed to provide greater profitability and greater access for the multinationals.

3. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War

In the 1980s, economic stagnation in the Soviet Union and its increasing reliance on grain imports from the US, underlined that the Soviet bloc was losing the Cold War – economically. This process and the eventual collapse in 1989-90 strengthened the case of those imperialist strategists advocating less reliance on regional dictatorships to shore up imperialism.

The timing of the February 2 1990 move by FW De Klerk was not accidental. In fact, he specifically referred to the collapse in eastern Europe as a reason "allowing" for "democratisation" here in South Africa.

4. Human rights movements

Economic developments in the advanced capitalist countries in the 1960s led to the rapid growth of new social strata (white collar workers, a massive tertiary student population, new professions). These socio-economic developments coincided with the Vietnam war and growing internal structural problems. New social movements (anti-war, black power, youth and student, feminist, greens, new trade unions, and progressive religious movements) exploded onto the stage in 1968.

It was partly out of these strata and movements that the world Anti-Apartheid movement grew. These new social movements (at first largely centred in the 1st world) began to have an important and generally progressive impact on imperialist international policy.

The rapid advances made in the last decades in communications technology have helped foster simi-



lar movements around the world. This technology has also dramatically increased the possibilities for building global solidarity. The tragedy of a Boipatong is seen simultaneously in Johannesburg, London and Washington.

Contradictory Impact

It is out of the contradictory impact of these, and other factors that the worldwide trend to negotiated transitions to democracy needs to be understood.

In principle, any degree of democratisation is an improvement for the working people. The SACP has never taken the ultra-left view that "the worse that things are, the better it is for the revolution."

But it is also clear that the imperialists are fostering transitions to democracy with their own agenda. For Communist Parties and other left and progressive forces, the challenge is to engage with these transitions to defeat the other side's agenda. Where left and democratic forces have failed to engage adequately with these processes, they have been outmanoeuvred by imperialism and its local allies. Our task is to ensure an unstoppable movement towards far-reaching democracy.

• In future issues we will look, amongst other things, more closely at: *Neo-liberal theories of transition; Developing Revolutionary Alternatives; Social Movements and Transition; The Armed Forces and Transition; The Bureaucracy and Transition; Elections and Transition; and The Economy in Transitions.*

The SACP and Elections:

Time for Communists to organise for a massive ANC Alliance victory

The SACP will bring 1 million extra, working class votes for the ANC ticket. This was one of the resolutions taken at our party's National Election Workshop held at the beginning of July.

But why is the SACP not contesting the April 27, 1994 elections separately? Why are we joining a single ANC-led list?

There are at least three good strategic reasons, and one good tactical reason for our decision.

Strategically:

⊕ These are not ordinary elections. They are national liberation elections. There are two basic sides in these elections. On one side, are those forces attempting to hijack democratic change in the direction of neo-apartheid. On the other, there must be a unified and massive national liberation movement. Let us keep this perspective. No confusions, please.

⊕ The membership and constituency of the SACP overlaps to a very large extent with the ANC. The SACP is a party of the working class and for socialism within the ANC-led alliance. We have a unique and historical alliance. This is grounded on the realities of South Africa – a special kind of colonialism, but on the terrain of a fairly developed capitalist economy. Our's is a national liberation struggle in which the working class is both the leading class force and the largest class. A national lib-

eration movement and a workers' party in alliance is the reality in our country... and it makes sense.

⊕ Programmatically, there is no substantial difference in short and medium term perspectives between the ANC and SACP. For decades, the SACP strategically has been committed to a national democratic revolution as the most direct path to socialism in SA. These coming elections are a step in the national democratic process.

Tactically:

⊕ These will be the first ever elections for the overwhelming majority of our people. This applies especially to the ANC/SACP constituency. Symbols, voting procedures and choices need, from our point of view, to be absolutely clearcut, as simple as possible. A separate SACP ticket could confuse many would-be ANC-alliance voters.

SACP priorities

The SACP will, then, be participat-

ing on the ANC list. But we will not be participating passively! As a party, as communists we will set an example of dedication and activism in order to ensure:

- ⊕ a resounding election victory for the ANC list.
- ⊕ an ANC list that emerges from a democratic nominations process.
- ⊕ an ANC list that reflects a strong working class and gender awareness.
- ⊕ an election campaign that does not side-line social and economic struggles of all kinds.
- ⊕ an election platform rooted in a mass-based reconstruction programme.

We will fight these elections, and we will build a powerful ANC and a powerful SACP in the process.

SEKUNJALO, KE NAKO, NOW IS THE TIME FOR COMMUNISTS TO ORGANISE FOR A MASSIVE ANC ALLIANCE ELECTION VICTORY!

NOW IS THE TIME!

ANC



SEKUNJALO! KE NAKO! NOU IS DIE TYD!

FORWARD TO A DECISIVE ANC-ALLIANCE VICTORY!

FW's man on the SABC board

On June 24th Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert was finally forced to step down as interim chairperson of the SABC board. The board itself was not prepared to accept him.

Slabbert said he was resigning "not reluctantly, but happily". The facts, however, suggest something else.

When the hearings for a new board began in early May, the name of Van Zyl Slabbert for chairperson began to float in the English-language press. Someone in the background was running a campaign to promote him for the post.

The independent selection panel, came to a different conclusion. They selected Professor Njabulo Ndebele as chairperson, with Van Zyl Slabbert as vice chairperson.

On May 26 the selection panel was summonsed to a meeting with FW De Klerk. According to one source, De Klerk physically tossed the list back at the panel, dismissing it as "inadequate".

The whole point of the selection panel was to ensure that the process of selecting a new SABC board "should be independent of the government of the day." De Klerk's intervention completely infringed the spirit of this.

De Klerk objected to Ndebele on the grounds that he was "not bilingual". As it happens, Ndebele speaks Sotho, Tswana, Zulu, Xhosa, English and a little Afrikaans. He also reads French and German fluently. For De Klerk, "bilingual" means English and Afrikaans.

The panel met Minister Danie Schutte the next day, and on May 28 they had another meeting with De Klerk.

After being brow-beaten for three days, the selection panel took a vote with four voting to reverse their decision on Ndebele, and three voting to keep Ndebele.

On May 31 the selection panel announced its new board, with Slabbert as chair, and Ndebele reduced to an ordinary member.

How did Slabbert react to all of this? His first reaction was irritation. He had not been personally informed be-

fore the news became public. He said he would not accept the chair, he could not afford the embarrassment of being seen as "De Klerk's man".

But Slabbert quickly changed his mind. After a meeting with De Klerk he agreed to "chair the board's first meeting". This saved De Klerk from a damaging political crisis.

Emerging from the first board meeting on June 3, Slabbert changed his mind again. He said the board should be "left alone", "give us a break". In a thinly disguised reference to the ANC and the Campaign for Independent Broadcasting, Slabbert talked about political "prima donnas" and people who "wanted to throw their toys out of their cots". Slabbert announced that he was now going to serve as chair "until the end of July."

In the press conference, Slabbert announced that he had received unanimous support from the board. This is not



true. The 11 right-wingers on the board prevailed on a not unreluctant Slabbert to stay on as chair.

Meanwhile, during his brief career as chair, Slabbert held a series of meetings with senior SABC executives, reassuring them that they would not lose their jobs. Just before his removal as chair, Slabbert told the Vrye Weekblad that: "The SABC is a large and complex organisation... Anybody who thinks that you can... 'radically renew' it... is living in a dreamworld..."

HOW SLABBERT PLOTTED WITH PW TO DEFEAT THE ANC

Slabbert's meeting with FW in which the President "persuaded" him to stay as Chair of the SABC board, was not the first meeting he has had with an apartheid President.

In February 1986 Slabbert, then Leader of the Opposition, abruptly left parliament. He claimed that the final straw that led to this decision was a meeting with President PW Botha in November 1985. Slabbert claimed this meeting had been very depressing.

PW Botha responded by releasing a 42 page document, the transcript of the meeting (which he had secretly taped!). Unfortunately for Slabbert, the transcript presents a very different picture of the meeting.

Here are extracts from the PW Botha-Slabbert meeting:

Slabbert: "President, I think, I honestly think, and this I say with my experience of the thing, I still think you can

pull the teeth of the whole ANC story, but this is not a matter I can discuss with the Cabinet Committee. This affects the security situation. This is perhaps why I mentioned the name of Dr [Neil] Barnard [then NIS head].

PW Botha: "You know I have given you the right to speak to them... you, doctor, can make a positive contribution."

Slabbert: "I would gladly like to do that..."

PW Botha: "We will look at it on merit. I promise you that, and it will reach me."

Slabbert: "I would be very thankful."

Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert has often attacked us for believing that democratic transformation should be mass-driven. Slabbert advocates "elite bargaining" instead. Thanks to PW's tapes, we have an interesting glimpse into what "elite bargaining" is.

FREE THE AIRWAVES!

CUBA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

South African Solidarity for Cuba

Cuba has recently been struck by a strange disease which can cause blindness and paralysis. Over 26,000 Cubans have been affected in the past months.

The disease is completely unknown internationally. Cuban and world health specialists are urgently working to find a cure.

Despite having one of the best health systems in the world, Cuba is battling to cope with this epidemic. A daily intake of vitamin tablets helps to stop the disease.

The Cubans have now managed to arrest the spread of the disease by supplying free to each Cuban citizen one vitamin capsule daily. This means nearly 11 millions vitamin capsules each day! No country in the world has the capacity to produce this many vitamin tablets daily.

The need is urgent and the Cuban government has called on the international community for assistance.

Here in South Africa, a broad-based Cuban Solidarity Campaign

has already been formed. Funds for vitamins and other humanitarian aid is being collected.

☛ In Port Elizabeth the Lennon Pharmaceutical Company has donated 1,2 million multivitamin tablets to the campaign.

☛ The National Progressive Primary Health Care Network has set up "Soap Boxes for Cuba" to collect bath soap and detergents.

☛ In Carletonville mineworkers passed around tins and collected hundreds of rands for Cuba.

☛ At the June 16th rally in Khayelitsha and in SACP branch meetings all over the country sums of money are being collected to buy vitamins.

No sum is too small.

VIVA CUBA! VIVA INTERNATIONALISM!



End United States blockade of Cuba

For over thirty years, the United States has imposed a total economic blockade on Cuba. Trade, finance, tourism and even humanitarian assistance has been blocked.

The US trades and maintains relations with undemocratic and brutal regimes around the world. The US only belatedly and half-heartedly imposed sanctions against the apartheid regime in South Africa.

But the US for three decades has continued to punish the Cuban people for daring to choose their own democratic path.

Stop this hypocrisy! End the blockade!

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Question: Which Third World country:

- a. Has eliminated poverty, homelessness and illiteracy?
- b. Has raised its citizens' life expectancy since 1959 from 55 to 75 years?
- c. Has sent more doctors overseas than the World Health Organisation?
- d. Spends 56% of its budget on

education, health, housing and social security?
e. Defeated the racist SADF at Cuito Cuanavale?

Answers:

- a. Socialist Cuba
- b. Socialist Cuba
- c. Socialist Cuba
- d. Socialist Cuba
- e. Socialist Cuba

VIVA CUBA! VIVA!