

## THESES ON THE CURRENT SITUATION

## INTRODUCTION:

1. Major changes have taken place within South Africa, affecting the manner in which the liberation movement should conduct the struggle. There is no doubt that the actions of the people and the resultant confusion within the ruling bloc has placed the question of political power high on the agenda. These developments demand of the ANC and the rest of the broad liberation movement tenacity to principle and strategy, and yet versatility in tactics.

2. The main internal factors characterising the qualitative change in the balance of forces are:

- \* the unconditional release of political leaders and the de facto unbanning of the ANC;
- \* the reclamation of legal space by the mass democratic movement;
- \* the ANC and MDM emerging as the political centre around which all other genuine anti-apartheid forces are coalescing;
- \* growing flickers of protest and defiance among black soldiers and police; and
- \* uncertainty and confusion within the ruling class on how to handle the crisis.

On the international plane, the positions of the movement - in particular on the issue of negotiations - have won acceptance among a wide spectrum of forces. Even the erstwhile allies of the regime such as the US administration advance conditions close to that of the ANC. Those who seek to block further actions against the regime base their arguments not on whether the demands of the movement should be met, but on whether they are being met and how.

3. Though out of balance and confused, the regime seeks to turn its weaknesses into a source of strength: to launch a counter-attack that would let it off the hook of the all-round mass offensive and international isolation. In this regard, it seeks to undercut the revolutionary content of the democratic struggle and reduce it to protest at a pace determined by the regime and with the purpose of realising the programme of the Nationalist Party: a modified apartheid based on continued white privilege.

## STATE OF THE GOVERNING CLIQUE AND ITS STRATEGIES:

4. The governing clique should be seen as one in transition. De Klerk wants to place the NP, parliament and the cabinet at the centre of all decision-making processes. Already, he has restructured the central bodies of power, relegating the State Security Council to a secondary status and bringing NIS directly

under the president's office. However, he is still far from consolidating his position as the president of the whole apartheid establishment. The restructuring has certainly infuriated the military-security establishment. If Mahan's recent statement in Benoni, with the usual emphasis on security is anything to go by, there is disagreement even on the steps taken re: political prisoners and the demonstrations.

5. The strategic objective of the regime is clear: Whatever the path to reach it, the platform of the Nationalist Party and De Klerk remains that of reforming apartheid to the extent that it might be "acceptable" to the South African people and the international community and, more important, to the extent that it protects the privileges of the white community. To this end, they desperately seek "credible" collaborators, especially from the ranks of the ANC (in particular the leadership based inside the country) and the MDM. Each step the regime takes, be it the release of political prisoners or the gradual lifting of the State of Emergency, is thus presented as a great beginning justifying the de-escalation of struggle and international isolation. The democratic movement, if so co-opted, would be trapped in endless "talks about talks" and negotiations.

6. While the co-option of sections of the ANC and the MDM is their ideal, the regime has definitely set its target on harnessing the "middle ground" behind its programme. All sectors of big business, the DP, sections of such forces as the FFF, relatively patriotic functionaries of the bantustan machineries, black business, sections of the church and other such forces are their main target. De Klerk hopes to build around him a "coalition for reformed apartheid" and chip the peripheries of the anti-apartheid coalition at its edges. He would thus isolate the ANC and the MDM as "the unreasonable lot" to be dealt with with a heavy hand. It should be noted that repression continues, ~~though on a lower scale~~. The targets have been selected with deliberate planning: detention of strategically placed leaders of the MDM, the assassination of trade union leaders and systematic harassment of the trade union movement.

7. High on the agenda of the regime's programme is to set the economy on a better footing. This entails addressing the structural aspects of the crisis: ensure the inflow of capital and loans; stabilise the state of foreign exchange reserves; generate more rapid growth; etc. Privatisation - for which a special ministry has been created, expanding the export market especially into Africa and a concerted drive against the working class are some of the major strategies the regime pursues. Contradictory as they might be, in the context of the reaction some of these measures will provoke among the working people, the regime sees them as crucial to the normalisation of the internal political situation as well as allowing it to pursue its political programme without "undue external pressures".

## CHARACTER AND IMPLICATIONS OF OUR STRATEGIC GAINS:

(NB: The release of the senior political leaders constitutes one of the major gains from the all-round struggles waged over the years. However, it must be seen within the context of the objective/ subjective situation regarding the state of the ruling class and the broad liberation movement, as well as the concrete milieu into which they have been released.)

8. Through the Campaign of Mass Defiance, the ANC in particular and the MDM in general have asserted themselves as the most active, militant and clear-sighted leader of the anti-apartheid forces. The campaign has pushed the regime back on a number of fronts. By "legalising" mass protest and democratic organisation themselves, the masses have broken out of the strategic blockages which were created by the State of Emergency. People's confidence has been reinvigorated, and the broad liberation movement is once more publicly asserting itself as the alternative power. This is taking place not only in the major cities but in such rural areas such as Oudtshoorn, Pietersburg, Umtata, Lady Frere and Hazyview. Backed by broadly-based mass action, the democratic movement has opened up vast possibilities to strengthen its structures and solidify links among various constituents.

9. ~~The regime's retreat on the issue of demonstrations~~ has unleashed the energies of the people to act as a united force. One strategic gain from these demonstrations is the array of forces which have been harnessed, including most of the senior religious leaders, white city councillors, some black councillors; individuals from big business ~~and a solitary police reservist~~. The moral appeal of the MDM has extended far beyond the forces envisaged for the Anti-apartheid Coalition. But another and more strategic factor in the demonstrations lies in their location: the white city centres. When they do take place, whole cities come to a virtual standstill, factories close and "white South Africa" is reclaimed by the people. In this context, mass struggles have somewhat broken out of the confinement to the ghettos which was ~~one of the main weaknesses of the 1984-'86 period.~~

10. But this strategic potential needs to be exploited to the full, with a clear purpose of moving towards even more effective actions. How do we ensure that these demonstrations become a purposeful part of the all-round struggle? Certainly, to hurl petrol bombs at police and wage street battles during such demonstrations would appear "very militant" but would in fact be provocative and counter-revolutionary. Yet ways have to be found to ensure a skilful combination of such demonstrations with carefully-planned assaults on strategic targets by the vanguard movement. The choice

of targets and of the actual moment of injecting the armed element would have to be carefully planned and executed. In this way, the enemy will be more effectively weakened, and the character of our all-round offensive not lost. Further, the conduct of these city demonstrations should not supplant revolutionary organisation and actions in the townships. The task of turning them into mass revolutionary bases must be put before the people. And the long- or medium-term perspective of achieving the same in the city centres, especially at the workplaces must be placed on the agenda.

11. The flickers of protest, defiance and attempts at neutralising the enemy armed forces might be too low to warrant any qualitative leaps in our thinking. But it is precisely our strategic perspective that should guide the manner in which we note even the most isolated developments, exaggerate them and seek to develop them to higher forms. We refer in particular to:

- \* the stand taken by a Coloured lieutenant in the police force and the support he commands among his colleagues;
- \* the positions advanced lately by the leader of the military administration in the Transkei bantustan;
- \* the identification by a police reservist with the democratic march in Johannesburg;
- \* a deliberate drive by demonstrators, at least in one instance in Cape Town, to offer "flowers of peace" to soldiers; and
- \* the growing number of objectors, some of whom are trained and experienced soldiers; and
- \* the fact that within the DP are some former senior officers of the SADF, identifying with its anti-apartheid positions.

The potential to neutralise and win over significant sections of the enemy armed forces, especially the blacks, is there. The issue is that it must be more intensively pursued, not only by the underground structures, but also in open mass campaigns of the MDM.

12. The central role played by the working class in the planning and execution of the mass defiance campaign constitutes an important advance for the whole struggle. On the one hand, workers have taken the lead in ensuring unity in action among unions of various political persuasions and thus achieve more massive actions and a more united approach on the issue of the LRAA. On the other hand, a deliberate decision has been taken by COSATU to strengthen the MDM at all levels, thus ensuring a more structured and democratic relationship among the forces constituting the core of the anti-apartheid forces. The leading role played by the NUM in this regard needs to be noted, especially taking into account the strategic nature of the mining industry to the apartheid economy.

#### PLACE AND ROLE OF THE RELEASED LEADERS:

13. It is in this context that the role of the released leaders

should be examined. The political situation is pregnant with many possibilities. Yet the leadership to this offensive suffers from many weaknesses:

\* The MDM leadership either suffers from a lack of revolutionary perspective or is hamstrung by its "legal status". Therefore, its planning and the manner in which the campaigns are conducted does not move beyond random identification of a campaign, selection of dates and relying more on the moral appeal arising out of the actions undertaken.

\* In reality the task of giving a deliberate revolutionary interpretation to on-going developments and directing them strategically belongs to the underground. But, save for the guidance from HQ and attempts by one or two collectives within the country, we do not have an underground leadership of this calibre. But it should also be asserted that the revolutionary perspective does not belong solely to the underground: all levels of democratic leadership should have it, and apply it to their concrete station.

\* The over-centralisation of the MDM, influenced to a large measure by state repression, has done it a lot of harm under present conditions of heightened activity. Consultations with the regions and the affiliates (of the UDF in particular) is described as "almost non-existent". At the same time, some regional and especially local structures are weak; do not exercise initiative; and are not involved in the planning and execution of campaigns. The national leadership relates to "the masses" directly, through the media.

14. The released leaders and the whole movement senior leadership collective within the country should be central in the rectification of these organisational weaknesses and in giving strategic guidance to the popular offensive. The principle regarding their involvement should be understood as follows:

\* Their release should not have the result of restricting "normal activities of struggle and/or relieve the regime from on-going mass actions demanding real changes towards the elimination of apartheid...

\* "...It should not be our initiative to reduce [internal and external] pressure.

\* "Whatever tactical steps need to be taken, we must ensure that the struggle continues unabated." (Ref NWC Working Document)

What concrete role should they play?

15. The de facto unbanning of the ANC: The fact that no restrictions have been placed on the released leaders is a major victory for the democratic forces. They should project the name of the movement, articulate movement positions on all issues and act as an "open" movement collective within the country. We should however guard against the regime's strategy to create "an internal ANC" which would, at best, be distinct from the "external ANC" and,

at worst, be at loggerheads with the latter. Therefore, we should project the movement leadership as a single undivided collective; ensure regular consultation with the released comrades; and intensify the campaign for the actual unbanning of the movement. The "unban campaign" could climax in huge rallies on December 16th/January 8th. We should also not expose movement members who are in the underground or working in other anti-apartheid formations. The released leaders should also advise the movement on matters relating to the development of the u/g and armed struggle, without themselves having to be involved.

16. Guidance to the MDM: Their experience will definitely be invaluable to the MDM. Structurally, they are UDF patrons and can therefore relate to it without having to be seen as an exclusive preserve of those who are in touch with them. Meetings should be arranged with the leadership, lower structures and affiliates of COSATU and the UDF. While operating as a collective, account will also have to be taken of the inclination and various qualities of the leaders, to ensure division of labour where necessary. Their briefing should be from as wide a spectrum of MDM forces as possible so as not to get trapped in the perspective of one "grouping" or another.

17. Unity of patriotic forces: They should be projected as leaders of the people of SA and become the rallying point to unite all patriotic forces. In addition to the forces that are to take part in the CDF, they should also appeal to those who are still in doubt but are taking some tentative steps: eg., a wide variety of independent churches and other religious institutions, sports bodies, bantustan leaders of the Holomisa and Ramodike type, etc. The aim should be to forge an even broader front of patriotic forces and further isolate the regime.

18. The enemy armed forces: Related to the above should be a deliberate drive by the leaders to appeal to soldiers and police - especially the black contingent - to join the patriotic forces. Their prestige and seniority has the potential to create a thousand more Rockmans. Their guidance on this question should be infused into the MDM.

19. Around them should also emerge a powerful movement for the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners. This should form an important part of the defiance campaign and the marches: to include marches from courts to the centres where leaders and activists are imprisoned. We should also project leaders of the MDM who are in detention/have been sentenced eg., the Delmas group and Valli, Mafolo. This will further expose the duplicity of the De Klerk regime. Political prisoners and detainees who lived in various localities should be popularised in action to demand their release.

SCENARIOS - THE ISSUE OF "DUAL POWER":

20. The strategic developments unfolding under our very eyes do so in a situation in which the revolutionary movement is not strong enough to seize power. Yet the issue of political power has been placed high on the agenda. Whatever the regime does, there is no turning back. Two possible scenarios emerge from the current conjecture:

\* The regime could feel let off the hook as a result of the rescheduling of a significant part of the debt and the wishy-washy positions emerging from the Commonwealth Conference. Mass struggles within the country will certainly intensify, and the de facto "legal" operation of the ANC and the MDM will worsen the regime's crisis. It could then resort to repression: restriction of the leaders, detentions, etc, etc. In the instance, if the present advantages are correctly utilised, mass action will move to even more intense confrontation. This will also impact on the developments cited above regarding the enemy armed forces.

\* The regime could continue on the present course of allowing marches, legal operation of the released leaders, gradual lifting of the State of Emergency and release of NM in the new year, etc. This would gradually set the stage for negotiations, in a situation in which the regime hopes to draw out major compromises from a democratic movement not yet strong enough to call the shots. If and when such negotiations collapse, it would resort to repression.

21. Both possibilities cry out for a rapid strengthening of our forces at all levels. But, given the amount of time at our disposal, we cannot achieve such strength as would enable us to seize power. Therefore we should, as an immediate strategic task, gear our forces - "legal and illegal, peaceful and non-peaceful" - for the capturing of a strategic beach-head in the context of political power. We should aim for the immediate achievement of "dual power". Dual power is not an absolutely necessary stage in any struggle. It arises under specific given circumstances, most often not willed by the revolutionary forces. In this instance, it would be an expression of a qualitatively new balance of forces, allowing for a more rapid movement - which could take one or two years - towards the actual seizure of power (or genuine negotiations).

At the same time, the two possible scenarios will require different emphases with regard to the actual forms of struggle and their combination under given circumstances. As such, one of the greatest challenges facing the movement in the immediate future will be the ability to rapidly move from one emphasis to another with the changing situation, without disorganising our forces.

22. How then will such "dual power" express itself? How do we build our forces? By answering the latter question we will hopefully clarify the first:

- \* Intensifying the campaign of national defiance and using the space captured to more rapidly strengthen grassroots structures of the MDM and ensure proper leadership and co-ordination.
- \* Building and asserting the open profile of the movement while creating, with deliberate speed, leadership cores in various strategic centres. The forces for such are there both within and outside the country: the question is how to carefully and yet boldly utilise them.
- \* Giving more purposeful direction to the marches: to include far-reaching demands and actions such as the occupation and immobilisation of city administrative offices, factories, etc. This to include spreading the marches to rural areas and putting on the agenda the land question and possibilities of occupation of farms, demanding referenda against "independence", etc.
- \* Introducing a revolutionary content to organisation in the townships (and factories) by immobilising and destroying township councils, creating organs of peoples' power, and even now generating a "movement for people's safety" to create a people's militia.
- \* Taking extra-ordinary measures (eg., formation of an Operations Directorate manned by senior and experienced NEC leaders to supervise MHQ work) to intensify the armed struggle with deliberate planning and a clear purpose in keeping with the current situation.
- \* Engaging in a massive campaign to win over/neutralise enemy armed forces using all layers of the broad liberation movement, including the released leaders and the MDM.
- \* Broadening the spectrum of forces rallying around the ANC (and the MDM), including the white city mayors and councillors, relatively patriotic bantustan functionaries, etc, etc.

In other words, we should see to the emergence of a broad patriotic movement, led by the ANC and backed by the politico-military and organisational force necessary to defend itself and move more rapidly to the seizure/transfer of power.

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