

INTRODUCTION

Urgent political and organisational tasks await us as we move into the 1990's. The situation has changed dramatically. It will continue to change dramatically. A year ago we were still living in a situation of total war on all fronts. Today we are moving into a period dominated by talks and negotiations. It is imperative that we understand what is happening. Confusion, bewilderment and paralysis will be our lot unless we do so. More important, our concrete tasks depend on a proper assessment of the changing situation. There is insufficient clarity as to how we should assess the NP under De Klerk today as well as its various anti-segregation moves. Nor have we worked out a proper strategy on how to deal with the Democratic Party and the Consultative Business Movement (CBM). It is this which causes division, confusion and paralysis. As a result we have not applied ourselves with sufficient vigour to the concrete political tasks - because we are uncertain what those tasks are. For example, we say that we have moved into a period of "negotiations" and have proclaimed it a "site of struggle". However, we have paid insufficient attention to how we conduct struggle on this site. The issue of negotiations does not become a site of struggle unless we make it so. Our mere saying so does not make it so either. The question before us therefore is how do we conduct struggle on this site. Our answer to this question will depend on our assessment of the situation and it is to this question that a few brief remarks will be addressed.

REASONS FOR DRAMATIC CHANGE IN SITUATION

What has happened to so dramatically alter the situation in our country? Basically the new situation is the result of the massive victories of the liberatory forces in Southern Africa during the 1980's. This includes the heroic struggles and victories in Angola and Namibia despite heavy costs, the successful mass resistance of our people which has triumphed over tricameralism, repression and the state of emergency, the successes achieved by the African National Congress in its campaign to isolate the apartheid regime as well as other victories (acceptance, popularity) including the victories and standing of its military wing, Umkomto We Sizwe, both inside and outside our country. These massive victories of the liberatory forces in Southern Africa have plunged the regime into deep crisis. It is unable to break out of the grip of this crisis which has serious political, social and economic dimensions. Top priority for local and foreign capitalists (whose interests are interlinked), is the preservation of the economic order. To this end, the dominant section of the ruling bloc, the NP under De Klerk, is compelled to implement political changes involving some "reforms". The ruling bloc is by no means united. In fact under the impact of the massive victories of our struggle, it is divided. On the one hand there is division between the Nationalist Party (basing itself on reforms on the basis of ethnicity with no economic change) and the Democratic Party (basing itself on a federal system, a vague non-racial qualified franchise with protection of group rights but also with no economic change). On the other hand, there is division between the NP and DP on one side (who favour "reform") and the CP on the other (which stands for the retention of old style apartheid.) The crisis has also resulted in confusion and uncertainty amongst layers of whites who hitherto have benefited from apartheid, as well as other groupings who constitute the so-called middle ground - traders, professionals, intellectuals, managerial layers, etc. These features of the situation have arisen as a result of the victories of our struggle and the resultant crisis in which the apartheid regime has been plunged.

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COMPLEXITY OF SITUATION

The situation, however, is much more complex. It is not just a case of pro. vs anti-apartheid forces and those caught in the middle. Whilst apartheid in the form which South Africa has known since Union in 1910 is in process of collapsing under the impact of events, there are other social forces at play which pose serious challenges to the Mass Democratic Movement. We ignore these forces at our peril.

MAJOR SOCIAL FORCES AT WORK: ROLE OF IMPERIALISM

The three major centres of international capital, namely the USA, Japan and the EEC countries, who dominate the world market and world economy, have despite differences of approach, arrived at a common position, namely that the apartheid system no longer serves the purpose for which it was created at the turn of the century, i.e. promoting and preserving the interests of monopoly capital. Their conclusion is that apartheid in its present form must be abandoned and be replaced by a system of government without formal apartheid but retaining the basic essentials of the cheap labour system, which would have the effect of demobilising the working masses as well as creating an environment favourable for the continued preservation of the interests of monopoly capital. This would involve the creation of a system which extends FORMAL equality and FORMAL political rights to all (on one or other formula) but which would permit NO fundamental, social or economic change and which would allow NO provision for any meaningful redistribution of wealth - along the pattern of neo-colonialism so successfully implemented in other parts of Africa.

Imperialism was never opposed to the apartheid system. In fact the apartheid system is the creation of British imperialism. The change in attitude is necessitated by the fact that the mass struggles of our people is creating a situation in which the black working class is beginning to play a more and more dominant role. It is becoming conscious of its strength and is beginning to fulfil its historical mission. Relevant here are the ever increasing mass struggles of workers on the factory floor and in the townships, the spectacular rise of the progressive trade union movement,

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the creation of mass based sectoral organisations in townships and ghettos all over the country and the development of a consciousness and understanding of the need for building independent working class organisations within the broad anti-apartheid struggle. This development poses a serious threat to the interests of international capital. Hence the necessity for major political adjustments.

IMPERIALISM ASSERTS ITS DOMINANCE

The situation now unfolding in our region is therefore not only a simple one of a struggle between forces of apartheid on the one hand and anti-apartheid forces on the other. It is that; but in addition we are witnessing a massive political intervention by imperialism which seeks to impose its version for a negotiated settlement on South Africa.

Of course imperialist domination of our region is nothing new. It has existed ever since before Union. The present form of imperialist domination is the result of a combination of factors motivated as it was in the latter part of the 19th century, by a desire to take control over the diamond and gold mines. Hence we witnessed:

1. Wars of aggression and conquest aimed at the destruction of tribal society, its rural economy based on agriculture, livestock breeding and handicraft. This destruction was necessary for imperialism so as to create a reservoir of cheap labour.
2. Land wars in which the indigenous people were driven off their land so as to deprive them of their independent livelihood. They were driven into reserves - reservoirs of cheap labour - which exist to this day in the form of homelands/"independent states".
3. British imperialism seizing control over the gold fields. In the process it went to war against the Boers and established the Union of South Africa - with the defeated Boers as partners as part of a conscious plan to dominate the region and its black inhabitants.
4. The apartheid system being ^{imposed} upon blacks - enforced landlessness, rightlessness and helplessness before the law - by this alliance of Boer and Brit.

After Union, land laws, labour laws, franchise laws, pass laws and a host of other apartheid laws entrenched the privileged position of a small minority as well as the poverty, rightlessness,

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landlessness and helplessness of the vast majority. It created a rightless fragmented labour force with one foot in the town and one foot in the reserves. This is the real face of capitalism in South Africa. In contra-distinction to how capitalism emerged in Europe, in S.A. capitalism did not emerge as a result of internal development. It was imposed from above and from outside in the form of monopoly capitalism. Ever since its imposition, capitalism in South Africa has depended heavily on the imperialist centres. Today monopoly capitalism is dominant in every sector of the economy including agriculture. Monopoly concentration of capital is reflected by the fact that by 1987 four companies (Anglo American, Sanlam, S.A. Mutual and Rembrandt) controlled 80% of all shares on the JSE. Anglo American alone controlled 55%. A feature of the 40 years of NP rule has been the marriage between Afrikaner capital and international capital. Afrikaner controlled monopoly conglomerates have arisen and are interlocked with the older monopolies. This explains the direction of NP policies. Within a system dominated by monopolies, privatization can never lead to free competition or a free enterprise system. Our economy has been dominated by monopoly capitalism, NOT free enterprise, and today we witness the further extension of monopoly domination. Not only has imperialism dominated the region, but economies of countries around South Africa have historically been structured to be dependent on South Africa on crucial levels. South Africa has emerged as a sub-imperialist centre, a junior partner of imperialism seeking to dominate the region on its own behalf and on behalf of imperialism. In the process Imperialism and the S.A. regime employ a variety of tactics to maintain such domination eg manipulation with aid and loans, mode of investments, destabilisation, sabotage, military intervention, use of bandit movements such as the MNR.

NEO-COLONIAL SOLUTION

When therefore we say that imperialism is intervening politically in the current situation, we do not imply that there was no imperialist domination before. Far from it. The point however is that imperialism has decided that apartheid must be abandoned - at least in the form in which it has existed since Union - and some other formula

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must be found to maintain imperialist domination. There are a number of factors which are favourable for imperialism, and which make the imposition of a neo-colonial negotiated settlement a real possibility unless the Mass Democratic Movement is able to meet this challenge. These favourable factors are:

- i) all the countries in Southern Africa are imprisoned within an imperialist dominated world market;
- ii) all the countries in the region are dependent upon the IMF and World Bank for loans and aid. Both are dominated by the United States and only give assistance on condition that there are no socialist initiatives, and/^{that they be} reversed when they have been commenced;
- iii) military aggression by South Africa as well as destabilisation supported by imperialism has done considerable damage to the region creating mass starvation and suffering and a breakdown of rule in some instances;
- iv) whilst countries of the socialist bloc have rendered immeasurable assistance to the liberation movement on the basis of internationalist solidarity, they are unable to intervene in a way which would enable our region to break free from the economic stranglehold of the imperialist system;
- v) the upheavals in the socialist bloc countries have provided the capitalist world with a major weapon in the ideological and propaganda war in the region;
- vi) many of the governments in Africa themselves are opposed to any radical social and economic change and actively assist in the imposition of a neo-colonial solution.

On the one hand therefore there have been massive victories and successful struggles. On the other hand imperialism is determined to maintain its domination.

It is in this kind of situation that the negotiation process is being set into motion. IT MUST IN CONCRETE FORMS BE MADE a site of struggle - not a site of capitulation.

WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES

Our strategic objectives have been outlined at joint UDF/COSATU workshops. We emphasize that our strategic objective is - not negotiations - but the transfer of political and economic power to the democratic majority. Our struggle is designed to enable

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the masses of our people to take control over their own lives and shape their own future. This means that our struggle is based upon the right of the people of Southern Africa to self-determination. Because our country is dominated by Imperialism, the fight for self-determination is by its very nature inevitably an anti-imperialist struggle. Self determination not only implies political rights, but the right of our people to take control over the resources and wealth of this land and to manage them for the benefit of the population as a whole. This is precisely the objective which the De Klerk-Thatcher negotiations are designed to prevent.

Our objective is to put an end to oppression and exploitation as well as the domination of this region by imperialism. The present phase of struggle is described as national democratic, embodying the aims outlined in the Freedom Charter. For the working masses of this land, the achievement of the Freedom Charter is the essential basis for advance to socialism. Hence the National Union of Mine-workers (NUM) has adopted the Freedom Charter as the guiding document in the struggle for socialism. The National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA) has adopted the Charter as a minimum programme. Other unions too have adopted the Freedom Charter. How rapidly South Africa advances towards this goal depends on a number of factors, eg the correlation of class forces within the liberation alliance, the extent of unity achieved in the unfolding struggles, the strength or weakness of counter-revolutionary forces, the extent of "white" support for democracy or conversely the extent of white resistance to change, the international balance of forces as well as the strength and consciousness of the working class. It is objective realities - not just dreams and hopes - which will decide these issues.

When we say that negotiations must be made a site of struggle, we must ensure that whatever we do will have the effect of advancing and not retarding the attainment of our strategic objectives.

THE PROBLEM: WORKING OUT CONCRETE TASKS

As stated, we have not sufficiently worked out our concrete tasks. If there is validity in what has been said thus far, then our

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concrete tasks begin to take shape. It is insufficient to say that negotiations is a site of struggle. It is more correct to say that we must make it a site of struggle. This would include the following:

A. POLITICAL EDUCATION

- Spreading an understanding of what the De Klerk regime hopes to get out of the process, i.e. its aims;
- Spreading an understanding of the real aims of Thatcher, Bush, Mitterand, etc.;
- Clearly identifying the aims of the MDM;
- Counterposing the aims of the MDM and making it known in every corner of the land.

B. INTENSIFICATION OF STRUGGLE

Backing up the process with mobilized power. It must be remembered that the outcome of all negotiations depends on power or lack of it.

Examples:

- a) Negotiations between bosses and unions depend for their outcome on the relative strength of the parties. How much a union can win through negotiations depends on how many workers it has organised at the workplace into the union, the extent to which the members have been mobilized and are prepared to fight, the union's ability to sustain action in support of its position and the extent of solidarity support. On the other hand the bosses' power depends on their resources, their ability to sow division in the work force, their ability to break the will of workers to fight on, their ability to destroy worker confidence, to create confusion and division in worker ranks, the extent of suffering amongst workers and their families compelling them to settle.
- b) Rent Boycott. Negotiations with local authorities on the Rand were preceded by sustained action by the masses who fought off every attempt to break the boycott. Councils only agreed to negotiate when they realised that they could not break the boycott. The negotiations with councils therefore were backed by mass action which continued even whilst negotiations proceeded. When the leaders held talks, they observed ground rules (accountability at all levels) which strengthened the struggle including winning the moral high ground.

We need to make sure that the power of the people is increased. That means that we must increase the mobilization of our people and intensify mass struggles so as to ensure that strength is on the side of the MDM.

police activities in unions and communities must come to an end.

- end government and ruling class monopoly of media on radio and television. Provide equal access to media for all.

IT IS OUR TASK TO IMPLEMENT CAMPAIGNS AND PROGRAMMES TO POPULARISE, INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY THESE DEMANDS AND TO WIN MAXIMUM SUPPORT FOR THEM.

TASK NO. 3: REJECT DE KLERK VIEW OF NEGOTIATION PROCESS AND IMPLEMENT PROCESS ON BASIS OF THE PRINCIPLE "THE PEOPLE SHALL GOVERN"

- # The process proposed by De Klerk backed up by massive propoganda is being dubbed as an open process of negotiations with no preconditions. This fraudulent position must be exposed. The regime has through systematic repression and terror suppressed all political activity. It has an organised presence at every level including the media. This places the democratic forces at considerable disadvantage and De Klerk's process must therefore be rejected outright. Remember the haste with which the regime tried to push through elections for Constituent Assembly in Namibia - in the hope that Swapo will be unable to organise. Only the years of activity, struggle and organisation by Swapo saved the situation. De Klerk must not be allowed to prevent the mobilisation of the democratic forces. Rather than talking about negotiations as such, we must pay special attention to every element of preconditions and the creation of a climate in which people would be able to participate freely in all decision-making processes relating to the agenda of negotiations as well as the process.
- # We need to clearly identify a process/procedure/ approach which will ensure that people are not bypassed and that there are no secret negotiations behind the backs of people. The process we fight for must be won - which will ensure that it will have the effect of building up organisations and free political activity on the democratic basis. We must fight for the right of our people and organisations to be consulted at every level on every issue on the agenda. We must create platforms/structures for discussing all these issues at grassroots levels so as to ensure that our people participate at every level.
- # We must build up a style of leadership based on accountability and democratic decision-making. Leadership is answerable to the people at all times. This approach or style of handling issues relating to negotiations can only exist if the climate is created and preconditions met.
- # This approach is based on the right of our people to self-determination and must be popularised at every level so as to counter the massive ruling class campaign to impose the De Klerk/Imperialist approach.

TASK NO.4: WIN SUPPORT FOR UNIFYING PRINCIPLES OF CDF

- * We must propagate and win massive support throughout the country for a single non-racial democratic South Africa with a single parliament and a single universal franchise for all.
- * To ensure that people in homelands are part and parcel of this struggle, special reference must be made to homelands which must be fully incorporated on the basis of full equality and democracy for all people in a single non-racial South Africa.
- * Strategies for action must be worked out for homelands such as the Transkei to ensure that we win the support of the populace for our vision.

TASK NO.5: TAKE CONSTITUTION MAKING TO THE PEOPLE

- * We must ensure that the De Klerk process of Constitution making and negotiations for a new Constitution is rejected.
- * We must popularise at every level the idea that the people of South Africa have the right to draw a new Constitution and that the organised way of doing so is through a Constituent Assembly organised on a non-racial and one person one vote basis.

In this regard the Constitutional Guidelines of the ANC must be popularised, discussed and built upon.
- * For this purpose also concrete political education programmes must be implemented at all levels.

TASK NO.6: WE MUST BUILD NON-RACIALISM IN ACTION

- * We must remember that every mode of organisation and every struggle contains an ideological component. The chief ideological component of the regime is the idea of ethnicity as the central organising principle. The war on ethnicity as the central organising principle has not yet been won. It must be won!
- * What is more, we need to build up the kind of culture, outlook and method of organisation which must serve a post-apartheid South Africa as well. Organising on racial lines hampers this process. The South Africa of tomorrow must be built today - in action as well as in words. Therefore all national and regional structures must be built on a non-racial basis.

There is a problem at local levels because of the Group Areas Act and the location system. Because people are forced to live in group areas and locations, grassroots structures will in most instances have a membership drawn from one so-called racial group. It is at local levels that one takes into account the prejudices inherited by people. The point of entry into the Mass Democratic Movement is more often than not (except in the case of trade unions) through Group Area based organisations.

We must make sure that from that point onwards there is a conscious process of deracialisation of organisations.

All co-ordinating structures at regional and national levels must be non-racial. This will ensure that there is an active process of reversing prejudices and racial thinking and practice.

We must not pander to racial thinking. The incorporation of large numbers of workers in the Western Cape and Natal within Cosatu structures is clear indication of the fact that it is possible to organise and direct people into organisations on a non-racial basis. If workers can do it then other sectors of society can do it as well.

Any attempt to reinforce racial thinking and racial structures must be fought.

We have over the past few years been involved in the building up of sectoral organisations. We must make sure that this proceeds apace - but on a strictly non-racial basis.

TASK NO. 7

We must extend the political and moral influence of the Mass Democratic Movement to every layer of our society.

Therefore we need to work out a structured system of alliances and programmes of action which extend to forces outside the MDM.

To do that we must build up the MDM as the core. There must be political clarity as to what the MDM is and its agenda, its political programme and its independence.

TASK NO.8: BUILD WORKING CLASS LEADERSHIP IN STRUGGLE

As far back as 8 January 1984, just after the birth of the UDF and even before COSATU was born, President Oliver Tambo spoke of the need to build up working class leadership of our struggle. We need to do this in practical terms on an organisational, political and ideological level.

TASK NO.9: PROPAGANDA AND IDEOLOGICAL WAR

The ruling class and imperialism in general have unleashed a massive propaganda and ideological war on our struggle in Southern Africa and other parts of the colonial and semi-colonial world. We need to work out programmes within our organisations and outside our organisations to counter all these campaigns and to ensure that we build up an ideology and vision which will assist in the process of freeing South Africa from oppression and exploitation.