

THE CURRENT INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION  
Briefing Notes  
16th August, 1989

1. Political crisis within the ruling bloc

\* The stormy resignation of PW Botha, although it owes a lot to his own intractable and immodest personality, needs also to be situated within a wider political context. It is an expression of the present political crisis of the regime - and it will further contribute to this very crisis.

\* The essence of this crisis lies in the fact that the regime, while it continues to be relatively strong, lacks any clear political strategy. As a result, the unity of the ruling bloc is, year by year, eroding. The one contender for the status of an overall strategy - the "Total Strategy" associated with the National Security Management System - has not delivered on the promises of its most ardent advocates. The rise of FW de Klerk, who has no historical connections with the NSMS, is an expression of a growing uncertainty within the Cabinet about the appropriateness of the NSMS as a total answer to the crisis. This is not to say that FW de Klerk will not have recourse to the NSMS structures - but it is likely to be in a more ad hoc and hesitant manner. We can also anticipate, therefore, more free-lance activity by the security apparatuses, which are certainly not going to simply whither away.

\* The ad hoc, drifting character of the regime is directly related to two important sets of pressures operating on the ruling NP :

[i] Within the white community recent polls show a substantial shedding by the NP of support both to the right ( to the CP ), and to the left ( to the DP ). Both opposition parties are likely to make large gains on Sept 6th at the expense of the NP. A hung parliament is still unlikely, but not entirely impossible. While such a hung parliament would certainly foster parliamentary illusions among many progressive whites ( and some blacks ) - it would also definitely greatly deepen the indecision and erosion at the top. With just 3 weeks to the elections the NP is showing signs of uncertainty as it tries to plug holes on the left and right simultaneously. Thus, in the space of 48 hours, FW forced PW to resign over the Kaunda visit, only to suggest that he might not be able to make the visit after all ( "owing to his new official position" ). And then, 12 hours later, he was announcing that, after all, he would be going. This wavering reflects, amongst other things, the contradictory pressures of the white electorate.

[ii] The international factor is also exerting major constraining pressures on the regime. In particular, the great importance of the debt re-negotiations set for mid-1990 and for 1991 cannot be overstated. Despite a rising tide of mass struggle, it will be very difficult for FW de Klerk to unleash the full weight of repressive

measures available to him in terms of the State of Emergency. Detentions on the scale witnessed in 1985-8 would make the debt negotiations very difficult for the regime. Economically, it cannot afford a failure.

In short, the present period finds the regime hesitant, off-balance and vulnerable.

But the major catalysing factor in all of this is the rising tide of mass resistance that is beginning to reassert itself once more.

## 2. The immediate background to the present mass resistance

At the beginning of the year the IPC analysis suggested that a new turning point was in the offing. That after a period of relative retreat for the MDM, with some 40 000 detentions over 3 years, a new confidence and capacity for organised resistance was beginning to reassert itself. At the same time, while many MDM organisations had been relatively destabilised, general mass militancy had remained high. It was clear that the consolidation of organisation around a clear programme of mass action was required. In this context a programme was developed with the following major focuses:

- \* mass defiance of emergency restrictions and of apartheid laws ;
- \* mass boycott of the coloured and Indian tricameral elections ;
- \* mass solidarity with the people of Namibia in the lead up to independence ;
- \* the campaign against the Labour Relations Act.

These main focuses were announced in the January 8th speech, and they were developed in detail in consultation with the MDM, particularly in our meeting in early June with the MDM leadership. All of these campaigns are now under-way.

## 3. Brief review of current campaigns

3.1. Mass defiance: \* started off with protest against discriminatory health facilities and has taken off the ground in the major areas - PWV, Durban, WCape. Some actions also reported in OFS and Krugersdorp

\* forms vary, with the WCape ahead of other areas: defiance of restrictions, actions in the schools, defiant attendance of funeral of MK cadres

\* taken up effectively in the mines  
\* also to target transport system, segregated parks and other facilities.

\* plans for national mass defiance of restrictions on organisations for 20th August.

3.2. Labour Relations Amendment Act: COSATU Congress passed resolution for action to coincide with elections. Concrete form to be decided upon at Workers' Summit last week of August.

3.3. Elections: campaign against candidates started in areas such as Natal. Yet both election campaign and protests low profile.

3.4. Mass actions in Venda around the 10th anniversary of "independence" - developing into revolt similar to last year's.

3.5. Problem areas: \* leadership to whole campaign given by COSATU and UDF as core; but not filtering through properly to the regional and local structures; co-ordination and consultation weak.

\* involvement of youth structures at national and lower levels minimal

\* as revolt deepens, to assume more 'insurrectionary character' - MDM not well-placed to guide at this level.

#### 4. Further proposals on programme of mass action:

4.1. General approach agreed to with MDM. Yet need to strongly raise question of properly structured and functional leadership at all levels. Also ensure involvement of local/regional structures in planning of actions and need for them to take initiatives on basis of concrete realities.

4.2. Week of Action: as period in which all campaign dovetail, with massive all-round actions. Need to influence MDM towards at least, a 3-day general strike. ~~Strike action should also assume form of "sit-ins/sleep-ins".~~

4.3. Defiance should spread to rural areas, addressing concrete issues, for example: \* Transkei - Sabata's burial should be a Congress event;

\* Protests against 10th anniversary of Venda "independence" to include boycotts, disruptions, etc.

\* KaNgwane to organise mass rallies and engage in other forms of defiance.

In all the rural areas/bantustans to find issues for such defiance, including segregated schools and other facilities, forced removals, etc.

4.4. What actions of defiance can white anti-apartheid forces engage in? For eg., "defiance in reverse": mass visits to townships, usage of facilities reserved for blacks, etc.

4.5. Sports: mass actions against the rebel tours: at hotels where the rebels lodge, converging on the grounds during games, graffiti campaign, raising of ANC flags, disruptive actions on the pitches eg. putting nails, etc.

4.6. Anti-apartheid Conference and Coalition: need to use platform

as basis for immediate actions.