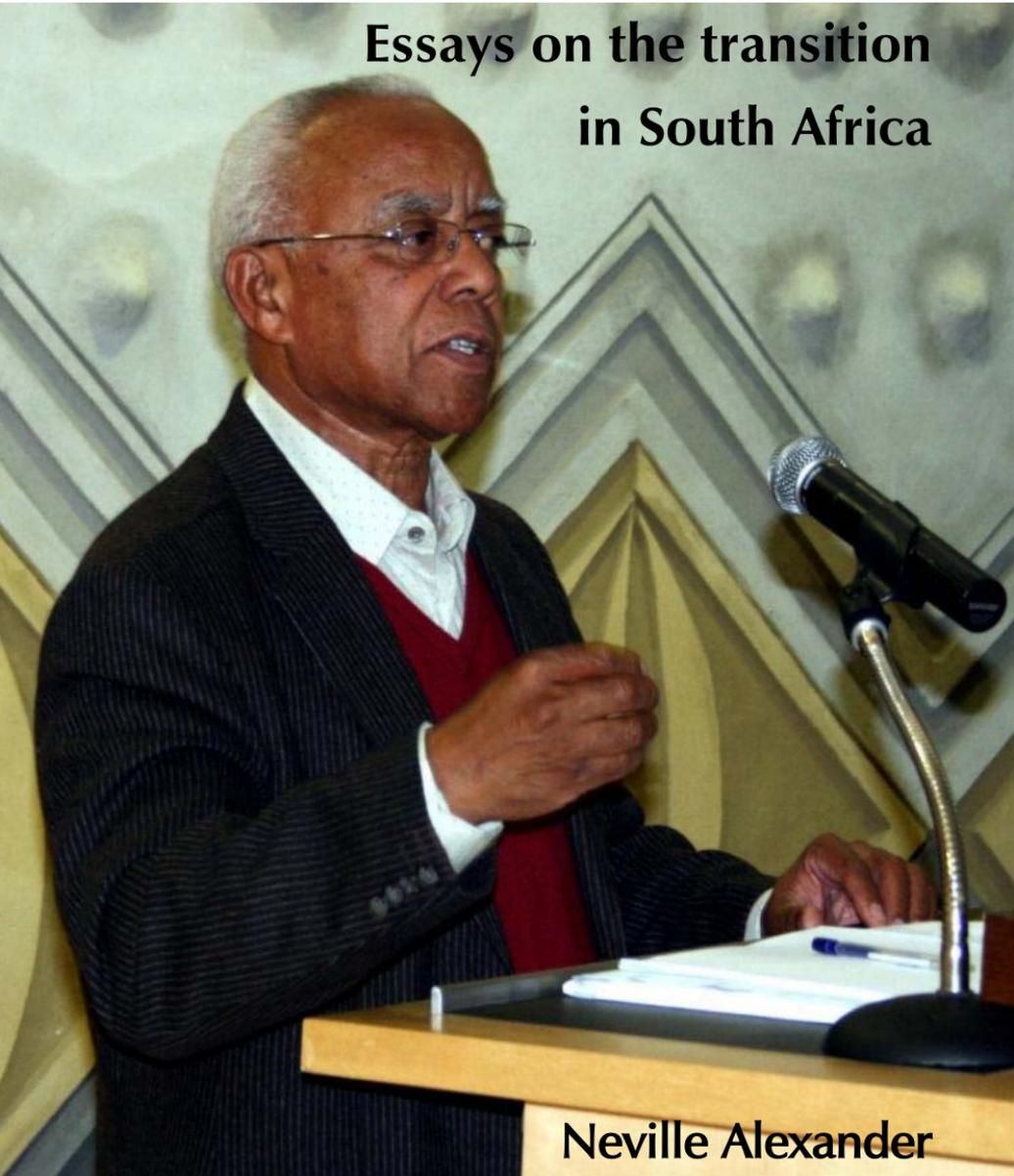


# Some Are More Equal Than Others

Essays on the transition  
in South Africa



Neville Alexander

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## PREFACE

SOUTH AFRICA, IT IS WELL KNOWN, is involved in what is called the transition to democracy. As such, it is one of a number of similar societies in Southern and Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa. The science (or is it science fiction?) of transitology has been used by literally hundreds of South African and foreign scholars and politicians in order to predict the most likely path of development. Ingenious and breathtakingly complex analyses as well as a whole edifice of concepts and terms have seen the light of day during the past five years or so. Sadly, we have to record that few, if any, of these have helped us to make much sense of the inscrutable social reality in our benighted country even if they have led some people to a more nuanced understanding of such values as equality, democracy, the market, etc.

I do not pretend that the essays which I present in this volume are informed by the insights of transitology. They are occasional pieces that were formulated with a view to understanding the complex relationship between short- and longer-term scenarios as well as the contradictory ways in which middle-class and working-class agendas intersect in the various domains of struggle.

From a philosophical point of view, these essays are attempts to understand the often agonising relationship between human choice and inexorable historical processes. They show, or rather I hope that they show, that it is possible to be involved as a political activist making one's contribution to the shaping of our society at the same time as one adopts the historian's distance from the actual sites of struggle. If these essays, quite apart from whatever incidental critique of any particular strategy or policy they

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might give expression to, help readers to appreciate the present as history and thus lead them on to realise the possibility, and even the obligation, to change things, they will have justified my presumption in having them published at this time.

My thanks to Buchu Books for taking the risk of publishing a set of essays that are very definitely not mainstream. Thanks also to Venetia Naidoo, Geraldine Tobias and Lynette Farrell for patience in typing the many versions and corrected versions through which each of these essays had to go.

*Neville Alexander*

*5 October 1993*

# The politics of national and institutional transformation

THE KALEIDOSCOPIIC EVENTS of that *annus mirabilis*, which 1989 was for this generation, and even more so the succession of leap-frogging changes that followed on the announcements of 2 February 1990 by the State President of South Africa, the man with the Mona Lisa smile, overturned for us who live in Southern Africa not only the post-war world order but overnight seemed to scrap every one of the 'eternal verities' by which our perception of reality had been determined, whether we happened to be on this or that side of the many divides of the apartheid state. People were transformed as if by magic. Francis Bacon's aphorism to the effect that those who begin with certainty will end with doubt, and *vice versa*, took on flesh in the shape of our closest friends, comrades and colleagues. Those many folks in our society who have some sense of *terra firma* underneath them and who had been willing to sacrifice careers and opportunities in order to initiate or execute costly, risky or socially responsible enterprises began searching desperately for all manner of sangomas and gurus. The social-science gypsies who are 'located' in the pink caravans of the universities began doing a roaring trade by filling the world with words even though it was precisely the value of their particular trade in prediction that had been annihilated in those two fateful years. Whenever we are called upon, as we are so often these

days, to speak in the prophetic mode, we are, therefore, self-critically modest. Much of what we say is phrased in the amphibolous language of the oracle or of the weather forecast. Even today, the gist of my analysis can be stated in such terms: Cloudy, with the possibility of rain, clearing later.

In spite of the shifting ground underneath us, the constantly changing socio-political landscape that is characteristic of 'periods of transition', we have to find ways and means of describing honestly and carefully what is happening around us and where we seem to be heading. Those among us whose life's focus is the transformation of the universities of South Africa, if they are not to waste their time and their energies, have got to get a realistic sense of both the possibilities and the limits of transformation. How we characterise our present 'period of transition' is, therefore, critical. Even if we could agree on some such comforting, if evasive, formula as the notion of a Gramscian 'interregnum', we would still have to decide what exactly this means in our context. How does it help us to determine ends and means? What are our time frames? How long are our short, medium and long terms?

I shall resist on this occasion the academic's propensity for making theories. Instead, I want to build my contribution around four pillars of consensus which appear to have attained the status of incontrovertibility among all of us who are not professionally interested in manipulating 'the masses'.

- ~ The ruling classes in South Africa have to reform the racial capitalist system. In its apartheid form, it had become a counter-productive burden since at least the early 'seventies.
- ~ The apartheid state has not been overthrown or smashed, as we had set out to do in the 'sixties. This is the real reason for all the vogueish talk about us having

'to engage the state'. In spite of its vulnerability, the ruling elite has retained its grip firmly on all the repressive apparatuses of the state. In this regard, the triumphalist illusions still rampant in some circles of what is now fast becoming the ex-liberation movement amount to a dangerous condition that has to be cured quickly if we are to see the way ahead clearly and avoid catastrophic mistakes.

- ~ The system of racial capitalism, given the 'new world order' and the hegemonic consolidation of reformist strategies among formerly anti-apartheid social forces, will persist in a changed form in the short to medium term. Class alliances as well as the legitimating discourse of the system will change. In general the movement will be from 'race' to class even if for the majority of the black people and for some white people the realities of life will either not change at all or will become considerably worse. For erstwhile radicals, the temptation to set out on the long march through the institutions rather than to scale what now appear to be the Sisiphan heights of the revolution will become irresistible.
- ~ The potential for social conflict will be enhanced in the short term. The shifting balance of social forces will determine whether this conflict becomes a liberating catharsis or the kind of dead-end Armageddon that is being played out in Eastern Europe and in some parts of the Middle East today.

P.W. Botha began the strategy of half-hearted reform and single-minded repression that the powers that were then deemed sufficient to correct the faltering system. F.W. de Klerk has continued this policy, couching it in different terms since realising that control can no longer realistically be exercised by means of the white population and an assortment of black collaborators but only through the

construction of new class alliances involving the bourgeoisie, the black and white middle classes and some sections of the white working class. Class collaborationist strategies predicated upon minimally neutralising and optimally co-opting the political and trade-union representatives of the black working class have become the pivot of the De Klerk regime's plans. The details of constitution making, the many fashionable clichés about things such as 'blocking mechanisms' as opposed to a '50% + 1 democracy' are the pathetic but all too obvious attempts of the captain of a slave ship who on a stormy middle passage is forced to call in the help of some of his captives in order to stabilise the vessel but without taking the chains off their limbs. As long as he can keep his hand on the tiller of power and as long as the chains continue to restrict in important ways his valuable cargo, he can permit them a certain measure of freedom. His calculation is that as they come to accept that they are all in the same boat, none of them will be tempted to rock it.

This is exactly our problem. How can we all be in the same boat of an endangered and desperately tacking racial capitalist system and rock it at the same time so that we can get our hands on the tiller? Jakes Gerwel (1992) thinks there is a way. The politics of negotiation, he says,

has resulted in the liberation movement no longer being able to argue that social and institutional changes will only follow after the seizure of state power ...

He foresees an interim or transitional stage during which the emphasis will be on constitutional reform while at the same time some reform in the social sectors can and will be undertaken. During this period the balance of power will shift towards the oppressed and exploited. They will vote into power on the basis of a new constitution a democratic government which will embark on a programme of long-

term and fundamental transformation. In consequence, therefore,

the imperatives of the negotiation process has [sic] had the effect of channeling the struggle to dismantle the apartheid system into the very institutions which constitute that system. The goal of a rapid and total displacement of the existing institutions by a new radically different social order has, of necessity, given way to a negotiated reform of the separate institutions from within ...

As a general proposition, this is to say the least a premature judgement. Because of the insular autonomy traditionally enjoyed by South African universities, there may be some reason to believe that progress away from the racist, sexist and undemocratic practices of the hey-day of apartheid is possible. At these places of 'higher' learning, it is relatively easy for intellectuals to translate the imperatives of reform (from above) into the logic of transformation without abandoning the vocabulary of radicalism which veils in a mist of nostalgia the real discontinuities occasioned by 2 February 1990. It is more possible here to give the impression of having the strategic initiative even in the short term whereas all that we have in fact are expanding opportunities to inaugurate practices and approaches that may themselves eventually alter the parameters of state policy. In a debate with Gerwel on the concept of a 'People's University', as long ago as March 1988, well before De Klerk had set foot on his road to Damascus, I sketched what I thought a radical strategy for the transformation of the university in South Africa should be. I see no reason at all for changing that perspective. I repeat that we have to adopt the approach that there are both possibilities and limits to what can be done in promoting an anti-Establishment, anti-capitalist project at any university in South Africa. Some of the universities may lend themselves more, some less, to such a radicalising

project at one time or another.

I said at the time and I repeat today that the consequence of this approach as far as our practices at the universities are concerned are too many to spell out. Suffice it to say that anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-elitist, anti-classist, anti-authoritarian, anti-conformist educational practices, new methodologies, new syllabi, new ways of assessment, new attitudes towards language, in short a new concept of the university must needs be realised if we are to break out of the suffocating embrace of the intellectual, political, social and cultural barbed wire which surrounds all universities in South Africa today. How far we can push this process, how many casualties we will suffer in doing so, is an issue that will be determined by the balance of forces in the class struggle. However, in doing so (and here I think there is a large measure of agreement), we are establishing one more corner of the firm base which all progressive organisations of the people are busy establishing in all spheres of life, on which the non-racial, democratic socialist future will arise. To do so, it is our main purpose to sharpen rather than to reconcile contradictions. How to do this without getting the university closed down by the reactionary custodians of state power ought to be one of the main questions that should preoccupy students, lecturers and those in the administration who are genuinely committed to the new society we are all trying to discern in the distance.

In other words, people like Gerwel, then as now, despite their important contributions in so many different spheres of life in South Africa, fudge the central question of power. They make the classical mistake of believing that because we are able to take office we have in fact taken power. They believe in the teeth of the facts that unlike Botha, De Klerk is willing to commit class suicide by *transferring* rather than merely *sharing* power. What they are not saying clearly enough is that in the new equation, we will be able in the university context to promote anything that is compatible

with the interests of the capitalist system as a whole but very few things that will challenge that system in any fundamental way, i.e., without a determined and often extremely conflictual struggle. Because we are able to move away rapidly from the overtly racist features of the specifically apartheid university, we often fall into the trap of thinking that we have bucked the system itself.

The capitalist class for its part has anticipated developments with acuity. Important centres of influence and power are busy writing the scripts for the immediate future which we, 'the actors' or 'players', whether 'key' or not, will be expected to act out. A good example is the Commonwealth Secretariat. If you would like to know how these worthies visualise your future at the universities, take the trouble to read Sections 4.49– 4.57, entitled *Institution Building*, of the Commonwealth Expert Group's Report (1991). There is nothing there with which any progressive academic could disagree but there is also nothing there that reconceptualises the university as an instrument to undermine the capitalist system and its entrenched hierarchies and inequalities which, in South Africa, are destined to be largely determined by so-called 'race' for generations to come.

In laying down their guidelines for prioritising funding at the universities, the Expert Group couched their advice in unexceptionable anti-apartheid terms. The point I am making is that, read differently, these are also unmistakably pro-capitalist terms. And in the end, it is certainly all about funding. Those institutions, including universities, that could become a real threat to the system will simply be starved of funds by the present state and by any successor capitalist state as well as *a fortiori* by specifically capitalist and/or imperialist donors.

It is for this reason that I insist that we do not fudge the central issues of class and of power. Today, it is possible to talk easily and comfortably about 'correcting' or

'addressing' issues arising out of discrimination based on 'race', gender, age, religion and the like but it is not very nice to raise the issue of class inequality even though, as I have indicated, in South Africa these are necessarily and will be for generations issues of racial inequality. As long as we continue to do this, we will see only the possibilities of our situation, only to be pulled up with a jolt by the built-in limits of the system, as the Mugabe administration is discovering at this very moment in Zimbabwe. This is, in my view, the absence in what is otherwise a clear-sighted and properly optimistic treatment of the subject by Jairam Reddy recently (1992). It is the clearly stated major premise of Stuart Saunders's equally clear-sighted article prepared for an issue of *Nature* magazine more than two year ago (Saunders 1989). The elitist/classist basis of all education in a so-called post-apartheid South Africa is the point of departure of the SYNCOM analyses and of all the neo-Thatcherist privatisation moves of the present regime. This is also the reason why they tolerate and encourage the fudging of the issues of class and power!

We should learn from the experience of other peoples and other periods. Some 25 years ago, the very debates we are beginning to conduct now were fought out, under different circumstances, of course, in Western Europe and in North America. The literature is vast but the *gravamen* of all of it is unmistakable: until and unless you have state power, there are definite limits beyond which the ruling class will not let you go. Moreover, the dangers of co-option are omnipresent. Again, we could trot out the more important of the theories that try to explain this phenomenon but it is probably unnecessary. Instead, I want to quote directly from a book of *Documents of the New Left* published in Berlin in 1991.

In a chapter entitled 'University Revolt and University Reform', after describing the struggle for the Counter-University in the late 'sixties and early 'seventies, the

editors go on to explain how the imperatives of the production of knowledge for state and capital invariably deflected the euphoria and creativity of the students and radical staff into technocratic 'solutions' which paraded under the mask of 'radical reformism'. A small group of sectarians dissociated themselves from this mainstream to propagate a particularly dogmatic type of 'Marxism-Leninism' in ever-diminishing islands within and outside the universities.

The reforms in the education system continued slowly but consistently. They changed the universities so thoroughly that nothing has remained of their erstwhile 'autonomy'. Together with it, one of the basic premises of Critical Theory vanished, i.e., the belief that intellectual praxis guarantees self-reflective autonomy. Furthermore, even the idea of a critical university was lost in the tangle of regimented academic courses, examination preconditions and restrictive employment and planning policies. Increased access led education ministries as well as the rectors and university senates that depend on them to impose restrictions on admission, limits on the permissible period of study [a kind of age-restriction], reduction of resources and pressures to perform ... Although the universities became educational factories and anonymous building complexes, they did not transform the students into proletarians and the privilege of higher education, even though it was spread more widely, was not eliminated (*diskus* 1992: 385).

This gives us some idea of the limits of reform/transformation where state power has not been conquered by the oppressed and exploited people. It should not, and it is not quoted in order to, paralyse us. Many and crucial gains can be made. Bourgeois ideology and bourgeois practices can be put on the defensive through careful and systematic assaults in all sectors of the terrain of struggle.

Another, more conservative, German assessment of the legacy of the students' revolt and the 'sixties makes the Point from a specifically pedagogical stance simply and effectively:

Although the most far-reaching plans to found a 'counter-university' in the sense of a critical university were only realised to a modest degree over a very limited period of time, a number of enduring changes did take place. The most comprehensive was to counteract the much criticised Ordinarien-Universität (the university dominated by the professors), through a process of democratisation in the form of greater participation of all the groups involved and an educational evaluation of the university situation ... A lasting effect of this period of radical change has been a considerable strengthening of the theory of university teaching, and in particular interaction in the classroom a point of departure for the democratisation of the university. An intensification of counselling, work in small groups and projects in connection with the stressing of self-awareness in the context of practical university politics is a field of activity that has given lasting direction to university reform (Rohrs 1989: 63).

Although these gains are even now being eroded (see Werz 1992), there can be no doubt about the entrenched character of the most important reforms. In particular the autonomisation of the students through access to considerable financial means has become one of the main guarantees in most parts of Germany of relatively democratic, change-orientated universities. For South Africans, the debate that has now erupted around the reintegration and uniformation of the universities of the former East Germany has considerable relevance in view of the similar complexes of issues that have arisen around the so-called 'upgrading' of former Bush Colleges.

Be that as it may. The essential question that we have to

pose at this time is the following: To what extent and how are radicals and progressives located within the universities going to push to the limits the transformative potential of this inherently elitist institution in this 'period of transition' where identifiable socio-political space has opened up for such projects? We should avoid at all costs the tendency to pose the question in terms of taking responsibility for restructuring the managerial levels of the system of racial capitalism unless we are prepared to get trapped within the system. Above all, as intellectuals committed to the search for truth, it is incumbent on us to 'tell no lies and claim no easy victories'.

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# Africa and the New World Order

## **The concept of Africa**

'AFRICA' IS NOT SIMPLY a geographical expression. In this year when some people are celebrating the quincentenary of that fateful voyage by means of which Christopher Columbus inaugurated what the British historian, Lord Acton, euphemistically called 'the unification of the world', it is pertinent to remind ourselves that Africa is above all one of the many by-products of colonial-imperialist conquest and of world capitalist exploitation on the grand scale. To be precise: Africa is in the first instance the result of the resistance of the peoples of the continent to the inhuman process of 'the expansion of Europe'. It is particularly because of the Atlantic Slave Trade, which another British historian, Reginald Coupland, correctly labelled 'the greatest crime in history', and because of the fact that the peoples of Africa and of the African diaspora have been the main victims of racism in the world that a coherent sense of being African evolved. Today, with the generosity of spirit that is often the child of extreme suffering, the most far-seeing amongst us have widened the concept of African to embrace all those, regardless of their geographical provenance, who have a genuine commitment to the continent of Africa and who identify completely with the sufferings and the strivings of the people of the continent. Like Okelo in the recent film by Mira Nair, *Mississippi Masala*, we continue to maintain that Africa belongs to the Africans but unlike him, we do not qualify that claim by adding the phrase 'black Africans'. It is indeed

the 'message of this paper that it is out of Africa, by virtue of the depths of its suffering, that a new world order will be born, no matter how improbable that may appear at present.

## **The New World Order**

One of the reasons for this formally prophetic statement is that the much talked about New World Order of President George Bush, not unlike Columbus's 'New World', is not so new at all. It is no more than the old world order in a new jacket. It amounts to no more than the restructuring of the international division of labour to accord better with the economic and political interests of the three most powerful trading blocs in the world today. Of course, we have to add that the material basis for a new world order has been created through the new (micro-electronic and biochemical) technologies that have revolutionised production, distribution and communication processes in the post-war world.

After the ignominious collapse of the bureaucratic-centralist, so-called socialist states of Eastern Europe and of the Soviet Union itself, the kaleidoscope of the world economic system has stabilised to reveal that three trading blocs, viz., the American trading bloc, the European trading bloc and the Asian trading bloc (Brand 1991), have during the past 30 years or so been re-dividing the world among themselves. For the moment, it appears as though the balance of power between these three is to be policed and maintained by the only remaining superpower, i.e., the United States of America. The recent war in the Persian Gulf gave us some idea of the shape of things to come. In the words of Noam Chomsky: 'The U.S. has a virtual-monopoly of force, it is a tri-polar world economically, but it's a unipolar world militarily (Chomsky 1991: 23). Much of the common and the separate agendas of these trading blocs

is going to be mediated by international agencies such as the United Nations (UNO), the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Accordingly, these agencies are going to appear to be much more independent of any particular political grouping than was the case in the past. In reality, however, the basic dilemmas of the restructured world economic system have not yet been resolved.

Like empires that preceded them, the regional trading blocs of the new economic world order may divide into a handful of protectionist superstates. It by the new political world order we mean increased American hegemony disguised as international cooperation, we may come to know the new economic world order as regional hegemony disguised as free trade. (Brand 1991:158)

Zbigniew Brzezinski (1991: 20) says bluntly that 'as of now', the phrase new world order is 'a slogan in search of substantive meaning'. According to him, the answer to this question will depend on 'the eventual resolution of the four large structural dilemmas'. These 'dilemmas' are (1) How will Europe define itself? (2) How will the Soviet Union be transformed? (3) How will the Pacific region organise itself? and (4) How will the Middle East be pacified? (See Brzezinski 1991: 67.)

## **The second wave of liberation**

At the time of writing, the answers to all four of these questions are still in the balance even though the Soviet Union has formally disappeared from the map of the world. At both the economic and the political levels, these questions continue to confront strategists and politicians as dilemmas. At the ideological level, however, there is widespread agreement among First World intellectuals that the philosophical tenor of our time is ... dominated

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by Western concepts of democracy and the free market ... [These] represent today's prevailing wisdom. The competing notions of Marxism, not to speak of its Leninist-Stalinist offshoot, once so intellectually dominant, are generally discredited. (Brzezinski 1991:3. Also see Amin 1991:6.)

In Africa, indeed, the transition to democracy has become such a concentrated and domino-like process that scholars and activists speak of a 'second wave of liberation' (see Kühne 1992; Yeebe 1992; etc.). It is a fact that more than half of all the states on the continent 'have embarked on a fundamental transition from authoritarian governments, military and civilian, to more democratic systems' (Joseph 1991). Among academics worldwide and Africanists in particular a veritable industry has been created around the complex of themes called 'transition to democracy' or the 'conditions of democracy debate'. This debate is not peculiarly African, indeed it is particularly conducted in the context of the dramatic changes being engineered in Eastern Europe.

Clearly, however, we Africans have to re-examine the basic theories of democracy in the context of our history and of the political-economic relations now existing in our respective countries. Detailed research as well as political moves towards a greater unity at the base should be inaugurated. A Pan-African unity of peoples rather than merely states should become the medium-term objective of those who wish to surf into a democratic future on this second wave of liberation. Democracy means power to the people. It is our task to concretise this concept at local, regional and national levels, to find out organically, i.e., in consultation with those who will have to carry out whatever decisions are made at any of these levels, how this concept can be realised in practice. We have to find out which combinations of representative and direct democracy work in such a manner that the urban and the rural poor

are empowered. It is necessary to stop the marginalisation of the poor, especially of the rural poor, and to resolve what Kühne (1992: 14) calls the 'democratisation dilemma of the urban middle classes' in Africa. He describes this dilemma as follows:

On the one hand, their economic frustrations constitute the hard core of the 'second wave of liberation'. Unpaid salaries and stipends, threats to their survival because of difficulties on the supply side etc., push them in their millions towards resistance and into the streets against the existing regimes. After a short period of euphoria based on the attainment of the first signs of democratisation, precisely that happens which is to be expected in accordance with the literature on democratisation of processes, i.e., the same middle classes take to the streets again, even where the new regime in question has made considerable concessions, because their expectations of improvements in the material conditions of life have either not been fulfilled or only partially fulfilled. (Kühne 1992:13. My translation.)

Incidentally, Kühne's 'urban middle classes' embrace, amongst others, teachers, civil servants, unionised workers, professionals, students, artisans and traders. I am in agreement with his assessment that the manner in which this dilemma is resolved will influence decisively the direction of the present surge towards empowerment of the people.

In the African context, we have to re-examine at the continental level our understanding of Pan-African unity. In a thought-provoking recent article on the subject, Horace Campbell raised all the relevant questions. He concluded, among other things, that

political independence and the unity of states as inscribed in the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) cannot be the basis of African liberation. A federation

of Africa based on the cultural diversity of the continent and the harnessing of the knowledge and skills developed over centuries are some of the challenges which face the African people in the next century. (Campbell 1992:26)

At the national state level, it has become a matter of life and death that we re-analyse honestly and relentlessly the myths that have been spun around the supposed links between the one-party state and so-called 'traditional African democracy'. Scholars like Peter Anyang'Nyong'o (1992) have begun to sweep away some of the cobwebs. How basic this undertaking is can be read from the way in which Nyong'o (1992:01) disentangles the problematic within which these fanciful claims used to be made. He shows, for example, that since modern political parties did not exist in most pre-colonial African societies, it is a mere anachronism to use this concept, including derivatives such as the one-party state, in order to analyse and understand these societies.

## **Development, aid and sovereignty**

Africans, like the peoples of other continents, have the historic opportunity to give shape to the evolving new world order. This is obviously an eccentric view if we look at the world from the vantage point of the present centres of economic, political and military power. It is not for nothing that the major analyses, with a few honourable exceptions, never mention the African continent. If they do, it is usually as an extension of Europe, one that is 'mediated' through the major economies of South Africa and Nigeria. In one of his new world order scenarios, Brand (1993: 158) writes quite unproblematically that

the African nations, especially if joined together in the African Common Market (ACM), could present a problem or a prospect for the (European)

Community. EC plus ACM equals two continents united in a trading bloc. The African nexus exists: Morocco has already applied to join the EC.

Similarly, he enumerates the usual devastating list of Africa's problems, to wit water shortages, health problems, especially AIDS, one-party states, falling GDP, etc., and concludes that 'the best hope for the (African) common market would be leadership by Africa's two strongest economies, Nigeria and post-Apartheid South Africa' (Brand 1992: 157).

Which brings us to the unavoidable question of the 'Bretton Wood sisters'. There is general agreement among students of the question that even though economic growth is not an essential condition for the initiation of the process of democratisation, it is such a condition for its survival and consolidation. The parlous state of most African economies is, therefore, an ill omen for the future of what little progress has been made in the direction of a democratic dispensation on the continent. As the base of the so-called Third World, the peoples of Africa are the main victims of the post-war economic order of which the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are the twin pillars (*The Economist*, October 12th 1991: 3). At the global level, the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal (PPT) came to the following conclusion in September 1988:

There is no doubt that the IMF and the World Bank, as international institutions for regulation and crisis management, have failed and that they are therefore responsible for the dramatic deterioration of the living conditions of peoples in many parts of the world. They serve the interests of the creditors rather than function for the benefit of the peoples of the world, particularly of the Third World. (PPT 1990:334)

The assessment is substantiated by statistics that are, in general, incontrovertible. Thus, for example, the Bank itself

estimated that in the period 1984–87, there was a net transfer of some \$87.9 billion from South to North because of the imperatives of debt servicing. The OECD put this figure at \$387 billion for the period 1982–87 (see PPT 1990: 331).

More than four decades of IMF/World Bank intervention in development programmes in Africa and a decade of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) have driven the continent over the edge of ruin. According to the Report of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, by 1990 Africa's debt had almost doubled its 1980 figure. At present, the debt stands at \$280 billion and it is rising rapidly. For sub-Saharan Africa, the debt of \$160 billion represents 112% of GDP!

    Servicing the mounting debt has become the main burden confronting the continent. Each year sub-Saharan African countries pay \$12 billion. This is only one third of the interest due and about 30% of export earnings. Debt is costing Africa more than the continent is spending on the welfare of its people, including health education (Chamley 1992).

This is not the place to examine the many reasons proffered as explanations for the shift that took place in the original developmental and stabilisation functions of the Bretton Wood sisters. More and more, objective scholars have come to agree with the PPT's view that today,

    the IMF operates in the interests of private lending institutions. It is doing its best to extract debt service from Third World debtors in order to prevent defaults on private bank debts and their repercussions on the economies of the industrialised capitalist countries. (PPT 1990:331. Also see *The Economist* 1991:32.)

Because of the ways in which the Bank/IMF negotiators impose conditions, both economic and extra-economic, before making available new loans to countries in need, the

whole question of sovereignty is raised. In the words of *The Economist* (1991: 35):

When the distinguished visitors from Washington, D.C. speak with one voice, they often become, in effect, a lobby with great clout in domestic politics. The government finds it harder than ever to keep up the appearance of being in control of events.

This brief reference to the economic dimension of the new world order as it affects the African continent has to suffice as an indication of the need to re-examine the post-colonial paradigm built up around concepts such as 'modernisation', 'development', 'balanced growth', etc. African and non-African liberals see an approach to the solution in refinements of the instrument of 'conditionality' by, for example, linking aid to human rights 'performance' and to progress along the path of multi-party democracy (see e.g. the informative article by Erdmann 1991). At the economic level, the United States' Council of Economic Advisors (CEA) (1992) recommends an infusion of humanitarian, financial and technical aid to complement active policy reforms especially in the first phases in the 'adjustment process' in order to avoid 'catastrophic declines in consumption and maintain support for reforms'. The longer-term agenda is stated unequivocally:

Financial aid should be viewed as a transitional mechanism. Over the longer term, sustained growth depends on greater integration into the international trading system and increased access to private capital, both of which depend on comprehensive reforms. (CEA 1991)

As against this recipe which, clearly, foresees a greater role for international agencies, including the Bretton Wood sisters, the radical agendas go in exactly the opposite direction. This includes the relatively moderate view of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal that the dependency of the Third World countries 'can only be overcome by a

dissociation from the constraints of the monetary world market' (PPT 1990: 310), a view that explicitly denies the relevance and the possibility of autarchy for more regions but which insists that 'it has to mean a new form of political control of capital flows, nationally as well as internationally (PPT 1990: 311). They recommended a new Bretton Wood type conference in order to 'reshape the existing international institutions'.

At the furthest point on this spectrum stands the view that is associated with the name of Samir Amin and that has become known as *the theory of delinking*. In a nutshell, he maintains that democracy under capitalism is impossible in the periphery of the world system. This is the reason why capitalist expansion has brought about not the socialist revolutions expected by Marx and others to break out in the advanced capitalist countries but, rather, 'anti-capitalist' revolutions

provoked by the polarisation inherent in worldwide capitalist expansion with socially intolerable consequences for the peoples of the peripheries and semi-peripheries of the system. The strategic aims of those revolutions entail delinking from the logic of worldwide capitalist expansion. The process of achieving these aims entails in turn gradual and continual progress of democratization of society through practical management of power and of the economy. (Amin 1991:6)

## **Pan-African unity**

This important train of thought needs to be explored in detail. In particular the link between radical democracy and delinking has to be demonstrated in both theory and practice. What has become crystal clear is that the nations of Africa will be unable to solve any of their major problems unless they tackle these on a continent-wide basis. From a

totally different point of departure, for example, Martin Bangemann (1992: 31), the Vice-President of the European Communities, concludes that Africa has to rely increasingly on its own strength. Classical development aid can never be more than the proverbial 'drop in the bucket' and private capital will not come in because 'national home markets in Africa are too small to attract investors'. His recommendation, not surprisingly, is strong regional blocs in order to make these areas more attractive to investors.

Whether or not this happens and because of the problem of conditionality, our longer-term goal must needs be a genuine Pan-African unity of the peoples of the continent. An important starting point would be for all the African states to agree that the whole continent shall be a nuclear free zone and that all 'offensive' weapons be destroyed throughout the length and breadth of the continent. Besides the putative economic and security gains that would flow from such a move its demonstration effect would be massive in the USA and elsewhere. This is a case of turning a weakness into a strength. By outlawing war and using diplomacy and negotiations for the settlement of disputes among African nations or states, we would be tackling one of the fundamentals of our epoch under the most favourable conditions imaginable. Because Africa is an area where, with the exception of South Africa, no large-scale war industry exists, we would be tackling a manageable problem in the most practical possible way; we would promote the unity of African people, who are the victims of senseless and avoidable wars, and we would be putting a stop to the insane waste of valuable foreign exchange on weaponry and munitions.

Once such a social movement for peace among the Africans gets off the ground, it will become possible, indeed imperative, to tackle other fundamentals of the continent today. I refer here to the questions of ecological preservation, especially the fight against desertification,

health provision, especially the fight against AIDS and other forms of plague and, last but not least, we would expose those regimes that are no more than an African mask behind which malign foreign interests hide their rule.

It is essential that the search for Pan-African unity in the course of this second wave of liberation be based upon the struggle against those material conditions that hold the people of the continent in bondage. In this way, the people themselves, the urban and especially the rural poor, will become involved directly in their own liberation. Unity cannot simply be forged in the drawing rooms of conference halls or in the corridors of power more generally. It has to be built from below. And unity of the people of Africa is the precondition for the liberation of the continent from the divide-and-rule strategies that have subjugated our people ever since 1416, when the first dot of African territory was conquered by a European army.

If this generation succeeds in promoting the realistic programme of action I have sketched here, a new world order will indeed be initiated from out of Africa. The apparently unbreakable chain of a world system of exploitation and oppression that began quite literally with the chains that enslaved so many millions of our people and forced them out into the diaspora will be broken at its weakest link.

I have used or referred to the notion of 'dilemma' repeatedly in this address. In the period we are living in and for the next few years, this is as it should be. For many of the certainties and the verities of yesterday have been blown away by the stormy events of this last decade of the 20th century. We are exploring new ways of solving the riddle of constructing the just society. In this voyage of discovery, Africa is no longer the *Maison des Esclaves* of the world, no longer the heart of darkness. Just as our continent was the cradle of humanity and one of the main sources of world civilisation, so it can and will become a source of

renewal, a bridge to the rediscovery of the oneness of the human species. The ancient Roman saying can acquire a quite unanticipated meaning: *ex Africa semper aliquid novi*.

# Negotiations and the struggle for socialism in South Africa

THE FUNDAMENTAL PREMISES of this essay are twofold, viz, that the ANC, for reasons that derive from the logic of its own approach to the struggle for national liberation, entered into the negotiations process prematurely as seen from the point of view of the most exploited and oppressed people of South Africa and, secondly, that this negotiations process as conducted at present and under the prevailing circumstances can, if successful, lead nowhere else but to a slightly modified, structurally adjusted racial capitalist system that will continue to generate class inequality largely as racial inequality.

## **Phases in the struggle for national liberation**

Depending on the criteria one adopts, different periodisations of the struggle for national liberation in South Africa (hereafter 'the struggle') are possible. Considered from the point of view of class leadership and ideological direction, the struggle can be periodised along the lines described briefly below.

### **1910–1945: The Lazarus period**

In this phase, political struggles of the oppressed and exploited people had certain common features which expressed themselves 'automatically' again and again. With the exception of the small Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), all the major political organisations of the people

were based largely on 'race' or colour and on ethnic group consciousness. 'Africans' were represented largely by the African National Congress, 'Coloureds' by the African People's Organisation and 'Indians' by the Natal Indian Congress and (later) by the Transvaal Indian Congress. The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) was half-trade union, half-political organisation. It included in its ranks both African and Coloured people in very large numbers during its short life (1919–1929).

All these organisations fought to improve the lot of 'their own people', the ANC for Africans, the APO for Coloureds and the Indian Congresses for Indians. Their leaders were middle-class people (teachers and preachers mainly, also some skilled artisans and traditional chiefs). While all of them at the end wanted an equal vote for all men (only very much later also for all women), they were prepared to settle for less than the full franchise at any given moment. In other words, they 'struggled' for concessions from the white minority governments. Theirs was a Lazarus policy of gradual and peaceful change which depended at bottom on begging for the crumbs that fell from the tables of the rich and the powerful.

For this reason, their methods of struggle were mostly non-confrontational. Their leaders would write letters to 'the authorities', draw up petitions to them, go on delegations and generally plead hat-in-hand for some betterment in the conditions of life of 'their people'. Only very seldom, under extreme pressure from the spontaneous actions of workers in the cities, would they agree to support such actions as strikes, boycotts or pass-burnings. While some minor privileges for middle class blacks were gained during this period, it is in fact a period of retreat. It is the period during which the Smuts-Hertzog system of social and political segregation based on colour was firmly established. Socially, its record of defeat and retreat is marked in particular by the Natives Land Act of 1913, the

Natives Land and Trust Act of 1936, the Natives Urban Areas Act of 1921, and by a string of laws that made it almost impossible for black people to become skilled workers. Politically, the low point of this record is marked by the passage of the Natives Representation Act of 1936. Under this law, even the few 'African' men in the Cape Province who had the right to vote in parliamentary elections, were deprived of this symbol of their semi-citizenship.

Today, it is easy to underestimate the importance of what these organisations tried to do. It is all too easy to denounce the leading men of that time as Uncle Toms unworthy of our respect. We have to remember, however, that these were men (and a precious few women) who placed themselves at the head of a dispossessed and defeated people (Africans) or of people who had only recently come out of slavery (Coloureds) or out of indentured labour, i.e., temporary slavery (Indians). Without the power of new ideas, or the power of arms and almost without the power of property, they could hardly lead a militant struggle for their rights. On the other hand, we should resist the fashionable temptation of overestimating their contribution to the struggle for national liberation. History should record, not glorify, the actions of those who made it. Whether they knew it or not, the leaders of this period of our struggle were at bottom promoting the interests of the tiny mission elite, of the would-be black middle class, i.e., those few out of the mass of blacks who got near enough to the white man's table to be able to stretch out their hands to catch some of the falling crumbs. Because they were also oppressed, their actions and their words possessed a definite dignity. But because they tried to be included in the existing system of white minority rule, they could never lead a struggle for liberation that would embrace all the oppressed and the exploited people.

### **1946–1960: The period of protest and defiance**

The second phase of our struggle for national liberation was one of militant mass action. It began with the African Mineworkers' Strike of 1946 and picked up, as it were, the baton of some of the struggles pioneered in the first phase by organisations such as the CPSA and the ICU. If the first phase had been the moment of 'the leaders', this second phase was to be the moment of 'the masses'. Yet, as we shall see, there was no basic difference in the direction of the struggle even though it began to include ideas of democratic organisation, of political programme and of militant action.

Already at the end of phase 1, in 1943–44, the Anti-CAD Movement and the ANC Youth League respectively promoted (different) ideas of new political programmes and of militant mass action. The young men and women of that period were strongly influenced by the anti-colonial struggles that were sweeping through Asia (India, China, Indonesia) at this time. They were also influenced in some cases by radical socialist and Marxist ideas and by the struggles of communist and socialist parties (Spain, Yugoslavia, Greece, China). In the case of the Anti-CAD (and later of the All-African Convention) leadership, ideas of 'Non-European' (Black) unity, non-racialism and political struggle based on a democratically formulated programme (i.e., not on the say-so or the whims and fancies of this or that 'leader') took shape in the late 'thirties and early 'forties. These ideas came to influence mass politics in the whole of the Cape Province, including the Transkei, but especially in the cities and towns of the Western Cape. It was the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) that fashioned the ideas and forged the tools of non-collaboration, the boycott as a weapon of struggle, of non-racialism and of the programme for nothing less than full

democratic rights for all.

Indeed, the tragedy of the Unity Movement was that it failed, after 1948, to involve itself consistently in the mass protest and defiance campaigns of this period. Its leaders became paralysed by the fear of brutal repression at the hands of the neo-nazi storm troopers of the apartheid regime. They acted, in effect, on the basis of a theory of 'the perfect moment' when everything would magically come together and the oppressed people of South Africa would 'rid themselves of the scourge of white domination'. As this was simply a fantasy, it meant that – after 1948 – the Unity Movement was unable to test its ideas in the fire of mass action.

In so doing, they gave the historical advantage to the other main stream of the struggle for national liberation. This is the current of Africanism or African nationalism pioneered as a systematic programme and ideology by the ANC Youth League at the same time as the young men and women of the Western Cape were building the Unity Movement. Africanism was the mirror image of Afrikaner nationalism. That is to say, it held that the indigenous Bantu-speaking people of South Africa constituted the nation and would determine the future shape of the country. The minority 'national groups' of Whites, Coloureds and Indians would be accommodated in the independent black state which would be based on the ideas of African Socialism and Panafricanism (a United States of Africa).

Whatever might have been the false hopes and illusions of the first Youth Leaguers, to them belongs the honour of having pioneered the forms of mass defiance and mass protest without the semi-religious, pacifist delusions of a Gandhi. The year 1948 marked the beginning of the brutal era of apartheid. Suddenly, it became crystal clear to the black youth of South Africa that things were going to get worse, not better. The very devil of Fascism and Nazism

that many of their fathers had volunteered to fight against in World War II was now in power in South Africa. Clearly, the Lazarus policy of pleading and begging did not work. The Youth Leaguers, therefore, formulated their Programme of Action in 1949. This programme was to shape the landscape of liberatory politics during the entire decade from 1949 until 1960. The war had also led to an influx of black people into the cities where they lived in *pondokkies*, *blikkiesdorpe* and *sakkiesdorpe*, that is to say, in squalid, unhealthy squatter camps. This unskilled and semi-skilled working class represented the social base for the militant action driven by the utter desperation of poverty and by the shame of racial oppression. Those of us who witnessed and lived in those times can never forget the many ways in which the insane racism of the vast majority of whites reduced black people to the level of the most brutalised animals.

The Africanism of the Youth League was the logical and intuitive response to these conditions. The Youth Leaguers appealed to the blood-and-soil emotions of the majority of the oppressed people and tried to instil feelings of pride and resistance in the downtrodden masses. Their greatest success, of course, was the Campaign for the Defiance of Unjust Laws (Defiance Campaign) of 1951–52.

In the course of the many struggles conducted during the early 'fifties, some of the Youth Leaguers were influenced by the ideas of their Coloured, Indian and Communist allies and began to accept what was in effect a philosophy of multi-racialism. This wing of the Youth League went on to gain control of the ANC and later formed the Congress Alliance (with the South African Indian Congress – SAIC, the South African Coloured People's Organisation – SACPO, later called the Coloured People's Congress – CPC, the (white) Congress of Democrats and the South African Congress of Trade Unions – SACTU.) The Alliance was cemented in 1955 by the

adoption of the Kliptown (Freedom) Charter.

The other wing of the Youth League, which insisted on the original Africanist doctrine, eventually broke away in 1958 to form the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC). They continued the tradition of 'positive direct action' and were strongly influenced by the coming to power of Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, in 1957, and of Sekou Touré in Guinea, in 1958. It was the PAC leadership who organised the anti-Pass campaign of 1960, which led to the massacres at Sharpeville and Langa in March of that year. These events rang in the next phase in the struggle for national liberation.

The gains made in this period were mainly political and organisational. The ANC became a mass organisation, a tradition of mass protest politics was firmly established and the politics of bowing and scraping for concessions was left behind. On the other hand, in spite of SACTU and the high profile of the SACP (Communist Party) leaders, the specific interests of black working people had not yet become the main content of the struggle. African (and sometimes black) nationalism obscured the class differences between middle- and working-class people. In the conditions of the apartheid state, this meant that the preoccupations of middle-class people (especially higher educational facilities and business opportunities) were placed in the forefront of the struggle. Of course, apartheid in the early years levelled everybody and helped to deceive the oppressed people into believing that they all had the same interests. The bitter struggles against the pass laws, the migrant labour system, the Bantu Authorities Act, the location system, the Group Areas Act, the Bantu Education Act, the Suppression of Communism Act and against the hundreds of other laws and regulations that imprisoned black people in the land of their birth: all these many struggles served to bring black people together and to reduce their consciousness of 'race' and colour and, to some extent, even of language and ethnic differences. They created the basis for what came to be known as Black

Consciousness in the third phase of our struggle, to which we now turn.

### **1960–1976: The years of silence**

The brutal repression which followed on the massacres of Sharpeville and Langa changed the character of the resistance to the system of racial capitalism, now called apartheid. With the exception of one wing of the Unity Movement, the entire liberation movement turned to one form or other of armed struggle. For a people that had been reared for more than fifty years on ideas of passive resistance, delegations and petitions, defiance campaigns, non-collaboration and boycotts, the turn to arms was a difficult but dramatic decision. The formation during 1961–62 of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), Poqo (later APLA) and the Yu Chi Chan Club (later the National Liberation Front) transformed the politics of South Africa and of Namibia. Although the armed struggle in South Africa never developed beyond the level of armed propaganda, it did have a decisive influence on the changing character of the national liberation struggle.

For the dominant current in the struggle ,i.e., the Charterist current, as for the others (Africanist and broadly socialist), the turn to arms meant ‘the continuation of policy by other means’. The underground leadership of the ANC and its allies made it clear repeatedly that the strategic goal of their struggle was to force the government of South Africa to the negotiation table. Although from time to time voices could be heard which put forward the idea of fighting for the revolutionary overthrow of the regime, these were never (except perhaps in 1984–86) the dominant voices in the Charterist camp. The moderates’ position was further strengthened by the practices and theories of the anti-colonial struggles in Africa during the ‘sixties and ‘seventies. All of these struggles were conducted against

foreign colonial overlords represented in their African colonies by a small coterie of administrators, business people and the Christian church hierarchy. They were, of course, supported by collaborationist classes of traditional chiefs and would-be or sell-out (comprador) black capitalists. In all these cases, as in Asia a decade earlier, the colonial powers (Britain, France and Belgium mainly) decided to withdraw and to 'transfer power' to the new elite of African professionals and middle-class men and women who usually led or gave voice to the demands and the struggles of the urban and the overwhelmingly rural masses in most of the African colonies.

The pattern of mass protest and direct action followed by negotiations became the model for one struggle after another. Only in those colonies where there was a sizeable white settler minority (Kenya, Algeria and 'the white South' of the Portuguese colonies, Rhodesia and South West Africa) was a higher level of force necessary. Guerrilla warfare and mass action followed usually by a negotiated settlement became the tried and tested model of liberatory strategy in all these cases. The peculiarities of the South African case are dealt with separately below in the section entitled 'Negotiations and the Conquest of Power in South Africa'. It is, of course, a matter of history now that in all these cases, in spite of a very radical rhetoric and some lasting revolutionary practices, the post-liberation governments could not get beyond the neo-colonial socio-economic and political structures of the rest of Africa. Why this was so is a separate but important story, one which we shall have to study carefully since our movement is trapped in similar circumstances to those of the anti-colonial struggles in Africa.

It is now common knowledge that the ANC and MK were able in the course of the many years of exile to develop a strong international support network through the anti-apartheid movements in Western Europe, later also in

the USA, Canada and Australia as well as through the Nordic governments and the governments of the actually existing socialist states of Eastern Europe, Cuba Vietnam and, to a lesser extent, of China and North Korea. Besides excellent propaganda, they had definite advantages over the PAC-Poqo-APLA the only other section of the movement that got anywhere beyond the preparatory stages of the armed struggle. They had the invaluable alliance with the SACP which opened the doors to the USSR and its allied states. These were the only countries, outside of some African states, that were willing to supply arms and advanced military training. In the circumstances of the Cold War, i.e., the competition between 'East' and 'West', this was decisive since it meant that the ANC had the same potential as any of the other successful guerrilla movements of that time and of the previous period (Cuba, Algeria, Vietnam). For this reason, liberals and social democrats in the West wooed those in the ANC whom they regarded as pro-democracy (i.e., pro-capitalist) moderates. This is where the liberals in the anti-apartheid movement played such a big role. They insinuated themselves into the ANC and all its structures and made sure that the radicals would not become dominant. In this, as we shall see, their tactics were reinforced by international developments. Because of its own politics of incorporation into the existing South African state, the ANC was open to such infiltration. The organisation obtained many advantages and large-scale support for education, health and developmental projects in exile and inside the country. From the beginning, those who supported the moderates in the ANC were not simply salving their conscience. Slowly but definitely, leverage was established by means of 'development aid' in order to enable the West eventually to influence the policies and strategies of the ANC and of its allies.

After the Soweto uprising of June 1976, the ANC (and to a lesser extent, the PAC) obtained a very necessary

transfusion of revolutionary youth. More than a decade of exile had led to very little military action and, in fact, the view had become widespread that the ANC was not really concerned about violent revolutionary action. Even its 'military' actions appeared to be no more than the logical extension of its pressure politics. The PAC, wracked by disunity and feuding among the leaders, did well simply to survive the rigours of exile under conditions where its revolutionary message was rejected in the West, where Africa was too weak and itself too divided to be of much assistance and where the PAC's only 'socialist' backer, China, could not give much more than military assistance.

It has become fashionable among those who have tried to write the recent history of our liberation movement to ignore or to play down the work of the Black Consciousness Movement during the latter half of the years of silence. There can be no doubt at all that one of the crucial mistakes of the Verwoerd era was the creation of the Bush colleges. In these academic squatter camps during the late 'sixties and the 'seventies, thousands of young black men and women from every corner of the country, including the rural areas and the Bantustans, came together to learn the skills and gain the knowledge that their masters believed them to be capable of. The incredible paternalism of the racist rulers makes one shake one's head even today, many years after the worst intellectual and moral brutalities have faded in one's memory. Few ruling groups in the history of humanity have humiliated the intellectual cream of a people so deliberately and so profoundly.

It was from these lowest depths that SASO, under the inspired collective leadership of people like Steve Biko, Barney Pityana, Mamphela Ramphele, Peter Jones, Saths Cooper and tens of others hoisted the r:niversity generations of the late 'sixties/early 'seventies to heights that made it possible for the whole of the oppressed people to visualise a new and a better future in spite of the all-

embracing repression and the omnipresence of the police state. Today, there are many, some very good, books and films that tell the story of this innovative generation. We need not repeat that here. In a nutshell, we can say that the BCM revived the hope and the energies of the oppressed people, gave them for the first time the idea of practical alternatives to the racist state and made it possible for the youth especially to understand how the cultural revolution was an integral and a decisive part of the struggle for the total liberation of the black people. They were children of their time, only too aware – some of them – of their weaknesses and the chinks in their ideological armour. Black Consciousness, as an ideology, was inevitable, given the brutality and the racist exclusiveness of apartheid. To become a truly liberatory idea and practice, it had to grow beyond itself, deepen and enrich its theory of South African society and root itself in the struggles of the working people at the point of production. These issues, and the question of armed struggle, led to major debates in the BCM after 1976–77 and eventually split it asunder.

### **16 June 1976–2 February 1990: Armed propaganda and revolutionary mass action**

The new youth of the Soweto generation galvanised the 'parent movements'. In particular, the ANC proved to be the most suitable vehicle for the promotion of the revolutionary dreams and aspirations of this youth. By 1978/79, the first trained guerrillas among the new generation were ready and eager to come back. They did so and opened up a period of armed propaganda that gave the ANC the edge over all actual and potential rivals by the early 'eighties. The profile of the organisation was enhanced beyond anything that its leadership had ever dreamt of; the young lions of MK became heroes/heroines and role models for the township youth of the 'eighties. Young men and

women like Solomon Mahlangu, even more than Basil February in the 'sixties and Joe Gqabi in the 'seventies, became revolutionary martyrs admired and respected by all oppressed and exploited people irrespective of their political affiliations. The ANC without any doubt became the most popular of the liberation movements.

It was the armed propaganda of the ANC, together with the fact that the majority current in the independent trade-union movement that had been developing alongside the students', civic, youth, church and women's organisations in the 'seventies and early 'eighties, decided to support the Charterist current, that eventually gave the United Democratic Front the edge over the National Forum as the main opposition movement to the tricameral dispensation of P.W. Botha. Of course, without the support of the anti-apartheid movement abroad and the plentiful funds and other resources poured into the UDF by Western governments, churches and foundations, the UDF would have had a much more difficult growth path. The dominance of the Charterist (Congress) movement in the 'eighties gave rise to the illusion that the ANC was 'the sole authentic representative' of the oppressed people of South Africa, a view which bred all manner of sectarian and undemocratic beliefs and practices as well as equally sectarian responses from other political tendencies. It is not too much to say that, ideologically, the roots of some of the sectarian violence that is now threatening to negate so many of the gains of our struggle have to be sought here.

Most of this period was characterised by the political struggle against the Tricameral dispensation, the mushrooming development of what is loosely called 'civil society' among black people, i.e., the dense network of social, cultural, educational, health and economic organisations that sprang up after 1973, especially the trade unions and civics, by the rapid urbanisation of black people due to the poverty of the rural areas, the collapse of the

South African economy in the wake of world-wide recession and because of financial sanctions, and by waves of unprecedented repression, destabilisation and general state terrorism.

This latter strategy of the Botha regime was the attempt of the securocrats to contain and roll back the waves of radicalisation that were engulfing the entire subcontinent of Southern Africa in the early 'eighties as a result of the inspiring developments in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Namibia. So intense were the struggles in South Africa itself that for a short time some activists in the SACP and the Congress movement apparently believed that an Iran-type insurrection could get rid of the apartheid regime. Conversely, the policy of destabilisation and state terrorism reached its climax in this period and 'succeeded' in halting for a while the further intensification of the mass struggles.

### **The present period: Negotiations and the conquest of power in South Africa**

The events that changed decisively the political-economic framework in which our struggles were fought out in the 'eighties took place elsewhere. I refer, of course, to the rise to power of the Gorbachev tendency in 1985 and the earth-shaking events that followed in the subsequent five-year period. Today, it is clear that talks between the South

African government and the Rivonia leadership in prison had begun by 1986 already and that via the IDASA initiatives, South African capital and individuals connected with the apartheid state made contact with the ANC leadership in exile at about the same time. It is tempting to suggest that inside information about the direction of Soviet policy induced the SACP and its allies in the Congress movement to begin to tone down the insurrectionist rhetoric of 1984–86 (witness the SACP /SACTU messages to the 1987 (Second) Congress of COSATU in which they

cautioned that 'socialism is not on the agenda'). However, until those who know the facts are willing to write about them, this is mere speculation. What is very probable is that some of the leaders of the ANC had lost faith in the efficacy of the armed struggle as waged up to the mid-'eighties as an instrument to bring the South African government to the negotiation table, and were willing to try constitutional means if the regime would talk on terms that were not humiliating. Sanctions and other forms of international leverage were useful weapons in the arsenal of this group of leaders. While these weapons could not neutralise the armed might of the South African state, they gave the government a credible argument to put to its white constituency for justifying the ideological somersault that was begun by Botha and eventually concluded by De Klerk. This became even easier after the *Götterdämmerung* of 1989 in Eastern Europe and later in the Soviet Union itself. The speech of 2 February 1990 was the culmination of a carefully orchestrated process of elite-level co-operation on the one hand and of a series of totally unforeseen events on the global level on the other hand.

There is no doubt that economic and political realities brought the South African ruling class to understand that the apartheid option of the racial capitalist system had been exhausted. By the early 'seventies already – as has been demonstrated in numerous scholarly works – the system had reached its ceilings and become counter-productive in all important respects. I need not repeat these arguments here. What is important, however, is the proposition that the – at first tentative – reform of the system was a deliberate pro-active strategy decided upon by the rulers in their various think-tanks particularly after the 1976 uprising demonstrated the system's total loss of legitimacy. It is important to stress this, not in order to downgrade or trivialise the heroic battles fought on all fronts by our people in the decade between 1976 and 1986, but in order to

concentrate our minds on the fact that the 'racist Pretoria regime' has not been defeated militarily. This awkward but stubborn fact is usually elided in discussions about the present conjuncture and about our perspectives, even though it is clearly one of the central features of the political landscape.

Usually, Humpty-Dumpty attempts are made to pull the wool over the eyes of our audiences. This is done by the simple trick of pretending that the discourse of the 'seizure' or conquest of power is categorically the same as the discourse of the 'transfer' of power. Another way of putting this is to maintain in the usual woolly way that 'negotiations is a site of struggle'. Yet another way of playing around with words is to try to translate the fact of 'reform from above' (i.e., through elite-level co-operation) into some version of 'transformation from below'. In the game of power politics, this might be a legitimate ploy but it is an unseemly and unacceptable sleight-of-hand when indulged in by a leadership ostensibly involved in a revolutionary struggle for national liberation, democracy and the emancipation of the working class.

The time has come for us to state clearly the character of 'the transition to democracy' that is being negotiated by the contending social forces in South Africa today. This is necessary because unless we do so, we shall be aware neither of the limits nor of the possibilities inherent in the present conjuncture. Successful political strategy and tactics require precisely such clarity.

The armed struggle that was launched in 1961 by the forces of liberation against the apartheid-capitalist system has failed insofar as it ever was its military objective to overthrow the South African state. Let it be said immediately that the dominant core of the leadership of the ANC itself never set out to overthrow the South African state; instead, their stated goal was always to force negotiations on the regime.

This is a decisive fact, to which I shall return presently. As part of an ensemble of political tactics formulated, or sometimes arrived at, by the liberation movement, however, the armed struggle had definite successes in that it forced the ruling class generally and the NP government in particular into accepting the need to reform the system by restructuring the economy and the society within certain definite limits. In their concise analysis of the economic and socio-political reasons for the failure of apartheid, Morris and Padayachee (1988: 13) identified three elements in the state's reform initiative. These were:

- ~ initiating a *limited* process of 'democratisation' of ideological and political life;
- ~ implementing a dual process of 'de-racialisation/re-racialisation' of social and political life;
- ~ instituting a partial, and selective, 'redistribution' of social resources towards the black majority. (Emphasis in the original.)

They stress the point made above that the repressive apparatuses of the apartheid state have remained intact (Morris and Padayachee 1988: 13). The first question on which some clarity has to be attained, therefore, is the following: *Can the forces of liberation push beyond the capitalist system in the present conjuncture, one feature of which is precisely that the repressive state apparatuses are almost wholly intact?* The answer to this vital question is, paradoxically, in the affirmative. However, it depends on the realisation of at least two socio-political conditions, both of which are in the short term highly improbable. The first of these is the escalation of mass action to the point where what propagandists have aptly named the 'Leipzig option' becomes possible. In essence, this means that the armed might of the state is neutralised by the very magnitude of peaceful resistance, strengthened by the occupation of

strategic points and the gradual erosion of the *esprit de corps* of the standing army. A prior condition for the realisation of this option, however, is the commitment by the state authorities to a humanistic ethos that prevents them from unleashing the kinds of massacres that have characterised 20th century South African history with such sickening regularity from Bulhoek to Boipatong. My own sense of the situation, especially because of the relative weakening of the position of the white minority and *a fortiori* of the National Party as an instrument of imperialism in Southern Africa, is that we have probably gone beyond the law of the frontier and that such massacres have become unlikely but not impossible.

This is a new element in our political landscape. Guerrilla warfare was forced onto our movement in 1960 because of the fact that the South African army, until very recently, was never recruited from the people. Even today, it remains essentially the army of the ruling white tribe despite the fact that, in the lower echelons, more and more blacks have been admitted on terms that often make them more ruthless enemies of the people than their white counterparts. As long as the army was insulated from the people by racial prejudice and racist structures and practices, we could never take for granted one of the basic tenets of the classical theory of insurrection, viz., that in the final phase of a revolutionary struggle, the action shifts from the streets to the army and that it becomes imperative to break the chain of command so that soldiers refuse to shoot on the revolutionary people. Today, because of the changing class ('racial') composition of the armed forces, the changed character of the dominant strata of the ruling class, and because of the changed global balance of forces that makes a *white* ruling group expendable if a black elite is available for the more efficient management of the capitalist system in a black majority situation, we can rely at the very least on dividing the armed forces in an insurrectionary

situation in a manner that could spell disaster for the ruling class.

Having said this, of course, I have to say immediately that we are not at all within striking distance of this situation. The independent organisational strength of black workers at the political level is minimal, despite the impressive power of the independent trade-union movement. This is so because of the peculiar character of the struggle in South Africa where, in particular, racial oppression has put the emphasis on the unity of black (oppressed) people and blurred the fact of class exploitation. While the paramountcy of workers' issues and interests was for a brief moment in the 'eighties almost the common-sense position of the people's organisations, this was never the case before and has since also been smothered in the populist rhetoric of 'democracy' and 'human rights'. In short, mobilisation of the exploited and oppressed people with a view to reaching the ideological coherence and organisational depth that will make the Leipzig option feasible cannot be conceived of as a short-term matter. This, tragically, is being done by not a few pro-ANC activists and strategists at the time of writing (early August 1992). It is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of a revolutionary strategy, the goal of which is to place in power the urban and the rural poor as opposed to the black (middle class) elite, which, objectively, is the most that the present negotiations strategy of the Triple Alliance can hope for. I shall return to this issue in a moment when I examine the alternatives to the strategy of negotiations for power sharing.

The second condition for pushing our struggle beyond the confines of the capitalist system, is the possibility of favourable developments on the international stage. In this regard, we have every reason to be pessimistic in the very short term. The collapse of the USSR and of Eastern Europe and the consequent crisis of credibility that has paralysed

the international socialist movement have rolled back many of the gains made by revolutionary struggles of workers and peasants over the entire globe during the past 150 years or so. It is a crisis of world-historic magnitude, let there be no doubt about it. On the other hand, it is neither the first time that the international socialist movement has been faced with such bleak prospects nor is it strange or inexplicable given the epochal character of the struggle between capitalism and socialism on the scale of world history. It is perhaps difficult for our generation to realise the extent and intensity of the feelings of defeat, futility and betrayal that international socialist and workers organisation, especially in Europe, experienced with the collapse of the Second International in 1914, but we can read this up in the biographies and historiographical works of some of the leading socialists of that time. Arguments from analogy are never enough because the socio-historical context changes rapidly and often profoundly, yet I believe that it is useful for us to bear in mind that today's defeat is often the necessary prelude to tomorrow's victories.

Such exhortative writing should not, however, obscure the main issue, viz., that a post-capitalist dispensation in South Africa is completely feasible in the medium term but its survival will depend on a profound shift in the balance of international forces in favour of labour. At the very least, it would require the de-linking of a few of the major advanced capitalist economies from the world economy. The circumstances under which this could happen are at present scarcely imaginable.

Let us return, for the moment, to the present negotiations process. The essential proposition I wish to advance here is that, objectively, the leadership of the Triple Alliance has entered the process on the terms of the class enemy. While it is more than clear that Vorster-Botha-De Klerk made their move in response to the pressures building up in the system especially because of the waves of

militant mobilisation in the 'seventies and 'eighties, I repeat, that their strategy is pro-active, not merely reactive, precisely because they have not been defeated. De Klerk's February 1990 speech makes it very clear that they shifted from talking in the ventriloquist mode via their puppets to the negotiation mode involving valid interlocutors who authentically represent the majority current in the liberation movement because of the shift in the global balance of forces in favour of capitalism-imperialism. In other words, they were emboldened to embark on this course at this time because they realised that what they consider the Congress 'moderates', i.e., those in the leadership of the Congress Movement who at the very least are not anti-capitalist, would necessarily become dominant in the organisation under the new world-historic circumstances. Any negotiations process would by its very nature reinforce this structurally induced dynamic. The subsequent demobilisation and demilitarisation of the Congress Movement, if we abstract from the complexities of inner-party feuds and conflicts for the moment, would seem to have borne out this calculation.

The ANC leadership itself, taken as a whole, has always been committed to a negotiated solution of the conflict in South Africa. As I have pointed out already above, for a brief period in the early and the middle 'eighties, insurrectionist discourse became very popular especially among the radicalised youth and some SACP activists but there was little prospect that, within the populist confines of the Congress Movement, that discourse could become hegemonic.

Because the ANC was the dominant political force among the oppressed and because of its programmatic stance of negotiations, it was the most available 'partner' for the impending dialogue as far as the rulers were concerned. Other political forces which, at the time were and for the foreseeable future will be, marginal (NB not negligible!) to

the main action, were / are used by the rulers in order to weaken the ANC as a negotiating partner but the rulers well understand that the moment of these forces will come, if it does, if negotiations fail and if a coherent revolutionary strategy is arrived at. Either together with militants in a fragmented ANC or on their own, these more radical populist forces would exact a greater price from the Establishment for any 'settlement' or 'solution', even within the framework of a modified system of racial capitalism.

Leaving aside biographical or subjective considerations that may have influenced specific individuals in the leadership of the Congress Movement to 'engage the state', i.e., to enter into negotiations, it is obvious that the collapse of Eastern Europe, the tragic success of destabilisation policies in Southern Africa which reduced the Frontline States to a condition of chronic apprehension and the overt and subtle arm-twisting by the liberation movement's imperialist 'benefactors', together with the attrition, the fatigue and the exhaustion that were the result of the unprecedented struggles of the 'eighties: all these factors persuaded the ANC-SACP leadership to take the plunge and to probe the historic compromise in or about 1986/87. Clearly, also, it was the decision of only one, albeit the numerically and organisationally most important, part of the liberation movement. Hence, inevitably, It was, and was seen as, a power-political move made from the vantage point of a particular approach to our struggle rather than from that of a united people. This is, no doubt, a complex matter. There is no point in now putting forward the view again that any entry into negotiations should have been preceded by exhaustive consultations with other political tendencies in the movement no matter how insignificant they were, precisely because of the extreme danger of fragmentation and, in the final analysis, civil war. The so-called Patriotic Front was in all respects a total abortion and, I am afraid to say, an insult to the political intelligence

and the courage of people who had risked their lives for freedom and democracy in South Africa.

What is more to the point, however, is the fact that, objectively, the leadership of the Triple Alliance was committing itself to seeking a solution to the conflict in South Africa within the framework of capitalism. This is the real explanation for the rapid shift in the political registers of that movement from a militant quasi-socialism to a common or garden 'democratic' capitalism. This is why the ambiguities of the Freedom Charter which in the past had conveniently united the Congress Movement in an illusory populist coherence, had to be expunged. Everything became negotiable: 'nationalisation' has given way to the 'mixed economy', the unitary state can now encompass elements of federalism, 'majority rule' now means 66,6 percent and even the universal franchise (one person – one vote) can be diluted through Byzantine constitutional mechanisms that no ordinary citizen will ever understand. One can argue, of course, that all negotiations imply compromise. This is certainly true, but if the purpose of the exercise is to place oneself in control of the levers of the state power within a capitalist framework, one has to realise and accept that the end effect will be to strengthen, not to weaken and much less to destroy, that system. In her classical attack on the revisionist theory and strategy of Eduard Bernstein in the German Social Democratic Party at the beginning of this century, Rosa Luxemburg set out with unrivalled clarity all the real issues. In essence, what she wrote then is equally true today, bearing in mind that what she refers to as 'social democracy' we would now call democratic socialism:

Can the social democracy be against reforms? Can we counterpose the social revolution, the transformation of the existing order, our final goal, to social reforms? Certainly not. The daily struggle for reforms, for the amelioration of the conditions of

the workers within the framework of the existing social order, and for democratic institutions, offers to the social democracy the only means of engaging in the proletarian class war and working in the direction of the final goal – the conquest of political power and the suppression of wage labour. Between social reforms and revolution there exists for the social democracy an indissoluble tie. The struggle for reforms is its means; the social revolution, its aim.

It is in Eduard Bernstein's theory ... that we find for the first time the opposition of the two factors of the labour movement. His theory tends to counsel us to renounce the social transformation, the final goal of the social democracy and, inversely, to make of social reforms, the means of the class struggle, its aim ...

But since the final goal of socialism constitutes the only decisive factor distinguishing the social democratic movement from bourgeois democracy and from bourgeois radicalism, the only factor transforming the entire labour movement from a vain effort to repair the capitalist order into a class struggle against this order, for the suppression of this order – the question: 'Reform or revolution?' as it is posed by Bernstein, equals for the social democracy the question: 'To be or not to be?' In the controversy with Bernstein and his followers, everybody in the party ought to understand clearly it is not a question of this or that method of struggle, or the use of this or that set of tactics, but of the very existence of the social democratic movement.  
(Luxemburg 1978:8)

To conclude this section: the present negotiations strategy of the ANC never was and does not have the potential to become the continuation of a revolutionary strategy for the seizure of power. Insofar as it could have been – conceptually – the continuation of a strategy for the transfer of power from one elite to another within a slightly

modified capitalist system, it is premature and doomed to failure. The unfavourable balance of forces and the lack of organisational preparedness of the movement as a whole as well as the essential coherence of the state in the short to medium term guarantee a different outcome. If, after some period of profound or bloody conflict, at the beginning of which we possibly find ourselves today, the ruling elite, with the assistance of countless imperialist agencies, bring the 'sobered' and 'pragmatic' remnant of the leadership of a fragmented Triple Alliance to sign a settlement, it will be one in which the original agenda of the Broederbond, i.e., for a power-sharing arrangement between Afrikaner- and African nationalism, will have been realised.

This is the real significance of all the class-collaborationist talk about a 'social contract' in the ranks of the South African labour movement today. In many cases, as is well known, trade unions have gone beyond words. As Frantz Fanon pointed out many years ago, the beneficiaries of this kind of neo-colonial deal are the rising (black) middle class and the top layers of the skilled and semi-skilled, especially the unionised workers. In South Africa, however, these strata, even though they are stronger than anywhere else on the African continent, still exclude the majority of the urban and the rural poor. Any premature, short-term 'solution' will, therefore, be made at the expense of the latter.

## **Alternatives to negotiations**

In the short term, as I have pointed out on various occasions recently, the most likely alternative to the negotiated transition to democracy, however defined, is a military government of a special kind. Recent developments, especially after the breakdown of CODESA II, have underlined the fact that the gulf that separates the contending social forces in South Africa is so wide and so

deep that, from the point of view of the bourgeoisie, only a military government will be able to control the transition in such a way that the danger of a successful black working-class revolution can be discounted. Indeed, the destabilisation of the townships can arguably be traced back to the need to create the conditions for persuading the West to accept that this is the only way. In the process, it is hoped by those behind this strategy that the ANC will be discredited and weakened to the point where its leadership will be ready to settle for much less than they have always stood for, the independent organisations of the workers, especially the largest and most militant trade unions will have been destroyed or co-opted and a large proportion of the radical leadership of the Congress Movement (and of other political organisations) will have been decimated. Once the political and the economic attrition will have made its impact on the desperate but chastened masses, the military would be persuaded (by the West? or by the Broederbond?) to hand back power to the civilian authorities. Ironically, at that point, the military authorities will themselves convoke a Constituent Assembly in the secure knowledge that the outcome will be the best for the survival of the capitalist system in Southern Africa.

It is necessary to repeat that nobody in the ruling class wants this scenario to be realised. They prefer, obviously, a successful negotiation process with the least possible dislocation of the system. But this is clearly not going to happen. (It is, in brackets, amusing to read today what some of our celebrated political analysts were saying a mere two years ago.) The ruling class is obliged and committed to the restructuring of the apartheid-capitalist system. They will use all the available mechanisms to engineer the transition. Their best scenario is the process of negotiations for power sharing, the second-best is the military government of a special kind which I have referred to above.

At present, the social forces are deadlocked. We cannot overthrow the system and they cannot rule without massive and counter-productive repression. Is there another way? As indicated earlier, the answer to this question is a clear YES. There is the way of revolutionary socialism. In South Africa today, this means, amongst other things, the following steps:

- ~ Continued class struggle for fundamental social reforms with a view to increasing the social weight and the economic leverage of the black working class. Such struggles will bring about a secular shift in the balance of forces in favour of the working class as a whole. In this respect, campaigns, such as those against VAT, for a living wage, houses for all, a compulsory and free national health service, compulsory and free education for all, jobs for all, etc., are the nuts and bolts of this plank in our platform. At the political level, it involves the formulation of a Workers' Charter/Manifesto that will draw a clear line between the workers' struggle against capital and the populist-nationalist struggle for the cosmetic improvement of the system of racial capitalism. It will also put an end to the grand illusions of the oratory of the social contract and make it clear that workers cannot take responsibility for running the capitalist system of exploitation. Hence we have to give full support to and, wherever possible, initiate, mass struggles for the most rapid possible attainment of these reforms.

Again, we have to be clear that the goals of all such action have to be clearly related to the socialist project of the workers' struggle. Otherwise, the revolutionary energies of the masses will be dissipated and wasted on attaining the self-serving interest of power-seeking, elitist cliques. The class struggle should not be turned into a circus. We must guard against the situation described by the Czech novelist, Milan Kundera, in a

memorable passage in which he compared the struggle to a contest between a theatre group and a modern mechanised army.

- ~ At the same time we have to propagate and fight for the most radical possible democratisation of our society at all levels. This means quite simply translating into practice the *real content of democracy*, i.e., *power to the people*, by establishing in practice and in detail in the context of the full decision-making participation of the working people, what power to the people can/does mean at every level, whether we are talking about control of educational institutions, structuring the labour process at the point of production, determining budgets and service charges at local government level or whether we are talking about the most democratic possible constitution at central level. For this reason, the demand for the Constituent Assembly remains pivotal at this stage to the conquest of state power by the oppressed and exploited majority.

Yielding to this demand is clearly the last resort of the bourgeoisie in South Africa today on a scale that begins with the continuation of the present racist tricameral-cum-Bantustan constitution. They will only yield to this demand when the conditions for the Leipzig option have matured.

In my view, all other compromises that involve short-to medium-term governmental co-responsibility for maintaining the inequities of the existing system are a trap to be avoided like the plague. If for no other reason and having due regard to the very different circumstances in the two situations, we should study carefully the history of the 'interim government' that was initiated in pre-independence Namibia with the drawn-out Turnhalle process. The entire history of reformism and social accords in this century in

countries where conditions were that much more favourable than in South Africa today rises before us like a neon warning. Only people with a totally different reading of the history of our struggle or with a totally different agenda would ignore that warning. It is an exceptionally dangerous game to try to pass off any other constitution-making mechanism for the democratically elected Constituent Assembly based on a one-person-one-vote non-racial franchise and proportional representation, an assembly that will have the untrammelled right to structure its own agenda. Those who try to play around with this demand are playing with a fire that will consume them.

- ~ We have to internationalise our struggle by linking up concretely with all anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist forces in the world today, more particularly on the African continent. Only the security provided by the international solidarity of these forces will reinforce the sense of strength and power generated by working-class consciousness forged in the furnace of struggle against the actual and would-be managers of the racial capitalist system. Only the international elaboration of our struggle, its flowing together with similar struggles elsewhere, e.g., the workers' struggles in Brazil, in Korea, and in Eastern Europe can guarantee that it will not be suffocated after victory.

Finally, despite the restored hegemony of populist and middle-class ideologies in our political organisations today, the ethos and the goals of revolutionary democratic socialism are not far beneath the surface of the workers' struggles regardless of where and how they manifest themselves. I take my cue once again from the inimitable Rosa Luxemburg, writing about the state of what was then called the 'social democracy' at the beginning of the 20th century: 'The proletarian movement has not as yet, all at

once, become social democratic, even in Germany. But it is becoming more social democratic, surmounting continuously the extreme deviations of anarchism and opportunism, both of which are only determining phases of the development of the social democracy, considered as a process' (Luxemburg 1978: 61).

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# The national situation

SINCE THE FOUNDING OF WOSA almost three years ago, important events have taken place that have changed the face of the world as well as of our own country. The great expectations that were the result of the fall of the Berlin Wall as well as the euphoria that was generated by the release of Mandela have given way to a 'new realism' and even to a sense of despair.

In South Africa itself, most people are gripped by a contradictory feeling of end-of-the-century anxiety and millennial hope for better things to come. On the economic front, all is doom and gloom, on the political front, there is a decided sense of dead-endism as far as the negotiations process is concerned. On the other hand, no clear-cut alternative seems to be available, at least as far as the liberal and the conservative media are concerned. Socially and culturally, we have seldom in the recent past been faced with such a disastrous situation as during the first three years of the 'nineties.

## **The external factor**

Before we look at our own situation in more detail with a view to discussing the way forward, it is necessary for us to mention briefly some of the more important international developments that are helping to shape the stage of South African history in this last decade of the 20th century.

The first point to stress is that the collapse of the Soviet Union and of its East European satellites has not resulted in a capitalist paradise in which we can all live happily ever after. Indeed, the built-in contradictions and the endemic

crisis of the world capitalist system have been thrown into high relief by the catastrophic events of 1989–90. In the words of an impeccable anti-Marxist source:

In 1992, the New World Order's promise of stability and peace was shattered by age-old ethnic conflicts before we even began enjoying it. The hopes of a mega-Europe, where the collapse of socialism would end the divisions of the past and spread the prosperity of the West into the hungry countries of the East, did not last long into the year. The second half was dominated by bitter wars, the spectre of neo-fascism and disillusionment with the promise of unbridled capitalism. And the European Community – for which 1992 was scheduled to be the great year of unity – stood by helplessly, its future thrown into doubt by the rejection of the Maastricht Treaty. (Anton Harber, 'The year old ghosts refused to stay silent', *Weekly Mail*, 23–29 December, 1992)

In short, the dead-end character of the world capitalist system for the vast majority of humanity, its potential for conflict and war, has been confirmed beyond all reasonable doubt. At the end of the 20th century, just as it was at the end of the 19th century, the system is once again caught in the throes of a general crisis.

The long and deep depression that began in the mid-'seventies and that has continued ever since with only occasional mini-booms in the industrialised countries, has continued to cast its shadow over the entire world. Unemployment even in the advanced capitalist countries is seldom below 10% of the economically active population, while in the dependent economies of the so-called Third World, the situation is catastrophic. War, famine and disease have reduced the lives of countless millions in the ex-colonial world to a level of misery unknown in human history. In this situation, the most fitting Welcome sign for those who still cherish any illusions about 'the promise of

unbridled capitalism' is that which used to meet weary travellers on their arrival at legendary Samarkand: Abandon hope, all ye who enter here. Certainly, this is what the people of Europe have learnt. They have discovered that the Stalinist real socialism of yesterday was only purgatory compared to the hell of the real capitalism of today. Indeed, one city in Somalia has actually been called 'Hell' by journalists.

For reasons that will be analysed in another conference paper, a contradictory and menacing combination of multinational enterprise and inter-imperialist rivalry between the three global trading blocs (Europe, North America and East Asia (Japan)) which is fraught with the danger of regional and even world war, has become clearly manifest in the aftermath of the Cold War. As far as the Southern African region is concerned, Europe still has the edge over the other two blocs even though both Angola and Namibia are fast being sucked into the sphere of interest of North America. This competition, which is the second point to note, will sooner or later take its toll on the region.

Although, thirdly, the instability rampant in Eastern Europe and the refusal of the population there to embrace the obvious evils of capitalism have meant that that region of the world has not proved to be the investment paradise that most analysts expected, this does not mean that billions of dollars are automatically ready to be invested elsewhere. Stability (i.e., predictability) and profitability are the iron conditions of capitalist investment. If these don't exist, capital is 'invested' in speculative enterprises, mainly on the stock exchange. This tendency has led to the dangerous ballooning of financial instruments on the world's bourses not secured by productive or even by real capital.

The fourth development that will and does influence the shape of things to come in South Africa is the ideological accompaniment of the collapse of real socialism, i.e., the hegemonic status of the discourse of democracy and the

market. A regular mystification of the notion of democracy has been taking place so that, today, the main features of the bourgeois-democratic republic, i.e., multipartyism, regular elections, a bill of rights, an independent judiciary are fast being equated with democracy as such. This is clearly one of the most dangerous ways of ensuring the dominance of the capitalist ruling class on the world scale. (In brackets, we need to stress that it is a world-historic and essential task for revolutionary socialists to demonstrate that democracy is socialism, that only socialism can guarantee democracy.) A simultaneous movement is taking place at the level of economic theory and ideology. All of a sudden, people who yesterday were vehement critics of 'the market' and proponents of 'the plan' have been converted, Saul-like, to accept the benefits of the former. They have been struck blind by the light of their own opportunism. They can see no alternative, the more honest or more ruthless claim. Those with more sensibility claim that their conversion is merely 'tactical', and so forth. In fact, though, they have abandoned socialism, spat on Marxism and embraced the philistinism of bourgeois political economy. We are literally surrounded by such people in South Africa. Their challenge to socialism is not at all theoretical in character. It is political, and it is at that level that we shall be called upon to meet the challenge in future.

The fifth feature of the new international landscape that we have to note is the *de facto* de-linking of the continent of Africa from the rest of the world economy. The continent accounts for less than 1% of international trade, i.e., for practical purposes, it scarcely exists. Of course, its precious metals, its oil and some of its crops continue to be needed (even though in much reduced quantities and at criminally low prices) but for the rest it is an object of aid and charity as far as 'the North' is concerned. The most recent tragedies in Somalia and in Mozambique have etched this aspect of the African reality into the consciousness of all humanity

through the recurrent scenes of horror and famine projected nightly onto the world's TV screens. Paradoxically, the 'new South Africa', this so-called post-apartheid South Africa, appears to the middle-class politicians, business people and academics of the rest of the continent as the light at the end of the tunnel of Afro-pessimism. They expect great things of the reintegration of South Africa into the comity of African nations. Alas, they will, I believe, be greatly disillusioned. That is to say, their long-suffering working people, the genuinely toiling masses, will be worse off at the end of the flirtation with the sub-imperialism of South Africa than they are at present.

The last point to note is that the general crisis of capitalism ought to be the opportunity of democratic socialism. This is not the case, however. The main reason why revolutionary socialists cannot utilise the death throes of the world capitalist system in order to inaugurate an alternative world system is what Ernest Mandel calls the crisis of credibility of socialism in the wake of the ignominious collapse of real socialism in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union. One of the main consequences of those disastrous events has been the acceleration and reinforcement world-wide of the process of social democratisation of the Left, a process that began in the 'fifties and 'sixties with the phenomenon of Eurocommunism. The South African Left, especially that segment which Alex Callinicos labelled the 'Trade Union Left', has not escaped this fate, as we shall see.

## **Southern Africa**

The international developments mentioned above have had a uniformly negative impact on the countries of Southern Africa. Continued destabilisation made worse by devastating drought has made the region even less attractive than usual to foreign capital in spite of some new

direct investment in Namibia. In general, unemployment has increased rapidly, giving rise to population movements such as have not been seen in the region since the beginning of the 19th century. Civil war, especially in Angola, Mozambique and South Africa has led to large refugee populations in all neighbouring states. This, together with De Klerk's move in February 1990, has led to the situation mentioned above where South Africa, and Nelson Mandela in particular, appears to some as Africa's great white hope. Drove of business and government people are visiting this country in the hope of increasing the volume of trade and enticing South African capital and know-how. Academics from (mainly) Anglophone African countries are desperately seeking temporary placements, sabbaticals or permanent appointments at South African universities, colleges of education and technikons, thus extending to the rest of the country a practice that has gone on clandestinely in the Bantustans for almost two decades already. They do this not only because the pay is incomparably better but also because here they have a better chance of doing actual research instead of teaching classes of up to 700 students. Moreover, their knowledge and expertise are in demand since South Africa's polecat status can only be perfumed away through this kind of legitimation and since there is a genuine ignorance in South Africa about the rest of the continent.

Of course, the main determining developments are taking place in the sphere of the economy, more narrowly defined. The SADCC has now become the Southern African Development Community (SADC). There are great expectations that once an interim government has been established in South Africa, the driving force of the South African industrial and technological machine will transform the region through an economic miracle similar to that which changed the face of post-war Western Europe. All the regimes involved are thus committed to regional

integration via mechanisms such as the expansion of the South African Customs Union, the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) and the new SADC. This fact has important implications for the working people of Southern Africa. They are going to have to resist the lure of patriotic, populist ('non-class') politics, by means of which these regimes are going to try to conceal the intensification of exploitation and the sub-imperialist character of South African capitalism. They are going to have to unite as a class against all those who want to promote the regime of profit at the expense of the workers.

### **Ruling-class strategy**

Events have confirmed our basic analysis of, and our main predictions about, the strategy of the ruling class in South Africa. The naive belief of the negotiators in a smooth 'transfer of power' has been shattered in the most brutal possible manner. The recent acceptance of the strategic perspectives document by the NEC of the ANC following on Joe Slovo's much-publicised 'sunset clauses' proposal represents the final humiliation of the ANC leadership. In those documents, once one has stripped away the rhetoric, they recognise that the realities of the power relations in South Africa leave them no option but to acquiesce in the co-optive strategy of the local and international ruling classes. Class collaboration, as opposed to the Verwoerdian racial and ethnic collaboration, is what the ANC leadership is now openly pursuing.

The facts of the South African situation can be described quickly and briefly. On the economic front, things have gone from bad to worse. In particular, the scourge of unemployment, the greatest disaster that can befall working people, has never been worse in this country. Even the South African government admits that more than 50% of the economically active population are out of work.

Regional unevenness means that in areas such as the Eastern Cape, the unemployment rate is well above 80% for black youth. Less than 4% of new labour can be absorbed annually, which means, for example, that virtually none of the matriculants who managed to pass in 1992 will be able to find work in the formal economy. Some of the luckier ones will be able to go on to technikons or universities. Most will end up in one or other crevice of the 'informal economy' which includes anti-social gangsterism, drug-trafficking, etc. Today, the unthinkable in *Herrenvolk* South Africa has become normal. Whites – more than 2 000 families in the Transvaal alone – are receiving soup-kitchen assistance so that they don't starve, and scabbing white workers and their families gladly share hostel accommodation on Natal coal mines with black mineworkers. Unemployed white workers and their families are living in so-called white squatter camps in different parts of the country.

As will have become obvious in an earlier conference paper, there is little hope that things will be getting better any time soon. Unemployment and inflation in South Africa's main trading partners inevitably impact negatively on the local economy since demand for South African exports is reduced and the price of imports increases steadily, thus fuelling further inflation in the national economy. A life-saving transfusion of direct foreign investment and long-term loans is seen as the key to economic growth together with increased productivity of labour, greater financial and fiscal discipline, i.e., a leaner and meaner public sector and large-scale privatisation of state-run and parastatal enterprises. The new Minister of Finance and of Trade and Industry, together with the IMF and World Bank gurus, has concocted a witches' brew of higher personal and indirect taxes and more retrenchments in the public sector, i.e., greater pressure on the working class, more scope for the 'dynamism' of the private

capitalist entrepreneur, and to hell with the unemployed. He has been issuing blunt warnings that unless this bitter medicine is swallowed, the 'liberation movement' will kill the goose of the South African economy that lays the golden egg. His two sorcerers' apprentices, the much-quoted spokespersons of the ANC economics department who are 'preparing to govern', sickeningly repeat his prescriptions in the fond belief that they can persuade the black working class that 'the promise of unbridled capitalism' can be realised. More often than not, they merely confirm that they are speaking on behalf of the rising black middle class, the new junior partners of the white ruling class. Their ritual genuflections to the 'rights' of workers are manifestly hypocritical and merely demonstrate their fear that 'the great unwashed' may escape from the cage of populist ideology to create mayhem and shatter their cosy dreams.

The social consequences of this hopeless economic situation are plainly visible to all. Rapid urbanisation as the landless and the jobless millions flee from certain starvation in the rural areas has led to sprawling 'squatter' settlements where the desperate people are compelled to compete with one another for scarce resources. Basic necessities such as water, housing, energy (firewood, electricity), schools, healthcare, even latrines and cemeteries are hopelessly inadequate and where they do exist indescribably primitive. The resultant social tensions are easily politicised and erupt into civil conflict and even civil war (Inkatha vs ANC in Natal, Inkatha vs ANC, PAC, AZAPO in various parts of the Witwatersrand, Ciskei Bantustan authorities vs ANC and PAC in the Eastern Cape and countless other similar situations). Warlords linked to protection rackets, rentlords, druglords and other cruder forms of criminality are rife in these areas and in most townships. Traditional social control is disintegrating, the corrupt, bankrupt, racist state cannot and will not reassert even its repressive order because many parts of the cities have become no-go areas

for its civilian and uniformed functionaries and because it suits its sinister agenda to promote so-called black-on-black violence. What Marx and Engels wrote almost 150 years ago in *The Communist Manifesto*, we can repeat today with tears in our eyes because every one of us knows how true their words are:

The bourgeois claptrap about the family and education, about the hallowed co-relation of parent and child, becomes all the more disgusting, the more by the action of modern industry, all family ties among the proletarians are torn asunder and their children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labour.

Everywhere there is crisis: in education, health, recreation and above all in the economic sphere. The representative organisations of the people are unable to offer any real solution. Negotiations for power sharing are held up as the short-term answer. The people are asked to be patient for a while and to trust their 'leaders' while they work out a deal with the rulers and the bosses. As in Eastern Europe, the desperate situation of the people has brought to the surface all lines of cleavage in our society, and these are exploited to the full by the rulers and by balaclava-wearing third forces. Alleged racial, ethnic, language and even religious differences are highlighted and exaggerated by unscrupulous political manipulators in order to mobilise 'a constituency', i.e., a power base. Deadly weapons of war have been made freely available by the South African regime since the mid-'seventies for the purpose of destabilisation in all of Southern Africa and the situation is all but beyond the control of the racist state today. The result is the traumatising prevalence of violence in all sectors of our society. One layer of the working class can be easily incited against another as when so-called hostel-dwellers are brought out against so-called residents or when one group of taxi-drivers is mobilised against

another. The possibilities and the realities of civil conflict in their new South Africa are infinite.

This social chaos, the sordid result of a century of bourgeois rule in South Africa, is the clearest evidence of a dying culture. Even from a nationalist point of view, it is clear that the bourgeoisie cannot satisfy the most basic needs of the people. The populist leadership, with the ANC upfront, believe that a power-sharing deal between themselves and the ruling elite will create the conditions for a new beginning. They, however, know and if they don't, they ought to know that such a deal will do no more than bring into the power bloc the black middle class and the skilled layers of the black working class. The rest, the unskilled and unemployed workers, will, as in the past, be marginalised as the superfluous 2/3 in a 1/3 society. We need look no further than certain countries in South America, such as Brazil, or in West Africa, such as Nigeria, to see what a desperate fate this strategy has in store for the vast majority of our people. It is the merest wishful thinking for the leadership of the ANC to believe that what they have not won on the battlefield, they will win in debates around a negotiating table.

Let us repeat clearly once again what the main thrust of ruling-class strategy is and has been since February 1990. For economic reasons and in order to regain a certain measure of political legitimacy in the aftermath of the disaster of 1976, the ruling class has been compelled to scrap Verwoerdian apartheid. They realised, of course, that through the scaffolding of the laws and practices of apartheid, the house of racial inequality had been built on firm foundations. 'Dismantling apartheid', for them, meant no more than repealing the pro-white, especially pro-Afrikaner, affirmative action laws they and their predecessors had put on the Statute book since 1910 and especially since 1948. By doing so, they would accommodate within the continuing, albeit amended, racial

capitalist system the rising black middle class and the skilled black working class, without in any fundamental way affecting the real power relations between the bourgeoisie and the working class. For the overwhelming majority of the black people, the cosmetic changes to the system would make very little real difference; for many, they would lead to a dramatic worsening of the quality of life unless there was some unplanned form of economic windfall such as a steep increase in the price of gold.

The socio-economic thrust of ruling-class strategy is crystal clear. Their problems reside largely in the political sphere. They can no longer govern with the support of hand-picked black collaborators; since November 1989 at the latest, they have been willing to share power with the authentic black nationalist leaders of the liberation movement but in order to cover their flanks on the right and in order not to lose control in the period of transition, they have to obtain built-in minority vetoes that will guarantee the continuation of the capitalist system on the one hand and that will not take away from the white minority its ill-gotten headstart of wealth and privilege on the other hand. If they fail in either of these two objectives, the risk they took in initiating the negotiations process could end up in either a working-class-led social revolution against the capitalist system or a neo-fascist right-wing counter-revolution against De Klerk's 'treacherous' policy of 'liberalisation'.

This is the reason why the negotiations process is characterised by such contradictory developments. Thus we have the unlikely and incredible sight of former dyed-in-the-wool racists like Pik Botha or Danie Craven embracing former radicals like Thabo Mbeki or Steve Tshwete and appearing to speak the 'normal' language of liberal democrats. In fact, the Democratic Party, traditional custodian of this Western cant, has been hard-put to defend its corner of the political spectrum against the authoritarian

predators from both the right and the left as these have suddenly discovered the (economic) importance of the hallowed values of capitalist democracy. At the same time, we have the clearly orchestrated attempts to weaken the main negotiation partner of the National Party, i.e., the ANC, through third-force assassinations of community-level and labour leaders and other stalwarts of that organisation and, more generally, the carefully planned strategy of dividing one group of black people against the others by enhancing real language, colour, religious, regional, cultural and political differences in the context of extremely scarce resources. Both incredibly crude (vigilantism and third forces for example) and incredibly sophisticated (the World Bank, Goldstone Commission) methods are used in order to widen the cracks that the long years of anti-apartheid struggle had begun to cement. The 'success' of these cynical and calculated moves should not be doubted. Our movement has been set back many decades in important respects. Some of the major gains of the 'seventies and the 'eighties, e.g., participatory democratic practices, the non-racial ethos and anti-collaborationist practices, have been virtually erased.

The leadership of the ANC are going for broke. They have gone beyond the point of no return. They have in fact crossed the Rubicon of the liberation struggle, i.e., they have determined to compromise with the white rulers of South Africa in all spheres, political, economic, cultural and recreational. Elsewhere, I have explained in some detail why it is precisely the ANC that has had to take this fateful step and why it is precisely the ANC that is able to do so. (See the chapter 'Negotiations and the struggle for socialism in South Africa' in this volume.) Other populist organisations such as the PAC and, to a lesser extent, AZAPO, are tossed this way and that way on the stormy waters set up by the negotiations process but the ANC, almost without any visible dissent in its ranks, has crossed

over. Their dissenters and rebels, it would seem, have chosen not to rock the boat and are, so they say, biding their time until they are well and truly on the firm land of 'the new South Africa' that is being prepared in the bowels of CODESA.

During 1992, in order to get all their supporters, especially the trade unions, firmly on board, the ANC leadership orchestrated a programme of mass action. The operative word here is 'orchestrated'. Even though spontaneous local protest marches, strikes, boycotts, chalk-downs, sit-ins, etc., characterised the period and even though these were clearly informed by the Tripartite Alliance's call for mass action, all the main 'events' were the result of collusion between the ANC and the NP. This became most obvious in the surreal spectacle of ANC marshals and SA Police/SADF operatives jointly 'controlling' the demonstrators. In some cases, these marshals actually handed over 'unruly' elements among the marchers to the police. Besides the declared limited goal of the mass action, i.e., strengthening the leverage of the negotiators vis-à-vis the government, the effect of this collusion was to pull the teeth of the mass action and to defuse the militancy of the radical youth and of the organised workers. In many cases, the carnival atmosphere quite simply reduced the noble motive and the rage of the people to the level of street theatre. And it is sad to record that much of the success of this manipulative strategy was the result of the COSATU leadership's tacit and active collusion with their Tripartite allies.

Of course, it is clear that in spite of the leaders' intentions, the campaign of mass action showed to the working people very clearly that there is an alternative to negotiations, i.e., precisely mass action, mass struggle, stripped of its theatrical element. Even ANC spokespersons on occasion inadvertently, under pressure from below or fired by the spirit of the action, stated that this is indeed the

alternative. But we shall return to this point presently.

At the time of writing (early 1993), the short-term agenda of the ANC has been spelled out as follows by Nelson Mandela, the President of the organisation:

- ~ A resumption of multi-lateral talks at CODESA.
- ~ Ensuring a climate of free political activity in all parts of the country.
- ~ The establishment of a transitional executive council as well as an independent elections commission and media commission to ensure free and fair elections.
- ~ Elections for a Constituent Assembly as an interim government of national unity before the end of the year.
- ~ Reincorporation of the 'independent' homelands.

The collusion between the ANC and the NP leadership teams has reached the point of transparency. Shaun Johnson, one of the more insightful political journalists in the liberal camp, puts the matter very clearly:

What are the signs that suggest 1993 will be different from 1992 ... ? Primarily, of course, the words of de Klerk and Mandela. But these are worth more than mere rhetoric, the fickleness of which has been our curse. They flow from a clear recognition of three critical factors – the tailspin in which the economy finds itself, the deepening despair of the nation writ large, and the growing frustration of the international community. *This shared government/ ANC world view is the glue which holds South Africa's new political centre together: there are and will be vast differences in policy between the Nationalists and the ANC, but there is now almost total convergence on the fundamental rules of the game.* (Argus, 9/10 January 1993. My emphasis.)

An important mechanism that has clearly been decided on between the two partners to facilitate the transition to their new South Africa is that of the sectoral negotiation

forum. I am referring to institutions such as the National Economic Forum, the projected National Education Forum, National Health Forum, etc. These are in actual fact no more and no less than the old Native Advisory Boards where representatives of peoples' organisations told representatives of the racist national or local state what would work and what not. Today, the ANC 'strategists' justify this collaborationist policy by claiming that in this way they can prevent the National Party government from 'unilaterally restructuring' the economy, the educational system, the health sector, etc. This is a fatuous and hypocritical claim. The fact of the matter is that the supposed control which the 'liberation movement' can exercise in these forums is minimal, if not illusory. The government of the day can subvert any decision taken in any of these forums and get away with it on budgetary or security grounds. We have to see this ploy for what it is, viz., a transparent attempt to substitute collaborationist and reformist tactics for the tactics of class struggle and class confrontation. To put the matter in a nutshell: until the black people of South Africa have the full and unfettered franchise at national, regional and local level, there is no way that we can become party to policy decisions that will be carried out by the existing unrepresentative racist state. Such an 'engagement' of the (apartheid) state is not simply a class-collaborationist stance. It is, in the context of the present social realities of this country, an act of racial collaboration which is categorically no different from the cruder (Uncle Tom) versions of the Bantustan and Tricameral politicians. It represents, clearly, a movement from 'race' to class at the level of both political strategy and ideology and to that extent it is the ideal mechanism for the transition to (bourgeois) democracy. Moreover, from the point of view of the ANC, it is useful bait with which to entice non-Congress, non-negotiating groups such as AZAPO, WOSA and others, to lend legitimacy to its

collaborationist strategy. The point is not that we should not participate in the discussions about the establishment of such forums. The point is that we should not participate in such forums.

## **The way forward**

In WOSA, our perspective is informed by our analysis according to which what is happening in South Africa today is the process of the co-optation of the black middle class and of the leadership of the unionised workers by the ruling class. This is a decisive shift in class alliances from the previous power bloc which consisted of an alliance of the bourgeoisie, the white middle class and the white working class. At the political level, the drama is being played out mainly between the NP and the ANC as the main historical representatives of Afrikaner and African nationalism respectively. In the context of a global shift towards neo-liberalism in economics and politics, this co-optive process is being scripted in terms of the transition to democracy. At this level, it is no different from similar processes in other 'Third World' situations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. However, the racist apartheid state has unique features which necessarily impact on the stereotypical process. Thus, for example, a democratic South Africa will have to be devoid of any signs of white minority control. At the same time, the existence of a militant, relatively well-organised industrial proletariat in this country means that beyond the immediate question of colour there looms the question of class equality and emancipation. The solutions to both these questions are conditional on the universal question of gender equality and the struggle against patriarchy.

The bourgeois and petty-bourgeois politicians who are conducting the negotiations for power-sharing have a joint interest in projecting themselves as 'the main actors' in this

drama. In other words, they want to control the process by restricting it to a dialogue and a negotiation between two elite groups that make deals, as it were, behind the backs of the mass of the working people. If we want to find a short way of stating our alternative strategy, we could do no better than to say that we want to ensure that the black workers, the urban and the rural poor, will be the main actors in the democratisation of South Africa. Only if this happens will the democracy that comes about in a free Azania be a real democracy, i.e., a situation in which power belongs to the people.

For us in WOSA, even though the conditions under which we conduct our struggle have changed, the struggle continues. We do not break up the struggle for liberation into stages that can be separated from one another. We do not assume responsibility for the problems of the bourgeoisie. The fact that they can no longer govern in the old way does not mean that we have to rescue them by sharing power with them and helping them to rule our people. It means, instead, that they must stop governing, they must be made to relinquish power.

Because of the international, continental, regional and national political climate today, the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system in South Africa is not on the immediate agenda. We must accept, for the present, that the power elites will find a compromise even if it does not come about in the way they intend. Indeed, the most likely transition is an authoritarian interim government with military features. The 'purging' of the SAP and the SADF is a preliminary move in order to integrate MK (and perhaps APLA) in the 'new' security apparatus whose first and main task will be to deal ruthlessly with Left and Right in the next few months/years.

This does not mean that socialism is not on the agenda. It does not mean that we have to embrace capitalism even in its social democratic version. This is the reason for our

opposition to the talk about a social contract between capital, labour and the state which is fast becoming the 'common-sense' position in COSATU and to a lesser degree in NACTU. This is a separate but important subject which is treated in another conference paper. Suffice it to say that the social contract is the burial place of yesterday's trade-union left which is being resurrected as a very ordinary party of social democracy completely at home in the populist ANC-SACP alliance.

Our tasks are crystal clear. We have to intensify mass struggle for fundamental social democratic reforms wherever possible, relentlessly expose all compromises with the bourgeoisie, increase the organisational capacity of the urban and rural poor, raise the level of class consciousness of all workers and move rapidly, together with all other revolutionary and democratic socialists, towards the creation of a mass socialist movement and a mass democratic workers' party. These tasks are completely feasible. They represent the basic planks of a programme of action that constitutes a real alternative to negotiations for power sharing. This conference has to translate this programme into a set of concrete tactics and organisational goals and deadlines.

Let us do so.

# Problems of democratisation in South Africa

THE REFORMIST PROCESS OF MOVING away from apartheid to a system of deracialised capitalism is treated by most analysts as one of a category of similar cases in the modern world, usually under the rubric of 'Transitions to Democracy'. As in all these cases, this nomenclature *does* capture at a certain level of abstraction what is common to numerous societies in Southern Europe, Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. But, equally, it imputes a spurious sense of uniformity and standardised process to the cases studied, each of which in reality has its own peculiarities based on a particular history and a particular configuration of social relations. The sociological-political industry that has grown up around these 'transitions to democracy' and which has kept many an academic in employment has become tediously repetitive and predictable without, however, helping the strategist or the activist to know what not to do and even less what to do.

To begin with, there is a general assumption that all of us mean the same thing when we commit ourselves to the attainment of democracy in our society. But this is palpably not the case. Without, for the moment, considering the question of democracy from the point of view of potentially conflictual entities such as 'class' or 'ethnic group', it may be useful to glance at modern theories of democracy which are calculated to explain the diverse realities journalistically conjured together into a simplistic process called 'transition to democracy'.

In a state-of-the-art summary of modern liberal and conservative theories of democracy, Shapiro (1993) has

shown that most of them derive their understanding of the concept from the seminal work of Joseph Schumpeter (1942). Shapiro's essay is important because it is a conscious attempt to use the insights of these theorists in order to illuminate South Africa's agonising transition to democracy. At the theoretical level, his most important finding is that most modern bourgeois theories have jettisoned all substantive notions of democracy and essentially define it in procedural, minimalist or rules-of-the-game frameworks. Thus, Rousseauesque or even Tocquevillean notions of democracy as expressing the 'will of the people' or of promoting 'the general good' are no longer regarded as being relevant to the definition. Instead, they are satisfied with the minimalist definition according to which, in the formulation of Samuel Huntington, a social formation can be said to be 'democratic' if there are 'contested elections based on universal franchise as well as the civil and political freedoms of speech press, assembly and organisation that are necessary to political debate and the conduct of electoral campaigns' (see Shapiro 1993: 2-3).

In its most consequential variants, this understanding of what democracy is also does away with its representational aspects. It is reduced to a process ('game') in which competing elites ('the main players') sell their political programmes to 'the masses'. The circulation (or alternation) of these elites in the corridors of power is what defines the democratic dispensation. An absolutely indispensable precondition for the success of this system is a 'normative commitment to democracy' on the part of the competing elites, i.e., the belief that defeat in one election does not preclude victory in the next. As opposed to the Schumpeterian notion, there is the notion of consociational democracy based on the 'elite cartel', i.e., the negotiated compromise between the relevant political-economic elites who express their willingness to share power. Whereas the former is associated with what is known as multiple-cleavaged

societies, a consociational solution is usually prescribed for societies characterised by a single deep-going division (so-called single-cleavaged societies). In Shapiro's essay, he points to the fact that theorists like Di Palma and Przeworski believe that the presence of any redistributive element in a negotiated pact between elites makes the process more difficult and even impossible. Huntington also points to the fact that the democratisation of any 'racial order' is one of the most difficult processes and is seldom successful. It is always accompanied by high levels of violence and Huntington shows that South Africa is one of the most violent societies in the world. He considers economic growth to be a *conditio sine qua non* of the transition to democracy.

If I can anticipate somewhat: it ought to be obvious that modern minimalist notions of democracy are unlikely to satisfy the material needs of the oppressed and impoverished majorities in Third-World contexts, even though the gains in political space and in personal (individual) freedoms and rights are by no means unimportant. According to Shapiro (1993: 23) the South African case, in terms of Huntington's model, approximates that variant of the transition to democracy which he calls a 'transplacement', i.e., it is a case where democratisation is the result of 'joint action by government and opposition groups'. Both parties recognise that alone they cannot determine the nature of the future. Such transplacements are only possible, according to Huntington, 'when reformers are stronger than standpatters in the government and moderates are stronger than extremists in the opposition (Shapiro 1993: 28).

It is, therefore, a matter of some significance that prominent publicists and theorists in South Africa, who are committed to a democratic South Africa and a deracialised capitalist system, have become progressively more pessimistic about the possibility of consequential

democratisation of the country. Heribert Adam, for example, writing from an avowedly social-democratic perspective, maintains that

the democratic dilemma lies in the fact that a 'democratic oligarchy' – an authoritarian order with a semblance of popular participation – is likely to perform better economically and attract more foreign capital at lower labour costs than a genuine institutionalisation of the popular will ... That predicament does not bode well for the prospects of genuine democratisation beyond the ritual of manipulated popular endorsement. (Adam 1993:22)

Increasingly, the previously euphoric liberal analysts of the South African 'transition' are beginning to accept the pessimistic prognosis first expressed in this form by Van Zyl Slabbert to the effect that the system of *racial* domination is likely to be replaced by a system of *multi-racial* domination. Again, it is Heribert Adam who puts the matter most clearly when he asserts that '[t]he reluctant partners in joint domination may both reach the conclusion that they can afford only *limited democracy*' (Adam 1993: 9. My emphasis).

Even more significant than the shifts that are taking place in the ranks of (bourgeois) liberal democrats are the somersaults effected by former radicals, 'communists', socialists, Marxists, amongst others. There is a clearly observable convergence of positions on the Schumpetrian centre that is taking place. From within the ranks of what I call the ex-liberation movement, a more or less extinct volcano, the seismic impetus was initiated by Joe Slovo, the national chairperson of the South African 'Communist' Party when he proposed his so-called sunset clause. As is well known now these 'personal' proposals of the 'chairman' of the Communist Party came to inform the 'strategic perspectives' of the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress. In effect, these

perspectives accept that until the year 2000, approximately, South Africa will remain under the thumb of the white minority even if its hold on power will have been relaxed in important respects. When all is said and done, this is the real meaning of a Government of National Unity (GNU) as agreed to, apparently, between the leaders of the ANC and the National Party. This deal, besides its fundamental assumption about the nature of the economy and the society, i.e., that the capitalist relations of production will remain essentially unaltered, eliminates the notion of majority rule and comes close to some kind of elite cartel. Because of its precedent-setting potential, it puts into question much of what the oppressed majority of black people have been struggling for against their colonial and racist masters for the best part of two-and-a-half centuries. In any case, there is no doubt that Shaun Johnson's assessment (see *The Argus* 9/10 January 1993) is correct, viz. that '[t]his shared government/ANC view is the glue which holds South Africa's new political centre together; there are and will be vast differences in policy between the Nationalists and the ANC, but there is now almost total convergence on the fundamental rules of the game'.

Almost all representatives of white and capitalist interests in South Africa who accept the need for more or less democratisation are adamant that existing properly rights and inherited wealth shall remain unchanged. Even though they are acutely aware of Balzac's aphorism that 'at the beginning of every great fortune lies a great crime', they are resolutely opposed to all talk of 'historical redress', '*Wiedergutmachung*', 'restoring of the land to the indigenous people', and so forth. Instead, there are half-hearted concessions made in terms of affirmative-action programmes and, at the macro-economic level, a neo-liberal strategy described as 'redistribution through growth'. The problem with this latter tongue-in-cheek blueprint is that even the most optimistic Establishment economic analysts

do not expect any serious economic growth to occur in South Africa for many years to come. For one thing, South Africa is dependent on an international economic system that is itself caught in the throes of a major crisis of stagnation; the high and terrifying levels of violence with the consequent dislocation of economic activities (strikes, boycotts, terror attacks on industrial and other productive plant, loss of workdays, etc.) render the system unpredictable and unstable and constitute an effective deterrent to vital foreign investment. In short, even for the attainment of the scaled-down minimalist 'democratic bargain' as described by Huntington et. al, some of the most important preconditions do not exist in South Africa at present.

Add to this the fact that a sizeable and increasing minority of the white population reject the negotiated pact with black nationalism on the basis of one or other conservative principle (such as 'self-determination', 'confederalism', pure and simple racism) and that this section of the population is heavily armed, relatively well organised and resourced and equally prepared for mobilisation, then it becomes abundantly clear that the path to even the limited democracy which is now being promised is a treacherous minefield. Already the casualties, beginning only since 2 February 1990, have to be counted in terms of thousands even though the general mobilisation now threatened by the rightward-moving forces under the command of the 'Committee of Generals' has not yet taken place. Even though, as I believe, there is very little likelihood of a counter-revolutionary coup carried out by racist storm-troopers, it is obvious that these forces can bring about mayhem on an unprecedented scale. Should some of the smaller, essentially middle-class, formations, such as Inkatha, continue to play the ethnic card with its separatist potential, they could find themselves in an unholy alliance with these neo-fascist groups, not unlike

that between the South African regime and Unita in Angola or between it and Renamo in Mozambique. Like Savimbi, Buthelezi and Co. can and already do justify this kind of political behaviour in terms of cold-blooded *Realpolitik* for the defence of so-called 'democracy'.

The upshot of such a development would be a necessarily repressive and authoritarian response from the existing state, whether in the guise of the ruling National Party or in the guise of a GNU. Such an authoritarian government with military features (Adam's 'democratic oligarchy') will undoubtedly be tolerated by the democratic West since it will be directed against an irredentist right wing movement. What will not be as obvious, however, is the fact that it will probably also destroy left-wing radical initiatives and organisations that will tend to give organised expression to the substantive material and socio-cultural demands of the urban and rural poor. This is not a case of 'seeing things'. There is clearly no greater danger to the centrist cause of a limited democratisation of the system than the contingency that rightist and leftist popular mobilisations against the strategy of moderation, even if undertaken for exactly the opposite reasons, could coincide in time and space. The experience of the Weimar Republic in the inter-war period in Germany holds many lessons for South Africa today if we make the necessary socio-historical adjustments.

In this regard, the authoritarian reflex of the ruling National Party requires no lengthy analysis. It is the well-known social-psychological shadow that accompanies the entire *corpus* of ideas, beliefs and practices of the systematic policy of racial discrimination of apartheid. However, the record of the other 'main players' in the negotiations, to wit the African National Congress and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), is not very encouraging, at least as far as recent history goes. The ANC has been traditionally one of the most tolerant and democratic political formations in South

Africa. Yet, some of the acknowledged facts about that organisation's less glorious moments in exile, in the underground, and especially in the turbulent townships during the 'eighties testify to the absence of a democratic culture both inside the organisation and its allied structures and in its relationships with rival political formations. At the very least, we would have to accept that democratic practices are very shallowly anchored in the ANC and seldom extend 'beyond the ritual of manipulated popular endorsement'. Indeed, I myself had occasion in the mid-'eighties to warn repeatedly that through the promotion of the vicious claim of 'sole authentic representative' status, the ANC and its then surrogate structures, including the United Democratic Front, were sowing the wind and that they (and we, the people) would inexorably reap the whirlwind. That is one prophecy I would wish today that it had not been necessary to make. The fact of the matter is – and we have to face it squarely – that by making cracks in the cement of unity which our determined struggle against apartheid in the 'seventies and early 'eighties especially had brought about, the politics of sectarianism opened up the spaces which have been filled by the lizards of the Third Force to destroy our united movement, render it vulnerable and force it to make unprincipled concessions in the negotiation process.

Be that as it may, there is sufficient reason to be sceptical about the 'normative commitment to democracy' of at least some of the leadership cadres in the Congress Movement, that political party which is explicitly 'preparing to govern'. Many of the gains made in the 'seventies and the 'eighties in respect of grassroots democratic practices especially in the trade-union and in the civic and other community-based movements, have been rolled back although it is dear that the memory of such practices is an important platform on which new social movements can be based in future. Perhaps the most encouraging sign today is the fact that

both inside and outside the ANC, militants and former militants of the liberation movement feel secure enough to voice their dissatisfaction with the authoritarian practices inside the Congress Movement. As recently as Friday, 7 May 1993, Mike van Graan, a well-known cultural activist associated with the most militant campaigns of the 'eighties, launched an all-out attack on what he considers to be the anti-democratic instincts and practices of the Department of Arts and Culture of the ANC. Writing in the *Weekly Mail*, he confesses, amongst other things, that the attempts of the 'cultural commissars' to deny cultural workers and artists their independence, i.e., to control the production of those artefacts that ought to be freest of all in a democratic society, fills him with a profound sense of betrayal:

Those of us who fought alongside you against apartheid thought that now we will have the space to create, to sing, to laugh, to criticise, to celebrate our visions, unhindered. We were wrong. We now realise that space can never be assumed; it must continually be fought for. Of course, some of us will yield to the temptations you offer, many will conform to the new status quo (already self-censorship and fear of criticising the ANC is rife), some will go into exile and a few will say 'Nyet!'

Perhaps by way of a historical footnote, I should just add that at a time when it was unfashionable and highly dangerous to say so, some of us in the very heat of battle warned against the terroristic potential of the *de facto* intellectual intimidation and censorship conducted by the 'cultural desks' of the UDF and allied structures (see Alexander 1991; S.A. Institute of Race Relations 1991).

So much, then, for the democratic credentials of 'the main players'. It ought to be clearer – given the economic, political, cultural and historical constraints on the democratisation process in South Africa – that even if a negotiated settlement were to be attained within the time

frame set by the NP and the ANC at least, i.e., by the beginning of 1995, virtually every indicator speaks against a period of 'democratic consolidation' thereafter. The polarisation of the contending social forces is such that already now, certainly during the so-called free and fair election for the so-called Constituent Assembly and more than certainly after those elections, massive military force will be needed to make sure that the country does not slide into the 'anarchy' of revolution and counter-revolution. Against this background, the substance of the negotiations concerning matters such as the degree of federalism or regionalisation that will be tolerated under the new constitution, the degree of independence of the judiciary, the exact character of the armed forces, the approach to matters linguistic, ethnic, cultural, etc., almost cease to have relevance. At most, these debates reflect the shifting balance of forces between the main contenders for holding office in the new dispensation.

There are, however, not only limits but also many possibilities for democratisation of South African society. There *is* light at the end of the tunnel and it is not necessarily the light of an oncoming train. To begin with, there has clearly been a shift in the balance of forces in favour of the oppressed people of South Africa. Even though it has been the inarticulate premise of this paper that that shift has not been as significant or as decisive as most political activists seem to imagine, in historic terms it is significant enough to represent the beginning of the end of the racial order in South Africa. Quite apart from any real gains in formal democratic institutions and practices that will emerge from the process of negotiations – and it is necessary to stress that such gains are exceptionally important for the entire population, even if they do not guarantee that the holders of public office will be able to deliver the economic and social goods they promised those who voted for them – the decades of mass struggle have

established a tradition, a vital memory in some cases, of self-organisation and participatory democracy, in short, a democratic civil society. Even if we only accept the fragile aphoristic truth contained in the saying that 'today's rhetoric is tomorrow's policy', it is clearly a matter of no mean significance that all the main political and mass-based formations in their public expressions are informed by the discourse of participatory grassroots democracy. Thus, for example, in spite of the creeping bureaucratisation of the trade-union movement, there is a significant residue of democratic practices, shop-floor democracy and accountability on the basis of renewable mandates, to ensure that labour leaders will not be able to suppress the spirit of independence by means of which the union movement has been built up since the early 'seventies. Similar traditions and practices are well established in other mass formations such as civic associations, students' organisations, etc. Even though we have no reason to be sanguine and simplistic about the contested terrain of 'civil society', the existence of which in no way can guarantee a successful process of democratisation, it seems to me that it is in this sphere that we need to concentrate our efforts. In the end, only the independence of these mass formations, i.e., their financial independence, their commitment to non-sectarian practices and to the principles of participatory democracy will carry us over the period of potential erosion of the gains that were made in the 'seventies and the 'eighties. Whatever one's point of view, it is abundantly obvious that vigilance is called for and that we have to commit ourselves firmly to continuing the struggle for democracy at the very time when there is talk that we might have to accept the second prize of a so-called *limited* democracy.

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# Fundamentals of education policy for a democratic South Africa

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION, I should like to acknowledge my debt to a book called *Anpassung des Ostens an den Westen oder Bildungsreform in ganz Deutschland?* It is subtitled *Gedanken und Vorschläge linker Pädagogen* (Berlin 1992). It is a slim volume of essays on the dilemma of left-wing educationists in the former German Democratic Republic who are now faced with the agonising consequences of having to adapt to the strange and disconcerting rules of what they ambivalently and slightly tongue-in-cheek acknowledge to be the 'democratic' educational system of the Federal Republic of Germany. Their fundamental question is: What has to be done in all seventeen of the German federal states in order to democratise the educational system? They recognise the historic opportunity which the ignominious collapse of the former GDR should have given democratic socialists to 'start from scratch' but at the same time realise that the conservative pressures exerted on the total system by the realities of recession and by what they consider to be the reactionary politics of the FRG have all but cancelled out this opportunity.

Their 'thoughts and suggestions' are presented tentatively and – in my view – defensively, but they are exceptionally stimulating and particularly appropriate for South Africans grappling with very similar questions. Whereas their situation, and their text, is permeated by feelings of defeat and betrayal, our situation of neither

defeat nor victory can and will, I believe, give rise to a more hopeful and a more decisive 'text'. As we come closer – on paper – to the imperfect mouse of 'limited democracy' which is at best what will emerge from the mountainous labours at the World Trade Centre, and as the mechanisms that will establish the post-apartheid system are sketched out and put in place – I think here in particular of the National Education and Training Forum – the reality of the devastation wrought by 40 years of apartheid education (and economics, health, housing, etc.) is beginning to take on statistical flesh for all of us to see. Whether we accept the specific processes of the extremely messy transition from apartheid to post-apartheid or not, we are all compelled to step across the threshold that separates the politics of negation from the politics of affirmation. This is so because – as in the former GDR – we have been afforded the opportunity by 'history', i.e., by the titanic struggles of the 'eighties, to make a direct or indirect impact on the processes of formulating educational (and other) policies for a new South Africa.

Some of us will want to involve ourselves in the education policy formulating processes that are generated directly from the discussions at the WTC at Kempton Park with more commitment than others. This is the unavoidable result of different political assessments and strategies. However, we need not – certainly not at this stage – pose these differences in military terms. Differences of approach and of opinion do not inevitably have to be sorted out on the physical battlefields of civil war. At this stage we are all involved in fighting ideas with ideas. This is a precondition for the democratisation of debate and polemic in a country used to the brutalities of repression and the survival tactics of the underground.

## **The transition as context**

It is axiomatic today that educational policies and practices do not exist in a vacuum. They are always an integral part of the economic context, the political conflicts and the cultural currents of the epoch in which they occur. Even as young students organised in the Cape Peninsula Students' Union in the 'fifties, we saw this, perhaps only through a glass, darkly, when we placed at the top of our programme of action the Teachers' League of South Africa's demand for 'a democratic system of education in a democratic South Africa'. Similarly, it is no longer disputed that in education, as in every other major sphere of society, the interests and the ideas of the ruling class(es) and ruling strata are the dominant ones. They tend to shape and to limit the processes and practices that are possible at any given time. Of course, we know, from both theory and practice, that particularly in the sphere of education, the control of the rulers is not absolute: counter-hegemonic practices and mobilisations *are* possible. They are the lifeblood of struggle on the ideological front and they can help to change the global situation. Our own experiences especially in the late 'seventies and in the 'eighties confirm these generalisations one hundred percent.

However, the point is important for radical education-  
alists since it implies the need to

understand the interaction between social transformation and changes in the educational system, on the one hand, and the need, on the other hand, to relate this (interaction) appropriately to the rhythms and the fundamental characteristics of pedagogical processes. (*Anpassung* 1992:9. My translation.)

To put the matter more concretely: for educational policy formulation, it is as futile to consider educational change in isolation from other social changes as it is to

ignore the findings of educational theory and of developmental and cognitive psychology. The basic question remains:

With which and against which social processes does education policy interact, with which or against which political processes does it promote the interests of the new generation and how are these processes understood? (*Anpassung* 1992:10. My translation.)

In other words: it is essential that we have as clear an understanding as possible of what we are now calling 'the transition' if we are to put forward policy proposals and recommendations that will simultaneously promote the interests of the new generation (and of all other learners, incidentally) and tend to open up the society in transition to critical scrutiny and to transformative action. This is, naturally, not the forum in which to attempt a detailed analysis of the transition. Many and divergent analyses exist. However, allow me to say in a few sweeping sentences how I see this transition from apartheid to post-apartheid South Africa.

In a nutshell, the negotiations process is calculated by the ruling bloc to do away with all vestiges of Verwoerdian apartheid without changing the fundamental (capitalist) social relations. The change in the global balance of forces occasioned by the collapse of the Eastern European and Soviet state system afforded the rulers of South Africa the opportunity they had, in a sense, been waiting for, i.e., to initiate the process of co-opting the political and economic representatives of the oppressed strata by offering them a power-sharing deal. The proviso was clearly that this leadership would have to give up illusions about a 'transfer' of power, never mind the cherished revolutionary ideal of a 'seizure' or 'conquest' of power. For a liberation movement rendered vulnerable by the global and regional transformations of the mid-to-late-'eighties, there was little option but

to enter into negotiations. The white nationalist movement, represented by the NP, gave up the racist utopia of Verwoerdan apartheid and the black nationalist movement, represented in the main by the ANC, gave up the socialist utopia of a fundamental revolutionary change in the relations of power in South Africa.

In both camps the 'realists' came to the fore and set the pace. They could (and can) do so because they are agreed on the basic framework of a (formally) deracialised capitalist system. In socio-political terms, this means that a new power bloc, or system of class alliances, is being forged and formalised. The rising black middle class is being 'elevated' into the ruling strata at the expense of the recalcitrant elements of the white working class. The actual and potential socio-economic power of the black elite is being acknowledged by the ruling white elite and 'rewarded' at the World Trade Centre in the only possible way, viz., by the formal deracialisation of the existing racial capitalist system and a formal commitment to a nebulous programme of black advancement or affirmative action. I stress this formal element because it ought to be clear that given the character of the present mode of production, the 'normal' social (class) inequality generated by the system will, in South Africa, continue to manifest itself essentially as racial inequality in the absence of a dramatic redistribution of resources and wealth within a short space of time.

It is a moot point whether any other scenario could be realised. I do not believe that in the very short term any real alternative exists. Suffice it to say that the negotiators are wilfully or naively closing their eyes to the transparent fact that any deal that is brokered at the WTC will almost automatically exclude some two-thirds of the population from its presumed benefits. Except for the broadly historic changes in the constitutional and human-rights climate – which are indeed significant and are not, let us stress, a gift to the people from the negotiators but the partial reward of

decades of struggle and sacrifice by the most divergent anti-apartheid forces – at the socio-economic level where the ‘enjoyment’ of these rights really matters, nothing will change for the vast majority of the urban and rural poor. Indeed, things are going to become very much worse in the short term because of the deep recessionary crisis of the global system and the particular problems of the South African economy.

### **The challenge to radical pedagogy**

Whether or not the irredentist right wing of South African politics retards the negotiations, it ought to be clear that both in the so-called transition and beyond, the immediate future will be shaped by the market-driven imperatives of the system manifest in the profit motive, the principle of achievement and the technical-vocational needs of commodification. Most of the recommendations for educational renewal and restructuring that will emanate from the governing elite will be (and are already) based on norms and values that are not only compatible with, but tend to reinforce, the production of profitable commodities. There is, I trust, no need for me to analyse in this forum the latest series of scenario documents that have emanated from instances such as the HSRC and, indeed, NEPI, in order to demonstrate the truth of this assertion. Allow me, however, to warn that in the present and foreseeable climate of economic disaster, compounded by the desert-like situation in township schools, the abysmal levels of poverty and the mountainous obstacles relating to media of instruction, the incentive to acquire technical and vocational skills will not be available automatically to a generation of youth that has known nothing but alienation and disillusionment in the cul-de-sac of Bantu education.

There are, therefore, definite boundaries by which radical proposals for educational reconstruction will be

limited. However, as I indicated earlier, no ruling group can ever have total control over the educational processes in any society. This is, indeed, one of the main reasons why changes do take place periodically in the educational sub-system. It ought to be clear, to mention but one example, that the new-found commitment to human rights, to 'a justiciable Bill of Rights', to multi-party democratic pluralism and to the decentralisation of control and administration of education and other social services, will provide all democrats, including radicals, with the space in which to influence the policy-formulation process as well as the practical implementation of agreed policies. Beyond that, the very fact that the tried-and-tested apartheid prescriptions, textbooks, methods, and all the other paraphernalia lie discredited in ruins means that our own anti-apartheid experience, our own experiments in alternative education, education for liberation and people's education start without handicap and with the considerable advantage of legitimacy and of their international pedigree. This is, if I may be allowed to make the point at this juncture, the main reason for the existence of the Project for the Study of Alternative Education (PRAESA) at the University of Cape Town. We believe that the documentation, theorisation and systematisation of the educational practices generated in both formal and non-formal spheres during particularly the last two decades of anti-apartheid struggles, is the most significant starting point for any educational renewal in South Africa. Next to this, comparative education and certain reforms of existing apartheid institutions are the other major possible sources of renewal.

Educational reform and renewal will be a long-term process rather than one dramatic act of legislation. It requires a global perspective and clear goal-setting. Above all, in the words of the authors of *Anpassung* (1992: 12) which already sound trite to our generation:

Educational reform can only succeed as a broad democratic movement which is carried in particular by teachers, students, parents and pupils, and which is shaped and co-determined by them. On the basis of the clear delineation of the responsibility of the (central) state, the regions and the localities, such a process takes on the form of 'reform from below'.

In addition to this vital point of departure, a special obligation and need rests on educationists in South Africa. Because of the many years of international isolation as a result of apartheid and because of the Eurocentric legacies of colonialism, South Africans, generally speaking, are catastrophically ignorant about the rest of the African continent. In view of the post-colonial developments and the many successful experiments in the educational sphere in other African countries, we have a lot to learn and, of course, we have something to give as a result of the democratisation processes unleashed by the struggle against apartheid. For us to prepare for the 21st century as an African country, we need to adopt a pan-African rather than a narrow South African or Southern African perspective. Such an approach will have a decisive influence on the new curriculum and on syllabus content. Many contacts are being made between South African and other African educationists. At PRAESA, we are busy integrating ourselves with existing educational research networks in East, Central and West Africa and, together with a number of African institutions in different regions of the continent, we are busy organising a *Pan-African Colloquium on Educational Innovation in Post-Colonial Africa* to be held in 1994 probably in Kampala, Uganda.

According to the authors of *Anpassung* (1992: 13–15), the basic goal of the radical project is to create the social conditions in which all human beings can attain self-development. This involves the production by human beings of the necessary economic, political and cultural

conditions but it does not mean that human beings should themselves be reduced to commodities. Self-determined development of every human being is incompatible with his/her subordination to the laws of the market. A humanist pedagogy should, *inter alia*, focus on

- ~ the crucial questions of our epoch such as world peace, ecology, hunger, poverty and underdevelopment in most parts of the world, a democratic historical consciousness and human rights;
- ~ the attainment of a system of economy in which the great paradox of our time, viz., the co-existence of overproduction and the destruction of commodities in order to maintain the market mechanism, can be eliminated;
- ~ the right of all human beings to value-producing labour as one of the defining dimensions of being human;
- ~ the equality of rights and status of men and women in society;
- ~ the further development of all tried and tested as well as new forms of direct democracy which make it possible for people to participate in political, economic, social, cultural and ecological planning and decision-making.

Only if these conditions are realised will education – like other spheres of social life – gradually be freed

from regulation by the law of value and become amenable to transparent democratic influences.

(*Anpassung* 1992:15)

Finally, I should like to suggest that next to what is now generally known as the NEPI principles, radical pedagogy in South Africa should adopt the programme of principles set out in the *Anpassung* (1992: 15–25). In summary, this can be stated as follows:

- ~ The right to learn is an inalienable right which makes possible the development of the individuality of each

person in dignity and freedom. It is intolerable that the right of one person to learn should be exercised at the expense of the same right of any other person.

- ~ Ensuring equality of opportunity as an expression of social justice is fundamental to any progressive educational policy.
- ~ The acquisition of a sound foundation in general education for all spheres of life by every young person is a precondition for the development of individuality and of the capacity for lifelong learning. This is based on the insight that a sound general education is the beginning of all human development which embraces one's entire life including vocational education and professional activity. It implies *inter alia*, that radical educationists should counter the tendency to reduce professional and vocational activity to the status of a mere job and should try to overcome the separation between study and work.
- ~ Education as a socially determined process is part and parcel of the life experience of all young people and should be manifest not only in the specifically educational institutions but in all spheres of life and especially in their personal, family sphere and in the spheres of recreation and leisure.
- ~ Co-determination and co-responsibility of teachers, parents, students and pupils are preconditions for the democratisation of schooling.
- ~ Education is a lifelong process which is closely intertwined with other activities of the individual and with society in general. For this reason, educational, social and economic policies have to be viewed in their mutual interdependence. A radical educational programme should, therefore, embrace the following demands, among others:

- Legislative provision for continuing adult education and retraining;
- Free access to further education and periodic study leave;
- The different levels of state administration have to ensure that adequate adult education and training facilities are available close to residential areas;
- Continuing education (and training) should as far as possible be synchronised with the socio-economic planning of the democratic state.

### **Co-responsibility and co-determination**

In regard to the control and structuring of the educational process, the fundamental tenet of a democratic ethos, viz., that those who are expected to carry out a decision should be part of the making of that decision, should apply. This is imperative since it is grossly oppressive to assume co-responsibility without co-determination.

Schools and other educational institutions should be controlled by the teachers, students and parents and the management team should be accountable in the first instance to this triad of 'stakeholders'. The entire school should be run on democratic lines and be suffused with an atmosphere of democratic co-operation. Learners should not simply be taught facts about the theme 'democracy' (the franchise, political pluralism, parliament, the ballot, etc.) but should be afforded the opportunity to practise democracy.

Students should be seen as the most important component of the educational process and they should, therefore, have a decisive voice in structuring that process. The negotiation of knowledge between partners rather than the top-down inscription of knowledge by the omniscient teacher on the *tabula rasa* of the student should inform

teaching styles. Teacher training should aim at maximising the self-confidence, critical awareness and creativity of the educators so that methodological innovation and adaptation become a self-evident part of the teacher's pedagogical wherewithal.

For the same reason, teachers should have the right to organise themselves in trade unions and in professional associations as well as the general right to belong to the political party of their choice. The hierarchical and paternalistic system of headmasters and headmistresses who play God over their teaching colleagues and over their students must be eradicated. Principal teachers should become such by virtue of their recognised professional competence and should be appointed by the teachers in their capacity as a component of the relevant PTSA or PTA. In general, PTSAs and other democratically constituted organs of the community should have decision-making and consultative powers in regard to all educational matters.

Because of its social-reproduction functions, the provision of education is the responsibility of the state. In a democratising South Africa, this will require of the state many new but unavoidable tasks. Besides the fiscal and curricular innovations that democratisation will necessitate, the very location of the schools and other educational institutions of the emerging nation will have to be reconsidered in terms of de-ghettoisation and de-racialisation of the system. Privatisation and semi-privatisation, the mechanisms by which the wealthy strata and the white minority are trying to ensure a top-class education for their children at the expense of the schooling of the mass of working-class children, should be systematically and rapidly eliminated. Ongoing research will have to be undertaken in regard to fundamental social issues that affect the educational processes. In particular, the problems deriving from racist and sexist structures and practices, the effects of scientific-technological and socio-

economic changes on the content and methods of schooling, the possibility and relevance of alternative models of education, the generation gap, critical pedagogy, among many others, are in need of urgent study by teams of competent educators and social scientists.

As we stumble towards a new (democratic?) South Africa, we have to guard against the marketisation of education and training even though we acknowledge the need for economic efficiency and productivity. Self-determination of the individual and social solidarity based on an education that is informed by humanistic values and by the recognition of human rights rather than by the imperatives of the market place: this is a worthwhile goal and an eminently feasible framework from which to derive the details of the educational process as a set of day-to-day practices.

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