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DON'T TRUST SOUTH AFRICA!

STEP UP THE FIGHT FOR
NAMIBIAN INDEPENDENCE!



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EDITORIAL NOTES

DON'T TRUST SOUTH AFRICA! STEP UP THE FIGHT FOR NAMIBIAN INDEPENDENCE

In terms of the agreement signed by representatives of the governments of the People's Republic of Angola, the Republic of Cuba and the Republic of South Africa at United Nations headquarters in New York on December 22 last year, implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 435 providing for the independence of Namibia is scheduled to start on April 1, 1989.

The struggle for Namibian independence has been going on for a long time — in fact ever since the imperialists seized the territory in 1883. Is this struggle at last coming to fruition?

In 1899 the Boer leader Jan Smuts wrote a pamphlet denouncing British rule in South Africa as "A Century of Wrong". But if ever there has been a century of wrong it is that of the imperialist domination of Namibia. It began in 1883 with the German annexation of the territory as part of the overall imperialist carve-up of the African continent. German rule in Namibia was marked by the utmost ferocity which in a few years had dispossessed the African people of their heritage and driven them to revolt. When in 1904 the German army had defeated the Herero in battle, their commander General Von Trotha issued his notorious Extermination Order which declared:

"The Herero nation must leave the country. If it will not do so, I shall compel it by force. Inside German territory Herero tribesmen, armed or unarmed, with or without cattle, will be shot. No women and children will be allowed in the territory; they will be driven back to their people or fired on. These are the last words to the Herero nation from me, the great general of the mighty German emperor."

Justifying his actions, Von Trotha declared: "I believe that the Herero must be destroyed as a nation".

By 1907 the Herero population had been reduced from 80,000 to 20,000, but it was not only Herero who suffered under German rule. By the same date 60% of all the peoples of Central and Southern Namibia had been exterminated.

The Germans were defeated during the First World War by a South African force led by General Smuts, and at the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919 South West Africa was awarded to South Africa as a "C" class mandate to be administered as an integral part of the metropolitan area. This implied that South West Africa would no longer be treated as a colony, but in fact the people of the territory continued to suffer under colonialism of a special kind equivalent to that practised in South Africa itself. The oppression and exploitation of the voteless black majority by a white minority regime continued, together with military excesses from time to time which were on a par with those of the Germans, as demonstrated by Smuts' massacre of the Bondelswarts in 1922.

UN Trusteeship

When the United Nations was formed after World War 2, most former mandated and colonial territories were placed under United Nations trusteeship and within a few years brought to independence. South Africa, however, refused to place South West Africa under UN trusteeship, arguing that the League of Nations mandate under which it was given control in 1919 was still valid and that the UN had no authority. Internal and external resistance to South African rule, however, steadily intensified. The South

West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) was founded in 1960 and in 1966, after failing to secure any concessions from the South African regime, was forced to resort to armed struggle. In 1971 the World Court ruled that South Africa's occupation of Namibia was illegal. In 1973 the United Nations General Assembly recognised SWAPO as the sole authentic representative of the Namibian people.

Finally in 1978 the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 435 laying down the conditions for the transition to independence. The resolution called for a ceasefire and the appointment of a UN monitoring group (UNTAG) to work with the South African authorities for the implementation of the plan. The bulk of South African troops were to be withdrawn and those that remained (about 1500) as well as SWAPO troops in the territory, were to be confined to specified camps. Other conditions were:

1. All discriminatory and restrictive laws in Namibia were to be repealed.
2. Political detainees were to be released and exiles allowed to return.
3. The South African-appointed administration was to be dissolved and free and fair elections were to be held under UN supervision.
4. The constituent assembly thus elected would draw up a constitution for independence which would then be introduced.

South Africa accepted Resolution 435 in principle but from the word 'go' advanced objections and pursued policies which made implementation of the Resolution impossible. An interim stooge administration was installed in Windhoek in defiance of the United Nations, and a programme of aggression and destabilisation was carried out against Angola. South Africa, backed by the United States, argued that the presence of Cuban troops in Angola threatened South African security, and that Namibia could not be granted independence until the Cuban troops had been withdrawn.

This 'linkage' of the issue of Namibia and Angola completely ignored the fact that Cuban troops had come to Angola in the first place to defend Angola against the South African force which invaded the country at the time of independence in 1975 and advanced to within striking distance of Luanda. At no time did the presence of Cuban troops in Angola pose any threat to South Africa. South Africa simply played the Cuban card as a justification for her further aggression against Angola and continued refusal to grant independence to Namibia.

Bearing in mind the appalling atrocities perpetrated by South Africa in Angola and Namibia in the years since Resolution 435 was adopted by the Security Council in 1978, one is fully justified in treating with scepticism South Africa's protestations of her intention to give Namibia independence.

It is our belief that South Africa will continue to do everything in her power to frustrate the independence process.

How Long Will It Take?

When Resolution 435 was adopted it was expected that the whole independence process would take about a year. In terms of the proposed time-table issued by the UN Secretariat in January this year, the release of political prisoners and detainees and the repeal of all discriminatory laws should start from April 1. South African and SWAPO forces should be restricted to base from the same date. South African forces should be reduced to 12,000 by mid-May, to 8,000 by June and to 1,500 by July 1. The repeal of all discriminatory laws and the release of political prisoners should be completed by June.

The electoral process should begin on July 1 with the registration of voters, and elections for the constituent assembly should be held in the first week of November. Within a week of the elections, the remaining 1,500 South African troops should be withdrawn from Namibia. The newly elected constituent assembly should then draw up and introduce a new constitution for a free Namibia.

In a separate agreement also signed on December 22 in New York, the governments of Cuba and Angola made arrangements for the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola, estimated to number about 50,000. Three thousand Cuban troops were to have left for home by the time the Namibian independence process started on April 1st, 1989. By August 1989, all remaining Cuban troops should be redeployed north of the 15th parallel, which runs about 200 miles from the Namibian border. Half the Cuban forces should leave by November 1989, two-thirds by April 1990 and all of them by July 1991.

The signing of these agreements represents a significant advance for the cause of peace, freedom and democracy in all South Africa. If the terms are honoured by all the parties, Namibia will be free and a SWAPO government will be installed in office by the end of this year. The people of Angola will be rid of the crushing burden of war for the first time since independence in 1975 and will be able to get to grips with the multifold problems of reconstruction and development which are crying out for attention.

So far, so good. Let us pay tribute to the men and women who have beaten back South African aggression and opened the road to peace and progress:

- the people of Namibia who have never accepted colonialism and have produced in SWAPO a liberation organisation with the vision and

organisational and military capacity to achieve victory.

- the people of Angola who provided a rear base for SWAPO (and the ANC) and who not only suffered the consequences without complaint but also fashioned a war machine capable of facing and defeating the South Africans on the battlefield.

- the magnificent Cubans who came to the rescue of Africa in an unparalleled demonstration of internationalist solidarity and willingly donated their blood and treasure to the cause of freedom.

- the peoples of the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries who provided the essential expertise, personnel and resources without which the job could not have been done.

- progressive forces and solidarity movements throughout the world who helped mobilise international opinion and channelled moral and material support to the cause of liberation.

We have been given proof in Southern Africa that unity in action between the socialist countries and the national liberation movements is capable of defeating the combined forces of racism and imperialism. A regional conflict has been wound down and prevented from spreading, while at the same time the cause of liberation has been advanced. It can be seen that peace is not incompatible with the fight for freedom.

This glorious victory has not been achieved without cost. For one thing South Africa's liberation forces headed by the ANC have had to be redeployed, and this has inevitably resulted in some dislocation. But this is a price the ANC and its allies have been willing to pay in order to deny South Africa or any of her imperialist friends any excuse for renegeing on their undertakings.

SWAPO Must Come To Power

It is plain that South Africa has no desire to see a SWAPO government installed in Windhoek and will do everything in its power to prevent it. And there are many ways in which it can sabotage the New York agreements.

One crucial clause of the agreement between Angola, Cuba and South Africa reads as follows:

“In accordance with their obligations under the United Nations Charter, the parties will abstain from threat or the use of force and guarantee that their respective territories are not to be used by any state, organisation or person in connection with acts of war, aggression or violence against the territorial integrity, the inviolability of borders or the independence of any state in south west Africa”. Bearing in mind South Africa's support for UNITA, as well as her record

of aggression and devastation in all the frontline states, can we believe that she will carry out her obligations under this clause? Foreign Minister Pik Botha has declared that *military* support for UNITA will cease, but other forms of support will continue, which means South Africa will continue to promote UNITA in every possible way to destabilise the Angolan government and promote its own interests.

For its part, the United States maintains that its support for UNITA, including military support, will continue uninterrupted, and one of the first acts of President Bush on attaining office was to assure Savimbi of this. UNITA itself has declared that its fight will be intensified. Will South Africa close down all UNITA training camps in Namibia and expel all UNITA military personnel from its territory? Will South Africa stop US military supplies passing through its territory on the way to UNITA?

Another clause in the New York agreement reads:

“The parties will respect the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of the states in south west Africa”.

Bearing in mind the way in which South Africa has ‘non-interfered’ in the internal affairs of states like Lesotho and Swaziland, not to mention any other of the frontline states which have suffered invasion and death squad attacks, who can believe that South Africa will not interfere in Angola and Namibia? Is not any form of support for UNITA an interference in the internal affairs of Angola?

Is not the retention of Walvis Bay a violation of the independence of Namibia? Walvis Bay is Namibia’s only deep-water port and the only channel, apart from the rail, road and air links with South Africa itself, through which Namibia can trade with the outside world. For 60 years South Africa administered Walvis Bay as an integral part of Namibia, but in 1977, fearing the advent of independence, incorporated the port into South Africa where for some years it artificially formed part of the Green Point electoral constituency — for whites only of course. In 1978 the UN Security Council called for Walvis Bay to be reintegrated into Namibia, but South Africa has hung on to it as a useful dagger pointed at the heart of a free Namibia.

The Non-Aligned states have been demanding that the Security Council take action to return Walvis Bay to Namibia before independence. If this were done, South Africa would have one less weapon in its hands to undermine Namibian independence.

A Guarantee of Conflict

South Africa will also seize on any ‘unrest’ in Angola as an excuse for hanging on to Namibia, in the interests of South African security. Yet the continued

support for UNITA by South Africa and the US is a guarantee that conflict in Angola will continue and can at any time erupt into violence. Furthermore, there have been press reports of South Africa transferring UNITA personnel from Angola to Namibia where they are being issued with citizenship papers which will enable them to take part in the electoral process and cast their votes against SWAPO.

And there are all manner of other ways in which South Africa can interfere in the internal affairs of Namibia before independence in a bid to prevent SWAPO from winning the elections to the constituent assembly, or to tie the hands of any government which comes into office after independence. Attempts will be made to divide the Namibian people on ethnic lines — even to hold segregated elections on the same farcical ‘separate but equal’ basis as in South Africa itself.

Interference in the affairs of an independent Namibia will obviously also be exercised by the South African and transnational corporations which dominate the economy of the territory and have been bleeding it dry in the run-up to independence. SWAPO is pledged to tackle this problem, but there is no way in which this economic dependence can be eliminated overnight at a stroke, as other frontline states can testify. No doubt Namibia will join SADCC in an effort to shake off the South African stranglehold, but it will all take time.

For all these reasons, the burden of steering a true course to independence which will fall on the UN Special Representative and the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) will be enormous. UNTAG is to have both a civilian and a military component and was originally to total about 7,500. Attempts by the Security Council to reduce this number to 4,650 for reasons of cost are greatly to be deplored. South Africa and her imperialist friends must not be allowed to sabotage Namibian independence, and if more personnel are required to ensure this, they should be provided by the international community.

For all these reasons, while we celebrate the signing of the New York agreements on December 22 as a vital breakthrough, we call on progressive forces throughout the world not to diminish by one iota their efforts on behalf of SWAPO’s freedom fight. Just as South Africa will fight to frustrate, so must we fight to ensure the implementation of Resolution 435 in the coming period. Vigilance cannot be relaxed until SWAPO comes to power and independence is consolidated. Any relaxation now will only play into the hands of South Africa and imperialism.

NO REFORM IN SOUTH AFRICA

The ending of the era of President P.W. Botha does not mean the end of apartheid in South Africa. It is not like the departure from the scene of Caetano in Portugal or Franco in Spain. South African Presidents or Prime Ministers are not absolute dictators who exercise tyrannical powers as a personal right and whose demise signals the dawn of freedom. Dr Malan was replaced by Strijdom by Verwoerd by Vorster by Botha by De Klerk or whoever, but the system of white supremacy over which they presided continued unaltered. The forces of liberation are directed not against an individual but against the colonialist set-up he represents. The fight for freedom will continue unabated until South Africa's special type of colonialism is completely destroyed.

Nevertheless, it has to be recognised that under P.W. Botha a number of initiatives were taken which, while leaving the condition of the majority of our people unchanged, had the effect of confusing international perception of what is going on in our country. There was the farcical tri-cameral parliament, and the removal of pin-pricks like the Mixed Marriages and Immorality Acts. And more recently there has been the decision to withdraw from Angola and agree to Namibian independence, the provision of new accommodation for Nelson Mandela with the prospect of freedom in the foreseeable future, the reprieve of the Sharpeville Six, the release from prison of Harry Gwala, Zephania Mothopeng, Zwelakhe Sisulu, Raymond Suttner and others. The regime tries to present itself as tolerant, reasonable, humanitarian, always willing to compromise, but faced with intransigent enemies who have mounted an international onslaught under the aegis of Moscow aimed at destroying democracy and all civilised values which South Africa shares with the West.

The regime's emergency laws and censorship measures have undoubtedly reduced international knowledge and understanding of what is happening in South Africa. Real news is much harder to come by. TV is forbidden to take pictures of 'unrest situations'; journalists are forbidden to be within sight of security force action; it is an offence to write or reproduce a 'subversive' statement. As a result South African issues are not in the public consciousness to the same extent as they were at the start of the emergency, and what is perceived is often false.

The regime must not be allowed to get away with these distortions of the truth. For example, the New York agreement on Namibia/Angola signed on December 22 was not the product of South African goodwill but the consequence of South Africa's military defeat in Angola and the mounting

pressure of world opinion demanding the independence of Namibia.

Similarly the reprieve of the Sharpeville Six was not a genuine act of clemency on the part of President Botha but the regime's capitulation before the worldwide storm of protest evoked by the original death sentence for 'murder by common purpose'.

There are over 60 other political prisoners on death row, but Botha remains stony-hearted over their fate. The world campaign to save the lives of these prisoners and to secure the release of all political prisoners and detainees in South Africa needs to be intensified, not diminished, in the wake of the Sharpeville Six reprieve.

The provision of 'comfortable' prison accommodation for Nelson Mandela is likewise inspired, not by the regime's concern for Mandela's welfare, but by the desire to deflect international criticism of his continued incarceration. But even if Mandela were released unconditionally, world protest should not be allowed to die down. What of the other Rivonia prisoners — Walter Sisulu, Ahmed Kathrada, Raymond Mhlaba, Elias Motsoaledi and Andrew Mlangeni — sentenced in the same case at the same time to the same period of life imprisonment? They have endured the same suffering and loss of the amenities of life as Mandela. The demand for the unconditional release of all political prisoners must be intensified.

The release of Gwala and Mothopeng is likewise testimony not to the mercifulness of the regime but to its opportunism. If it were not so, why was not Oscar Mpetha, old, ailing and crippled, not released at the same time? Even the judge in his case declared his unwillingness to send him to prison but said the law gave him no option. And there are many other cases of political prisoners who could be released on compassionate grounds but are not, because this is a regime without compassion.

Far from showing the face of reform to the South African people, the regime is in fact intensifying the repression. The emergency laws continue in force, and men, women and children continue to be detained without trial, tortured and very often done to death in the most sordid circumstances behind prison walls. Death squads and vigilantes continue their beastly vigils; the premises of organisations attached to the mass democratic movement are destroyed in arson and bomb attacks. Action continues to be taken to silence the democratic press.

The United Democratic Front, COSATU and other bodies are crippled by bans and restrictions which make it impossible for meaningful legal activity in opposition to the regime to be undertaken with any consistency. The conviction last November of 11 of the defendants in the Delmas trial and

the imposition of heavy prison sentences opens the way for the prosecution on charges of treason and terrorism of 900 mass democratic movement activists classed in the indictment as co-conspirators. They have done nothing more than campaign openly for freedom and democracy, but in today's South Africa that is enough to attract the most severe forms of judicial persecution.

For 95 per cent of the South African population there has been no 'reform' under President Botha. On the contrary, their life-style has deteriorated. The economy is in tatters, unemployment is at record levels and inflation soars, leading to a sizeable reduction in income per head of population. Strife and conflict continue — in the mines and factories, in the schools and universities, on the borders. The increased activity by Umkhonto we Sizwe is a direct consequence of the deep freeze into which normal political activity has been placed by the regime.

This is not the time for the international community to relax its pressure on the South African regime. On the contrary, with the regime ever more shaky in its grasp of power, paralysed by uncertainties over all its policies, on the defensive, ideologically bankrupt — this is a time for mounting a new offensive against the apartheid edifice. Given the right combination of circumstances, it can be brought tumbling to the ground.

Don't give the racists time to recover, to regroup, to get their breath back! Don't be gentlemanly to murderers! Administer the death blow while you can!

GORBACHEV AND THE FIGHT FOR PEACE

There is no doubt that the international situation is changing before our very eyes. Soviet troops have been withdrawn from Afghanistan. Cuban troops are being withdrawn from Angola, Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea. Plans have been set in motion for the settlement of a number of regional disputes in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The Iran-Iraq war has ended. Top level meetings are taking place between the Soviet Union and China. North Korea meets South Korea to discuss unification. Polisario holds discussions with Morocco on the independence of Sahara. Palestine Liberation Organisation leaders are "received" by officials of the British and US Governments. Everywhere the logjam which piled up during the period

of the cold war is breaking up and the river of international life is flowing more freely again. The prospect for peace appears more rosy.

If the peoples of the world can breathe a little more easily today, they can give thanks to the governments of the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries for having taken a number of brave and imaginative initiatives. Ever since the Revolution in 1917, the Soviet Union has stood for the peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems and has advanced proposals for the attainment of collective security which, had they been accepted by the imperialist powers at the time, would have avoided the slaughter not only of the second World War but also of a number of more local conflicts which have shattered peace and stability this century.

The standard reaction of the imperialists has always been that the Soviet proposals were pure propaganda, that they were not genuine, that they were impractical, or what have you. Thus the imperialists freed themselves for continued preparations for war, developing Star War plans, Stealth bombers and all the paraphernalia of nuclear conflict which made the outbreak of the holocaust by accident or design appear inevitable. In a bid to put an end to the arms race, the Soviet government has in the recent period taken a series of unilateral actions which have left the imperialists floundering and breathless.

On August 6, 1985 — a few months after Mikhail Gorbachev was elected general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union — the Soviet government announced a unilateral moratorium on all testing of nuclear weapons and invited the United States to follow suit. Had the US accepted the invitation, there would have been no more explosions of nuclear weapons by either side and the threat of nuclear war would have steadily receded as weapons systems became obsolete. But the US refused the invitation on the grounds that (a) such a ban would be difficult to verify and (b) the US had not yet completed its current test programme and that unless it did so the Soviet Union, whose current programme was already complete, would be left in a position of superiority. Eventually, the Soviet Union was forced to resume testing out of the necessity forced upon her by the arms race.

However, the Soviet initiative was not wasted. A climate of expectation was created amongst the peoples of the world, including the American people, which forced President Reagan to meet Gorbachev at the Geneva summit where both sides voiced the declaration that nuclear war was impermissible because there could be no victors. This was followed in due course by the agreement signed in Washington in December 1987 by Reagan and Gorbachev for the elimination from Europe of all intermediate and short-

range nuclear missiles — the first treaty providing, not merely for control of production, but for the total destruction of a whole class of weapons capable of destroying the European continent.

One year later, on December 7, 1988, President Gorbachev took the United Nations and the world by storm with his historic speech announcing a whole range of further unilateral Soviet concessions in the sphere of disarmament. Within the next two years the Soviet forces are to be reduced by 500,000 men. By 1991 six Soviet tank divisions are to be withdrawn from the GDR, Czechoslovakia and Hungary and disbanded. Soviet forces stationed in those countries will be reduced by 50,000 men and their armaments by 5,000 tanks. Soviet forces in the European part of the USSR and in the territories of other socialist countries in Europe will be reduced by 10,000 tanks, 8,500 artillery systems and 800 combat aircraft. In addition, a major portion of Soviet forces will be withdrawn from the Mongolian People's Republic.

Capitalist Reply

All this at a time when the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan was already under way. And a few weeks after Gorbachev's United Nations announcement, Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze told the Paris conference on chemical weapons in January 1989 that the Soviet Union intended to destroy its whole stock of chemical weapons and would start eliminating them at a specially built plant this year. He invited international inspection. And there have been further such unilateral initiatives from the Socialist countries.

The reply of the capitalist countries to these initiatives has so far been lame in the extreme. They claim that the Soviet Union is so far ahead of the West in conventional weaponry that they do not need to make a response. And indeed they have made none, calling instead for further unilateral concessions from the Soviet Union. Their own Star War and chemical weapons plans proceed apace without alteration or amendment of any kind, apart from the elimination of medium and short-range nuclear weapons from Europe under the INF agreement. None of the 500 US military nuclear bases in foreign parts is being closed down. No US troops are being returned home from Europe or anywhere else.

President Gorbachev said in his UN speech last December:

“We shall maintain our country's defence capability at a level of reasonable and reliable self-sufficiency so that no one might be tempted to encroach on the security of the USSR and our allies”.

He then went on to stress one of the main factors motivating the Soviet government in its present stance.

“By this action, and by all our activities in favour of demilitarising international relations, we wish to draw the attention of the international community to yet another pressing problem — the problem of transition from the economy of armaments to an economy of disarmament”.

What Gorbachev is proposing is that the capitalist and socialist countries should get together, under the auspices of the United Nations, in some form of “joint effort to put an end to an era of wars, confrontation and regional conflicts, to aggressions against nature, to the terror of hunger and poverty as well as to political terrorism”.

The money saved through disarmament could be put to constructive use to solve problems which are common to all humanity. On January 18 President Gorbachev announced that the Soviet military budget would be cut by 14 per cent for the coming financial year. Were the capitalist countries to respond in like measure, enormous funds would become available to finance joint expeditions into space, the tackling of environmental problems which effect everybody, and the like.

National exclusiveness is no longer possible in the modern world, said Gorbachev. Economic, food, energy, environmental, information and population problems, once treated as national or regional, had become global problems thanks to the scientific and technological revolution.

“The world economy is becoming a single organism, and no state, whatever its social system or economic status, can normally develop outside it.”

The mixture of realism and optimism which pervaded Gorbachev’s United Nations speech captured the imagination of the world, holding out as it did the prospect of replacing the horrors of the cold war and the threat of nuclear conflict with an era of co-operation and progress to the benefit of all humanity. It was a tragedy in more senses than one that proper analysis and consideration of what he had to say was swept away by the earthquake in Armenia.

On the other hand, there can be little doubt that the scale of international co-operation to relieve the consequences of that disaster was enhanced by world-wide appreciation of the stand he has taken in international affairs and the process of *perestroika* and *glasnost* which is associated with his name. The Soviet contribution in the recent period to the easing of international tension is undisputed. Mrs Thatcher says she can “do business” with Gorbachev. President Reagan stopped talking about the “evil empire”. On

his accession to office President Bush promised to seek all possible ways of co-operation with the Soviet Union in the interest of peace.

A New Trail

President Gorbachev repeatedly stresses that the Soviet government is blazing a new trail through hitherto uncharted territory. Some of his formulations in the UN speech strike one as tentative and experimental. We ourselves would like to have more precise definition of phrases like:

“Today we have entered an era when progress will be shaped by universal human interests.”

“World politics should be guided by the primacy of universal human values”.

“World progress is only possible through a search for universal human consensus”.

“We should jointly work our way leading to the supremacy of the universal human idea”.

“The new phase also requires de-ideologising relations among states”.

Some have criticised Gorbachev’s formulations as a departure from Marxism-Leninism, but he himself in his UN speech specifically denied this.

“We are not abandoning our convictions, our philosophy or traditions, nor do we urge anyone to abandon theirs”.

At the same time Gorbachev realises that he is treading on uncertain ground. In his 1987 speech in Moscow on the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution he himself posed some “tough questions” which he said required Leninist answers.

First question: Knowing that imperialism is the major source of the threat of war, what leads one to think that the aggressive nature of imperialism can be altered?

Second question: Can capitalism get rid of militarism and develop in the economic sphere without it?

Third question: Can the capitalist system do without neo-colonialism?

Gorbachev did not answer those questions in 1987. Nor did he answer them in his speech to the United Nations last December. But he did ask himself whether his view of the new world order was too romantic.

“Are we not overestimating the potential and the maturity of the world’s social consciousness?”

He acknowledged that he had heard such doubts and questions both inside the Soviet Union and “from some of our Western partners”. His reply was:

“I am convinced that we are not floating above reality. Forces have already emerged in the world that in one way or another stimulate the arrival of a period of peace.

The peoples and large sectors of the public do, indeed, wish for an improvement in the situation, they want to learn to co-operate. It is sometimes even amazing how powerful this trend is. It is also important that it is beginning to shape policies . . . Even those politicians whose activities used to be geared to the Cold War and sometimes linked with its most critical phases are now drawing appropriate conclusions”.

The danger is that the imperialist countries will change their words but not their deeds. There has so far been no meaningful response to the Soviet Union’s unilateral disarmament *actions*, let alone proposals for the further destruction of nuclear weapons.

While the US pretends to be taking part in the settlement of regional conflicts in Afghanistan, Angola/Namibia, Nicaragua and elsewhere, it continues to sabotage peace by sending weapons to the Afghan rebels, UNITA and the Nicaraguan contras. Bush, Thatcher and company are very ready to condemn apartheid in words, but resist to the utmost all forms of meaningful action to bring the apartheid system to an end.

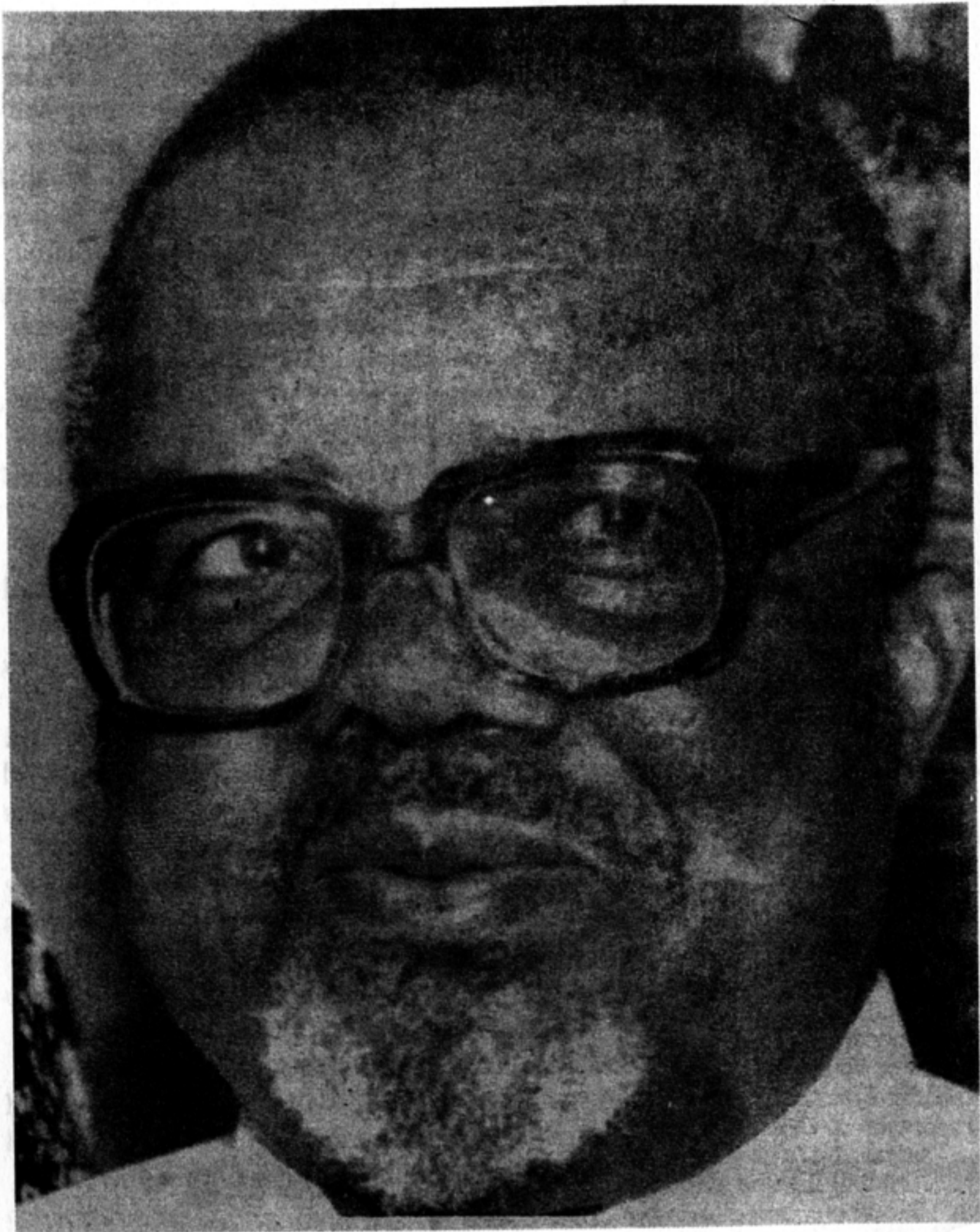
Nevertheless, this is not a time for drawing back, for pessimism, for retreating behind ideological walls. This is a time for pressing home the socialist initiative, for carrying the fight deeper into territory formerly closed to us. Let us take to heart the following words from Gorbachev’s UN speech:

“The understanding of the need for a period of peace is gaining ground and beginning to prevail. This has made it possible to take the first real steps in creating a healthier international environment and in disarmament.

“What are the practical implications of that? It would be natural and sensible not to abandon everything positive that has already been accomplished and to build on all the gains of the past few years, on all that we have created working together”.

We do not have to abandon our ideological perspectives in order to fight for peace. We do not ask Gorbachev to turn back, but on the contrary applaud his achievement to date and urge him forward. At the same time we will continue to play our part in mobilising the people of our country and the world to ensure that his advances meet with an adequate response and that victories continue to be notched up on the road to peace and social progress.

WELCOME HOME HARRY GWALA!



Harry Gwala, released from jail on November 26, 1988, after serving 11 years of a life sentence under the Terrorism Act. He had previously served 8 years in prison for "sabotage", from 1964-1972. Formerly a leading member of the ANC, SACP and SACTU, he pledged his continued support for the ideals of the liberation movement.

IS SOUTH AFRICA SUITED FOR GUERRILLA WARFARE?

By Tebogo Kgobe

The question of insurrection needs special attention by South African revolutionaries because South African conditions present a set of limiting factors in so far as certain forms of armed struggle are concerned. It is necessary to take a closer look at armed forms traditionally employed by popular movements against their stronger adversaries, in order to determine what possibilities the South African scenario presents us, who have chosen the path of armed struggle.

The principal form of armed struggle of the popular, militarily disadvantaged, against the strong, unpopular adversary, is Guerilla Warfare. The disadvantage is usually expressed initially in terms of both numbers and in military ware. Because of this, the guerillas, who are few and ill-equipped, avoid direct confrontation with their enemy. They use hit and run tactics to wear down the enemy, hitting him where he is weak or least expects it and disappearing. In order to redress the balance, they strive to

popularise their campaign through successful actions which net them recruits to swell their ranks and capture weapons from the enemy. They avoid action unless success is assured. This is to ensure growth of confidence within their inexperienced ranks and convince the masses of the viability of armed struggle against the unpopular, stronger forces.

As the guerillas grow in number and experience, as they capture more and more weapons from the enemy, they begin to carry out bigger attacks. But they still use hit and run tactics, always ensuring success.

Classical guerilla warfare has always grown from the countryside, although predominantly urban guerilla warfare saw success in Cyprus led by General Grivas. But Cyprus was the exception rather than the rule. Why the countryside? All the reasons are strategic and based on the advantages the countryside offers for the development of guerilla warfare.

Firstly, in almost all the countries where successful guerilla warfare has been waged, the infrastructure in the rural areas was poor. The roads, rail and other communications networks were ill-developed, hampering mobility for the enemy's trucks, personnel carriers and tanks, whereas guerillas needed only good boots to manoeuvre.

Safe Havens

Secondly, often upopulated and inaccessible areas ensured for the guerillas a safe haven to create their bases from which to launch their campaign. The security forces were weaker and more spread than in the cities and the rural population often neglected. The security forces in the countryside were far from command centres in the cities. The guerillas therefore had easier access to the less policed rural villages to carry out their propaganda and agitation to win the masses to support their action and get recruits to join the guerilla forces.

Apart from these important strategic considerations, guerilla armies have often received sanctuary from sympathetic neighbouring countries from which they have made their preparations for launching their activity. The support of these neighbouring countries has often entailed training, logistic and transit facilities for the guerillas. The easier accessibility of the rural areas from these neighbouring countries has therefore also been an important consideration in deciding why the countryside is chosen for launching guerilla warfare.

The areas in the countryside, therefore have become important embarkation points for armed struggle and important conduits for the passage of guerillas. Building from the countryside adjacent to the

sympathetic neighbouring countries has also ensured for the guerillas retreat to these countries when the pressure became too great for them. They have the opportunity then to regroup, and mount fresh attacks.

Guerilla armies have grown more or less along these lines, increasing in size and efficiency, tackling ever bigger enemy targets in hit and run tactics which demoralise the enemy forces who are never given a chance to put to use their superior firepower and skill. Through this constant harassment the enemy is invariably forced to abandon some of the territory and leave it under virtual control of the guerilla forces.

The guerillas thus advance deeper into the interior, gradually surrounding the well defended cities. They fight in ever-increasing guerilla formations, but as a rule never engage the adversary in stand-off operations. But the actions increasingly assume some conventional elements in respect of the numbers and the sophistication of the weapons employed, without the rule of quick disengagement being broken.

Support of the People

In all their activities, the guerillas have relied on the people in the areas of their activity for survival and growth. The people, whose support the guerillas must first win, act as the eyes and ears of the guerillas, giving them information about the designs and movements of the enemy, enabling the guerillas to take appropriate action. They also hide the guerillas and provide them with food. It is from the people that the guerillas get their fresh supply of young recruits. In this sense, guerilla warfare is a people's war.

In a broader sense, people's war is armed resistance by the people themselves, organised in different ways by the inhabitants of villages apart from the guerilla forces but complementary to their actions.

The way people's war evolves is usually the same, and follows in the wake of an intense guerilla campaign. Because the enemy becomes aware of the close relation between the people and the guerillas, and because he cannot find the guerillas who may be hiding in the mountains or tilling the fields with the peasants, with their weapons stashed away, atrocities follow the village population. The enemy unleashes terror on the people in order to intimidate them from lending support to the guerillas, to get information etc. But these atrocities throw the people more into the embrace of the guerilla forces.

The people arm and organise themselves in order to defend their communities. They carry out actions like ambushes against the enemy. Often, armed actions by the people are directly linked to assistance or cover for guerillas. The people in some locality may ambush reinforcements of

enemy troops to delay them from advancing to areas where guerillas may be engaged in some action. Because the guerillas often operate in different areas in order to disperse the enemy, the pattern is usually the same for other villages. The armed detachments of the people however usually confine themselves to their locality, even though the element of people's war become generalised, occurring as it does in many different localities.

People's war is an important strategic development for the regular guerilla force and is actively encouraged by them even without the inevitable enemy atrocities. With its development the hands of the guerilla forces are freed from passive defence which is left to the villagers themselves. The guerillas, who have to be highly mobile, can then concentrate on their offensive campaign. The battle-hardened peoples' detachments are also a reliable reservoir of manpower for the regular guerilla forces.

The guerillas advance thus, liberating area after area in the countryside. With the next to total or complete squeeze of the cities, the death-knell of the incumbent regime sounds. The countryside is the bread-basket of the cities. The war is brought right to the cities' doorsteps. The restlessness in the cities increases and the guerillas begin to organise sabotage and other military campaigns in the cities themselves. But usually the military scenario almost always ends there — in a stale-mate, with the guerillas unable to take the major towns and the regime compelled to acknowledge that it cannot defeat the guerilla army.

A War of Attrition

In this sense, guerilla warfare is also a war of attrition, breaking down the morale of the enemy through crippling the political, economic and social infrastructure and producing a no-win untenable military situation leading to the collapse of the regime.

This is more or less what took place in Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Algeria, Nicaragua etc. This is more or less the situation as it pertains in El Salvador today. In Cuba, the guerillas led by Fidel Castro actually managed to break the stalemate and capture the main towns and were poised a few kilometres from Santiago, almost completing the rout before the flight of the dictator Batista and the surrender by the armed forces.

In Vietnam, the "honourable peace" mouthed by Nixon was nothing but a face-saving lie. The victory of the Vietnamese forces was a resounding and complete defeat for the Americans. The combination of conventional warfare, guerilla warfare and people's war was consummated by a popular insurrection which saw the mauling of the U.S. army and even the occupation

of the U.S. embassy in Saigon by the revolutionary forces. The Americans left in an ignominious hurry, having suffered their most crushing defeat in history.

In a nutshell, guerilla warfare is usually conducted from the countryside because:

1. The enemy's infrastructure is poorer
2. The enemy forces are fewer and more spread
3. The countryside is easily accessible from sympathetic neighbouring countries
4. The difficult or sometimes inaccessible terrain offers safe bases for the guerillas
5. The rural population is neglected, providing the guerillas scope to win their support.

What is the reality as far as South Africa is concerned? In other words, do the same conditions pertain?

The Enemy is Highly Mobile

South Africa has a modern and well developed infrastructure of roads, rails, sea and air transport as well as other sophisticated surveillance and communications equipment. First-class highways like the N1 from the Cape to Messina, the N2 from the Cape spanning the coast up to Swaziland, the N4 from the Reef to Mozambique, the N7 from the Cape to Namibia, have many important arteries of superb tarred roads, both principal and secondary, leading to and straddling the entire strategic national boundary. This therefore ensures very high mobility for the regime's forces.

This high mobility is further facilitated by the dispersed system of command designed to meet the threat of guerilla war on a geographic basis. The enemy thus have the Northern Natal Command based in Mkuze to monitor a threat from southern Mozambique and Swaziland, the Eastern Transvaal Command in Nelspruit, Western and Northern Transvaal Command etc. These forces are able to react to a given threat quickly, given their high mobility and proximity to the areas of operation. The regime's forces also have access to many modern airports both civilian and military to increase their mobility and fire-power. Several of these are in the strategic North and East, like the one at the Hoedspruit Airforce base, the Phalaborwa airport, Jozini etc.

South Africa's economic might, coupled with its vastly superior military machine, has spun a veritable web which has entangled most of her neighbours in dependence and fear. While it is natural to expect independent African countries to offer bases to liberation movements

fighting their colonialist neighbours, South Africa's neighbours dare not do this. More — South Africa demands of these weak neighbours that they police their countries and South Africa's borders on South Africa's behalf.

If, for instance, guerillas evade the Botswana security forces and cross their common boundary with South Africa, evade the South African security forces and penetrate deep into the interior and are arrested weeks or months later, it is not the South African forces guarding the border who are blamed but the Botswana Government. The South Africans have infinitely more resources to check this movement, but our guerillas slip through and invariably penetrate deep into the country to carry out their missions. For South Africa's inadequate security Botswana gets the blame, and often retribution.

Many an underground ANC network operates in South Africa under the very noses of the well funded security apparatus about whose strength and sophistication the regime usually boasts. But the existence of underground networks of the ANC in countries like Botswana, with weaker security forces, is unfairly blamed on the connivance of those countries. In other words, these countries must spend a large slice of their meagre resources to hunt down people who are hardly their own enemies, and do it more vigorously than the South Africans do in their own country.

No Rear Bases

Unfair though this may be, these countries have found themselves obliged to take action, because the consequences for them are immediate economic strangulation, *coup d'états*, destructive and murderous raids on their countries. In many of these countries (none of which has ever offered the ANC "springboard" facilities), South Africa has sponsored and supported armed bandits to destabilise and attempt to overthrow their governments.

The consequences of all this bullying and aggression has been that the ANC has never enjoyed stable rear-base facilities in countries that were willing to allow their common boundary with South Africa to be used to advance the armed struggle. Even in pre-Nkomati Mozambique, the conduit was still the less amenable Swaziland, where hundreds of guerillas were arrested while in transit and deported back to Mozambique. In so far as neighbouring sympathetic countries were essential for guerillas to begin their armed campaign from the countryside adjoining them, the ANC has therefore always been severely hamstrung.

Although it has never been a critical factor, it certainly has been a great advantage of many a guerilla movement to have within its borders

strategically situated areas which are more or less inaccessible for the regime's motorised forces and from which the guerillas can create their bases to begin their armed campaign. The Cubans had the Sierra Maestra Mountains, the Angolans had the vast impenetrable Mayombe and other forests. South Africa does not have thick forests, inaccessible mountains and marshes which fulfil this purpose.

Although the countryside is less populated, it is nevertheless heavily policed to prevent guerilla infiltration. Taking advantage of the poor and ignorant rural population, the enemy carried out a campaign to recruit informers and waged propaganda to indoctrinate the rural population in strategic locations about the so-called evils of guerillas. Precisely in anticipation of and as a strategy to thwart the guerillas, the enemy embarked on a campaign to "win the hearts and minds" of the people in the strategic countryside, presenting the guerillas as horrible spectres serving the interests of foreign evil powers.

Our enemy, having long studied the theories of counter-insurgency, and having watched their *cordon sanitaire* crumbling before their disbelieving eyes, frantically began to prepare for the days when their unpopular regime would also face the threat of challenge from the popular armed forces of the people. Their preparations have not been without some measure of success.

All the above factors, looked at together, make the execution of guerilla warfare in the classical sense in South Africa very difficult, if not impossible.

Our Strategic Options

Does all this mean that the prosecution of successful armed struggle in South Africa is impossible, as people like Gatsha Buthelezi often claim, giving some of the above objective realities as reason? By all means no! Although guerilla warfare in the classical sense as outlined above stands little chance of succeeding, armed struggle is not only possible and a fact, but it is also a necessary component of any sensible strategy for total liberation. For our country a strategy for liberation that does not embrace armed struggle is not complete. Armed struggle is an integral part of all the political action that the masses of the oppressed must engage in to rid themselves of race domination. Apartheid relies on force to survive. Denial of armed struggle is denial of the right of the oppressed to try to redress the force equation. It is tantamount to enjoining the people to surrender. The constraints of legality dictate that the mass democratic movement does not espouse violence. But to refrain from public support of armed struggle and to denounce it are two different things.

The question, therefore, concerns not the legitimacy, but the feasibility of armed struggle. Is armed struggle feasible? That should not be the question, for armed struggle is, in fact, already a reality. Everyone accepts that the low-key war waged by the ANC has become a norm in South Africa. But most observers agree that it needs to be more developed if it is to pose a real threat to the South African state.

The moot question, therefore, should be whether the armed struggle, whose main present day feature is urban hit and run tactics, has the capacity to increase in intensity and organisation to such an extent as to pose a real threat to the regime.

It is impossible for the South African security forces to guard our vast frontier against infiltration of both men and hardware from the neighbouring countries. South Africa, therefore, will always be saddled with a problem relating to armed ANC guerillas and hidden arms caches in both the urban and rural areas. These men, apart from unremitting acts of sabotage and selected attacks on vulnerable security personnel and other actions, have the capacity to grow from within the masses.

It is the disciplined and organised growth of these underground armed forces that can pose a real threat. A carefully planned action by the ANC to get its best political and military organisers to most key urban and rural areas for such a campaign can undoubtedly be carried out. The ANC has often stated that the MK combatants trained in camps outside South Africa are only its officer corps. The main combat forces are within South Africa itself.

The process of building the combat forces is not an easy task and involves hard work and many risks, but the task is nevertheless realisable. However, the rapid growth of the combat forces can only be assured with the simultaneous growth of the ANC underground organisation.

The organisation of the underground armed forces must contend with a vicious and vast security and informer network. This necessitates improved professionalism and discipline of its forces and corresponding ruthlessness against members of the security forces and their proxies. The underground forces must outwit the South African security services to succeed in building a strong organisation.

A Qualitative Leap

The growth of the underground combat forces must lead to a quantitative and qualitative leap in armed actions. The enemy will find it more difficult to root out guerillas who are part of the ordinary masses than it does guerillas trained outside the country who have to be in deep hiding, operating literally

underground. The increase in number and skill of the underground combat forces must result in more audacious actions against the enemy infrastructure and personnel.

Wider organisation to coordinate actions in different regions and areas should be part of the strategic goal so that the enemy is not able to pool its organised strength in one direction to break the organised armed combat forces.

With time, proper leadership and organisation, these forces will cease to become merely a nuisance for the state but will become a cancerous sore, gnawing away at the body politic. This organised armed force cannot by itself topple the regime, however, because it is not possible for it to grow to an organised army of any sort.

The constraints imposed on the growth of the underground combat forces by the dictates of security and survival demand that these forces operate as separate, small units. Until the very end, there can be no question of organising them as a single unit. Coordinated activity is necessary, directed from the top. Sometimes joint actions involving several units can be undertaken, but the strictest possible security measures should be taken to protect the identity of the different units from one another.

There is no doubt that such an organised force can have a crippling effect on the state infrastructure and morale. It can inflict severe casualties on the enemy personnel, but it is not enough to wrest power from the enemy through force. It can engage in a war of attrition, in a protracted armed struggle.

Although most of this organisation should be centred in the urban areas where consciousness for change is higher, the rural areas must form part of this strategic build-up of the armed combat forces.

New Methods

This, however, is not the only form of armed offensive we should undertake, although for the present it is the principal form. The enemy should still be tied to defending the frontier through carefully prepared strikes and harassment in the countryside and in the urban areas involving well trained fighters of MK in these selected operations. Also, conditions precipitated by our all-round struggle and other unforeseen dynamics can usher in new, varied and even the traditional methods of armed struggle.

In so far as the principal form of our armed struggle is concerned, logic dictates that it cannot be managed from outside. The initial planning of this organisation certainly has to proceed from outside. Thereafter the centre of direction must physically shift internally. There can be no other way.

This organisation of armed combat is only part, therefore, of a strategy for the seizure of power from the enemy. The main component is the united action of the masses, to which the revolutionary movement must also feed organised forms of violence. The consequence of the successful development of the underground forces of the ANC and its combat forces and their intensified political and military actions will be to steel these forces and stimulate the confidence of the masses in the viability of armed struggle. On the other hand, the regime will be forced to acknowledge the indestructibility of the armed struggle as it totters under its heavy blows. Our armed struggle must ensure by its strikes that South Africa does indeed become ungovernable and apartheid unworkable.

The enemy is an important actor in the arena of struggle and can through his actions influence a movement to make certain strategic shifts, some of them major, just as the revolutionary forces can influence policy changes on the regime's part. But these dialectics notwithstanding, a movement in order to make rapid strides must define its strategic thrust clearly, based on an analysis of the concrete historical conditions and as thorough as possible an estimate of how the force relations are likely to develop.

It is correct, therefore, that we should not be dogmatic about the methods of struggle. But we must bear in mind that it is only through our action that we can influence changes on the enemy's part and in the force relations, and that therefore our main course of action should be clearly defined and be the most realistic under the circumstances.



THE CURRENT CRISIS AND THE GROWTH OF OUR REVOLUTION

**(A Comparative Analysis of the
States of Emergency in 1960 and 1986)**

By Sisa Majola

If today, 27 years after the formation of MK, we look back at the growth of our liberation struggle and consider the historical significance of the revolutionary crisis that is currently enveloping South Africa, we shall find it necessary to admit, without making ourselves victims of our own propaganda, that victory over the apartheid forces is definitely within our grasp. The death knell of the racist empire has already sounded in Pretoria.

The 1989 January 8 Statement of the National Executive Committee of the ANC refers to “the all-embracing crisis afflicting the apartheid ruling

clique”, and talks of the crumbling of “its ideology, policies and programmes . . . in the face of the people’s resolute march”. It says the desperate attempt of the regime to extricate itself from this “quagmire” is characteristic of “a regime in its death throes”.

But how correct and precise are we in proclaiming that at this juncture a crisis situation has developed in South Africa? Has the term “crisis” not become another nice-sounding cliché and catchword of this period? Are we not stretching our “euphoric” desires beyond the bounds of realism? When our revolutionary people storm the citadels of apartheid and begin to smell victory just around the corner, are they being over-optimistic in their assessment? What about the effects of the State of Emergency, the massive detentions, the disruption of street committees that had once mushroomed throughout the country? Is the racist government, in fact, not still in control of sufficient resources to stabilise the country? Is it not still in effective command of the legal and administrative structures that are set to “crush” all manner of opposition?

Some analysts have argued that this term “crisis” has been abused by the critics of the South African government, and that it is completely inaccurate as a description of South Africa in this period. “For anyone who walks the bustling streets of Johannesburg and Cape Town,” writes John Brewer, “‘crisis’ seems a particularly inappropriate description of the society.”¹ Meanwhile, R.W. Johnson² argues that South Africa should not be regarded as a country in a state of near collapse, and cynically remarks that the persistent predictions of imminent revolution create an impression that the clock is permanently stuck at five minutes to midnight. In their notoriously reactionary book, *Why South Africa Will Survive: An Historical Analysis*³, Gann and Duignan also talk of the resilience of the apartheid regime as a factor that is often ignored by those who see signs of a crisis in South Africa, and they argue that normal societal problems of growth and development should not be mistaken for a sign of crisis.

Analysing somehow from different premises, but nevertheless reaching the same conclusion, another group of South African academics suggests that it is actually the liberation movement (including the mass democratic movement) which is facing a crisis, having failed to conquer power during the period since the 1984 uprising. This argument also points to the strength of the apartheid regime and its utilisation of the State of Emergency to “maintain the balance of power in its favour”.

In this regard Tom Lodge maintains that the apartheid regime effectively remains unchallengeable and master of the South African house, and

suggests that the liberation movement must participate in the state-created institutions if it is to avoid being rendered ineffectual.

“The state’s resources are still far greater than those which can be marshalled by the forces of popular resistance. There is no stalemate, and the state can still tear apart the body of organised political activity.”⁴

Mark Swilling, on the other hand, while recognising that there are some contradictions at the top echelons of government, sees the role of the mass democratic movement as reinforcing the reformist sections of the apartheid cabinet since all substantial political changes can only come from them.⁵ Ivor Sarakinsky also sees the crisis in South Africa being resolved only through the process of negotiations, and calls on the liberation movement to make a “strategic intervention in state structures” by joining up with the tri-cameral parliament, the proposed National Council and Local Authorities.⁶

The common shortcoming in all these positions is that they fail to understand the crucial point in history that the South African revolution has reached. They are misreading the signs of a truly profound storm, mistaking it for the usual drizzle. Such behaviour resembles precisely the sceptics in the Biblical story of Noah’s Ark who, having never once witnessed a flood, thought that the gathering clouds were another passing shower of light rain. They have eyes, yet they cannot see; they have ears, yet they cannot hear what our movement, which is leading this revolution, says to the people of South Africa and the world in general.

The Balance of Forces

There is probably no better way of addressing these questions and assessing the real growth of the South African liberation struggle than to make a comparative analysis of the conditions and the balance of forces in the country during the two periods when the States of Emergency were declared, in 1960 and in the mid-1980s.

In the course of this discussion, we shall demonstrate how the African National Congress and its allies have made a profound political and organisational impact in South Africa in the face of the most formidable difficulties. These difficulties consist not only of the barbaric persecutions to which our members have been, and continue to be subjected, but also of the immense complexity of the historical conditions under which our movement has to lead a successful revolution. Yet in spite of these formidable difficulties and obstacles, the ANC and its allies, within a matter of one generation, have brought about an irreversible revolutionary crisis in the country and forced the apartheid regime to declare what has correctly been analysed as a

permanent State of Emergency, with all the ingredients of a pre-revolutionary situation.

There have been few instances in South African history when the government declared a State of Emergency. The first time was in the early part of this century when the Smuts government was faced with the revolt of the then militant white working class. This was a State of Emergency declared because of the sharpening of class contradictions within the ruling nation, but it was not the consequence of a revolt by the oppressed people. It was therefore not a pre-revolutionary situation even in the vulgar sense of the term.

The first time that the government declared a State of Emergency as a result of the revolt of the oppressed people was in 1960. As in most conventional situations when a State of Emergency is declared, the government felt that it was under siege, that the usual legal and administrative methods of maintaining its authority were not adequate. Even at this stage, however, no one seriously thought that a pre-revolutionary situation had matured in South Africa, neither the government nor the organisations of the oppressed.

Even the economy of South Africa could not be said to be in crisis in 1960. The country had been spared the worst effects of the crisis that occurred in most industrial countries. South Africa's fortunes could be attributed to two principal factors — firstly, the smooth and mutually beneficial relationship between capitalism and the system of apartheid; and secondly, the unique position that gold occupied in the international market.

The rapidly growing economy of the 1960s reached the limit of its potential in the early 1970s. In the periods 1960-1974, 1974-81, and 1981-86, the average annual growth rates were 5.5%, 3% and 1.1% respectively. What was once a growth model, that is, a stable pattern of economic advance within the framework of apartheid, reached its braking point from the mid-1970s to the point of stagnation of the end of the 1980s. Reviewing the performance of the South African economy in the mid-1980s, David Kaplan writes:

“In contemporary South Africa, recession uncharacteristically no longer gives way to significant and sustained economic growth. Since 1974, South Africa has experienced a number of ‘upturns’ (1975, 1980, 1983, 1985 and again in 1986) but each of these has entailed limited growth and has rapidly petered out . . . Recessionary conditions have become the South African norm and periods of expansion only limited and temporary aberrations. It is these exceptional features which justify the term ‘crisis’.”⁷

The phenomenal growth of the strike movement in the 1980s, corresponding to the organisational growth of the trade union movement,

has imposed, inside South Africa, its own kind of economic sanctions. Armed activities of Umkhonto we Sizwe since 1977, particularly those which have been aimed at the economic nerve centres like the Sasol refineries, contributed tremendously to the weakening of the apartheid economy. This development was accompanied by the growth of the international sanctions movement, which led to the decline of new fixed investment.

In the key manufacturing sector, for example, the decline in fixed investment was particularly pronounced in 1987 and 1988. There was a growing lack of business confidence in the apartheid economy. In his 1986 annual address, Dr De Kock, the governor of the South African Reserve Bank, suggested that the government may have to compel the business sector by law to invest. "The government has every right to expect the private sector to show more confidence in the future," he said.

Many sections of private capital have blamed apartheid policies for the economic and political tensions that have developed in South Africa. They have stated their unwillingness to bear the costs of implementing apartheid and its consequences — the huge military budgets, the bantustan programme, the occupation of Namibia, etc. The *Financial Mail* of 1 February 1980 wrote that "in the coming decade of crisis, what South Africa needs is skilled crisis management". Impatient with the slow pace of government reform, the business sector has developed its own political initiatives.

Apartheid Economy

If we are to understand the nature of the present crisis in South Africa, we must analyse it from the standpoint of the social relations of production upon which South African society is founded.

Because the mode of production in South Africa is capitalist, the crisis is essentially that of this capitalist system. By capitalism we mean a social system in which the means of production are owned privately and in which the owners of these assets hire wage labour in order to make a profit. Under capitalism commodities are produced not for use but for exchange at a profit.

To obtain the largest possible amounts of profit, the South African capitalists, right from the start, avoided investing in labour-saving machinery and relied, instead, on the services of human labour, taking advantage, in that process, of the colonial oppression of the black workers who could be paid starvation wages. The rapid expansion of the South African economy was rooted precisely in the super-exploitation of the black workers, hence South Africa could boast of the rate of return on capital investment that

ranked among the highest in the world. The apartheid economy thus attracted large investments from abroad, which in turn developed the South African industry faster than any other on the African continent. In the early 1960s, an average US company obtained more than twice as much profit from its investment in South Africa as it did in Britain.

The relationship between capitalism and apartheid has not, of course, remained static. For capitalists to survive the challenge of their competitors, they have to invest in more productive machinery. But machinery on its own does not produce commodities or make profits. The central factor in the equation is the worker. But the kind of worker that can operate a modern machine is one who is educated and skilled.

The increasing need for skilled labour was the most compelling reason for the pressures the capitalists began to apply on the government to change its labour policy and allow a free, mobile, and competitive labour force. Yet this demand for a free labour market is in direct conflict with the political objectives of the apartheid regime which aims to preserve white supremacy in all spheres of life.

Apartheid began to act as a braking mechanism on economic growth, and this led to a decline in the rates of profit, increasing unemployment and the general impoverishment of the population, particularly the black population. When profits decline the capitalists always seek to recover them by reducing the wages of the workers below the value of their labour-power. This attack on the living standards of the workers, however, only leads to more and more workers' strikes, which again eat up the declining profitability of the system. Meanwhile, company insolvencies, compulsory liquidations, massive unemployment and high inflation rates begin to characterise a society in crisis, as South Africa has become.

Between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s South African economic performance has not been the success story it once was in the 1960s. As Fuad Cassim writes in the *South African Review*⁸;

“South Africa is in the midst of its most serious depression since the 1930s. All the signs of a deepening economic and political crisis are present. Unlike earlier crises, which served as catalysts for renewed growth and development, the present one has eroded some previous advances such as the growth of the new industries. So far it has not generated any creative responses. The alternative to rapid structural change in the economy is stagnation, but changes required to alter the direction of development are blocked. A new political alignment is needed without which creative economic solutions cannot be found or implemented.

“The current crisis in South Africa is not simply another in the series that have characterised apartheid and capitalism . . . Any temporary recovery will not resolve the problem. The economic structure which emerged in the post-war period, with the high growth rates of the 1960s and early 1970s, is no longer tenable.”

The nature of the contradiction in the political economy of South Africa is such that only the revolutionary destruction of the old obsolete political and economic order and the transition from the old production relations to new ones will lay the basis for the further development of the economy and society as a whole. There is no way in which the crisis in South Africa can be resolved in a lasting way if apartheid is not abolished, and with it the capitalist economic system that underpins it. The suffering victims of the economic crisis are the working people who constitute the majority of the population, but have no vote. Socialism is the answer. A revolutionary people's government is needed which will make the needs of society, and not profit, the most important factor in production.

Contradictions Within The Ruling Nation

The concept of apartheid became the final rallying point in the consolidation of the Afrikaner as the principal ethnic component of the ruling group in South Africa in the 1960s. During the tenth anniversary celebrations of the National Party's coming to power, Dr Verwoerd, who became South Africa's Prime Minister on August 24 1958, confirmed again and again that the white government supported the policies that guaranteed white supremacy and the "placing of the African in his place".

The main apartheid programme in addressing what was then called the "native problem" was the establishment of bantustans, whose framework was embodied in the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act, No. 46 of 1959. In a speech delivered in the House of Assembly on March 24, 1959, Verwoerd said that the white man wanted to retain his domination over his part of the country, and that the Africans in the towns and in the rural areas were to be given no political or land rights. The representation of Africans in the central parliament was to be abolished. Africans in the towns were to be regarded as interchangeable migrants, even if they had lived there for generations.

Although the bantustans still exist, the regime has openly admitted that the programme is not a viable one. The grand dream of the establishment of ten so-called independent states composed of the various African ethnic groups has come to a halt.

In January 1986 State President Botha outlined his government's framework for constitutional development, stating: (i) the government accepted the notion of an undivided South Africa (excluding the already 'independent' bantustans) and that all regions and communities formed part of the South African state; (ii) it accepted one citizenship for all South

Africans; (iii) a democratic system of government, which accommodated all 'legitimate' political aspirations of all the South African communities, had to be negotiated; and (iv) all South Africans had to be able to participate in government through their elected representatives.

Although nothing of this has been implemented in practice, this statement was undoubtedly a departure from the racist rhetoric that used to come from the mouths of his predecessors Malan, Strydom, Verwoerd and Vorster. Even though he might not have meant it, Botha did tell his parliament that "South Africa has outgrown the outdated colonial system of paternalism and the outdated concept of apartheid." The apartheid regime has had to hide behind the policies of its opponents.

This shift in National Party policy is undoubtedly a victory for the liberation movement. The regime has been forced to defend itself ideologically from outside its long established trenches. It is the liberation movement that is determining the moral imperatives.

Failure of State Security

The political mood in South Africa in the late 1950s resembled very much the situation that prevails today. The ANC emerged from its 1958 annual conference with renewed vigour in the drive to defy the apartheid programme. Its paid-up membership at the time was 250,000, and a new Executive Committee had just been elected, composed of Chief Albert Luthuli as President General, Oliver Tambo (who had previously been the Secretary General) as Deputy President, and Duma Nokwe as the new Secretary General. Reflecting the political mood of defiance in the country, the Conference directed the new Executive to appoint a committee that would prepare for a nationwide economic boycott of such commodities and institutions as might be decided from time to time.

In Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London, Bloemfontein, the war against the passes was fought and the police spread their network throughout the country trying to stop the revolt from growing into open revolution. Nothing like it had been seen in South Africa, not even during the 1952 Defiance Campaign.

Gradually the urban workers began to change from the methods of peaceful protest and defended themselves against police brutality with rudimentary weapons. A semi-armed revolt took place at Virginia Gold Mine compound, when African mineworkers, armed with sticks and steel pipes, cornered the compound manager and his staff at his office and pelted them with stones, smashed furniture and windows, damaged cars belonging

to mine officials, and ruined stocks of food. More than 200 mineworkers were charged with public violence after the police made two baton charges. Two months after this incident, at Kroonstad, a large crowd of township residents turned on the municipal officials and then the police, whom they beat with stones as well as shot at with some fire-arms.

The whole South African countryside, stretching from Sekhukhuneland in the northern Transvaal to Zululand in Natal, also saw semi-armed peasants rising up and conducting a protracted revolt against the introduction of the system of Bantu Authorities. The immediate target of attack by the rural people was the chiefs who collaborated with the government. Many of them were killed or forced into exile from their areas, especially in Zululand, the Zeerust area in the western Transvaal, Sekhukhuneland and the Transkei.

The crisis point in this revolt of the rural people was reached following the Pondo uprising. In the areas of Bizana, Flagstaff and Lusikisiki, open revolt against the system of Bantu Authorities reached a climax when after the expulsion of all the government-supporting chiefs, a people's committee was set up to take over the administration of the villages and to serve as the principal co-ordinator in the ongoing struggle against the system. For the first time in the history of the liberation movement, an organ of people's power hoisted its flag on the Ngquza Hill, from where it got its name: The Intaba (Hill) Committee.

This became the centre of power in the locality, and also served as the people's court which tried and sentenced pro-government chiefs and headmen, but also settled disputes between the villagers themselves. Whoever took the position of the government or collaborated with Bantu Authorities was branded "umngcatshi" (traitor) or "umthengisi" (sell-out), and summoned to face charges before the Intaba Committee. If such a person defied the summons, his kraal was burnt down, to serve as a warning to other collaborators. Collaborators were treated as outcasts from the life of the people. Many of them fled to seek government refuge, and police kept them in a refugee camp near Umzimkhulu under guard by night. Not since the 1906 Bambatha Rebellion in Natal had South Africa seen such a peasants' revolt. In many districts of Pondoland people stopped paying taxes, and police could not enter the villages unless they were accompanied by a convoy of motorised soldiers. The revolt resulted in the complete disruption and dislocation of the apartheid administrative work in the area.

Following this development, the apartheid regime declared its first State of Emergency in 1960 which covered, at first, only the districts of Pondoland and Tembuland.

The police, Native Commissioners and chiefs were given a free hand to crush all opposition by force. Chiefs were empowered to remove whole families from their homes and to destroy their huts and dwellings. People were banned from attending gatherings, including church services and funerals. Those who treated the chief or headman "with disrespect, contempt or ridicule" or failed "to render such services to such chief or headman as should be shown or rendered in accordance with native law and custom" were arrested and punished.

Farcical Trials

So severe were the State of Emergency regulations for the rural people that no legal redress was available. Chiefs were given more powers to pass sentences and impose fines. They were not obliged to keep a written record of the trials they presided over. The only written record of a trial which needed to be kept in terms of the Emergency regulations was that which gave the name of the accused, the offence with which the accused was charged, the date of trial, the result of the trial and the sentence imposed. No provision was made for the recording of any evidence.

The ANC led a nationwide campaign against the political programme of the government, particularly the pass laws which evoked the anger of all the African people, both urban and rural. A day was subsequently chosen, March 31 1960, when deputations from the people would urge the government authorities throughout the country to abolish the pass laws. This day was to be called the "Anti-Pass Day". A pamphlet which condemned the pass laws was produced by a consultative committee of fourteen organisations.

These plans were only disrupted when on March 18, Robert Sobukwe, president of the breakaway Pan Africanist Congress, told a press conference that his organisation had planned an anti-pass campaign which would commence on 21 March, ten days before the ANC's Anti-Pass Day.

Duma Nokwe informed Sobukwe by letter that the ANC would not support this campaign because it had not been properly prepared. But when the police shot down the people in Sharpeville and Langa, on March 21, Chief Albert Luthuli called on all Africans and other sections of the population to observe March 28 as a day of mourning for the dead, and appealed to them to stay away from work on that day.

An extremely tense atmosphere prevailed throughout the country. In Johannesburg, violence erupted in African townships. In Dube and Meadowlands, for example, municipal offices and those of the Native Resettlement Board were set on fire and extensively damaged. In Cape Town

tens of thousands of people stayed away from work on March 28 to attend the funerals of those killed by the police a week earlier.

By this time there was confusion within the government, which felt itself to be under siege. A nationwide State of Emergency was declared on March 30, and a week later the ANC and PAC were declared unlawful organisations after the rushing through parliament of the Unlawful Organisations Bill (it became Act No. 34 of 1960). Both in town and countryside heavily armed police, soldiers and sailors were mobilised and sent into townships and villages to arrest hundreds of people, leaders and the rank-and-file, in the early hours of the morning.

In places like Cape Town, thousands of people were trapped within the townships and were not allowed to leave, while those outside were refused the right to enter. In Stellenbosch, Worcester, Somerset West, Simonstown, Hermanus, Paarl and Muizenburg, violence erupted and there were clashes with the police. In Durban, thousands of people marched from Cato Manor to the city to demand the release of their leaders, but were halted by a heavy cordon of police and soldiers. Those who managed to reach the city prison and to talk to the government authorities were later shot at and baton charged. Violence occurred in areas like Lamontville and Clermont townships. Similar occurrences were reported in Johannesburg, Germiston, Port Elizabeth, East London, Cradock, Bloemfontein, Pietermaritzburg and Ermelo. According to press reports, close on 100 people were killed and 400 injured in violent clashes throughout the country.

Resort to Violence

The events around the 1960 State of Emergency demonstrated that the government was vulnerable to mass revolt. This is why it turned to the use of violence and other repressive measures and to prepare for an open dictatorship. The declaration of the State of Emergency was made not from a position of strength but from weakness.

The State of Emergency in 1986 was proclaimed despite the fact that since 1963 the regime had buffered itself behind a barrier of repressive laws. In 1963 the government empowered the police to detain people without trial for purposes of interrogation. In the years that followed, parliament granted greater arbitrary powers to the police, culminating in the Internal Security Act of 1982.

The significant difference between the State of Emergency and subsequent events in the 1960s and those of 1986 is that, whereas the State security machinery in the earlier period succeeded in holding back the

people's advance by the use of its army, police, courts, prisons and other administrative measures, during the States of Emergency of the 1980s all such means have failed to stop the advance of the liberation movement. The first State of Emergency in 1985 was a limited one which covered only 36 magisterial districts, mainly in the Witwatersrand and Eastern Cape. It was later extended to the Western Cape. After eight months the emergency was lifted in March 1986, only to be imposed again on June 12 1986, this time over the whole country.

In making an analysis of this 1986 State of Emergency, David Webster wrote:

“With space available in the prisons, the state president informed the nation on 12 June that he was pre-empting a major insurrection by declaring another state of emergency ... The new emergency shows signs of lengthy and careful planning. On the night before it was declared, security forces swept through black communities detaining thousands. By June 1987, over 26,000 people had been detained. In eight months of this emergency security police detained as many people as the total held under previous emergencies and security legislation for the past 26 years. Internationally, South Africa is now second to none on an index of repression.”⁹

Conclusion

In 1981, John Saul and Steven Gelb¹⁰, using the definition of “crisis” given by Gramsci, described the developing South African crisis as “organic”. An organic crisis, they argued, is characterised by incurable structural contradictions deeply embedded in society.

The Intaba Committee of Pondoland has now multiplied itself into numerous People's Communes throughout the country — the street committees, area committees, village committees and other organs of people's power. Although the Intaba Committee was crushed, yet its spirit lingered on in the minds of revolutionaries, like the Paris Commune in the last century. It is the establishment of these organs of people's power, and the drive towards armed insurrection in South Africa that is sending waves of panic throughout the racist ranks.

The pretence that the South African government is invincible has been shattered. If this government was able to gain fresh breath in the 1960s following the banning of the ANC and the arrests at Rivonia, in the 1980s it is the ANC and its allies that have taken the centre stage of politics, while the authority of the apartheid regime is on the decline. Whereas it was the ANC in the beginning of this century that sent deputations to the government

asking for a discussion and resolution of the political problems of the country, in the 1980s it is the South African ruling class and vast sections of its traditional constituency that are sending deputations to the ANC asking for a discussion and resolution of the political problems of the country.

The overwhelming majority of the people of South Africa regard the ANC today as the alternative power to the National Party. The ANC is leading a mass movement whose cornerstones are the street and village committees, many of which have survived the State of Emergency. "Power to the People" now actually means power to the people's committees at all levels. Advancing to People's Power, Uniting in Action for People's Power and Mass Action for People's Power all mean that the task of the people's committees must be to prepare to take power and constitute themselves as the revolutionary authority.

Only if power is transferred to these people's communes can a democratic form of government be established on the soil of South Africa. The majority of the people are on our side. This has been proved again and again, not least in the failures of the apartheid programmes, including the failure of the recent Local Authority elections in October last year. The apartheid regime called for elections, and we called for a boycott; the people listened to us and boycotted. The same happened with the tri-cameral parliamentary elections in 1984. The initiatives of the regime are rejected by the people, while those of the liberation movement meet with a wholehearted popular response.

The victories of October 1988, however, can only be consolidated in a lasting way if they are institutionalised in the people's communes, which are the organs of victory.

FOOTNOTES

1. John D. Brewer, *After Soweto — An Unfinished Journey*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1986, p.10.
2. R. W. Johnson, *How Long Will South Africa Survive?*, Macmillan, London, 1977.
3. *Why South Africa Will Survive: An Historical Analysis*, Croom and Helm, London, 1980.
4. Tom Lodge, 'State Power and the Politics of Resistance', *Work In Progress*, No. 50-51, 1987.
5. Mark Swilling, 'The Politics of Negotiation', *Work In Progress*, No. 50-51, 1987.
6. Ivor Sarakinsky, 'The State of the State and the State of Resistance', *Work In Progress*, No. 52, 1987.
7. David Kaplan, 'Beyond the Indicators: A Perspective on the South African Economy', *South African Review* 4, edited by Glenn Moss and Ingrid Obery, Southern African Research Service and Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1987, p. 525.
8. *South African Review* 4, p. 535.
9. David Webster, 'Repression and the State of Emergency', *ibid.*, p. 142.
10. John Saul and Steven Gelb, *The Crisis in South Africa*, Zed Books, London, 1986.

The first issue of *The African Communist* was published in October 1959. To mark the anniversary, some of our readers have sent us words of appreciation for services rendered by the journal to the revolutionary movement.

“THE AFRICAN COMMUNIST”: EDUCATOR AND ORGANISER

By Andy Tsepho

This year marks the 30th year since the appearance of *The African Communist* (*AC*), a journal which has contributed a great deal to my understanding of the emancipatory revolutionary philosophy, Marxism-Leninism in general, and the theory of the South African revolution in particular. To mark this historic year, I would like to share some ideas with comrades and readers of the *AC* as to why I read and think this journal is indispensable and an absolute necessity for militants and activists. As an activist of the mass democratic movement operating under the noses of the fascists, the *AC* has been and continues to be an important educator, organiser and a guide to action.

The South African colonial regime is famous, nay, notorious for its censorship actions. Since the enactment of the Suppression of Communism Act, the banning of our Party and the ANC, the regime has done all in its power to cut us off from the world of democratic, progressive and revolutionary ideas. But truth has its own way of coming to the fore. No amount of censorship can suppress it for all time. And the *AC* has been the bearer of this truth.

The first time I had heard about the *AC* was in discussion with comrades in prison. From time to time reference would be made to this or that article in the *AC*. Comrades spoke with revolutionary pride and confidence about the journal's contribution to revolutionary ideas in the South African revolution, first and foremost, and secondly, in the African revolution. For these discussions it dawned on me that one cannot afford not to read, actually study and discuss issues raised in the journal. This appreciation and understanding was further enhanced by the study of Lenin's *What is to be Done?* wherein he argues with revolutionary vigour and passion the need to establish a Party newspaper. Since then I have been an ardent reader of the *AC*.

The *AC* plays a central role in my quest to understand and grasp Marxism-Leninism, the only revolutionary theory in contemporary times. I have come to understand the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism as applied to the South African liberation struggle, thanks to the *AC*. The omnipresence of racism and apartheid violence against the black majority has tended to generate simplistic, narrow, exclusivist and chauvinist conceptions about the nature of our struggle, either in the form of Africanism, black consciousness or some other tendency. Through reading the *AC* one has been able to clearly understand the shortcomings of such conceptions, either as attempts at theorising our struggle, or as guides to concrete practical actions in the struggle. While pointing out such shortcomings, the *AC* clearly articulates, at the level of theory, the correct understanding of the South African struggle as a struggle against colonialism of a special type, in which both the national and class struggles are intertwined and inseparable. By clarifying the dialectical link between the struggle for national independence and self determination, for people's democracy and socialism, the *AC* has contributed a lot to our understanding of the role of different forces in the struggle. The understanding of what forces to rely on, that is, which are the main forces of struggle and which are secondary, is very crucial in the process of struggle. It is on the basis of this understanding that strategic and tactical decisions are taken.

In the past ten years the popular uprisings and struggles of our people incited a lot of debates about the role of the working class in the national democratic revolution. At times some of the debates, published in academic and other journals, tended to be confusing and some actually challenged our own understanding. It was at these times that I turned to and relied more and more on the *AC* as the only consistent propagator, fighter and defender of our ideological position — the most consistent, coherent and revolutionary theory of the South African revolution.

The *AC* is not only a collective propagandist or educator. It is a collective organiser as well. The main duty of our Party and every militant, indeed of every activist, is to establish the widest possible contact with workers of all ranks, and to propagate democratic and socialist ideas, in the first instance among the workers who must provide the storm troops of the national democratic revolution, and secondly among all anti-apartheid forces. The *AC* plays a pivotal role in this process. It is a tool around which we have gone out to organise, educate and spread the ideas about our struggle. Increasingly, more and more activists, workers, women and youth as well as progressive intellectuals, gather around to read and study the *AC*. As a result an increasing number of activists and workers have become staunch supporters of our party.

What I find useful and revolutionary about the *AC* is that it does not dish out to us abstract theories which are unrelated to our daily revolutionary practice. The theory and ideas that one finds in it are actually stars that guide us in the theatre of struggle. Of particular relevance to me, particularly in the past 6 years, have been articles which articulated and argued the importance of alliances and the need to isolate the apartheid regime and the most reactionary elements, while at the same time constantly striving to broaden and deepen the anti-apartheid forces. This was very important in forming our organising strategy in the process of building a united democratic front. Without a clear understanding of what a front is and of front alliance politics it would have been much more difficult to build the mass democratic movement in the manner that we did. The task of broadening the front, as it emerged in the wake of the states of emergency, would have been unthinkable without the sound theoretical base. In a word, the *AC* succeeds as a guide to action.

Finally, I want to end up by paying tribute to our vanguard Party, the SACP. The *AC* can only be what it is — a forum for revolutionary ideas — because our party succeeds, through its revolutionary practice in the heat of battle, to guide and inspire the struggling masses at all times, and generally to

act as the revolutionary vanguard of the South African working class. In the words of Lenin, our Party is an “organisation capable of uniting all forces and guiding the movement in actual practice and not in name alone, that is, an organisation ready at any time to support every protest and every outbreak and use it to build up and consolidate the fighting forces suitable for the decisive struggle.” (*What is to be Done?*)

Long live the red banner of Communism!

Long live *The African Communist!*

SHOULD THERE BE ONLY ONE LANGUAGE?

“Now for the issues of language, culture and ethnic symbols. We are by no means indifferent to them. There is an ethnic entity in the Soviet Union, for instance, only 6,000 strong. But those 6,000 have a language, a culture and a history of their own. Shall we allow its identity to be obliterated?

“It would be a grave blunder — no, a crime — if that and other communities were to be assimilated. The true way to a stronger federative statehood is in the flourishing of all ethnic communities and cultures. Such flourishing is our country’s strength, not weakness”.

Mikhail Gorbachev, speaking on inter-ethnic relations at a session of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet on November 26, 1988.

WHITHER BIG BUSINESS?

Bourgeois strategies to cope with the South African revolution

By Gerald Borkman

Analysis of white South African capitalists is a neglected field. The reason may be because these capitalists have not had a single, obvious and effective organised political expression. The white South African bourgeoisie acts largely as a class *in* itself, rather than as a class *for* itself, united and conscious of its political interests. But the evidence of the past few years is that liberal members of this class have been working hard to change this state of affairs.

The character of the white bourgeoisie in relation to apartheid was touched on in a debate during the 1970s about whether apartheid contradicted or complemented capitalism. Yet because of its political and economic context, the discussion failed to consider political issues. It did not look at the potential for capitalists to withdraw support from the apartheid regime, nor at how business would respond to the unfolding struggle for people's power. Today we certainly need to go further and pose the directly political questions, but the debate over apartheid's relation to capitalism is a useful starting point.

It was in the context of a challenge to liberal interpretations of South African history that the controversy took off. Liberal academics — several like Michael O’Dowd linked to big capital — were concerned to argue that apartheid was a brake on capitalist economic growth. Working with an abstract model of capitalist “modernisation” derived from conservative academic circles in the USA, they argued that apartheid was economically irrational. Job reservation, they said, prevented the use of labour on the basis of merit. The migrant labour system made it difficult to train the workforce, and the cheapness of black labour meant that there was no large internal market to buy capitalism’s goods.

Some Marxist scholars shared this general view, analysing it in terms of the racist dimension of the relations of production becoming a fetter on the forces of production. Other Marxist writers entirely rejected the idea that apartheid contradicted the interests of capitalism. They pointed to the complicity of capital in the creation of the pass laws and argued that cheap black labour power was at the heart of successful capitalist growth in South Africa. According to them, national oppression was highly functional to the bourgeoisie.

Another group of writers tried to refine the debate by applying the concept of different fractions of capital. They argued that apartheid served the interests of some capitalists and contradicted the interests of others. In their view, mining and farming capital benefited from — and indeed depended on — migrant labour and job reservation, while industrial capital needed a stable, skilled and comparatively well-paid workforce that would also serve as an internal market for its goods.

All these debates took place at a time when capitalism was beginning to run into problems after its unhindered expansion in the 1960s. The slowing international capitalist economy boded ill for South Africa’s extroverted and dependent economy. There were indeed economic imperatives for some capitalists to want an end to job reservation and the upgrading of a poorly-educated workforce.

Also significant in understanding the parameters of the debate is the character of the developing struggles of the decade. The 1973 Natal strikes, the rise of black consciousness and the spreading student struggles began to raise questions about the relationship between apartheid and capitalism. Yet this political context was evidently not powerful enough to make a significant impression on the debate. Indeed, what stands out about the whole controversy is how narrow all the approaches were in their focus on the *economics* of the apartheid-capitalism relationship. The implication of the

important *political* contradictions between capitalists and apartheid were not yet fully appreciated.

That situation stands in sharp contrast to the 1980s. Today, the economic cost of apartheid to business is not just a hypothetical question — there is a real financial burden as the regime spends desperately on multi-ethnic bureaucracies, militarisation and white civil servant salaries. The economic benefits reaped by capital from a cheap black labour system are increasingly undercut by the enormous expense of maintaining the system. Today, the political future of capitalism in South Africa has been thrown into question by its link with apartheid.

A Divided Class

No analysis of the South African bourgeoisie can ignore the context of colonialism of a special kind. Although white and black capitalists both own means of production and exploit labour power, their class character and politics are rendered significantly different by the material reality of national oppression. Within the white bourgeoisie itself, it is necessary to take into account that South Africa's colonial history has made for significant political differences between English and Afrikaner business people.

Nor can an analysis of the South African bourgeoisie ignore the monopoly structure of the economy. There is today vast interpenetration of capitals from different sources. Through its mining operations, Anglo-American Corporation has invested substantially in manufacturing (eg. Premier and SA Breweries). The giant finance house SA Mutual has done likewise (eg. Barlows — which is also linked to Anglo). The economic interpenetration also encompasses extensive intersection with the apartheid state, most notably — but not exclusively — in military production and fuel supplies. South African monopoly capitalism is also noteworthy for the fundamental dependence of virtually every large capitalist enterprise on international technology and investment funds. Gold and mineral exports secure these imports by propping up the balance of payments.

In noting the economic problems of the bourgeoisie, a word of caution must be sounded. There is no simplistic connection between the behaviour of South African capitalists and their economic background. It can be noted for example that Anglo-American owns both Premier and SA Breweries, but the respective bosses of the two companies, Tony Bloom and Meyer Kahn, have been far apart politically (and Bloom has now decided to emigrate). In 1983 Gavin Relly supported a “yes” vote for Botha's tricameral constitution, while Harry Oppenheimer did not. According to journalist Anthony

Sampson with numerous contacts in the bourgeoisie, most South African business is still controlled by a handful of individual capitalists “each with his own background, conscience and perspective”. Personality and judgement, as much as economic interest, explains their differences of behaviour, he writes. (1987, p.186)

All these factors — colonial, ethnic, economic and personal — influence the general character of the bourgeoisie, creating severe political divisions within it. However, the recent period has seen significant new attempts by the white liberal capitalist constituency to organise both itself and the bourgeoisie as a whole into a powerful “moderate” liberal political force.

Liberal Capitalists and Political Power

How powerful is the liberal business lobby? White liberal businessmen like to portray themselves and their activities as being outside of the system of apartheid. They pose as independent onlookers occasionally forced into action when the system intrudes on, and threatens, their daily business. This convenient image enables them to deny any culpability in the crimes of apartheid and, instead, to offer themselves as neutral mediators between the liberation movement and the regime. They react blankly or violently to accusations that they collaborate with apartheid.

The fact is, of course, that the white bourgeoisie does generally acquiesce in the system. Even if some members bemoan the limited market for their goods, the class as a whole continues to benefit from the cheap labour that goes with national oppression. Most of its members give active support to Pretoria’s military machine, not least through the subsidy they provide by topping up the wages of white employees doing army service. Then there is also their overt and covert support for apartheid initiatives, such as sanctions busting, collaborating with security forces, and last year even distributing registration forms to workers before the 1988 October municipal elections.

Notwithstanding all this entanglement with apartheid, liberal capitalists raise two defences to the charge of collaboration. Firstly, they sometimes claim that there is little that they can do to change the government. The former managing director of Johnson & Johnson, Ron Morris, describes the company’s role as “but a small candle in a vast cavern of darkness”. (*Daily Dispatch*, 24.02.88). Tony Bloom declares that opinions of business people bounce off the government like ping pong balls when it comes to getting political curbs lifted.

Secondly, and in contradiction to the first defence, there is the refrain that business people — far from collaborating — are doing much to change

government policy. For example, Raymond Ackerman says that the dropping of the Immorality, Mixed Marriages and Influx Control Acts was “in no small way influenced by the many examples of successful integration by the private sector”. (*SA Forum*, Vol 9, No. 7-10, 1986)

Len Abrahamse of Syfrets and the SA Foundation has it both ways: he has “no wish whatsoever to exaggerate the clout or leverage that business does have”, but he nonetheless claims that it was “private sector” efforts that got the government to recognise “the permanence of blacks in a single economy”. (10).

These different arguments provide a clue to the real political potential of the liberal grouping within the bourgeoisie. In the past few years, this group has shown itself to wield effective influence in some instances, but not in others.

The potential power of white businessmen to oppose apartheid is vast. Anne Bernstein, policy director at the Urban Foundation business institution, points out that businessmen have control over workplaces and the market as well as financial, managerial and personnel resources. In addition, they have access to the State, media, international community, diplomats, conservative business people — and, Bernstein adds, to the black community. These levers offer wide scope for action. For example, at a very elementary level, liberal capitalist Basil Hersov points out that businessmen could attach conditions to any financial assistance they give, such as donating money only to schools that are mixed and areas that are desegregated.

For various reasons, however, most members of the bourgeoisie keep quiet about the scope for action, either not seeing or being unwilling to see the possibilities. Leading liberal business people sit on Botha’s Economic Advisory Committee¹. Others — like Barlows’ Mike Rosholt — have been on his Defence Advisory Council, and indications are that many take part in the counter-revolutionary Joint Management Committee structure. The Association of Chambers of Commerce (Assocom) has annual two day talks with the Cabinet. (*Star*, 19.2.87) Botha has major summits with senior business leaders every few years. These forums offer capitalists wide scope for affecting policy. They could, for example, withhold their attendance in support of demands. They could refuse to top up salaries of workers on army service, to do business with Armscor or to pay tax. There are countless other possibilities.

So the argument that the bourgeoisie has no political clout is extremely thin. But what is clear is that while liberal business people have this potential

power, they do not regularly or comprehensively organise to use it. Part of the reason is that they generally do not have to do so.

Ignoring Politics When The Going Is Good

Businessman Bob Tucker feels that capitalists have been “co-opted to accept that the sole function of business is to maximise profit and avoid confrontation or involvement in the affairs of the state”. Many business people are quite happy with a narrowly business role, as long as the system enables them to make short-term profits without being disturbed by political pressures. As Zac de Beer puts it: “when a man’s business is going well, he doesn’t feel the same need to go out in the streets shouting, as he does when it is going badly”.

South African business people thus have an unsurprising tendency to avoid direct political involvement unless it is thrust upon them. “South African capitalism is the greediest, the most acquisitive, the most short-term in the world,” says Bob Tucker. (*Weekly Mail*, 19.2.87) While the capitalists sometimes react to short-term political issues, as far as medium- and long-term development are concerned they characteristically play a reactive, rather than an initiating political role. Thus Theo Heffer, Grinaker manpower consultant, points out that employers are not influencing change in the wider society as much as they are being influenced by the lack of real change. (*Financial Mail*, 28.11.86).

Leaving politics to the politicians does depend on the degree to which government policy serves business interests at any given time. Yet there are times when liberal capitalists have felt driven to raise political issues — and have been ineffective in doing so. Despite their potential political power, they have sometimes been unable to bring it to bear effectively on the Botha-Malan regime. The reason for this failure lies partly in their lack of organisational experience, partly in their reluctance to stick their necks out.

Amateur Politicians

While South Africa’s liberal capitalists have immense potential power, they are also inexperienced in using this politically, being usually content to leave it to the regime to do most of the work of organising and managing state power for them. As a result, business people have continuously been manipulated and outsmarted by the regime. They have appeared to believe its promises and failed to challenge its smear campaigns. Former Johannesburg Consolidated Investments (JCI) chairman Gordon Waddell admits that “most of business, and particularly English-speaking business, is easily

conned". John Wilson of Shell says of the 1980 Carlton summit between Botha and leading capitalists: "What we rather naive businessmen failed to realise was that we were, in fact, being set up". (Sampson, 1987, p.134)

This political backwardness has manifested itself in the lack of organised unity in action among capitalists. The situation was described by academic Sampie Terreblanche in September 1987 as one where individual business people condemned apartheid, but they did not use their power as a group. For some business people, this has been deliberate. Showing himself to be half-hearted about the prospects for effective bourgeois class political unity, JCI's Murray Hofmeyer has argued that when there is a large group trying to take a single point of view, the lowest common denominator syndrome is the result. What is acceptable to everybody is adopted, and it is so feeble that it is useless. Hofmeyer therefore concludes that business is most effective on a company by company basis.

The common denominator syndrome is indeed borne out in the experience of the Federated Chamber of Industries (FCI) Business Charter — a set of bland political demands drawn up by worried businessmen in 1986. According to Christo Nel, to achieve widespread business support for the Business Charter, it had been necessary to depoliticise aspects to accommodate special interests. (*Business Day*, 2.12.86) This organisational and political problem facing South Africa's fragmented capitalist class is very real, and is a factor in explaining the low level of united political action in their ranks — even by those within the liberal political camp.

Business and the Oppressed People

While liberal business people often show a lack of interest in, or a weak capacity for united class action to influence the regime, they are less backward in trying to use their class interest to influence the forces of liberation. This has been admitted by Dr Conrad Strauss, managing director of Standard Bank Investment Corp. He argues that business can do little to directly influence (white party) politics. Then, with unashamed frankness, he adds that business should therefore "concentrate on persuading those who now have only limited participation in the political process that a market-related economy is not synonymous with a limited democracy . . . In short it is business' task to encourage broader community participation in the business process". (*Leadership*, November 87, p.80)

The arrogance of this position should not disguise the fact that Dr Strauss at least understands that the fundamental force for change lies with the people, and not with the regime. However, many, if not most, capitalists still

appear to believe that change will come from within the white bloc.

Business Tries to Organise Itself

In the past year, business has stepped up its attempts to organise itself and its class as a means towards making more effective its initiatives directed at both forces.

“The capacity of business to influence events has only partially been realised and mobilised,” Anne Bernstein correctly observes. “The contribution of business to change in South Africa requires much greater organisational content and strategic intent before it will have a major impact on the struggle to create a non-racial democracy,” she adds.

The liberal business sector has a whole set of initiatives underway, aimed both at the government and the masses. Its members have toyed with adverts in the press, the FCI Business Charter, visits to the ANC, international tours, employee share-ownership schemes, post-apartheid SA studies, joint-ventures with black South African capitalists, and increased “corporate social investment” programmes (housing, charities, etc). In all cases the aim is to raise their level of influence within the bourgeoisie and society at large.

In this regard, the following significant developments can be noted: moves towards unifying established English business organisations, the formation of an explicitly liberal business educational group, and the attempt to launch a moderate-centre political party.

Uniting the Business Lobbies

“It has always been a weakness of South African business that it has not spoken with a single voice,” said the *Financial Mail* in 1987. In October 1988, rival business associations Assocom and FCI set up a commission to study the possibility of merging at the beginning of 1990.² Historically, the FCI has represented industrial capitalists’ interests and has lobbied the regime for protectionist economic policies. The commerce body Assocom has advocated free trade. But these differences have faded with the increasing monopolisation of the South African economy, with different capitals spreading across both industry and commerce. By 1987, dual FCI-Assocom members made up one third of Assocom’s subscribers. The result is that Assocom and FCI now make joint representations to the regime on issues such as import surcharges. (*Star*, 24.8.88)

“Unity is Strength,” said the *Financial Mail* in 1987, urging a merger of the two organisations. (13.3.87) But far from unity, the two organisations have in the past spent years slinging it out to become the primary business

organisation. Assocom (with 99 chambers of 23,000 businesses) has since 1982 tried effectively to absorb the smaller and financially weaker FCI. The FCI resisted, arguing that industry was different from commerce, and needed a separate industrial body. In 1986, the organisation moved to develop closer ties with the Steel and Engineering Industries Federation of SA (SEIFSA), but it faced increasing attrition within its own ranks.

In the Transvaal, the local Chambers of Industries and Assocom branches merged in Krugersdorp and Springs in 1986, and in 1987 the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce merged with the Transvaal Chamber of Industry to form the Witwatersrand Chamber of Commerce and Industry (WCCI). The FCI fought back trying to re-establish itself in the Transvaal, and claimed 100 members, and a staff of three. But it compared poorly with the WCCI's staff of 50.

In 1988, Assocom changed its name to the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry to reflect the one-third industrial component of its member companies. Its chief executive Raymond Parsons argued that the Afrikaner Handelsinstituut (AHI) and the National African Chamber of Commerce (Nafcoc) covered both industry and commerce sectors, with the advantage that on 90 per cent of issues, they could each speak with one voice. Sub-structures catered for different sectional interests.

In response, FCI president Prof Hugo Snyckers said that the division remained, and that Assocom would blur its focus because of the mix. (*Financial Mail*, 12.2.88) The FCI board of management backed his stand, saying that "many manufacturers do not want a joint body with commerce". Snyckers argued that duplication could be avoided and a co-ordinated voice could be achieved through an existing committee of presidents of the AHI, Assocom, the FCI and the SA Agricultural Union.

Rivalry then intensified with the FCI announcing a membership drive in direct competition with Assocom. However, under growing pressure for unity the FCI agreed to reconsider the question of a merger.³

The changing political context of the past three years has provided impetus to calls for the two English business groups to unite. Political differences have been evident in the two bodies, though these are neither fundamental nor consistent. The FCI under Shell's John Wilson launched the Business Charter during the first state of emergency and protested at the declaration of the second emergency. But this liberal stand was shortlived, and FCI became even more conservative on some issues than Assocom. Many FCI members publicly dissented when Wilson criticised the Emergency in 1986. At its annual conference the next year, the organisation dealt mainly with economic issues and did not attack the government at all.

Despite the changing political line of the two organisations, this did not prevent them from issuing joint statements and making joint representations to the regime on political issues. If, as seems likely, there is a merger in the next few years, this lobbying activity would carry more weight, and liberal capitalists may find themselves with a powerful weapon, which although primarily oriented to narrow business concerns, has an important political potential.⁴

While Assocom and the FCI stumble towards a merger, monopoly companies have moved ahead to take another initiative with the formation of the Private Sector Council (PSC). This high-powered think-tank and lobby group was set up by the Urban Foundation, but subscribed to independently by Assocom, FCI, SEIFSA, AHI, SA Agricultural Union, the Chamber of Mines and Nafcoc. While the PSC is clearly no substitute for a proper political organ of the bourgeoisie, leading liberal capitalists see it as an extremely important initiative. They credit the PSC with the achievement of ending the pass laws. Indeed, its representations to the regime, albeit at the time of unprecedented mass struggle, did play a part.

Liberal Business Initiative

Organisation of business on an explicitly liberal basis developed in 1988, following on from the Five Freedoms Forum (FFF) establishment of a business focus group in September 1987 on a mandate from business people. A post-apartheid study group and another to liaise with more conservative business organisations were also being planned. The FFF's business group convened a conference of 80 capitalists in March 1988 to discuss ways of improving communication with workers, ending discrimination in business and black advancement. (*Weekly Mail*, 19.2.88) The conference took on a more directly political tone with JCI's Murray Hofmeyer pleading for sustained political involvement by liberal capitalists. Alex Anderson (chair of the Business and Economy Forum of FFF) stressed that business had to engage in "Groot Politiek".

Such appeals bore fruit in the formation of the Consolidated Business Movement (CBM), launched in August 1988 at a meeting attended by prominent individuals in the business world and the democratic movement. Said to be the result of 18 months consultation, the CBM included business people who supported the State of Emergency as well as those who had publicly denounced it, ranging from moderate National Party supporters to liberals. (*Weekly Mail*, 25.8.88)⁵ Notwithstanding this diversity and the fact that many of the business people are potential or existing sanctions-busters,

and have a disgraceful labour record, the CBM says that it accepts that change is inevitable and desirable. While the organisation's programme includes meaningless reference to "a fair and just society", it does pinpoint the need for a united non-racial democracy, stressing that this is necessary for a successful (capitalist) economy.

CBM convenor Christo Nel said that the launch meeting had been an eye-opener for many of the business people concerning the grievances of the democratic organisations, the effect of militarisation on economic growth, state attempts to draw business into Joint Management Committees, and the new labour legislation. The CBM planned to hold quarterly sessions with a wide range of organisations to inform and educate businessmen, according to Nel. The organisation also intended to develop in-company programmes to dispel white fears of a non-racial democratic order.

The *Financial Mail* said that the challenge put to the CBM, was to "use its not-inconsiderable influence with the government on some of the issues raised." The magazine noted that it would be "a tall order" for business to be able and willing to "bypass certain laws", such as leasing to black tenants in spite of Group Areas, or having plant-level labour agreements outside the ambit of the amended Labour Relations Act. In fact, the CBM itself seems unlikely to call on its members to do this, rather seeing its role in more limited terms: educating business people in the hope that this indirectly will influence their actions.

Although little has been heard of the CBM since its formation, the organisation remains an important device for the liberal business community to politicise uninvolved members of the bourgeoisie, even if, like Assocom, the FCI, and the Private Sector Council, it is still no substitute for a proper political organ.

The Call for a Moderate Political Centre

Perhaps the most significant initiative development over the past year has been the recognition by the more far-sighted members of the liberal business community that they need a new political formation to advance their interests. Accordingly, they have been at the forefront of moves to set up a new liberal/moderate political party. The *Financial Mail* has led the way in strategising this initiative. Early in 1988, the magazine carried a revealing article titled "Leadership in SA: Why are we waiting?". (8.1.88) It credited Botha and Heunis with the "impressive achievement of containing terrorism and township violence, while also moving away from the folly of Verwoerd's policies", but said that the two men did not have a clear or inspired view of the

future. Botha was the John the Baptist of a post-apartheid society, not its Messiah. The government, said the *Financial Mail*, lacked direction and commitment, and was drifting rudderless. It had become more “reactive” than “proactive”.

Two months later, this liberal business mouthpiece wrote of the February 1988 bannings of 17 mass organisations that the regime was lashing out in a policy vacuum and that Botha’s National Council was effectively dead. (4.3.88) The next edition of the magazine went to almost extraordinary lengths to convince Botha to write off his losses to the right and move towards his left instead. (*Financial Mail*, 11.3.88; 8.4.88).

Linked to this call, it also urged him to woo English-speaking support, arguing that the National Party (NP) should build alliances to left or be eroded from both sides. Moderate English speakers, said the *Financial Mail*, sympathised with what it called the NP’s new “centrist” position – in effect, advising the regime that this constituency was up for grabs. The Progressive Federal Party (PFP) was in “decline and disarray” and “ripe for the kill in all but their traditional strongholds”. (*Financial Mail* 8.4.88)

If the *Financial Mail* began 1988 by calling on the regime to win support on its left, it came more and more to lose faith in this option. “A vote for Botha is a vote for poverty” is how the magazine campaigned for business people to vote against the National Party in the October municipal elections. (2.9.88) Its attention turned more towards emphasising a theme raised early in the year, that unity should be built among the parliamentarians “left” of the government. But the problem recognised by the magazine was the poor shape of the PFP and the division between the party and independent liberal/moderate MPs. (*Financial Mail*, 11.3.88).

Business disillusionment with, and antagonism towards, the PFP had grown since 1984 when the capitalists reciprocated Botha’s Total Strategy friendliness. The closure of the *Rand Daily Mail* signalled that liberal business felt there was no need to retain this outspoken political organ – indeed, the newspaper had become an irritant. The PFP became increasingly redundant. It began to lose its role as a vehicle for liberal business interests. Tony Bloom, Chris Saunders and Zac de Beer continued to back the party, but many business people shifted towards the National Party.

After he resigned as party leader, Van Zyl Slabbert said: “In South Africa you have this pretence that business people are not involved in politics, but then secretly they funnel a lot of funds into the dominant party because the dominant party has the patronage and determines contracts and so on”. (Sampson, 1987, p.227). And Gordon Waddell, former JCI chair, has argued

that business could have financed a change of government: “Efforts were made under Van Zyl Slabbert. But with few exceptions, the funds were not forthcoming.” (*FM* 30/1/87)

The frustration with the PFP was based on the lack of a dynamic capitalist alternative to the National Party. The *Financial Mail* wrote in 1986:

“The business community here is rapidly becoming a political constituency which itself lacks cohesion of leadership and direction. So individual business people are vulnerable to the blandishments of perfidious Nat politicians who articulate the rubric of the free market but are unable — or unwilling — to deliver its substance.” (21.11.86)

The Search For A Leader

According to the *Financial Mail*, the PFP had shot itself in both feet in the 1987 white election, while the independent movement was squabbling too much. Expressing a classic desire for what Marx described as Bonapartism, the *Financial Mail* observed: “Out of the morass of conflicting aims, ambitions and personalities, only the rise of a charismatic leader could provide the catalyst for unity.” (26.2.88) This bourgeois organ was utterly blind to the fact that a leader — however charismatic — should still need policies and strategies. Neither the bourgeoisie, nor Botha, nor any other ruling class leaders had any viable policies or strategies to find a way out of the country’s crisis.

In January 1988 the *Financial Mail* had claimed that “no society is leaderless for long”. In February, it wrote: “No such leader is in sight”. Dredging for a solution, it added: “But saying we have no charismatic opposition leaders is not the same as having no leaders”. (26.2.88) Who were these leaders? It is an indication of the limitation of the bourgeois political horizon that the magazine — in all seriousness — put forward the name of Alan Hendrickse, leader of the Labour Party. This quisling was, according to the *Financial Mail*, adopting the role “traditionally filled by the dying PFP”. (22.1.88) Arguing that co-operation on the left of the Nats was needed, the journal said the PFP would have to compromise. “But who will take the helm?” it asked, going on to recommend that “the PFP should make a start by asking Hendrickse to be its leader”. (26.2.88)

Following this up some months later, the *Financial Mail* got former apartheid ambassador Denis Worrall to interview Hendrickse. In the interview, Worrall asked how the Labour Party finances were, enabling Hendrickse to reply that “the corporate sector” should look more sympathetically at the LP. Worrall responded that “this is one of the advantages of us finding some basis of co-operation”. (15.4.88)

Hendrickse and Danie Craven were the only people who stood up to the government during 1988, said the magazine in October. (28.10.88). The December edition hailed the Labour Party leader as “Reform’s Last Hope”, and proclaimed him Man of the Year, the “most effective politician of the year”, who had kept reform alive in “the forum where it mattered most”. Hendrickse, said the *Financial Mail*, would be pivotal in an alliance across the different racial chambers of parliament. (23.12.88).

What the *Financial Mail* therefore articulated in 1988 was a two-pronged approach involving, on the one hand, calls on the Government to ditch the right wing and to win support to the left of it, and — on the other hand — appeals for the formation of a strong moderate opposition to the Government in this very arena. These two thrusts are contradictory in that each could only succeed at the expense of the other. The *Financial Mail* eventually chose to emphasise the second more than the first. Common to both strategies however was the goal of a strong moderate political centre, either within the regime, or in an opposition, or in both through some shared power arrangement between the two. Indeed, according to the *Financial Mail*, the 1988 October municipal elections strengthened “the case for a new coalition in South African politics comprising verligte Nats, the PFP, Worrallites and Wynand Malanites.” (4.11.88).

What these strategies reveal is how much, still, the bourgeoisie’s horizon is dominated by parliamentary politics. It is noteworthy in this regard that the *Financial Mail* looked to Hendrickse rather than Gatsha Buthelezi for leadership — which is not to say that it had forgotten about the Inkatha leader. But certainly, for the bourgeoisie, significant political initiative and leadership are regarded as emanating from the ruling class and its lackeys. The forces of resistance may be entering their picture as makers of history but are not acceptable as wielders of power.

Creating a Party of the Bourgeoisie

Early in 1988, the *FM* viciously attacked the PFP for offering no credible alternative to the government and for lacking leadership, saying “We wait for Worrall to float his lifeboats”. (22.3.88) But it was Zac de Beer who came to the rescue after taking over, with Harry Oppenheimer’s encouragement, from Colin Eglin as PFP leader. De Beer, who retired as executive director of Anglo-American to take the party leadership, said early on that one of his tasks would be to reunite the liberal opposition. (*Star*, 7.8.88). Not surprisingly, the *Financial Mail* was the first publication to report that a new political party was being prepared for. (18.11.88)

Within a week, De Beer was given an unqualified mandate by the PFP to do everything possible to bring about a new political party with the Independent Party (IP) and the National Democratic Movement (NDM). (*Cape Times* 21.11.88). He chaired several rounds of talks between the three parties, and was credited with salvaging the negotiations when they broke down at one point. (*Sunday Star* 18.12.88) He was also made head of a steering committee to plan a founding congress early this year, draw up a constitution and give attention to who would lead the new party. (*Weekly Mail*, 15.12.88)

De Beer was reported to have the full support of the business community, and newspapers speculated that the birth of a new party was being encouraged by pressure from business concerned about a general election in 1989. (*Star* 26.11.88; *Sunday Tribune*, 20.11.88) They quoted Worrall as saying that businessman Louis Luyt had summoned the three party leaders and told them that “the business community wants you to get your act together.” (*Star*, 26.11.88) Business people were reported to be no longer prepared to split funding between the three parties. The PFP was said to be less short of funds after De Beer took over, but the issue of rationalising the financing of a liberal opposition was given impetus by the spectre of a general election. The *Sunday Tribune* said that the planned new party had been assured of financial support by both English and Afrikaans business institutions. (20.11.88).

The proposed party brings together the infrastructure and experience of the PFP, the credibility of the NDM in extra-parliamentary politics, and Worrall’s appeal to circles where the other two make no impact. The basic principles agreed on are for a non-racial democracy (not spelt out), the rule of law and an independent judiciary, freedom of speech, of voting and of assembly, and “private enterprise”.

Forming the party is just the beginning. Business intends this party to be the broker for alliance building that would be especially important in the next general election — which, according to Worrall, could produce a hung white parliament with no single party in the majority. There are already links with parties in the Indian and Coloured parliaments. (*Sunday Tribune*, 20.11.88) A leading supporter of the new party, the former *Rapport* editor Wimpie de Klerk, says alliances will be formed with established groups as soon as the new party has been established. (*Financial Mail*, 23.12.88)

While the accent is on the possibility of alliances with other parliamentary groups, the new party has also set its sights outside of parliament. De Klerk says that there has been wide-ranging contact with (unnamed) African leaders who have indicated support for the new party’s policies. The IP was early on demanding that Buthelezi be included in the new party, and De

Beer confirmed that co-operation would be sought with him “as well as a number of others”. (CT 24.11.88) Buthelezi in turn has expressed interest in talks between Inkatha and those forming the new party.

The planned party also has its eyes on the democratic movement. As expressed by the IP in a message to De Beer: “We recognise that the new party must be able to forge relationships, either formal or informal, with black parliamentary and extra-parliamentary groupings in order to enhance the achievement of a power base in parliament.” (*Financial Mail*, 16.12.88) This exposition of the strategy clearly reveals the potential seen by the bourgeoisie for an historic intervention into South African politics in the new conditions of the late 1980s.

Conclusion

The “business community” is not yet a single actor with a uniform project. Its cohesion, class consciousness and political unity continue to change. We tend to think only of the liberation movement as organising, mobilising, politicising and educating — but South African capitalists are busy doing exactly that. They have many social and political projects on the boil. New constituencies of capitalists are being pulled together to initiate and respond to the contest for state power.

The capitalists are coming, we might say. How effective they will be, and what this might mean for the liberation movement, needs to be examined.

FOOTNOTES

1. These include Warren Clewlow (Barlow Rand), PJ Badenhorst (United Building Society), Bobby Godsell (SA Consultative Committee on Labour Affairs), Meyer Kahn (SA Breweries), Donald Masson (Tradegro), DC McCarthy (McCarthy group), R Norton (Johannesburg Stock Exchange), Julian Ogilvie-Thompson (Anglo-American), Robin Plumbridge (Goldfields), Peter Searle (Volkswagen), and Conrad Strauss (Standard Bank Investment Corporation). (*Financial Mail*, 5.8.88; *Citizen*, 27.7.88)
2. The AHI, which has held together with only minor losses in the Nat-CP split, is against merging with Assocom and FCI, but in favour of co-operation, according to its Chair Gerrie Steenkamp. (*Financial Mail*, 3.6.88, 10.6.88) AHI representatives argue that there is a different style between the AHI and English business — the AHI has low key talks with the government, rather than “Press debates”. “Objectively there is a lot to be said for one strong business body which could provide a better service and analysis of problems for members. But economic and political factors are interlinked and I believe at this point in time there is still a lot to be said for a separate Afrikaans voice,” says AHI executive director Martin van den Berg. (*Financial Mail*, 10.6.88.)

3. An industrialist and former FCI and Transvaal Chamber of Industry leader, Hennie Viljoen, became president of the merged Witwatersrand Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He argued that it is only a matter of time before a national Assocom-FCI merger. (*Financial Mail* 6.5.88; 22.4.88) The FCI appointed Les Boyd as its new president to succeed the die-hard separatist Hugo Snyckers. Boyd is vice-chairman of the "Corporate Forum", described by the *Financial Mail* as "a powerful informal lobby group comprising senior executives for more than 50 big private sector companies." (21.8.88) He is also an executive director of Anglo-American Corporation and a past one of Seifsa, and could certainly be the person to nudge the FCI into merging with Assocom.
4. In addition to trying to draw in the FCI, Assocom may also attempt to recruit black business people. Natal Assocom leader Mike Meehan said in July 1988 that "On the Assocom (overseas) mission it was pointed out to us that it did not include a black businessman . . . We would very much like to have more black businessmen in the chambers". (*Sunday Tribune*, 31.7.88)
5. Co-ordinated by Christo Nel (PG Bison) and co-chaired by Naas Steenkamp (Gencor), the CBM launch meeting included Mervyn King (Frame Group), Chris Ball (First National Bank), M.C. Pretorius (Turner and Newall Holdings and Afrikaanse Sakekamer delegate to KwaNatal Indaba), Brian Smith (Volkswagen), Ken Maxwell (ICI, Rustenberg Platinum), Bob Tucker, David de Villiers (ex-Nasionale Pers) and Chris van Wyk (Trustbank). Although the following were unable to attend the CBM launch, they are said to be part of the organisation: Bobby Godsell (Anglo, SA Consultative Council on Labour Affairs — Saccola, Botha's Economic Advisory Council), Neil Chapman (Southern Life), and Mike Sanders (AECI).

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AFRICA

NOTES & COMMENT

By Jabulani Mkhathshwa

ANGOLA: WHAT WILL BE UNITA'S FATE?

The imminent independence of Namibia is almost an unbelievable reality. It is "almost unbelievable" in the sense that there are many times in the past when such an assessment has been proved wrong due to South Africa's unreliability and obstructionist tactics to the international processes seeking to realise the Namibian people's right to self-determination and independence.

What makes the present situation different from all past political practice? What, after Namibian independence, will conditions be like in Angola. Is Angola on the threshold of peaceful socio-economic development?

Angola's sacrifices for Namibia's independence are incalculable, and her need for peace cannot be over-emphasized. The discussion of this question calls for analysis of the fate of UNITA, which has been fighting against the People's Republic of Angola from Namibian territory, and whose support came principally from the governments of the United States and South Africa.

According to the agreement signed by Angola, Cuba and South Africa there should be a simultaneous withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola and South African troops from Namibia. The independence of Namibia objectively changes the geo-political map of Southern Africa and makes it difficult, if not impossible, for UNITA to wage any serious counter-revolutionary war from any state neighbouring on Angola.

If this agreement were to be followed by all the contracting parties to its letter and spirit, then the well which has served as a source of supply for UNITA would dry up and the supply lines would be cut at once. Without direct material and financial support from the US, and without the launch pad which the South African government provided through Namibia, UNITA would not have the advantages of RENAMO in Mozambique which operates directly from South African territory and which receives the full material support of the South African government and its army. Even if UNITA had real bases inside Angola, such bases would not have the capacity to escape detection and survive an attack by Angola's FAPLA forces.

A Different Reality

Reality, however, is likely to be different. Even as they signed the various agreements regarding the independence of Namibia, South Africa and the United States planned secretly for the destabilisation of Angola by other means. This has been revealed by Martin Walker, a journalist for the *Guardian* (UK), who wrote from Washington on January 13, 1989, that the first formal foreign policy commitment of George Bush has been to Jonas Savimbi. In a personal letter to Savimbi, then President-elect Bush promised to continue to give "all appropriate and effective assistance to UNITA" until a so-called political settlement in Angola was reached. This means that the United States will continue to maintain its military support for UNITA, currently valued at some \$15 million a year.

"I want to assure you," said Bush, "that American diplomacy will continue to encourage African and other interested governments to provide maximum support to a process of negotiation leading to national reconciliation in your country." President Bush's letter was dated 6 January, 1989.

In other words, all the talk in the past about the need for the withdrawal of Cuban troops as a condition for the implementation of UN Resolution 435 was meant to hide the fact that the US and South Africa intended the linkage to weaken the legitimate government of Angola so that it could be overthrown by UNITA. All the accord diverts public attention from the

northern part of Angola, on the border with Zaire, where the CIA will be launching Savimbi anew as a terrorist group seeking to destabilise the People's Republic of Angola.

During a recent lecture in London (22/1/89), John Stockwell, former CIA chief of the Angola Task Force in 1975, affirmed that President Bush himself, then at the head of the CIA, was responsible for the covert operation to which John Stockwell was assigned in Angola. During the era of Bush's American presidency, therefore, it can be expected that old ties between the US and Zaire will be re-established.

Amnesty Offer

The Bush administration hopes to impose on the Angolan people its own dictate about a matter that squarely belongs to Angolans and which has nothing to do with the United States. Addressing a press conference in New York, following the signing of the agreement after the quadripartite talks, Angola's Minister for External Relations, Afonso Van-Dunem 'Mbinda', stressed the policy of clemency and national harmonisation and the amnesty law which the Angolan government was making into a legal instrument for the reintegration in Angolan society of all citizens who stopped defending interests alien to those of their country.

"Without outside interference," he said, "we ourselves will know how to find the best solutions to our internal problems." He added that Angola would continue to demand of the US and South African governments that they cease providing military and logistical support for the UNITA terrorists.

The amnesty law applies to crimes committed inside or outside the national territory by Angolan citizens who have promoted, incited or practised violence and subversion against the national unity and territorial integrity of the People's Republic of Angola. Beneficiaries of this amnesty must pledge to renounce violence and be guided in their future conduct by strict observance of the provisions of the Angolan constitution. The government, through competent structures created for this purpose, guarantees the conditions for the reception and social integration of amnestied citizens. This amnesty law came into force on February 4 1989, and will be valid only for a year.

This amnesty law is likely to create problems for UNITA, possibly leading to vast sections of its membership coming back into normal life. Other sections, of course, will hope that the transfer of their main bases to Zaire will keep them on the same confrontational level against the Angolan government. In so thinking, however, they will be making an error. Zaire,

whatever its desires in this regard, can never play the same role as South Africa, and its army is not likely to serve as direct shock troops for the weak forces of UNITA in the manner that South Africa did.

In the course of the war against South Africa and UNITA, the Angolan armed forces, FAPLA, have gained tremendous experience in actual combat, experience which most African armies, the Zairean army included, cannot equal. The Angolan army can therefore not be taken lightly.

MOZAMBIQUE: PREPARATIONS FOR THE FIFTH FRELIMO PARTY CONGRESS

News about Mozambique tends to be dominated by items such as RENAMO activities, mass exodus of citizens as refugees to neighbouring states, famine in certain regions, and the like. An incorrect impression is then given that this country is only a passive victim of social ills, and that nothing positive and developmental is taking place. Sympathy for the people of Mozambique is welcome, but this should not obscure the fact that Mozambique, whatever its problems, is not about to be buried. Mozambique, in fact, does not need sympathy but active solidarity, a practical demonstration of support based on the knowledge that the government is rebuilding the country that has been devastated by colonialism and a war imposed on her by racist South Africa for more than a decade. Mozambique is reorganising the economy, re-housing displaced persons and resettling refugees returning to normal civilian life inside the country.

At the end of last year, 1988, Mozambique, Malawi and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) signed an agreement in the Tete province for the voluntary repatriation of the 600,000 or so Mozambican citizens who have fled into Malawi to escape from the atrocities of the South African-backed RENAMO. Even before the signing of the agreement, thousands of Mozambicans had been making their own way back home from Malawi. According to a report read by Prime Minister Mario Machungo to the Mozambican parliament, the People's Assembly, about 63,000 Mozambicans returned from neighbouring countries, principally Malawi, in 1988. For the return of the rest, Mozambique needs an economic and social infrastructure that will make it possible for repatriation to proceed smoothly. This positive development is a result of the progressive policies of the Mozambican government under the leadership of FRELIMO.

The preparations for the Fifth Party Congress therefore consolidate these processes, and pose new tasks that have to be solved in the coming period. The draft theses prepared for the Congress, due to be held in July 1989, have been given to all Party members as well as published for the whole population. These theses deal with questions and guidelines relating to the Party itself, the mass democratic organisations, national unity, national defence and security, economic and technical development, social questions, and international relations. The seven theses have formed a basis for discussions at all levels of the Party in meetings and seminars throughout the country in the run-up to the Congress. The outcome will form the theoretical basis on which the FRELIMO Party Congress will construct its policies for the next five years.

Vanguard Role

The first of the seven theses asserts the vanguard role of the party and says that it is “a party of all the people”. It continues to explain that membership of the Party is restricted to those “who agree to struggle for the building of a society of general well-being, progress, justice, freedom and equality — in short, a socialist society”. And Party members should serve as “a model and an inspiration” for other workers, through their dedication to the Party’s ideals “through their willingness to learn, through their involvement in the struggle against all forms of corruption”. However, in working out strategy and tactics, the Party must take into consideration the interests of the entire people and not simply of one class, argues the thesis. In that way, the Party expresses “the legitimate and patriotic interests of all sectors of Mozambican society”. It is in this sense that FRELIMO sees itself as “a party of all the people”.

The ideological basis of the Party is defined as being “the synthesis of the struggles of the Mozambican people’s revolutionary struggle with the universal principles of socialism”. This synthesis, it says, is to be applied in a creative way, taking into account Mozambique’s historical, social, cultural and economic realities. Although the FRELIMO Party admittedly takes into account “the experience of other peoples in building socialism,” it refuses “to copy” and does not mechanically apply foreign models of development.

The document further warns that the Party must exert a leading role in both state and society, but should not confuse its role with that of state bodies. Party members inside the state apparatus should ensure that Party policies are implemented there. Party cells have a decisive role to play, and each cell “should know how to interpret and develop the Party’s political line for its

own particular area of influence". The document also warns that the Party cells should not mechanically repeat Party slogans, but should "continually raise the patriotic and socialist awareness of their members and of the workers in general".

In the thesis on defence and security the document minces no words about the criminal role of apartheid as the principal source of insecurity for the Mozambicans. "Apartheid and colonialism are the source of war, conflict and destabilisation", it says. "The war waged against us is a war against the people... Under such circumstances, experience teaches us that victory rests fundamentally on organising the people to defend themselves and their property".

The FRELIMO Party, the document maintains, must ensure the correct functioning of the self-defence and civil defence units and the people's militia, all of whom are "an integral part of the defence of the country and the revolution". It also emphasises the need for the reorganisation of the armed forces in order "to ensure greater efficiency and combat readiness in the face of any kind of aggression". In addressing complaints about the arbitrary and illegal forms of recruitment, which ensured that Mozambicans who are white, Coloured or of Indian origin were not recruited, the Party document criticises this practice as a "serious irregularity".

Mozambique's enemies, the thesis points out, use racism, tribalism and regionalism "to break up the nation". National unity in this regard is the decisive factor for victory. Under today's circumstances, national unity "rests on an awareness of the causes of common suffering, on a will to struggle to end the war, and on the defence of Mozambican independence". It is therefore crucial that all Mozambicans regardless of their colour, race or educational level, should participate in "compulsory military service".

10-Year Plan

Mozambique's development as laid down in the ten-year plan adopted in 1981, has not yet been fully realised owing to "foreign aggression through bandit gangs". The thesis on economic development puts the main blame for the country's difficulties on the war, but also notes the role played by natural disasters, excessive centralism of economic management, structural imbalances inherited from colonialism, and lack of attention to technical and scientific training. The thesis says that the constitutional right of employment should be ensured primarily by channelling surplus labour towards agriculture, and that this process should be in accordance with the law and should involve the trade unions.

The thesis calls for special attention to be given to the peasant family sector in the distribution of land, and in providing farmers with technical assistance. Peasants who wish to form cooperatives should be encouraged, since “experience shows that where adequate support is provided to cooperatives that have been formed voluntarily, good results are achieved”. There should be an end to administrative interference in the cooperatives which should play a key role in the socialisation of the countryside, “striking a balance between individual and collective interests”.

Lastly, in the sphere of international relations, the FRELIMO Party stresses that Mozambique has been targetted by the warmongering circles of apartheid. It states that the South African regime is attempting “to eliminate Mozambique as a point of reference and hope”, and to make the project of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) non-viable by blocking access to Mozambique’s ports. The priority for Mozambique’s foreign policy must therefore be to ensure that conditions are established under which the apartheid regime abandons its policy of aggression, and opts instead for good neighbourliness and peaceful coexistence. FRELIMO Party, however, reiterates its support for the ANC of South Africa and SWAPO of Namibia, as well as “all democratic forces who are genuinely contributing to the elimination of apartheid and to the complete independence of Namibia”.

As the apartheid regime is trapped in an irreversible crisis, with its attention being forced to the simmering problems within its own borders, conditions are gradually being laid, principally by the liberation movement in South Africa, for the real peaceful process for the development of the countries that are neighbouring on South Africa. It is not apartheid itself that will ensure this process but its death and the construction in its place of a system that will genuinely safeguard the principles of “good neighbourliness” and “peaceful co-existence”.

BURKINA: Is It Glasnost or Counter-Revolution?

Four prominent personalities whose lives were taken by their closest colleagues immediately come to mind when the story of Burkina Faso is told, namely, Julius Caesar (killed by Brutus), Jesus Christ (killed by Judas Iscariot), King Shaka (killed by Mbopha Ka Sithayi) and Thomas Sankara (killed by Captain Blaise Compaore).

In justifying his act, Compaore said that the Burkinese revolution had strayed under Sankara, and compared what he called his “rectification

process” with “glasnost” in the Soviet Union. “The goals are the same”, he told an African journalist. Compaore’s version of glasnost, of course, is the further class differentiation that is currently taking place among the people, the creation of the petty-bourgeoisie and the import of Mercedes Benz cars. As one observer of this process lamented: “This trend just might run its course and then fizzle out once it has been decided that unspent monies from the Sankara days have been fully enjoyed. And then the rich will get down to the real business of developing the poorer parts of the country”. (*West Africa*, September, 1988).

Rectification of the revolution is supposed to mean its further thrust forward towards the fulfilment of the people’s desires. During his life time, Thomas Sankara stressed the need for the leaders of the Burkinese revolution to devote the resources of the country to its economic development, avoiding any reckless spending of state funds. His policies were orientated towards solving the problems of the people. If that revolution had strayed, then the Burkinese people should have seen the opposite of these policies being practised during the life of Sankara. Instead, it has been during the leadership of Compaore that the Burkinese people have seen the implementation of economic policies that are contrary to the revolution.

Compaore is said to have recently purchased a new Boeing 727 at the cost of \$11.7 million. The aeroplane was subsequently leased to the pop star Michael Jackson during one of his musical tours. Also, when Compaore celebrated the first year of his “rectification” of the revolution, he did not deliver his speech at Tenkodogo where Sankara and other leaders have traditionally held the commemorations of the revolution, but at Ouagadougou, where he is building a new presidential palace said to be costing a fortune.

Meanwhile Compaore has replaced the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution with what he calls “Revolutionary Committees” (CRs). And the people, who are obviously not impressed by these paradoxical institutions, have not shown any enthusiasm to join them. This has been admitted by the people in government themselves. Captain Arsene Ye Bognessan, who is national coordinator for the Revolutionary Committees, said that it would “require a certain time period to reconstitute complete faith in the militants. The objectives have not been achieved but we are sure that if we continue along the path, they will be”.

Compaore’s “glasnost”, however, is not the kind that allows real expression of political opinions and views, including those that were maintained by Thomas Sankara. No wonder many revolutionary leaders, including Sankara’s widow, have fled the country.

THE REVOLUTIONARY ALTERNATIVE FOR LIBERIA

By J. Toewiah Mwahsaygbay-Nipeh

Since the advent to power on April 12, 1980 of a reactionary pro-imperialist military junta in Liberia through a bloody coup d'état, several attempts have been made by some Liberians to analyse the changed and ever-changing socio-historical conditions which prevail as a direct consequence of the putsch. Added to some of the analysis are attempts to offer solutions to Liberia's chronic economic, social, political and cultural problems.

The attempts made so far, however, have one very serious and fundamental shortcoming, namely, the analysis is not historical and therefore does not emphasise the need for organising the struggle against neo-colonial oppression and class exploitation.

As far back as April 1985, J. Pal Chaudhuri sounded a very serious warning note to Liberians when he wrote:

"Liberia has gone through overwhelming changes between the Second MOJA Congress and now. The TWP has been thrown out of power, a president has been assassinated and a Master Sergeant has captured power. The new administration under the military has not done much good to Liberia. Unbridled corruption, gross mismanagement and wrong priorities have brought the economy to the verge of collapse. Foreign debt has mounted, unemployment has gone up and incomes of most people have plummeted. Government employees do not get paid regularly for lack of money in the treasury... Individuals who are considered a threat have been barred from participation in the election process. The press has been muzzled, the judiciary has been made pliant and educational institutions have been rendered ineffective through intimidation and use of force. A large number

of politically active young men and women have been kept in detention. The political atmosphere is suffocating; the economic condition is appalling. The so-called elections will inevitably bring Doe back to power. It looks as though the people of Liberia will have to continue their fight for rice and rights for some more years to come.”

J. Pal Chaudhuri, “Rice and Rights”, *West Africa*, April 15, 1985, p.737

Events have proved Chaudhuri right. There seems, so far, to have been no deep scientific historical research by any of Liberia’s men in the struggle for “rice and rights” which explains and justifies the need for uprooting and radically transforming the political system in Liberia as a necessary condition for changing the structure of dependent capitalism and the free sway of transnationals in the country.

It is not the purpose of this article to pass judgment on the main reasons and real intentions behind the attempts made so far; that is a matter for history and historians. What we intend to do here is to teach the real lessons about the roots and causes of Liberia’s underdevelopment and the consequences of this underdevelopment.

Fight Dictatorship

Against this background the true scope of the process taking place in Liberia should be seen as complex and controversial. Concrete directions and practical levers to fight the dictator and his imperialist godfathers abroad should be suggested.

Amongst the questions which we must seek answers for are the following: 1) Why is Liberia, said to be the oldest “independent” country in Africa, backward and underdeveloped? 2) What do Liberians need to do in order to overcome underdevelopment and make Liberia a strong and modern nation? 3) How did today’s “developed countries” overcome underdevelopment and what useful historical lessons do their experiences teach an underdeveloped nation like Liberia? 4) Why is it that after 142 years of “independence” Liberia continues to be a nation of politically unconscious, dormant, and almost submissive people who appear to be ready victims of political disinformation and misinformation? 5) Is life in Liberia possible without exploitation and oppression, arbitrariness and violence?

These are very important questions for Liberians in a world which abounds in intricate and contradictory phenomena, whose interaction is now more visible, rapid and powerful than ever before. In this present dynamic situation, Liberia’s potent new breed of patriotic intellectuals

must promote theoretical research work, seek to find new approaches in elaborating a strategy for overcoming backwardness and underdevelopment, do away with outdated or erroneous concepts.

To understand what we have to do, we have to educate ourselves, and education requires a lot of work. The problems of Liberia can never be solved by pious wishing, sentimentalism, inaction, infantility, disorganisation and church sermons. There is a need for persistent and consistent organisation of conscious political activity, otherwise the military dictatorship and the ruling class in Liberia will not give up the guarantees of their dominance that are provided by the army in cooperation with the more reactionary forces of imperialism.

Massive Exploitation

The working people of any nation are the motor forces to move on the road to progress. The Liberian working people are amongst the most oppressed, humiliated, alienated and exploited. They continue to be beggars and nominal citizens in their own country. Liberia was declared “independent” in 1847 but today, in 1989, Liberia is caricatured as a hybrid of the antebellum American South and pre-colonial Africa.

Liberian history textbooks teach the children that Liberia is unique in that she never had a foreign colonial ruler, but this is not quite acceptable. Paradoxical though it may sound, Liberia is a classical colony of the United States of America to which she still looks for everything including food, protection, trade and aid, investment and management and cultural inspiration. Since “independence”, all of Liberia’s successive ruling classes have consistently followed the policy of reliance on American and Western “aid” and “assistance”.

A short cost-benefit analysis is necessary at this point to see how “aid” and “assistance” have “benefitted” Liberia. More than a century of “aid” to Liberia has almost destroyed the Liberian small trader; “aid” has distributed and continues to distribute mass poverty and starvation. Wages of working people, which are paid at intervals of 4 months, are very low and shrinking. 80% of Liberia’s less than 3 million persons cannot read or write. In the cities, suburbs, towns and countryside, people live in squalid tenements, slums and ghettos. Average life expectancy does not exceed 35 years. Drug addiction and abuse, alcoholism, prostitution, corruption, vagrancy, theft, bribery and school drop-out are so commonplace that they have become part of “the Liberian way of life”. Children are subjected to privation, illness, ritualistic murders and brainwashing carried out most actively by radio, television, audio and videos which are gaining in their destructive strength.

“Aid” to Liberia has reduced many qualified and productive Liberian citizens to certified robots. The approach to education in Liberia is mercantile, a policy which does not serve Liberia’s national interests. The quality and prestige of teaching has declined. Structural, sanitary and logistical conditions are deplorable in spite of foreign “aid”. Liberia’s foreign debts are uncollectable and therefore unpayable. Brain drain robs the country of its skilled labour resources including qualified men of science and engineering. Liberia’s ecological problems are seriously aggravated by the ruthless activity of transnationals.

American Neo-colonial Interests

When he was still serving as American Ambassador to Liberia, Mr. William Julian Swing was consistent in defending and justifying America’s increased and increasing military aid to the puppet regime of Samuel Doe. He said that this was necessary to protect and defend “American strategic interests” in Liberia. What are these “American strategic interests”? They include: 1) To keep Liberia a safe raw material appendage of the monopolies and transnational corporations; 2) to maintain Liberia as a dependent capitalist nation; 3) ensure that Liberia continues to be a safe haven for the military monopolies and an important link for the CIA.

These are the “benefits” of American and Western “aid” and “assistance” to Liberia. They expose the falsity of the argument and myth spread by the imperialist press and mass media and persistently cultivated by world reaction that American “aid” and western investments are always intended to raise the living standards of the peoples whose ruling classes and groups receive this “aid”. Liberia is a vivid example to show that “aid” is a fraud and a weapon through which American imperialism comes to other countries disguised.

Imperialism and world reaction have discarded most of the conventional weapons of the old type of imperialism. In the new conditions and current balance of forces in the world today, imperialism purports to repudiate force and violence and masquerades as the leader of the so-called free world in the campaign against communism. It tries to avoid open advocacy of armed invasion and conquest but is prepared to resort to this to “restore democracy” against “communist expansionism”. We only need to be reminded that after the Cuban Revolution of 1959, American mercenaries invaded that island to “restore democracy”; in October 1983, American mercenaries and bandits invaded Grenada to “restore democracy”; upon direct orders of Washington Libya was bombed not very long ago because “Gadafi is a terrorist”.

US imperialism claims that the cornerstone of its foreign policy towards Liberia is to help Liberia to resist domination by others. At the same time, the imperialists are pushing their puppet Samuel Doe to fan the flames of tension with neighbouring West African countries. The imperialists of the United States of America maintain that the huge sums of money they invest in Liberia to extract raw materials are not for the exploitation of the people of Liberia but for the purpose of developing the country in order to raise living standards. But one only has to see the conditions in which the workers of the rubber companies live, for example, to be convinced about the gross violation of basic human rights by the moneybags of the US who profess to be the champions of human rights and the forerunners of democracy in the world. The ruling class and imperialists who are the main causes of Liberia's underdevelopment continue to warn Liberians against communism, which, they allege, seeks to enslave Liberians and interfere with Liberia's "peaceful development".

But reality itself continues to show that this is a barefaced lie and deceit, a stunt to hide from the Liberian people the truth that their real enemy is US imperialism and world reaction. It is not the communists and communism which support the discredited, hated and bloodthirsty, tyrannical regimes. It is not communism and the communists who have undermined and are undermining the real independence and sovereignty of nations and peoples. In fact, if one looks back into history, one finds that the origin of communism was a historical necessity made imperative by the need to fight against all forms of exploitation and dependence. Communism is always associated with genuine liberation.

The main enemy of all people is imperialism and neoglobalism headed by the magnates and financial oligarchy of the USA. Liberians are no fools. Let it be left to them and not to others to determine who their enemy is.

The time has come for the truth and only the truth. We are prepared to die for the truth!



A PEOPLE'S THEOLOGY FOR SOUTH AFRICA

God in South Africa, by Albert Nolan, (Cape Town, Grand Rapids, Gweru and London: David Philip, Eerdmans, Mambo Press and CIIR, 1988) xiv + 241pp., £6.95.

For the many Christians involved in the struggle for liberation in South Africa, Christian faith and hope on the one hand, and participation in the struggle itself on the other hand, form a seamless whole. In the lives of such people, the gospel message and the struggle are one and the same. There have been documents, of which the *Kairos Document* and *Evangelical Witness in South Africa* are notable examples, which have emerged from this practice of the gospel of Christianity in the South African context. Yet these documents made no claim to present a much-needed systematic theology of struggle in South Africa. Fr Albert Nolan's book, *God in South Africa*, presents just such a theology simply, lucidly and with great power.

Nolan, a South African Dominican, has had a long history of involvement in the struggle. He is on the staff of the Institute of Contextual Theology, and was centrally involved in the formulation of the *Kairos Document*, which has won recognition as a major theological contribution to the struggle for a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa. In 1983 Nolan, who was head of the Dominicans in Southern Africa, was elected Master General of

the Dominican Order. This would have necessitated a sojourn in Rome, and he declined on the grounds that his theological work for the struggle in South Africa was more important.

God in South Africa is, in Nolan's words, "an attempt to preach the gospel in South Africa rather than to speculate about its universal character. As such, it is written specifically for South African Christians. It is written in the conviction that the gospel, which means the good news of Christ, is misused if it is wrested from the context in which it is preached. His contention is "that the gospel for us today is the good news about what God is doing in South Africa today in the light of what God has done in the past".

Sin and Salvation

The main body of the book falls into two sections. The first, a bloc of four chapters, discusses sin, suffering and their causes, while the second deals with salvation and hope, and offers a challenge to South African Christians and to the Church in South Africa. Each of these sections is initiated by a careful discussion of the Biblical treatment of its central theme, and the book as a whole is a sustained correlation of the Biblical teachings about sin and salvation with the struggle in South Africa.

The theology of the book gives expression to the antipathy towards individualism which has emerged in the struggle, and Nolan carefully roots the theological concepts which he uses in temporal realities. The theology which he articulates bears no relation to "pie in the sky" aspirations and the other-worldly saccharine-sweet piety of Sunday Christians. In his treatment of sin, for example, Nolan places great emphasis on apartheid as a social structure of sin, and the corporate suffering which it engenders. He describes movingly the ways in which our people suffer under apartheid, and links this with the crucifixion of Christ. In the suffering of our people, Christ is crucified, and in our struggle God's power is displayed.

In his discussion of the system, Nolan draws upon the rich analytical tradition of the liberation movement. A chapter entitled "Unmasking the System" gives a pithy analysis of the apartheid system in which a characteristically lucid account of internal colonialism looms large. He exposes the regime's two-pronged ways in which the system engenders alienation. Apartheid, rooted in commodity-fetishism, is idolatrous; and the anger of the people against this wicked system is the very anger of God.

In his discussion of salvation, the non-individualistic character of the struggle and the need for active participation, two of the themes which run through the whole of this book, emerge once more. It is heretical, says Nolan,

simply to sit back and wait for God to save us or just pray and hope that God will intervene. He attacks traditional Christian coyness about power, and argues that while the enemy uses power to dominate, the gospel commits Christians to the struggle for people's power, power which serves and liberates. In people's power we encounter the power of God.

Freedom Charter

God in South Africa brims over with realistic optimism and hope. Nolan points to the demand of the people for non-racial unity immortalised in the Freedom Charter and in our struggle to realise it, to the increasing participation of masses of our people in the struggle, to the creativity and growth of our people's organisations in all areas of struggle, to the ideal and reality of democracy that pervades these organisations, to the struggle for people's education and to the terminal crisis of the regime. All of these are signs of the times, signs of hope, and in these, Nolan writes, "already we can see the finger of God".

Nolan's discussion of the struggle communicates some of the sense of hope experienced in the struggle. He points to the singing and dancing which characterise our struggle as a celebration of hope, solidarity and unity in action. He presents the perspectives of the struggle as an expression of the Christian virtues of faith, hope and love, lauding the vision of the Freedom Charter and denying that the struggle for people's power is in any way informed by a spirit of revenge.

En route, he exposes the hypocrisy of those who condemn the restrained violence of the peace-loving oppressed people of our country while failing to note the massive violence of the system. He discusses the armed struggle briefly, noting the just reasons for the formation of MK, and dissociating the ANC's policy of disciplined and restrained violence, to the end that violence be ended, from acts of "chaotic and undisciplined violence".

The book also touches on the question of the struggle and communism, noting that the term "communism" is used in a different sense by different people. He makes it clear that the struggle, like the social encyclicals of the Catholic Church, is increasingly opposed to capitalism. Though the approach of this section of the book is oblique, it will be apparent to the discerning reader that Nolan has little love for anti-communism. On Nolan's account all who engage in the struggle display Christian faith, for "the practice of the struggle is the practice of faith even when it is not accompanied by an explicit profession of faith in God or in Jesus Christ". Christians and non-Christians are united in one struggle, but God is with all who struggle.

The burden of the gospel-message for South Africa then is that God, who is with the poor and oppressed and against the oppressors, is angered by apartheid and present in our struggle. The day of liberation is near, and South Africa's moment of truth, of grace and opportunity, the time in which decisive action must be taken, is now. The time of salvation has come to South Africa, and salvation is intimately connected with our struggle. It is decidedly this-worldly.

God's Grace in the Struggle

At the same time, salvation is more than political liberation. The sense in which it is more is rather mysterious. Nolan characterises it as "another dimension, another angle or perspective on the same concrete reality", and calls it "the religious dimension". It means introducing God into the picture, and Nolan argues that it makes a world of difference not only to the Christians' picture but also to their practice. It enables the Christian to see the practice of struggle and the liberation it brings as God's grace, a gift given freely.

This is perhaps the most elusive part of the book. What it argues, in effect, is this: there is no Chinese wall segregating the religion and politics in the lives of Christians involved in the struggle. A Christian experiences life as a whole, and the struggle in particular, in a Christian mode. And so, for a Christian, the struggle is experienced as a divine visitation.

This good news is fraught with hope and challenge. It calls all South Africans to repentance, demanding of them that they participate in the struggle for structural change in South Africa. It challenges people to avoid any compromise with the system, whether by commission or omission. It is the call to new life, to transcend the past, to make a new start. It challenges our individualism, and calls us to collective and considered action. And it poses a challenge for the Church, dividing it and making it into a site of struggle.

Interfaith Consequences

It is a pity that Nolan does not tease out more of the interfaith consequences of the theology he presents. In his preface, he says that "the reader who is not a Christian, or not a South African Christian, will have to regard himself or herself as listening in to a conversation", and this is fair enough. But other theists, particularly practising Muslims and Jews, who also experience struggle in an explicitly religious (albeit non-Christian) mode, could in principle be made party to some of the conversation.

This is an important and challenging book which presents a people's theology for South Africa. It is firmly committed to the struggle, steeped in the traditions of the democratic movement, and rooted in a thorough and correct analysis of apartheid and the struggle. It should be studied by all Christians committed to the struggle, and will also enlighten non-Christians, disabusing them of the notion that the deliverances of Christianity are an opiate. It will infuriate supporters of the system and pew-Christians, who try to sell the people a stupefying caricature of Christianity in a doomed effort to defer the coming of South Africa's day of liberation and salvation.

God in South Africa deserves to be welcomed and read by all the cadres of the liberation movement, whether they are believers or not.

THE VOICE OF A REVOLUTIONARY

Thomas Sankara Speaks: The Burkina Faso Revolution 1983-87 (Pathfinder Press, 1988. £6.25)

Thomas Sankara was brutally assassinated on October 15, 1987. Those who were implicated in that dastardly deed included Blaise Compaore, his closest friend and comrade. Sankara was only 37 when he was killed and had been in power for four years. Yet his death touched millions of people in Burkina Faso, Africa, Cuba, Nicaragua and other parts of the world.

This collection of speeches and interviews which span the period from March 9, 1983 to October 1987 gives the reader an insight into his ideas and personality. It covers a wide spectrum of questions relating to fundamental ideas on revolution, Marxism-Leninism, culture and internationalism.

Reading this book one is deeply moved by some of the speeches, as indeed his audiences were. He spoke in order to help clarify fundamental issues and problems confronting the revolutionary process in his country. Since he was concerned to move people into action, the speeches inevitably contain rhetorical declarations and hyperbole.

What impresses the reviewer are his constant references to the relationship of the revolution and the active involvement of the masses. Power, he said, "must be conquered above all by a conscious people." For him a revolution is genuine "because it draws on the strength, the richness and the invincibility of the masses" (p.234). Sankara recognised that the peasantry, which makes up the largest part of the population, is a key force. In his concrete political actions he constantly sought to redress the pauperisation of the peasantry.

However he had an overtly critical attitude towards the petty-bourgeoisie, and towards leading people from the trade union movement and other left-wing parties. One gets the impression that for Sankara you were either for the revolution or against it. But this blanket black or white approach had serious weaknesses. Experience teaches that in every revolutionary process there are large groups of people, including from the peasantry and the working class, who remain passive. They have to be won over by conscious political and ideological work, otherwise they could throw in their lot with the forces of neo-colonialism, imperialism and reaction.

Sankara placed great emphasis on the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution. The CDR's were organised at all the work places and in all neighbourhoods and military units. In creating the CDRs Sankara was concerned that they should be the defenders of the revolution. In his words:

“He who speaks of revolution without taking the necessary measures to protect it makes a serious error and misunderstands the capacity for fighting and destruction of the forces of reaction” (p.166).

Abuses and Mistakes

In this speech, Sankara dealt in an honest and forthright manner with the serious abuses and mistakes committed by elements within the CDRs. He called for unity, criticism and self-criticism, and the discarding of slogans and opportunism. The speech, given to the First National Conference of the CDRs, makes stirring reading. One can feel the electric atmosphere generated by that speech and parts of it are Sankara at his best.

Yet it was sadly deficient in other respects. No real attempt it seems was made in that speech and in practice to resolve the issue of the role, functions, duties and responsibilities of the CDRs and those of the trade union movement. The trade unions felt aggrieved that the CDRs were usurping their functions. Moreover some leaders of the trade union movement had a history of working class struggle against the previous neo-colonial regimes and they resented the fact that young people with no or very little experience of work and trade unionism seemed to be lording it over them. This does not mean that on all issues the trade unions were correct. Far from it. But there was undoubtedly confrontation and conflict between the government and the trade unions.

Notwithstanding the mistakes and weaknesses (which revolutionary process is free of mistakes and weaknesses?) Sankara, as this book brings out, was a genuine revolutionary, sincere in his endeavours to improve the lot of his people and to involve the masses in all levels of political activity. He was

unjustly accused of seeking to foment trouble and revolution in other countries. This was an imperialist orchestrated campaign to discredit Sankara. In an interview in 1984 Sankara said, "Revolution can't be exported" and characterised the notion that it could be exported as "a counter-revolutionary view of pseudo revolutionaries, proclaimed by the bookish dogmatic petty bourgeois" (p.72).

In both theory and practical political life Sankara sought to redress the injustices and inequality suffered by women. One of his finest speeches was the one he made to thousands of women on March 8, 1987 in the capital Ouagadougou. Titled "The Revolution Cannot Triumph Without the Emancipation of Women", the speech analyses the historical genesis of women's oppression and subjugation, using Engels' methodological approach. In dealing with his own country he mercilessly exposes how men treat women, how single mothers and educated women suffer social disapproval and discrimination and how women who are the source of life still remain "invisible, faceless and voteless" and are still "in chains, shadow of the male shadow" (p.212).

The Burkinabe government under Sankara took serious steps to eliminate practices that demean women such as prostitution, vagrancy, forced marriages and female circumcision.

Internationalism

This book contains many speeches made by Sankara in which he passionately attacks imperialism and unequivocally expresses his solidarity with Cuba, Nicaragua, the PLO and our struggle in South Africa. Cuba, he said, "is very close to us" and his last speech, a week before his death, was a tribute to Che Guevara. As Sankara said, "You cannot kill ideas; ideas do not die. That is why Che Guevara — an embodiment of revolutionary ideas, of self-sacrifice — is not dead...." (p.243).

The struggle against apartheid South Africa was very dear to him, and he offered political, diplomatic and material support to the ANC. In his speech on the emancipation of women he quoted from the song our women sang on August 9, 1956: "You have touched the women, you have struck a rock. You have dislodged a boulder, you will be crushed" (p.227). After the death of Samora Machel, Sankara laid the blame squarely at the door of the racist regime and imperialism.

In his speech to the Eighth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement held in Harare on September 3, 1986, Sankara dealt with the terrible problem of the debt. He called for the non-payment of the debt and for united action on the

part of the non-aligned movement to deal with this crisis which is ruining the economies of so many developing countries. At that conference US imperialism was organising to prevent Nicaragua from hosting the next conference. In supporting Nicaragua, Sankara pointed out how that country had suffered more than his own and now “more than any other country today (it) knows the price of non-alignment. It pays daily in blood and sweat for its courageous choices” (p.191).

Sankara was an ebullient figure, ready to discuss and debate any issue with his own people and with foreigners. In his four brief years as President he matured as a revolutionary and leader, proclaiming himself a Marxist-Leninist. Unfortunately he was gunned down in the prime of his youth and denied the possibility of developing further. If he had lived he had the potential to emerge as one of Africa’s greatest revolutionary leaders. His revolutionary legacy will continue to inspire people in Burkina Faso, Africa and other parts of the world.

For anyone wishing to understand the ideas that motivated Sankara and which gave flesh and blood to the revolution in Burkina Faso this book is a must. It is a tragedy of our continent that linguistic difficulties prevent us from knowing and appreciating what is going on in different parts of our continent. It is a pity that those Africans who do not read French should only now have Sankara’s ideas available in English. Pathfinder Press has done a service by producing this book, but we revolutionaries in Africa have to give serious consideration to overcoming the language barrier.

Ahmed Azad

FILM REVIEW: Mapantsula

Nobody should miss seeing *Mapantsula*. It is an extraordinary film, coming straight out of the heart of Soweto, bursting with life and excitement, realistic yet imaginative, the story of a people fighting for their daily bread and their future, tragic and optimistic at the same time.

At one level the film can be enjoyed as a straightforward gangster movie. *Mapantsula* means *tsotsi*, and the hero is a wide boy called Panic, played with tremendous panache by Thomas Mogotlane, who co-authored the script with director Oliver Schmitz. The film moves at a rattling pace from episode to episode as Panic jostles his way through the Johannesburg throng, mugging and shoplifting, cocking a snoot at authority, tangling with the cops

and sometimes giving them information, sleeping with his girl friend in madam's back yard.

Authors, director and cameraman have done their work so well that one's interest is engaged from the word 'go'. One wants to know what is happening to Panic, where he is going next, what the future holds for him and his girl friend, how he can possibly get away with it. Panic's behaviour is outrageous, but nothing is unacceptably improbable.

These are real people, living in the real world. We can see, hear and almost smell Soweto — the children playing happily in the street until the police van turns the corner, when the stone-throwing and shooting start; the unemployed, silent and watchful, leaning up against the wall; the women defending their skokiaan empires with ferocious courage; the "comrades" toi-toi-ing down the dusty avenues; couples in a disco dancing on unconcernedly while Panic has his knife at the throat of an adversary. Life in Soweto may be nasty, brutish and short, but it is full of colour.

We empathise with Panic because his life-style does not flow from a defect in his character but is a form of protest against the system. He has his loyalties — to his mates, his girl friend, in the broadest sense to his people. Beneath the glitter and dash of his personality he has a basic integrity which in the end enlarges his understanding of life and gives him the strength to survive torture and say 'No' when his police interrogator asks him to sign a false statement against a 'comrade'.

Today it is ordinary people like Panic who are saying 'No' to apartheid up and down the country, making South Africa ungovernable. *Mapantsula* shows how this comes about naturally.

A special word of praise should go to the sound-track, as evocative and haunting as in Bergman's *Cries and Whispers*; and especially to the group Ouens who made the music as exciting as the story.

All in all this is a splendid film. As the newspaper blurbs say: Not to be missed.

P.M.



DEMOCRACY AND SOCIALISM IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN REVOLUTION

From C.M., Somafo

Dear Editor,

Developments in relation to our struggle for national liberation compel us to review strategy and tactics in line with our policy. As we are nearing our freedom, issues related to democracy and socialism tend to dominate most of our discussions, in an organised manner or not. Hence the need to clearly understand what kind of democracy we envisage in a future South Africa and what socio-economic formation we have to create in order to achieve the type of democracy we envisage.

Certain progressive observers have correctly claimed that genuine democracy, with the intention of redressing the sufferings inherent in the

apartheid system and to ensure the triumph of social progress, peace and friendship, can come in an environment of socialism. This letter is an attempt to contribute to the ongoing discussion on socialism and democracy in the South African revolution.

A close study of the South African socio-economic structure shows how inseparable are its two fundamental realities: class exploitation and national oppression. In our conditions, these two concepts are not only inseparable, but are also mutually related. We cannot therefore under our conditions fight against national oppression as a separate entity without tackling class exploitation, since to a large extent national oppression provides ground for class exploitation.

The existence of the ANC and the SACP as the twin pillars of the South African revolution is a testimony to the realities of its struggle. The ANC cannot successfully wage a national democratic revolution and realise its goals without redressing the historical injustices inherent in the socio-economic structure i.e., the nationalisation of the monopolies and the land question, while the SACP cannot wage a socialist revolution without placing on its agenda the struggle for democracy as a priority. The immediate interest of all the progressive sections of the South African people is the carrying out of the national democratic revolution to its logical conclusion. The main content of this revolution, as stated in the ANC's policy statement, is the national liberation of the black people, the Africans in particular.

The SACP sees the achievement of these democratic goals as laying the indispensable basis for the advance of our revolution to a socialist one. Lenin has emphasised repeatedly the closeness of the link between the drive for a socialist revolution and the struggle for democracy. "One should know how to combine the struggle for democracy with the struggle for the socialist revolution, subordinating the first to the second; in this lies the whole difficulty; in this is the whole essence"¹. Lenin furthermore correctly maintained that... "victorious socialism must necessarily establish a full democracy"

The ANC Strategy and Tactics spells out the leading role of the working class in the national democratic revolution and the fact that the majority of the blacks suffer both class exploitation and national oppression. For this reason, Africans constitute the leading force of the working class. They suffer more than any other sector of our society. Precisely because of its key position in society the African working class is referred to as the "backbone of the revolution".

Our working class is indeed capable of making headway in the struggle for

the realisation of national democracy, just as it is equally capable of creating the preconditions for a speedy advance to socialism. Lenin stressed that as a main condition for the victory of the revolution we must "... have the following of the majority of a class, the vanguard of the revolution, the vanguard of the people, which is capable of carrying the masses with it"².

Previous revolutions the world over are an adequate example of the necessity of concerted action by all working people for the success of a revolution. This truth holds for our situation in SA, through the alliance of the working class and the peasantry as a base. The ANC and the SACP have the important role of uniting and channelling the efforts of these forces for the overthrow of the regime, the creation of democracy and the unabated advance to socialism. Whilst realising the need for concerted action, we should understand that the struggle for democracy and socialism is dictated by conditions existing in the South African reality. For example, we cannot win any national demand without the destruction of the present capitalist mode of production; the reason being that capitalist production relations are the foundations of national oppression and class exploitation.

In our situation it is therefore correct to conclude that the struggle for national liberation coincides with the struggle for socialism. We find South Africa at one level operating as a country of a bourgeois-democratic nature whilst on the other level the colonised people are fighting for national liberation. It is precisely the integration of these two aspects in a single economic complex within the bounds of a single country that characterises South Africa as a colony of a special type; and it is these realities that also intertwine the struggles for democracy and socialism. The dominant features contain the potential of a successful national democratic revolution proceeding at once to a socialist transformation.

Footnotes:

1. V.I. Lenin *Collected Works* Moscow 1977. Volume 35, p267.
2. V.I. Lenin *Collected Works* Moscow 1972. Volume 26, p24.

MAKE DEMOCRACY A REALITY

From Freedom Oliver, Luanda.

Dear Editor,

Ever since the days of great revolutionaries — J.B. Marks and Yusuf Dadoo, to name only two — I feel all has been said and written about how best we can advance our struggle for the seizure of political power.

Today we are taken by *perestroika* and *glasnost* and the experiences of our most reliable friends, because these are tools in the hands of revolutionaries used to strengthen the people's revolution and to fight negative vices, routinism and bureaucracy in order to achieve greater transformations.

New questions are being asked from many angles as to whether we can take practical experiences from our great friends. *Perestroika*, according to Gorbachev, means more democracy. Democracy as a world phenomenon applies to any revolutionary movement, provided the people who want it are serious and true to the principles of that movement. Gorbachev attaches importance to the development of democracy primarily because he sees it as the only correct way of drawing millions upon millions of people into the making of history. In dealing with all questions in society, he believes that if millions get on with the job, success is assured because possibilities are created for the most extensive transformations.

It is with this approach in mind that Chief Luthuli once said, "The key to freedom is with the oppressed, not the oppressor." His words are relevant today. The millions of oppressed must be involved in the making of history, at home and abroad, if more democracy is to become a reality.

WORKERS' CONTROL AND STAGES OF THE REVOLUTION

From Theresa

Dear Editor,

On reading the introductory section of Toussaint's article in *The African Communist* of the third quarter of 1988, I thought he was going to say something really new in relation to the perennial problem of stages of the revolution in South Africa. Thus, initially, he made the point that the concept of workers' control, raised by James Motlatsi, president of the National Union of Mineworkers, had cut sharply across the settled position in the ongoing debate between the national liberation movement and the "workerists"; it had "burst like a fire-cracker on the political scene" (p.22). But, to my deep disappointment, Toussaint, having begun his article on this promising note, soon reverted to saying what the national liberation movement, and in particular the Communist Party, has been saying for several decades now in relation to the problem of stages of revolution in South Africa.

I am not saying that the movement has been making crucial errors. Indeed the movement has produced a series of excellent analyses of the South African question, the high point undoubtedly being the programme of the South African Communist Party adopted by its 5th National Conference held inside South Africa in 1962 (*The Road to South African Freedom*). Our movement has clarified that it is the national struggle which represents the centre of the first stage of our struggle in South Africa, and we have characterised our revolution as a revolution of the national democratic type. This most important conclusion still holds for today.

However, this correct position is being chewed over interminably just at a time when it is necessary for us to take a qualitative step forward while examining the character of the revolutionary process in South Africa. Recently not simply quantitative, but *qualitative* changes have taken place in our country. Without understanding this it is not possible to grasp why the conception of workers' control has emerged over the last few years in the midst of the people's movement.

The key aspect of the qualitative changes in the conditions of the struggle in our country is the emergence of the people's movement which began to give rise, in the second half of 1984, to organs of embryonic state power. This people's upsurge took place in the context of a deep political crisis based on the socio-economic crisis which had set in by the second half of 1984. The emergence of this people's insurrectionary movement in the framework of the national liberation struggle in South Africa demands that we take a fresh look at our strategic conceptions.

The objective relations in South Africa lay the basis for at least important elements of what has become known as a *transitional revolutionary process*. It was Lenin who first "discovered" the elements of such a revolutionary process in the Russia of the post-February 1917 revolution. A transitional revolutionary process is one which does not belong either to the bourgeois-democratic or to the socialist revolution, i.e. to neither of the classical or basic revolutionary types. It is a process which, in the context of our modern epoch, goes beyond the framework of the bourgeois-democratic revolution without becoming a socialist revolution.

This process tends to unite a comparatively broad alliance of class forces, with petit-bourgeois forces of a left-tending nature, rather than the working class, at least in the initial stage, taking the lead. For such a path to be realised a deep crisis affecting the whole society must exist, a crisis which the ruling class and the existing regime are unable to resolve. In this political vacuum

the people begin to take their fate and the fate of the whole country into their own hands, thereby engaging in history-making activity.

Different Paths

Closely linked to the understanding that the real revolutionary process in South Africa is essentially of a transitional type is the conclusion reached by the two main political contingents of the national liberation movement, namely the South African Communist Party in 1962 and the African National Congress in 1969, that the South African revolution is the path of the *national democratic revolution*. The national democratic revolution, as one of the typical revolution types of our epoch, is not a classical bourgeois democratic revolution, nor is it a socialist revolution.

Toussaint rejects the simplistic “two-stage” conception of the revolutionary process in South Africa, viz. a bourgeois-democratic revolution followed by a socialist revolution. He argues for a more “flexible” linkage of the national liberatory and the socialist stages. We have nothing against this point of view. The problem arises in that Toussaint tends to use this more “flexible” approach in order to downgrade the national liberation struggle in favour of the struggle for socialism, though he does stress that it is not possible to avoid the national liberation phase.

In fact he has moved in the wrong direction. The impregnation of the struggle for national liberation in South Africa with a process of “real revolution” make it necessary not to downgrade the national liberation struggle but rather to upgrade it.

The capitalist system in our country has reached its full potential on the basis of colonialist relations. In present conditions we cannot denote the national liberation struggle as a mere “way-station”, as Toussaint has phrased it, on the way to socialism. It has begun to be a deep revolutionary process in its own right.

Socialism and Democracy

The emergence of an insurrectionary movement and the depth of the country’s political crisis have fostered the belief among some South African revolutionaries that the socialist revolution is around the corner. We have seen this tendency reflected in the ranks of the national liberation movement over recent years and also among contingents of the people’s movement in South Africa, including in the trade union movement headed by COSATU.

We should not be misled into thinking that the qualitative changes in the conditions of the struggle have made it necessary for us to devote less

attention to democracy and national liberation and more to the prospect of socialism. Lenin himself warned the Bolsheviks over and over again that there is no way to reach socialism except by the path of democracy. In the concrete conditions of South Africa, national liberation constitutes essentially a democratic process and represents the main thrust of the revolutionary process. The emergence of insurrection serves to raise the revolutionary potential of national liberation. It therefore becomes the special task of the national liberation movement, particularly of all Communists, to do everything to deepen national liberation by expanding the democratic content of the people's movement.

Closely linked to Toussaint's tendency to downgrade the importance of national liberation is his use of the overworked and general formula of "working class leadership". Working class leadership, he insists, is the key to ensuring the "unbroken advance" from national liberation to socialism.

The concept of working class leadership suggests that in South Africa the transition is already being made from the national-democratic to the people's-democratic revolution.

In my opinion the conception that the severe colonialist and racist features of our country's social and political fabric can be overcome overnight is sheer naiveté. There is not only a great deal to be done with the economy, including its qualitative development, but also radical changes have to be made at the level of power relations. The two aspects are closely related. Doubtless it will be at the end of the stage of national liberation that the working class will finally be able to ensure its leadership in a truly vanguard sense and head the transition to the socialist revolution.

Toussaint has thrown the tactical formula of "working class leadership" into the theoretical arena in a dogmatic manner, thereby actually coming close to repeating the mistakes of the "workerists" or anarcho-syndicalists whose central error is to over-emphasise the working class content of the struggle in conditions where the democratic, and not the socialist, revolution is on the agenda.

Mass Political Campaigns

The cooperation of the mass working class movement with the rest of the people's movement will take many forms. It will take place at a more programmatic level in the framework of mass political campaigns, in mutual assistance in the course of various campaigns, including strikes and consumer boycotts, and in specific issues which can be taken up between COSATU and the various constituents of the UDF, the youth and women's

organisations, the cultural and sports organisations etc. All this must aim at not merely broadening the struggle and uniting the maximum opposition to apartheid, but also at deepening the democratic content of the people's struggle. Promoting the transition of this democratic activity to qualitative higher levels will culminate in the people beginning to take the various aspects of their daily lives into their own hands. The process of mobilising and uniting the people must lead to the setting up of more stable forms of people's power in all spheres. People's organs must become not only administrative but revolutionary organs ensuring the continuity of the revolutionary process and also centres of political struggle. Such a development has already begun in South Africa but has been partly hampered by the brutal repressions of the States of Emergency.

The concept of workers' control, in South African conditions, belongs not to the socialist but to the democratic revolution. In fact it has special relevance precisely for the transitional revolutionary process. Toussaint equates the radical form of workers' control with the socialist revolution and therefore must downgrade the more reformist or "simplistic" conception of workers' control to a mere question of "management" or administration of such spheres of the worker's life as accommodation, recreation and catering services. Failing to see the importance of the people's revolutionary movement in the framework precisely of the national liberation struggle, Toussaint cannot grasp the genuinely revolutionary compromise potential not only of the organs of people's power in general but of workers' control in particular.

There are two main areas of potential for workers' control. One is the situation where foreign companies are withdrawing from South Africa. Such "disinvestment", which is a form of monopoly adaptation to political and/or economic pressure, is essentially a defensive reaction, a sign of weakness on the part of international capital. Workers' control in such situations would be geared to utilising the contradictions which exist between big business on the one hand and the apartheid regime on the other. The aim of the workers in such situations is not only to protect the gains they have made in recent years — agreements with their trade unions, questions connected with pension funds, retrenchments etc — but also to go over to the offensive and, as a first step, to gain regular information about the new undertaking, about profits and costs, contracts and licences, credits, taxes paid to the government, exports and imports, technology and other know-how. It was Lenin who regarded the acquisition of such information as the first step on the road to workers' control.

A second sphere where forms of workers' control are especially suitable is in those spheres of the economy and society at large which are the key points

of the South African system of colonialist exploitation and repression. The two main arms are the mines and farms where particular backward, predatory and brutal forms of exploitation exist. In fact it was on the mines, in the midst of the great mineworkers' strike in 1987, that forms of workers' control began to emerge. Here the main thrust of the workers' struggle must be directed against the migrant and compound system. In this framework we can see how appropriate were the remarks of the President of the National Union of Mineworkers which were quoted by Toussaint at the beginning of his article.

A crucial arm of workers' control, as emerged very clearly during the mineworkers' strike, are the self-defence units which become especially necessary at times of heightened crisis. Such self-defence units, as with the people's organ in the townships, should be set up on a longer-term basis. They are embryonic organs of state power.

These forms of people's struggle are a key aspect of the new phase of the national liberation struggle in South Africa. It is the special responsibility of Communists and all revolutionaries to promote them and to see that they become a permanent feature of the South African struggle for national liberation, democracy and social progress.

WHAT PERESTROIKA AND GLASNOST MEAN TO US

From B.S.A. Berlin, G.D.R.

Dear Editor,

It is necessary to seek answers to the questions posed by Comrade Zindie in the letter section of the *African Communist* fourth quarter 1988. Perestroika and Glasnost are matters which concern not only the Soviet people but are also vital for all who are struggling for a world without wars and the well-being of everyone on our planet.

In any social structure, where a point is reached which demands advance, those seeking *new social progress* are accused of *wanting to go back*. Hence an intense struggle arises between the old and the new.

However, it is not simply a matter of black and white. Such struggle for social advance carries many shades in its complexity. There are elements who cry "let's go forward" while in actual practice seeking to turn "perestroika and glasnost" off course. On the other hand there are elements who genuinely fear that "perestroika and glasnost" will lead to the return of

capitalism. Then there are conservatives who are afraid of or do not understand the need for change and consciously strive to hold back advance to the new. So, as the process of struggle to go forward gains in momentum, there will be a lot of changing of standpoints and crossing of lines by the varying elements and streams. But as the old saying goes, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. The forces moving forward will gather ever greater stimulus and strength as the issues clarify themselves in the reality of daily life.

In looking for answers to the ever present questions “where do we go from here and how?” it would be an error to hypothesize on the “what-might-have-beens” and the “ifs-and-buts”.

No doubt the distortions in the development of socialism in the Soviet Union, due to the personality cult with its mistakes and frightful crimes, have contributed much to making the road forward and the restructuring of the socialist order complex and so painful. But much of the criticism we read in the Soviet press and elsewhere, of the personality cult and the shocking crimes as well as the stagnation period is by far too one-sided. While not seeking to play down the past wrong doings which have done so much damage to the development of socialist society and tarnished the image of the great humanitarian ideas of communism, as well as causing so much pain and suffering to millions, it is absolutely incorrect to ignore the great achievements of the Soviet people under extremely adverse conditions.

We of the world’s progressive anti-imperialist forces are in duty bound to record our history, no matter how painful at times, truthfully in every minute detail. Honest recording helps to avoid future mistakes and serves to motivate the way forward. It is essential that blank spots in Soviet history be filled and untruths rubbed out. The re-recording of this history cannot be done with a lop-sided approach if the truth is to prevail. A correct balance has to be struck between the negative and the positive — between the great achievements of socialism and the damaging negative features.

And where do we stand in all this? I believe that it is our internationalist duty to give our full support to the leadership and people of the USSR in the struggle for the democratisation of social life, for getting to grips with the problems of modern economy and for mastering the problems of advanced high technology. Though this is a struggle of the Soviet people and its leadership, it is also at the same time our concern. We can make a modest contribution to this struggle by putting forward our own ideas and above all by joining in the struggle to combat the ideological distortions, half-truths and downright lies propagated by the enemies of peace and socialism.

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