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“NON-COLLABORATION NOT NEGOTIATION”



BY

LIVINGSTONE MQOTSI

A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The oppressed people must learn that their heroes are not necessarily those who are feted and lionised by the press of the liberal bourgeoisie or the state-controlled television. In truth, too much of kind attention from those quarters, can be damaging to one's political reputation.

Our struggle has many heroes and martyrs — mostly unsung. One such person who has made a telling contribution to the struggle is **LIVINGSTONE MQOTSI**, a Unity Movement stalwart who has forced to flee the country in 1964 and has been living in exile since.

Comrade Mqotsi was, before his exile, in the forefront of the struggle. The leading positions he occupied in various organisations testify to both his involvement and commitment. He was on the Executive Committee of the Cape African Teachers Association and the All African Convention. He and Comrade Allie Fataar were Joint Secretaries of the one section of the Non-European Unity Movement and he was the General Secretary of APDUSA when it was first formed.

His work in the freedom struggle cost him and his family very dear. Here are some events which show the sacrifices he has had to make:

- (a) Though an outstanding teacher with a Master of Arts degree, he was dismissed in 1955 for his opposition to Bantu education.
- (b) Offers of employment by CSIR, Rhodes University and the University of Fort Hare were undermined by the authorities. In the end, this highly talented man was denied the right to work in order to maintain himself and his family.
- (c) He was put in charge of a Unity Movement press to provide employment and the legal right to remain in the urban area of East London. That came to an abrupt end when he was detained in the 1960 state of emergency declared by Verwoerd. On his release, many months later, he found that the printing press was sold in execution by the Deputy Sheriff.
- (d) Rather than starve or seek charity, he reluctantly took employment in a legal office. Very soon that office became the centre of the struggle for civil liberties. With fame came hatred from the police who charged Comrade Mqotsi and his principal, Louis Mtshizana, for defeating the ends of justice. Both were acquitted. Insane with

rage, the police then banned both Comrade Mqotsi and his principal for five years. The banning forbade him from communicating with his principal! This was the last straw. The Movement then instructed him to leave the country, which he did in 1964.

For a number of years Comrade Mqotsi was the editor of *Indaba Zasemonti*. This newspaper, *inter alia*, exposed the corrupt practices of the Matanzima regime. It became a popular and widely read newspaper. This was at a time when fascism had arisen in all its fearsome fury.

Here then is a man who is no stranger to struggle, striving and suffering. He is widely respected as a leading intellectual in the struggle and a writer of depth and intensity. His mild exterior and soft spokenness belies a spirit which is like tempered steel. In matters of principle, he is totally uncompromising.

We place before you excerpts of this Comrade's article on the all important topic of **Negotiations**.



NON-COLLABORATION NOT NEGOTIATION

The oppressed and exploited people of South Africa have, against great odds, fought valiantly to achieve the independence of South Africa from imperialist domination and for emancipation from exploitation and oppression. It is a measure of their courage and their determination to free themselves that they have made great strides in this direction; they have refused to buckle under the repressive mechanisms of the ruling class; urban and rural workers as well as the rural poor have come to assert their demand for *total national liberation*.

In the course of this thousands of lives have been lost and many have been jailed, persecuted, tortured and maimed.

These struggles of our people have now become a matter of international concern, and pressures — both national and international — have been mounting over the years for the dissolution of the racist exploiting system of capitalism-imperialism and the introduction of a united non-racist society in South Africa.

It is these very struggles; this unwavering resolve to free ourselves, that has led, *inter alia*, to the release of political prisoners who have been incarcerated for years by an illegitimate regime in terms of racist and oppressive laws which we have never felt any moral obligation to obey since they were imposed upon us against our wishes, framed and enacted without our participation. We therefore welcome the release of Nelson Mandela and others without reservation. They never committed any crimes and should never have been incarcerated for seeking to uphold their right to enjoy human rights in a country where black people have, as a matter of law and politics, religion, social and economic principles, been denied these.

The credit for the transfer of these men from solitary confinement to a wider concentration camp that is South Africa where blacks exist as non-citizens, does not, and should not go to the jailers themselves. Even this circumscribed freedom is as a result of the actions of the victims of South Africa's state violence; the selfless sacrifices of millions of often anonymous heroes. To call these incarceraters of our

people men of courage and integrity, is to use words in a curious way and to bend the rules of logic beyond recognition. And from that position, it would be easy to regard freedom itself — plus all that it implies, as a commodity that can be negotiated across a bargaining table.

One of the manifestations of this kind of thinking is the enthusiasm that has been generated by the so-called reforms that have allegedly been introduced by Mr De Klerk, white South Africa's president. Behind the accompanying euphoria is the suggestion that there has been such a change of heart on the part of his section of the ruling class that we can now expect the advent of the dawn of a new political day. We are invited to believe that the ruling class in South Africa is prepared to negotiate away its rule and its system, thus committing suicide, to make us free. That would be a unique event in all history. But it is this perception that has led to the formation of a bizarre co-partnership between a people's organisation — the African National Congress — and an organisation whose ethos rests on a racist philosophy — the National Party of Verwoerd, Vorster, etc. So committed is the leadership of the A.N.C. to this association that our people are being enjoined to sanctify this racist party of the Afrikaner wing of the ruling class. This joint venture of leopards and lambs is pledged to work out a new order for *our* South Africa no matter what those who are outside the enterprise may think.

It is in the nature of such an alliance that it should embrace a ragtag and bobtail collection of collaborators in the bantustans, the puppets in the tricameral parliament, who have been subjected to boycotts and ostracism by our people as political rejects, together with the representatives of finance capital, the liberal bourgeoisie.

Such a scenario must necessarily lead to a watering down of the fundamental demands of the liberation movement when these partners sit down to consider a new mechanism for our exploitation and oppression, when the old order will be dressed up afresh and re-assembled in a new form. Once these mixed elements are put together the stage will be set for the enactment of the drama of collusion, collaboration, accommodation and compromise which will go under the misnomer of a negotiated settlement. It is this betrayal — witting or unwitting — that our people, the oppressed and exploited people of South Africa, are being urged to support.

In the face of this real threat, we have to remind ourselves of the fundamentals of our liberation struggle: full democratic rights; the creation of a united, non-racist democratic South Africa; one South African nation with a common adult franchise and one parliament; freedom from foreign domination and imperialist exploitation; free and unsegregated education for all; inviolability of one's person, of one's home and privacy; civil liberties like freedom of religion, press, speech, meeting and association; full equality of rights for all without distinction of 'race', colour or sex; full use of the land; a system of justice free from 'race', colour and sex discrimination.

These basic demands are *non-negotiable* and cannot be bargained away as some people are already inclined to do. *We should never make any concession to racism.*

In the light of this and in the light of our history and experience as the oppressed and exploited in South Africa the conviction is gaining ground and there is growing support for the proposition that a policy of *non-collaboration* with the oppressors (and this includes the liberal bourgeoisie) is an absolutely necessary basis for the success of any struggle to put an end to the existing system of racism and capitalist exploitation. Increasingly, our people are refusing to be party to their own enslavement.

It is not by accident, therefore, that a concerted campaign against this policy is being revived as the pace towards wider and orchestrated plans for grand-style collaboration gathers momentum. Well placed to set the scene for the intended onslaught are the liberals — black and white. The first shots were fired by Mrs Fatima Meer, official biographer of Nelson Mandela, on an occasion celebrating one of the proud achievements of the A.N.C. In her view those who preach non-collaboration and regard the leaders of the bantustans and non-white appendages to the racist parliament in Cape Town as sell-outs and collaborators, are guilty of Trotskyism, no matter, apparently, what their political affiliations are. (*Business Day*: 13/10/89). We, however, can live with this time-worn demonology.

According to this professor of sociology, it is derisive to call collaborators by their proper name; it is a manifestation of "vulgarised Trotskyism which preached the doctrine of irreconcilable conflict and classified people into 'collaborators' and 'liberators'". To her, this is a kind of name-calling that "has been affixed today to all incumbents of apartheid institutions, homeland governments, community councils, the members of the two inferior Houses of the Tricameral Parliament."

She calls this "stigmatisation", which is naturally resented by those against whom it is directed to the detriment of Black Unity! (Echoes of vulgarised Black Consciousness). Events in Natal have to be seen as the ill-effects of this 'name-calling' which places the collaborators "outside the liberatory fold."

She, therefore, counsels revisionism and calls for a return to the old politics of collaboration as a strategy for engaging in the politics of liberation! All blacks, according to this professorial reasoning, are essentially part of the liberation struggle whose energies are directed against "the Nationalist government". What is necessary is to maximise black unity of all and sundry on a basis of collaboration and to her this represents "the strongest possible kind of confrontation". A tolerant attitude would take us away from 'personal' and 'puerile politics', the stock-in-trade of non-collaborators. This tolerance; this sweet reasonableness, however, does not extend to 'Trotskyites' who must be extirpated.

Writing in defence of liberalism and the liberal tradition, Daryl Glaser (*Business Day*: 13/10/89) mounts an attack on the policy of non-collaboration from another angle which rests essentially on ignoring the possibility of socialist democracy, but gives the impression that *democracy is possible only under liberalism*, that is, capitalism.

The liberal Ken Owen (*Business Day*: 16/10/89) is effusive in his praise of the nimble-mindedness of Harry Schwartz ('the quickest analytical mind of South African politics'), Glaser and Fatima Meer. His own method of analysis is to present our struggle as a conflict (perhaps reconcilable) between 'socialism' and 'apartheid'. He finds De Klerk an earnest man and urges the old liberals to get in on the act:

"Only liberalism can secure both liberty and progress while accommodating the diversity of South Africa. But the liberals have had the stuffing knocked out of them by the bully-boys, the nationalists on the one side and socialists on the other, for forty years. They don't have much courage or conviction left."

'Socialists' in this context should be read to mean the neo-liberals who masquerade as communists.

The logic of the position outlined above is to embrace the hordes of collaborators and highly organised liberals with huge sums of money which will be used to wreck the genuine struggles of the workers and the landless poor, that is, the social base of the liberation struggle in South Africa.

The actors in this drama of diversion, intrigue, capitulation and betrayal are a mixed bag: De Klerk's own oppressive regime; exploiters of our people in big business; capitalist-imperialist leaders and avowed enemies of our struggle, such as Margaret Thatcher and George Bush; collaborators and quislings in our midst; the representatives of capital in the Democratic Party, the Five Freedoms Forum and IDASA; the ruling class press; the U.N.; regimes of the Soviet Union and China; the beleaguered Front-line States and the OAU with its sordid record in Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and now Namibia; and, sadly, sections of the broad liberation movement.

In South Africa the task of manning this show has been assigned to the A.N.C. and the Nationalist Party, personified in Mandela and De Klerk respectively, the leading stars, though not, in fact, the producers and directors of this political jamboree.

The perception in some optimistic circles is that some Lancaster House pattern of 'majority rule', 'one-person-one-vote' will eventually emerge. That is an illusion of which we must disabuse ourselves at once. As Hosea Jaffe says (*Sunday Mail, Zimbabwe: 24/9/89*): "The place and role of the South African political economy in the world system of capitalism-imperialism makes such a perspective extremely unlikely." For South Africa belongs to the imperialist bloc of nations. "It is a bastion of the West in the African continent", continues Jaffe.

From this reality it follows that the national oppression and economic exploitation of our people and the emancipation of South Africa from imperialist domination cannot be resolved by 'negotiation' with the very perpetrators of the existing order in South Africa.

At this juncture the South African ruling class does not feel the urgency of an imperative impending revolutionary transformation. It has not been defeated yet and is in no immediate danger of being overwhelmed by the superior forces of the liberation movement. Therefore, there is no compelling reason for it to negotiate except on strategic grounds and in order to perpetuate the *status quo ante* on a new basis and with the consent, collusion and collaboration of the victims themselves. And the more illustrious these victims the better the deal for racism-capitalism.

Thus, any negotiated settlement at this stage can only be on the terms dictated by the interests of the dominant party, that is, on terms favouring the entrenchment and perpetuation of the status quo. No acceptable solution can be negotiated with the present ruling coalition of interests. It is the mass of the oppressed and exploited who must and can change society through their own organisations which must be kept

independent and free from all extraneous influences. We must resist the tactics of those who seek "to draw trade unions, student bodies, sports constituencies, church communities and a rag-bag of both 'black' and 'white' liberals into the 'negotiating process'" (New Unity Movement statement: *Negotiations — the road to betrayal* — 5/10/89)

What is contemplated by the masterminds behind this diabolical plan is a formula to make the status quo acceptable to the oppressed on the lines of suggested by Kauffmann of the German school of 'Africanists' as early as 1962 — a black-governed state and a white-governed state. That blueprint has since been modified, elaborated upon and mystified into federal, confederal and even consociational structures. And behind the scenes lurks the daunting figure of the head of the Kwa-Zulu bantustan and the Inkatha movement. For tactical and strategic reasons, he has not been mentioned too often in public lately. He has his own preferred blueprint for a 'post-apartheid' South Africa which will be put on the table at the appropriate moment. His own constitutional guidelines will be put into the hotch-potch alongside other constitutional guidelines and his position could well prove to be pivotal in the envisaged negotiated settlement, especially since the pre-1960 tradition of the A.N.C. which he has always invoked in defence of his participation in bantustan structures is being resuscitated in earnest after a period of uneasy dormancy. Which partly explains why the A.N.C. leadership often approaches this unrepentant "incumbent of apartheid institutions" with sterilised hands.

The leadership of the African National Congress, an organisation in which a large section of our fighting people reposes its confidence and its faith, having made common cause with the Broederbond and international finance capital, must in the end necessarily cultivate other alliances in the imperialist world with its vested interests in the exploitation of our people. Overall, their job will be to watch over and protect these interests; locally, their function will be largely that of maintaining law and order, that is, a police function. Having allowed themselves to be manipulated into that position, it will be difficult for them to wriggle out. The senior partners will expect them to deliver their part of the contract. As night follows day, the logic of a false political position will escalate into a tempo of its own.

The leaders of this organisation cannot be accused of being ignorant of the history of the liberation struggle in South Africa. They are well aware of the fact that there are other organisations in the country that take a different view to their own but hope, apparently, *that a conspiracy of silence will suffice*. They will roll on the bandwagon of collaboration

amid a razzamatazz of publicity and euphoria, complete with its orchestration of spells and incantations; toyi-toyi politics and vigilante squads. This melodramatic seance of soul brothers and sisters will preclude any possibility of dialogue with the doubting Thomases. After all, censorship of 'subversive' ideas is a well established South African technique of dealing with the opposition. The credo of a leadership hell-bent on arriving at a compromise, conciliation and settlement with the ruling class seems to be: *for those who believe, no explanation is necessary; for those who do not believe, no explanation is possible!*

But history has its inexorable laws. In our case its logic is on the side of non-collaboration with the oppressor and of *intransigence in matters of principle*. We have to reject negotiations with the South African racist rulers on the broad principle *that no ruling class known to us from our reading of history has ever negotiated away its system and its rulers except after its defeat. Even then; even after it has become clear that its hegemony is being effectively challenged, it has used negotiations to restore or perpetuate its position, that is, its rule and its system, in a different guise; on a new basis.* Thus the ruling classes may use negotiations to evolve neo-colonial systems and methods designed to conserve the old system and the old rule. Our struggle, therefore, has to be *clearly anti-imperialist and non-collaborationist*. From that position, we have to *demand the unconditional liquidation of the status quo*, a system and rule that have subjugated us, unconditionally, for more than three hundred years. *We do not posit piecemeal demands* even if that incurs the displeasure of those who are looking for 'moderation', 'commonsense' and 'maturity' in our ranks. The more we are reviled, the more we believe that we are right. For we do not care for the *plaudits of the enemy*. We do not wish to be flaunted by them in the public gaze. We must look and fight for real democracy for real freedom and not for bogus structures.

In this connection the verdict of the New Unity Movement on the subject of 'negotiations' is unassailable:

"We are convinced, on the basis of our understanding struggles here, and on the basis of 'negotiated settlement' in the neo-colonial world, that all the present talk of 'negotiations' is a cruel hoax. It is a hoax offered to embattled millions reeling under a violent and oppressive society that cannot be

patched up; whether by talks; talks about talks, racist reforms or by the weight of slush funds with which nation-wide efforts to head off truly democratic change are being pursued. It must be overturned and re-built upon the foundations of universal democratic principles.

LIVINGSTONE MQOTSI

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Epilogue

The ceremony ended with the court poet declaiming:

Come let us free ourselves from shackled sleep,
And rid ourselves of the death-like numbness of
thraldom;

Open the beckoning gates of liberation wide,
And march to the font of our nation's baptism.

Come let us scorn the bestial lust of tyranny,
Whose whiskers revel in the bloody stains of
slaughter;

Whose raging pangs drive men to acts of dastardy,
Like hungry wolves that tear the carcass up in savage
anger.

Come let us show our foes we will not flag;
Our spirits free will move from strength to strength,
And raise the voice of light, of love and liberty,
Above the deafening din of the blaring bugles of
domination.

Then shall there be not bond and free, slave and
lord;

Then shall we speak of men and women citizens;
Then shall we have a New Generation born and
bred

In the modes and tenets of equality of men.