

PERSPECTIVE ON THE CURRENT SITUATION IN SOUTH AFRICA.

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(Prepared for Lde Glava, USSR Embassy).

Current politics in South Africa is dominated by a series of strategic initiatives and counter initiatives by the various actors in the area. The bourgeois press and particularly the western media and governments have focussed almost exclusively on the meaning and content of Pres. F.W. de Klerk's 2 February address. Attention is focussed on the regime's actions, neglecting their inaction (particularly in regard to right-wing militancy) and not addressing directly the issue of causation. Furthermore, one important change that has occurred concerns the distribution of information. The Media Regulations, though lifted in part, still have an unconscious effect on many newspapers who continue to report in the 'soft' tone of the Emergency period. Also, the mainline press has resorted to the old strategy of support for regime initiatives ("Give de Klerk a chance" philosophy that we heard when Vorster, Botha came to power respectively). At the same time ANC in particular is attacked and accused of making excuses for not making concessions. A latent racism still pervades many areas of information, sources which still tend to see developments from the perspective of the ruling classes in our society.

With the above introductory comments in mind, the following report is structured around five areas of discussion:

1. Why did February 2 happen?
2. What has February 2 done?
3. What patterns have emerged in developments on the ground?
4. What strategic moves do the major actors appear to be adopting?
5. What prospects does the present delicate period hold?

## 1. Why did February 2 happen?

Like most policy speeches, de Klerk's statement was both a response to pressures as it is an attempt to forestall a further deterioration in the position of the white minority. As Massimo Vella Genovese tells us, governments initiate political reforms of the social system to prevent the revolutionary transformation of society that implies a change in the class relations in society. This perspective is contained in de Klerk's speech itself, and I intend to deal with the speech first, before moving on to a fuller discussion of the background. I suggest that a careful appreciation of the reasons for the moves will assist in planning the correct response to them.

First of all, de Klerk accepts that a particular form of negotiations is the only way out of South Africa's vortex of "violence, tension and conflict." That form is of the national convention type as distinct from a constituent assembly form, but is negotiations nonetheless. He separates the processes of negotiation on the one hand and the processes of governing, thereby rejecting the notion of the need for an interim government. De Klerk also repeats the sentiments and definitions of his version of a post-apartheid society contained in the NP Five Year Plan, with one important word change: dropping open references to white group or national rights, to talk of minority rights in their own right. De Klerk isolates four major reasons for the changes he suggests, but in many ways these are overshadowed in his talk by two others. The four are: (i) events in socialist Europe and USSR have had a spin-off effect on the liberation movements. De Klerk does not spell this out but it is clear that he means a two-fold effect: a) a withdrawal of material and economic support, and (b) challenging the dominant ideology of transformation employed by the resistance. In other words, the regime identifies that the time is ripe to challenge the national

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liberation movement at a time when both its material support and political programme are under attack at the global as opposed simply to a local level. Second, De Klerk argues that the internal organisations are now much weaker thanks to the effects of the State of Emergency. Thus, it is easier to negotiate with a weakened foe internally. This latter point therefore ties in with the collapse in his terms of the international front. Third, he responds to the declared positions of the movement on negotiations, initiated by the ANC in the statements of 9 October 1987 and, of course, the Harare Declaration and relevant resolution of the Conference for a Democratic Future. He does so, however, in terms meant to appease his white following as if the statements about negotiation are the result of the first two factors, i.e. collapsing support and pressure on ANC etc. Finally, he places his faith in the SAP and SADF to defend state initiatives. Thus the current retention of the State of Emergency is both necessary and unnecessary. It is unnecessary in that the 1986 amendments to the Police and Internal Security Acts after the initial declaration of the Emergency broadened the powers of the security forces to cope with "civil unrest." The Emergency is still necessary for the regime for essentially two reasons: (i) it provides indemnity for the security forces if they act against people, except where this action can be said to be mala fides, or "in bad faith" which is more difficult in law than showing they act bona fides. Incidentally, it seems to me that the call for an end to the Emergency from the democratic forces addresses this issue of indemnity directly. To remove the indemnity is to disarm the state's forces quite dramatically and represents a positive move towards a bilateral ceasefire in terms of the Harare Declaration). (ii) The state is busy changing the face of policing in South Africa, away from the obvious brutality of the securocrat era towards a more liberal definition of the police serving the state rather than directing it. It needs

The Emergency to act as a cover to that process, thus keeping the strategic elements of that shift out of the public eye as much as possible. Again, it appears that the Horns, Themstra and other Commissions of Enquiry are part of this process. De Klerk wishes to restrain the actions of shadowy sections of the forces, not to stop them. But at the same time, he wishes to distance the new state from the old by isolating individuals and groups rather than accepting state responsibility for their actions. He cannot extend the terms of the Horns Commission to beyond South Africa's borders because (a) it will affect directly the image of South Africa as a terrorist state in international law, and (b) it would affect the realm of P. W. Botha's efforts at an international breakthrough.

The forces De Klerk outlined are influenced by another two. A large portion of his speech was devoted to the economy, and the need to restructure sections of it. Here he devoted attention not only to international capital investment, so sorely affected by sanctions and the recent successes of "people's sanctions" as a factor in the domestic politics of UK, USA, FRG, etc, but also to the domestic unproductive nature of an economy suffering from its internal diseases of unemployment, poor education, technological backlog, etc. He is concerned overwhelmingly with economic stagnation and a crisis that feeds into a political crisis. Here the main chorus is privatisation and deregulation. Although both are policies practised quite widely in the international arena, it is clear that with the ~~new~~ success of separating the political transformation process from economic aspects of government in Namibia, the regime wants to rely on developing a strong, monopolised private sector to offset the prospects of a major redistribution of wealth and to break the power of trade unions by forcing them to confront capital alone with the state as their supporter. In effect, De Klerk has dropped the old policy of preventing economic changes through political repression. He now confronts economic issues with what he

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believes are economic solutions. In the process, he has forged the strongest alliance between state and capital since the 1930s. In this sense then, De Klerk can be classified as the first 'modern' leader of a reformist state.

The second ~~one~~ issue that provides a major impulse that he himself identifies is the notion of social conflict. For the first time a National Party leader has accepted that the violence is contained within and affects the whole of society. Prior to this, the orthodox view was to ~~accept~~ believe that the violence was abnormal and imported. Whilst an advance in itself, De Klerk's definition is still limited. For him, peace must be established first, and then discussions of a constitutional nature can take place. In other words, he believes that the two can be separated. The democratic movement, on the other hand, adopts the view that peace can only follow the creation of a new South Africa.

De Klerk's address does mark a watershed in South African politics: but whilst it is quite dramatic for white politics, it falls short of expectations from democratic quarters. This is not to say that it has created major challenges to both. But just as the results of the speech are complex, the causes that prompted the changes are not as straightforward or of benefit to the regime as De Klerk's speech suggests.

Fairly general agreement has been reached in academic circles at home regarding the broad impulses behind the changes. I have written elsewhere at length about the developments and thus present here only the broad thrust of our assessment.

First of all, it is necessary to outline in brief the conjuncture between domestic, regional and international issues. The impending collapse of domestic strategy based on the State of Emergency and the theories of counter-insurgency/counter-revolutionary warfare ~~was~~ coincided and was influenced by the collapse of Pretoria's grand strategy of

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of destabilisation, evidenced in the conclusion of the peace settlement in south western Africa and the consequent independence of Namibia. All of these developments took place within the context of the new international relations associated with the success of Gorbachev's foreign policy. The new international relations in particular placed pressures on both sides of the South African conflict: just as pressure developed on ANC from material and ideological directions, so too did the "communist threat" evaporate to expose the Total Onslaught mythology of the Botha era as well as give rise to the spectre of an economic desert if violence continued as investment began to look towards the economies of central and eastern Europe.

Domestic developments in the 1987-1990 period fall into at least two major categories. First of all, particularly from 1988 onwards the harsh effects of the State of Emergency that had smashed organisation as well as the organs of people's power on <sup>the</sup> ground, were slowly being overcome. In the aftermath of the launch of SAYCO, South African Youth Congress, in Cape Town at the height of repression, organisational methods were adapted to the new conditions. For more so than at the earlier period 1985-87, the legal and after February 1988 the restricted organisation came to a better appreciation of the combination of underground methods and legal, open activity. Naturally, the development was haphazard at first, but by the end of 1988 and into the spaces caused by the regime's moral defeat by the hunger strikers, the new methods of organisation began to roll back the State of Emergency itself. Furthermore, strike activity by the organised trade union movement under COSATU increased, affecting strategic areas of the economy like mines, railways and the post office. The schools crisis deepened. The activities of MK, particularly around the October municipal and local government elections in October 1988 also increased to make, finally, 1988 the year of the largest armed assault on the regime in the short history of the armed struggle.

The death squads, vigilantes and the state's war in the Frontline States and Europe was vicious and all-encompassing. However, it failed in

its major strategic purpose: the elimination of the liberation movement. Hence, during the period after 1987, the state's policy moved from simply being a counter-insurgency effort to one geared to counter-revolution, based at first on WHAM, winning the hearts and minds, to one based on the notion of political concession and the multi-racial state.

A second factor at the domestic level that was influenced by developments already outlined was the disintegration of apartheid legitimacy in the white constituency. This was mirrored both in the increasing alienation between sectors of capital and the liberal bourgeoisie, the desertion of NP ranks by Afrikaner intellectuals and youth based in the intelligentsia, as well as the disaffection within white working class ranks at the reorganisation of the labour process (particularly in the mines) that challenged their privileges, and a growing insecurity within the civil service, a sector that employs one in three whites in South Africa. Previously, financial boosts were used to contain this reactionary movement but that became increasingly difficult in the context of a generalised fiscal crisis brought about by intervention in Angola, the occupation of Namibia, the massive security apparatus and rampant corruption in government and the townships. The collapse in apartheid legitimacy was also most evident in the disarray within the National Party itself.

The liberal/intellectual constituency was disturbed out of its normal comfort by a number of factors: 1) the prospects of economic collapse; 2) the general insecurity of the developing conflict coincident with the greater exposure of strategic sectors of that constituency (after 1985 and increasingly after 1987) to the ANC in particular; 3) a generally liberal fear of the determination to resist by the country's majority as expressed in the escalation of the armed struggle within the context of overt state militarisation of South African society. One example, small as it is, of the break with apartheid style politics was expressed in the participation of many sectors of this constituency in workshops/discussions on the ANC Constitutional Guidelines, organised *intra alia* by IASA. One of the major unspoken themes underlying those discussions was the acceptability

of the need to bypass government in planning the future. For a constituency brought up in the traditions of western philosophy and politics that emphasises the legitimacy and authority of the state and government, that was a major advance. Out of this group in particular arose the phenomenon that gave rise to the "constitution factory", taking the idea of the Bill of Rights and other such issues and making them their own. It is significant that throughout the debates in these circles, although reference is made to ANC positions, the initiative for change along negotiation and constitutional lines is claimed by liberals as their own. This last factor perhaps explains the shift after February 2 to attacking the ANC more openly once again. The attack is an assertion of liberal independence from political movements whilst at the same time is an expression of their demand to lead the process of social change.

The collapse of apartheid legitimacy from the right-wing or reactionary side of the white political spectrum is two-fold. At one level the conservatives desire a return to Verwoerdian definitions of citizenship, state and nation. This is represented mainly by the KP of Andries Treurnicht. A more avowedly fascist movement, espousing a socialist economics geared towards white <sup>worker</sup> interests and based purely on racist dogma, is evident in the ANB of Terre'blanche as well as the large number of recently formed white militia and vigilante groupings. At present, they still identify their main enemy as the ANC alliance (and have acted accordingly) but it is not improbable that they could extend their attacks on the representatives of the regime who are now classified as sell-outs. Nevertheless — I deal with these groups further under section 3 — pressure from the right, located in strategic areas of white society like the security forces, places a complex pressure on de Klerk: at one level, he is forced to go slowly because of the threat of destabilisation; whilst at another he is forced to work faster to overtake them, but this involves a workable alliance with democratic forces who are in the position to withhold support from him if he refuses to concede points.



The crisis in the NP itself revealed itself only slightly in the fight between PW Botha and Fw de Klerk. De Klerk had a reputation for being more conservative but much cleverer than PW Botha. De Klerk's foresight lay in his ability to assess the defeat of SADF in Angola and the failure of State Security Council (of which he was not a member) policy internally. To safeguard privilege, to become the ~~winning~~ effective power rather than the ruling party, he realised a change of strategy was necessary. But the conflict within the NP also relates to the electoral results of the elections in September 1989 in which many NP MPs ~~have~~ are in danger of losing their seats and the NP losing its majority in Parliament unless the NP changes style and builds a new politics based on the co-option and absorption of the centre ground rather than falling back on the KP.

Regional impulses have tended to be concentrated in the peace settlement of south western Africa. It is also true, though, that increased British (particularly) and US interest in Mozambique and Zimbabwe (to a lesser extent) through investment and military support against MNR (and then SA), reduced Pretoria's "freedom of destabilisation" in the region after 1988. The major breakthrough, though, was the development in Angola/Namibia that saw a reversal of South Africa's policy; and for that matter the USA. The build-up to the complex political, economic and military crises associated with Cuito-Cuanavale and Caluque and the results of these battles propelled SADF into supporting the politicians in saving what they could of a smashed regional policy. Namibia's independence, though long expected, had more to do with the changes in the balance of forces in the region than on the justice of international law. The escalation of the conflict, though, had placed severe economic pressures on South Africa's besieged economy. Increasing fatalities of white conscripts even led to the pro-government church to question the morality of Pretoria's involvement in the war. Mutinies

by Namibian troops under SWATF endangered the SADF potential capability. All the while, SWAPO and allied organisations in Namibia had stepped up their resistance that ultimately weighed heavily on Pretoria's policy makers who were simultaneously trying to stop the unstoppable civil rebellion in South Africa's townships.

On top of all of these factors, the international arena came to play an important dual role. First of all, the international isolation of the regime reached great heights, although this anti-apartheid coalition was quite weak, given the reluctance of many countries like US/UK/FRG to support it effectively. The international isolation of the regime was challenged by the tremendous growth in support and prestige by ANC. The most marked concerns were shown by western countries that approached the ANC with a view to developing future foreign policy with an ANC dominated government in the region.

At home, the Defiance Campaign erupted with such force that the regime was forced in some instances to let the marches happen. Their planning was also influenced, however, by a belief that they could gain credit for allowing civil protest to happen; that they could shift responsibility for behaviour onto organisations by facing them to pay for any damages, etc; and by believing that the euphoria of open defiance would draw away energy and concentration on the development of organisation to match the mobilisation. Thus here, too, the state acted from a reactive and initiative perspective.

Collectively, all the forces coalesced to force the state to change its strategy. It was never clear precisely how De Klerk would do it, but in effect, he has attempted to take advantage of the problems that bedevil the democratic movement. This brings us to the second section.

## 2. What has February 2 done?

Numerous analyses exist already about the impact of De Klerk's

address. I only wish to highlight four of them on the state's side. First of all, it is quite clear from the limited terms of the unbanning of the movements that the regime wishes them to operate solely in accordance with the regime's negotiation agenda. De Klerk talks about normalising the political process, but there is ample evidence to show that his definition is not the usual one. The limited definitions of who is a political prisoner and who is not is under discussion at the present time. It is not clear what definitions are being used in the discussion but it seems as if the recent discussions about Prisoner of War status etc. have been forgotten. Besides those problems, the literature of the movement and policy is still subject to bans and restrictions. The question of the general amnesty is also under discussion. What the regime hopes to do is to ensure that ANC participates in discussions with the regime rather than spending its time developing its organisation throughout the country. Price action rather than meant to upset or sabotage the negotiation process is directed towards disrupting the further consolidation of organisation on the ground. To some extent, too, the violence in Natal whilst being its own *hukatha* existence and motivation assists the state strategy of disruption of the practice of normal politics by the liberation movement.

By moving onto the terrain of political negotiations the state has recognised the bankruptcy of some of its old policies and has hence discarded them, such as the JRC's. However, the concessions made in the statement only partially fulfill the demands of the Horere Declaration. The regime knows very well that the western powers in particular are not all happy with the document as it stands, a point proven perhaps by their action at the United Nations to secure a compromise version that is weaker than the Horere Declaration. Rather than simply dismissing ANC/UDF positions as was the case, the state now approaches them partially within the context of what they interpret is an international rejection of the principles of the South African resolution, particularly where these affect economic organisation. Thus, the state has moved the struggle from its side onto the same

ideological and political terrain as the liberation movement with one major difference between them. The state's resources of information control, the monopoly of capital in the South African commercial media, and the command that liberal intelligentsia holds in white politics, universities and institutions are stronger than the equivalent resources of the democratic movement.

The state has adapted its politics from looking behind it in fear at the reactionary elements of society to one of co-opting and absorbing the middle ground. The recent months have witnessed incredible vacillation on the part of some groups who had come to be identified almost as "allies" of the democratic movement at the height of the repression. Reference was made to this phenomenon at the beginning of this report, on p. 1.

But, as argued above, the state has also decided to address the issues of worker militancy/trade union organisation etc. through economic policies. Privatisation and deregulation in particular have assumed a great importance in state and capital's thinking. The struggles over the amendments to the Labour Relations Act of the past two years highlighted the militancy of workers' organisation. The state perceives that the best way to retain capitalist relations is to strengthen capitalist markets by allowing monopolies to extend control through the mis-named policy of privatisation. Besides the difficulties such policies, if successful, place in the way of most forms of nationalisation, the policies themselves involve a rearrangement of the economic framework within which trade union and working class politics develops. In a sense, the state withdraws from key sectors of the civil society, permitting a form of self-government dominated by the powerholders/capital but retaining the essential elements of policing and justice. The economic policies are in turn related to the dispersal of power to political units called minorities that exercise ~~the~~ a similar restraining power on the majority.

Crucial to the state's initiatives is the impression that it is constantly moving along a road to reform. Not, let it be said, a reform defined by the western nations as in terms of the Herero grandplan, but

spelt out in abstract, reformist terms. Thus "movement" rather than content becomes the determining force. It is, <sup>in</sup> part of this factor that De Klerk has launched an attack on one of the crucial areas of the liberation movement's strength, the fragile international anti-apartheid coalition. The EEC, although still holding out granting De Klerk complete freedom of action and the lifting of sanctions, remains wedded to capitalist forms of economy. Hence, their interest remains on the side ultimately of some form of social democratic capitalism rather than on ~~an~~ the creation of an more fully-blown extended welfare state in the region. Economic sanctions in particular have played an important part in concentrating the regime's mind to mend its ways. Any relaxation of this pressure provides the regime with an added infrastructural advantage.

But the new atmosphere has contributed to and coincided with other developments on the ground in the country. These developments contain the seeds of the future direction that the struggle in South Africa will take. As such they also pose new and different challenges to the parties involved in the conflict.

### 3. What patterns have emerged in developments on the ground?

I do not wish to go into an assessment of the state of play between the participants in the "talks about talks" series. Rather, this section concentrates on five particular areas:

- i) Bantustan developments;
- ii) Natal violence;
- iii) spread of defiance;
- iv) what prospects for PAC, PAM etc; and
- v) the phenomenon of militant white reaction.

A discussion of these points will lay the basis for the final two sections of this report on current strategic moves of the major actors and the prospects of the developments.

i) Bantustan developments.

Perhaps the most significant development in recent months has been the virtual self-destruction of the Bantustan system in its traditional form. For decades these areas have never been ethnically homogeneous, nor indeed have they been based on viable political or administrative foundations. Indeed they have been places of poverty, land hunger, unemployment and sites of the rise of civil bureaucracies dependent on Pretoria. With the spread of self-government and even so-called independence in some regions, corruption at government level at the expense not only of the South African taxpayer but more important of interest groups and people in the Bantustan regions ~~was~~ became associated with politically intolerant regimes used by Pretoria to repress and police the large rural areas they nominally controlled. However, the spread of organisation, again spearheaded by youth, workers and more recently women's formations drew in the resistance to local governing authorities. A new brand of leadership developed to take the reins of power in some instances, or to steadily influence the reluctant participants in the structures. With the regime under pressure from all fronts as outlined above in section 1, the insurrectionary and rebellious pressure within Bantustans posed a direct challenge to de Klerk's scheme of things. (More of this later). Indeed it has been one of the successes of the ANC recently to harness those forces to such a degree that with the exception of Mangoshe and Buthelezi, all other homeland 'leaders' have associated themselves with ANC calls for one united, non-racial South Africa.

The extent of Pretoria's crisis is illustrated perhaps by the coup d'état in Venda and rumours of an SA-backed attempt in Bophuthatswana. It appears that in order to retain at least some control in these areas, Pretoria is prepared to utilise the form of

politics used successfully in Transkei, Leskei, namely the coup. That they have not succeeded is perhaps due to their own clumsiness, but is also the result of vigilance on the part of the MDM and testimony to the political consciousness that has developed in many areas of South Africa.

### ii) Natal violence.

Needless to say, this is a complex phenomenon with a long history and many specific, regional and localised causes. The recent conflict, however, has assumed new, alarming proportions that can directly be attributed to the changing situation in our country. (The best explanation of the problem produced recently is that of Mzala in New Africa). There can be no doubt that criminal elements have taken advantage of an already destabilised environment and caused a good deal of trouble. To concentrate on those elements, however, is to detract from the fundamental causes of recent warfare. First of all, responsibility for the outbreak rests wholly with Inkatha forces and supporters in the aftermath of the success of the ANC Kings Park Mandela rally and the signal failure of Inkatha's rally. Riot police of the SAP and ZP, the KwaZulu police likewise were responsible for assisting Inkatha attacks disperse peoples as the war developed. The details of the battles do not concern me here.

Buthelezi is now totally isolated within the South African system. Whereas in the 1970's he called the tune, that is no longer the case. Within Inkatha, tensions have developed between Shomo and Buthelezi, and between Buthelezi and sections of the royal house. These tensions are fed by the collapse of Inkatha branches in many rural areas in particular. Significantly, the rise of CONTRAMEA, the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa, a segment of the MDM drawing in chiefs has made serious inroads into the traditional recruitment base of Inkatha, the chiefs. With the unbanning of ANC, many more Inkatha personnel have deserted the ranks in

faraway of the ANC. These people have become targets of Inkatha attacks.

Furthermore, schools in the KwaZulu area have responded vigorously against the Inkatha authorities, promoting people's education programmes and demanding SRC's, the student representative councils (school soviets). Traditionally, Inkatha could stamp on such activity because it was promoted by illegal movements. They can no longer use that excuse. School children and activists associated with the spread of defiance in the region have also therefore become targets.

From all accounts and surveys it is clear that Inkatha's hold on its involuntary membership is slipping. But it still has support from sectors of the security forces who use the Natal violence to emphasise the mythology of black-on-black violence, ie violence not aimed against state authority and therefore lacking in any legitimacy. Recent evidence also suggests a linkage between Buthelezi and right-wing arms robbers. Events have passed Buthelezi by, and what he is attempting to do in Natal is to establish for himself a seat at the negotiation table through force of arms in the absence of sufficient national electoral support. His desire is for ANC - whom he still attacks more often and more vigorously than the apartheid regime - to see for peace in the Natal region.

Of the ANC internal regional interim committees, it seems that those for Natal Midlands (centred on Pietermaritzburg) and for Natal South Coast (based in Durban and stretching southwards) are two of the strongest in the country as a whole. Thus, a destabilising campaign to disrupt the extension of organisation in the region benefits both Inkatha and the state.

### iii) Spread of Defiance.

Although the spectacular marches of the latter part of 1990 have generally come to an end, their place has been taken by the



man rally. However, the marches were but one very large, public show of defiance. All over the country, from the major urban centres to the remote areas of the northern Cape, smaller demonstrations and actions have become a regular feature of the present. It is clear, though, that the calls for continued non-violence have not yet been matched by violent action. At the same time, regional differences in the ability to organise and build and strengthen organisation is relatively slow.

In recent weeks it has become clear that the new regional structure of the ANC is beginning to take root, despite some of the problems such as harassment and the like that have developed. At the forefront of such reorganisation and the extension of the movement's organised presence is the youth sprouting under the banner of SAYCO. Organisations like SASSCO, too, are redefining their role in the current period, becoming rooted in the communities. Part of the difficulty of assessing the relative strengths and weaknesses of organisations is the fluidity of the situation on the ground. Anyway, it is clear that even whilst discussions are taking place, activity outside campuses, such as strikes and other labour actions, and the armed activities of MK have occurred particularly in regions associated with the border areas. Police and security forces, particularly in Natal have also been the focus of armed attention.

Recently, there has been a good deal of speculation about the resurgence of the PAC and other Black Consciousness / Africanist groups of various combinations. Besides a PAC-sponsored survey that produced predictable results showing shifts towards PAC from ANC among the youth, there is some evidence to suggest a gut-reaction / movement that sees PAC as more "radical" than ANC and thus more palatable. What is not clear is whether there is a shift in policy allegiance or whether there is just a problem with identity with the particular strategies. What is likely is that there has not been an allegiance shift of any dramatic force. Furthermore, the PAC and also bodies like PAM and the recent outburst of Trotskyite movements do not have anything to rival the ANC's

organisational and military infrastructure.

Reactionary organisation amongst disaffected whites, mentioned earlier, is becoming more apparent. Although it is not clear that the numerical size of the so-called right-wing is growing dramatically. What is happening, though, is the more obvious mobilisation and organisation of extant right-wing people into militia organisations who threaten to declare war on ANC. Already, the number of incidents involving attacks on comrades by white vigilantes is on the increase. One of the problems associated with these groups is the close proximity of their members to the security forces and the sources of their intelligence information. What is more, it is clear that large sections of the security forces themselves participate in the activity of these groups. It is also to be remembered that the defence establishment extends to commands and civilian force units, civil defence and 'Dad's army' units, thus encompassing large numbers of people who already have <sup>experience</sup> ~~a variety~~ of military training through their participation in the SADF through forced national service. Their politics, as indicated earlier, is a combination of fascist politics and nationalism, bound into a membership that is strategically placed, with access to training, arms and information. These people have already indicated that minority rights protection is not enough.

#### 4. What strategic moves do the major actors appear to be adopting?

The major actors are identified as the NP under De Klerk's leadership on the one hand, and the democratic forces led by the ANC on the other.

The NP entered the talks process because of the pressures and forces outlined earlier. However, 1986 Broedersbond documents indicate that the organic intellectuals of the NP had contemplated the notion of negotiation fairly early on. Publicly, and included in the February 2 statement, was the commitment to a form of national

caution that has gone under various names such as the National Statutory Council, the Great Indaba, and others. The hallmark of all of these plans is the participation of parties as individuals on the basis of their participation in the leadership positions within the tricameral parliament, the Senate - both "independent" and "self-governing"; and elected representatives of "urban Africans" and a number of appointed people by the State President. The council is not meant to be sovereign nor conclusive. All the while, the government of the day would be in charge of the normal matters of government such as policing, the economy and so on. As the table was drawn up, the balance would be in NP hands, supported necessarily by the representatives of the Senate structures. With the collapse of the Senate system and the movement by a majority of them beyond neutrality towards the ANC, the government - supported by liberal forces like the Democratic Party - has shifted its focus to include all other parties in a clear attempt to further whittle down the force of the ANC alliance. This would be done via the introduction of third or fourth forces ~~which~~ particularly on the liberation side and thus hopefully secure the NP forces with a majority, if not an absolute majority. These state (and liberals) expressly reject notions of Constituent Assemblies or directly elected bodies with sovereign powers whilst restraining factors such as those contained in the 1982 minute attached to Resolution 435 in Namibia are absent.

In constitutional terms, the NP is moving closer to the declared position of the KwaZulu/Natal Indaba Constitution. Principally, these proposals provide for a bicameral legislature comprising one house elected according to universal adult franchise on a common voters roll and a second house made up of equal numbers of ~~ethnically defined~~ <sup>representatives for</sup> racially defined groups, including a so-called "open group" made up of those South Africans who refuse to be classified according to race. Voting for these

representatives will be according to 'racial', voluntary association.

The trick comes with the ability of ~~one~~ single ~~minority~~ groups in the second house to veto or at least stall key legislation from the other house. Thus, unequal representation and the ability of the white group to prevent policies advocated by the majority is entrenched without direct reference to race according to voluntary association. One singular example used by spokespersons of the regime to justify minority representation in this way is that of the position of the Senate in the constitution of the USA. They adhere, too, to a Bill of Rights entrenching group and individual rights, as well as private property, amongst other things. Ultimately, the aim of the reformists is to deny an incoming majority government the powers associated with the current minority regime. Furthermore, whilst discussions of a constitutional nature develop, hopefully in their terms in "peaceful conditions" (ie in conditions of no strikes, demonstrations, defiance etc. given the state's extremely wide definitions of what policies are "violent" ones — let it be remembered the ANC/PAC were banned prior to the inclusion of armed struggle strategies in their armory of tactics), the regime would continue to implement its programme of economic restructuring, unhindered by such things as interim governments.

The potential for support of the above grand plan is extremely high, particularly from the western powers, but also from some of the liberation movements' allies who sympathise with the vision of a "moving" de Klerk. Similarly, the vacillating groupings of petty-bourgeois representation may opt for that option provided enough division can be created in the ranks of the oppressed and sufficient "multi-racial" as opposed to "non-racial" unity can be created amongst the ruling groups.

The ANC, working in conjunction with the MDM, the Manu Democratic Movement, finds itself in a quite unique situation. First of all,

it attributes, correctly, the changes as results of the long-standing campaigns of the party. However, what it perhaps was unable to do was predict the specific lengths to which the government has gone, particularly in relation to the SACP's position. Although the state's position has been worked out over some time regarding the Party\*, reliable sources indicate that de Klerk's extensive conversation with Van Zyl Stabert just before February 2 went a long way to convince de Klerk of the move.

The problems associated with any broad popular front also affect the conduct of the necessary new politics. The need for consultation with constituent parts, or political education for all even though most organisations are at different levels of development, etc. etc. come to the surface. Nevertheless, broadly-speaking, the alliance moves into the post-February 2 period stronger strategically than the state party because its strategies have been successful, partly because it has a mass basis. The difficulty becomes, however, how to incorporate new strategies, such as negotiation politics on the ground even if it is defined as a site of struggle, alongside the old without giving the impression that one is now discarding old ones, like the armed struggle. The decline in armed actions towards the end of 1989, the virtual absence of Umkhonto-we-Sizwe in the Natal conflict, here caused some speculation about the inability and/or a policy decision to conduct the struggle on a low key. If indeed such decisions have been taken — and it seems unlikely they would be immensely unpopular among the masses at home.

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The regime and its commentators have, since 1987 at least, adopted the interpretation of Gorbachevian perestroika current in the west, ie of a state turning its back on socialism and entering the community of nations as a 'normal' actor intent to abide by western norms of international relations. Hence, it was not surprising for the Bama to entertain Soviet envoys in Cape Town as they no longer represented a 'total onslaught'. The regime could remain hostile to the SACP precisely because it still espoused "out-dated communism." Perestroika in the USSR it was argued, cut the life-support for the SACP. Evidence of shifts in Pretoria, the SACP itself etc. further encouraged these views. It is clear Philip Nel has also been influential here.

One of the elements making the task of entering the debates involved with negotiation politics difficult is the fact that the terms of reference of constitutionalism (varieties of franchise and electoral system; structure of parliaments; entrenchment of rights; Bills of Rights, etc.) have for so long been monopolised by the liberal intelligentsia and white politics in particular.

Discussion of the issues needs to extend far beyond the organisational conduct of workshops and seminars. This is particularly important when one considers the call for a Constituent Assembly. At least one lesson of the experience of the Bolsheviks in 1917 was their commitment to a model for which they were not prepared outside of the areas they had managed to influence, thus not securing a majority in the elections.

The call for a Constituent Assembly, in other words, has to be matched by an ability to translate public support into actual votes.

It is not a foregone conclusion that the call for an Assembly will be successful. Part of the strategic planning around the issue involves ~~the~~ a struggle with the regime by the ANC not to be restricted to the terms of the regime's ~~own~~ reasons for unbanning the movement. Thus, the extension of structures, the absorption of more and more people into formal membership goes hand in hand with the elaboration of a system of political education whose target must ultimately be non-members as well. Similarly, the demand for interim government stresses the need to be able to control or forestall the incumbent government from executing policies that, once implemented, will be ~~more~~ very difficult to uproot and reverse. At one and the same time, the atmosphere of resurrection and upsurge associated with the extension of resistance and the events in the bantustans appears to clash with the formality of a negotiation process. Whilst the regime wishes all ferment to stop and for 'talks' to absorb energies of the movement, the movement for its part needs to rely on the mood of the people precisely to keep the regime clear about the extent of its <sup>(stakes)</sup> own crisis, and to keep the movement at the forefront of the popular resistance.

5. What prospects does the present delicate period hold?

Discussions of the prospects for the future are conducted at two levels. At the one, an atmosphere of euphoria rapidly enveloped many people. An impatience on the part of many to join the movements became apparent, as did the level of hysteria among the reactionaries. Perhaps the ~~coarsest~~ most accessible, sober comment about the current period is contained in Mwalimu Julius Nyerere's speech at the Arusha Conference in December 1987. He indicated clearly that the reality of people who had cherished the absence of democracy for so long would suddenly become democrats overnight; and indeed that the people who had been fighting for democracy would be satisfied immediately.

Anyway, there appear to be at least three scenarios:

- i) a reversal to apartheid old-style, either by the regime going back or through a reactionary coup d'état;
- ii) an incomplete transformation in which the regime's grand plan succeeds; and
- iii) the transfer of power through a combination of insurrectionary and negotiation strategies that opens the way for the transformation of South Africa into a democratic society.

i) Reversal of the process.

Part of the reason for the changes is the structural crisis facing the regime and white minority domination. White unemployment and poverty is rising; white education is in crisis; the economy is scarcely reproducing itself. Thus, for these reasons there can be no long-term reversal of the trends as we see them. At worst, a reversal or a coup would involve massive repression and death on a scale not yet seen. International capital, at least, may not permit such a catastrophe of one regional economy which still concerns them.

ii) Incomplete transformation based on the regime's grand plan.

The possibilities of success for this picture depend on a number of factors. Without wanting to repeat them, the points raised by De Klerk in his speech would require fulfilment. On the international front, developments sprouting in De Klerk and his regime's forums ~~are~~ include the ~~last~~ recent tendency to categorise the conflict in South Africa as ~~of~~ distinct from southern Africa no longer as an international conflict governed by the demands of international law, conventions and resolutions and upon which the national liberation movement has depended for its status in the international community. Instead, the definition of South Africa's conflict as a regional conflict necessarily isolates the liberation movement and strengthens the regime, precisely because the latter's isolation was conducted on the basis of the former definitions. Although it is not possible nor ~~is~~ valid to concentrate solely on international phenomena, their importance should not be understated.

Domestically, factors working in De Klerk's forums include the real possibility of the lifting of sanctions to boost an ailing economy. Previously, it was often thought that the lifting of sanctions would enable the regime to revert to its old policies. Whereas this may have been true at an earlier period — although I doubt it — it certainly is not the case now. De Klerk is committed to changing the form but not necessarily the content of the state as we know it. It is in this sense that we can talk of an irreversible situation. What is not clear is how far along the path of democratisation the regime will go, or indeed be forced to go if it is not destroyed in its entirety.

### iii) Democratisation through wholesale transfer of power.

Prospects in this category depend on a number of factors, some of which are evident from what has gone before. Important elements include the ability of the working class to extend trade union organisation and to resist the limitations of state restructuring of the economy in the immediate term. Furthermore, pressure of defiance and maintaining ~~an~~ and indeed extending <sup>the</sup> insurrectionary mood and most important activity that will influence



and pressurize all parties to a negotiation process will further enhance the prospects of genuine change. These elements must likewise be buttressed by extensive, grassroots organisation that can respond ~~and~~ swiftly to developments on the ground and to state initiatives. Above all, the developments in Southern areas and the spread of defiance opens up the first major possibility of a national alliance between town and countryside. This last development, if it can come to maturity, would strengthen incredibly the forces of the people. Southern regions have SADF-trained soldiers and police forces of their own. If the extension of resistance to apartheid within these forces spreads at the rate that the SAPP is feeling the effects of the Rockman affair, then these forces, too, could become useful adjuncts to the development of an extended people's army.

### Conclusion.

South African developments today represent a complex of phenomena: historical pressures that have produced change from a regime that realises the impossibility of governing in the old way. It has, furthermore, realised that constitutional change does not necessarily mean a collapse of privilege and the reversion of apartheid if that change can be directed and controlled not in the interests of a small, <sup>narrow</sup> nationalism but in the interests of a class-based understanding of South African society. Within white society this marks a decisive break with the past which brings with it its own uncertainty and insecurity. Into that vortex comes a resistance movement that has developed from a small army within a developing mass movement into a major national liberation movement with national and international prestige, capable of delivering stunning blows on the power of the regime itself. What is clear, however, is that far from the struggle for a new South Africa being over, it has reached new heights which will involve a battle over the precise definition of that new SA.

Jan Phillips.