

## **ANOTHER KIND OF WAR: Strategies for transition in the era of negotiation**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

"The ANC wants political negotiations, I must tell you. There is no need to push them on that. But it takes two to tango"

Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Anatoly Adamishin, in Harare in March, 1989.<sup>1</sup>

Current developments in the Southern African region may prove decisive in determining the nature of a non-racial, democratic South Africa (SA), and indeed the speed by which it is achieved. Namibia is moving toward independence with the implementation of United Nations (UN) Resolution 435. The detainees' hunger strike has turned the tide on the capacity of the security forces to implement repression in the old way, forcing the National Party (NP) government to consider lifting the emergency despite the survival and broadening of the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM). An end to the war in Mozambique may be on the cards. The first tentative moves to end the civil war in Angola have begun, including a meeting between President Dos Santos and Unita leader Jonas Savimbi and the declaration of a cease-fire.

FW de Klerk's new-style diplomacy is set to replace PW Botha's limited reforms, the dominance of his securocrat allies and his autocratic style. This is catalysing new debates and increasing divisions within the NP and between the Nationalists and the security establishment concerning the maintenance of power and new constitutional and strategic directions for the state. A series of meetings between United Democratic Front (UDF) leaders and President Bush and Margaret Thatcher has paved the way for top level discussions including African National Congress (ANC) president Oliver Tambo and NP leader FW De Klerk.

Significant Western Government, Soviet and Frontline states' cooperation and agreement on settling the South African question via the mechanism of a negotiated solution is rumoured to be in the offing.

The ANC has put forward clear conditions for negotiation with the SA state, which have been echoed by Congress of South African Trade Union (COSATU) resolutions within the country. The national executives of the ANC, the UDF and COSATU met in June this year to discuss how the liberation movement can take the initiative in the unfolding negotiations climate. And ANC leader Nelson Mandela has met with South Africa's state president PW Botha in his official residence, Tuynhuys.

These factors combine to herald a completely new situation which could significantly alter South Africa's political terrain. For the MDM, still smarting from the harsh repression of the emergency years, a thorough understanding of this new political situation and its implications for strategies of transition is critical to its ability to determine the course of the South African struggle.

If not well understood by the MDM, these developments could catch it off-guard, bypassing it like ships in the night. Like SWAPO in Namibia, the MDM could find the dawn of the new day appearing without its participation, and with its navigation machinery inadequately equipped for the task of transition.

## **Namibia — spotlight on negotiations**

The Namibian settlement has dramatically raised both hopes and fears in many activist quarters. In a matter of months the implementation of Resolution 435 has begun, albeit shakily, coupled with the South African Defence Force (SADF) defeat at Cuito Cuanavale and withdrawal from Angola and Namibia. Two perspectives — one very positive, one more cautious — have emerged on recent Namibian developments.

Many supporters of Namibian independence have welcomed the settlement which will lead to the final withdrawal of South Africa from its colony as a clear victory. The decisive battle at Cuito Cuanavale, combined with the inability of the SA government to continue to sustain the costs of the war or of the Namibian ethnic administration, has won what no one thought possible a year ago — independence for Namibia before the end of the apartheid state in South Africa. The elections, they believe, will provide a test of South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) support and the depth of its organisation. A hostile SA is a reality which cannot be wished (or fought) away at this stage. It is up to SWAPO to ensure that the gradual transformation of Namibia gains the maximum support and active participation of Namibians, thus making foreign intervention and disruption less likely.

ment process. Namibia's colonial status, weaknesses in internal organisation and the terms of Resolution 435 together made it possible for the SA government to reach a resolution without having to deal directly with SWAPO.

A South African appointed administrator continues to wield final authority in this colony, and resisted abolishing racially discriminatory legislation as long as was possible. While well funded Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) meetings and election rallies are held under the protection of the security forces, SWAPO continues to face a myriad different forms of harassment.

A combination of intimidation and dirty electioneering may help prevent SWAPO from winning the 66% of the vote it needs in November to be able to draw up a constitution for the new state and elect a government, without having to strike compromises with other parties, most of which effectively have their purse strings controlled from Pretoria.

South Africa continues to hold onto Namibia's only deep sea harbour, Walvis Bay. It has privatised key state infrastructures such as the transport network, selling them off largely to SA business interests. Namibia's economy remains as functionally linked into SA's as the economy of Natal or the Orange Free State.

The SADF has shifted some of its most feared troops from the northern war zone, such as the mercenary 32 'Buffalo' Battalion, to northern Cape bases less than an hour from the Namibian border. SA's capacity to destabilise and incapacitate the newly independent state's economy and social infrastructure is greater even than it was in the case of Mocambique.

All these factors make it difficult for many to see recent events in Namibia as anything more than a partial victory for the Namibian people.

To avoid a playback of the Namibian settlement in South Africa, the MDM is moving towards adopting a three part programme involving:

- setting clear terms for negotiations;
- taking the initiative in popularising these conditions;
- mobilising to ensure that mass-based organisations play a central role in any negotiations which may form a part of a political resolution to the SA conflict.

## **Time to take stock**

From all sides — the SA government, Britain, the United States (US), the Soviet Union, the Frontline states, the ANC and the MDM, there is far too much talk of negotiations for it all to be dismissed as kite-flying or political posturing. If recent statements are to be taken seriously, and we believe it would be foolish to ignore them, then the United States, in conjunction with its allies the British, French, Japanese and West Germans 'is going to do

political posturing. If recent statements are to be taken seriously, and we believe it would be foolish to ignore them, then the United States, in conjunction with its allies the British, French, Japanese and West Germans 'is going to do everything possible to organise negotiations between the black majority and white minority' in major initiatives beginning this year.<sup>2</sup>

It is time to take stock of these developments and to assess their implications for the course of the liberation struggle.

*The different forces at play in the process of transition in SA, the objectives and interests of these parties in negotiation, the divisions within them and the political dangers as well as possibilities of negotiation strategies are the subjects of this article. We argue that the various attempts to break the present strategic deadlock will be directly affected by the capacity of the MDM to broaden and deepen its organisation, and to take the initiative in producing a coherent, engaging and yet critical response to the negotiation agendas of parties inside and outside SA.*

In this discussion paper, we try to steer clear of either seeing negotiations as a hangman's noose which can bring nothing but defeat or containment of national democratic goals, or as a panacea for all South Africa's problems. We believe that greater clarity about the objectives and process of negotiations can help to avoid two apparently opposing perspectives on negotiations, both of which have the effect of marginalising the MDM from the process:

- Naive optimism: demobilisation and inactivity in the mistaken belief that an imminent negotiated settlement is going to deliver liberation like manna from heaven; or
- Left-isolationism: the adoption of ostrich-like head in the sand postures and rejection of talks in the belief that negotiating can only contaminate and compromise principled revolutionary positions.

We argue, firstly, that negotiations are not an all or nothing matter. They need not be a recipe for instant defeat, but equally, they will be no instant fix for the victory of democracy. Under certain conditions they may well be compatible with rather than contrary to the interests of the MDM. Political negotiations between the major protagonists should, in certain circumstances, be regarded as being complementary to grassroots organisation and mass mobilisation for people's power.

Secondly, there is no such thing as a 'big bang' theory of negotiations. All negotiations comprise distinct phases in a process that leads to a settlement, or to victory or defeat for one of the parties. Negotiations and negotiated settlements are two quite different issues. The act of talking does not necessarily mean that the conflict will be soon be resolved by a negotiated settlement. The negotiating process may take years but, given the variety of regional peace initiatives, growing international intervention and the many safaris to Lusaka, it has already begun in South Africa.

are bringing to bear on the state and the liberation movement are going to have powerful effects. The question is what political response and program the MDM adopts in order to take the initiative and to ensure that the interests of thorough-going democracy are furthered at all times.

To come to grips with these issues we will assess and examine the positions on negotiations of the major contending forces: firstly, the NP state; secondly, forces for change internationally and inside South Africa; and, finally, the MDM and the ANC. It is in this context that the MDM's strategies for transition in the era of negotiation will be assessed.

## The National Party State

### Narrowing options

The decline of the Botha state following PW Botha's stroke and the intense internal NP power struggle which Botha lost have resulted in important changes in the political process in South Africa. The executive, the security establishment, and the State President are no longer the omnipotent power which PW Botha and his military advisors so recently successfully bound together.<sup>3</sup> This has had important implications for the NP's strategic and constitutional direction in general, and its attitude to negotiations in particular.

There is much evidence within the NP state of confusion over policy and divisions over future direction. Six cabinet ministers and more than 20 MPs have resigned, including the former 'crown prince' of the NP, Chris Heunis. Shortly before it was redeclared, there was talk of the government considering lifting the state of emergency. Botha's apparent successor, FW de Klerk, has been to Europe to confer with Margaret Thatcher and other leaders and will probably meet George Bush, or at least high-ranking state department officials, in the United States after the September general election.

The economy is widely perceived to be in a state of decay. International pressure, particularly in the form of financial sanctions, is now openly admitted to be an effective constraint on state action.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, attempts to co-opt 'moderate' black leaders into a neo-apartheid constitutional reform process have been singularly unsuccessful.

While the domestic crisis of legitimacy remains, international pressure on the state to dismantle apartheid and deal with its prime adversary — the African National Congress (ANC) — is growing. Although the government remains organisationally strong, and through its security network effectively in control of the state, its options are narrowing.

The moribund state of the National Statutory Council (or 'Great Indaba') which the state hoped would draw conservative black politicians into constitutional negotiations is the most graphic illustration of the state's failure to broaden its political base despite three years of emergency and coordinated

counter-revolutionary warfare policies. Botha's 'total strategy' and security-inspired material interventions in townships around the country have failed to meet or defuse national political demands.<sup>5</sup>

Though it has been weakened and fragmented, mass democratic organisation has survived. It is slowly reconstituting itself and it continues to hold the greatest political influence over most township residents. It has managed, under difficult circumstances, to broaden its influence. Under the emergency, it mobilised the biggest stay-away in SA's history and would have brought together the widest yet anti-apartheid alliance in the form of the Anti-Apartheid Conference initiative if it had not been banned. And very significantly, it exercises the greatest constraint on the political ambitions of conservative politicians in the urban councils and the bantustan states.

The success of the hunger strikes has effectively eliminated mass detentions of activists as a cornerstone of 'counter-revolutionary warfare' policies. It is rumoured that the State Security Council was overruled by the cabinet on the hunger strikes issue — the first time in years that internal and international political considerations overruled security considerations in this way.<sup>6</sup>

### Dissension in the ranks

The state's political failure has occurred against the background of a deteriorating economy, damaging corruption scandals, an emergency weakened by fiscal and organisational constraints on 'winning hearts and minds', the maintenance of widespread (though largely uncoordinated) mass-based resistance to apartheid and a declining white support base (the NP has lost working class, lower-middle class and rural support to its right, and middle class and urban 'yuppie' support to its left, leaving it with just over 40% of white support in recent surveys).<sup>7</sup>

This is the background to current conflicts within the NP state, which revolve around a variety of issues, including whether the emergency is still needed, how to respond to the effects of sanctions, how to deal with the new militant mass trade unionism, how to broaden the social basis of the state and the role of the security establishment in government.<sup>8</sup>

Divisions over security strategy extend to the role and even existence of the National Management System (NMS) itself, due to the growing disquiet in the NP over the disproportionate influence exercised by securocrats under PW Botha's rule.<sup>9</sup> According to some informants, this disquiet extends to a desire at the very highest levels to trim the power of the NMS and of the securocrats, and possibly even to dismantle the NMS altogether if alternative forms of maintaining security can successfully be implemented.<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps the two deepest conflicts concern the form a future constitutional dispensation should take and who to negotiate with to resolve the political stalemate.

## Constitutional disputes

Marked differences within the NP over the nature of constitutional reform have become apparent in recent years. The government-appointed Law Commission into the question of a Bill of Rights concluded that all South Africans required the vote.<sup>11</sup> The recommendations have support within the government, but there is little clarity over *how* votes are to be exercised.

The Broederbond has circulated discussion papers with diverse views on the future.<sup>12</sup> One suggested that the long-term survival of the Afrikaner and the Afrikaans language does not require white or Afrikaans control of the state and may in fact be best guaranteed under a political democracy led by the black majority. A more recent Broederbond paper laid the basis for the Five Year 'Plan of Action' put forward by the NP at its Federal Congress in early July.

In his last reformist speech before announcing his retirement from the cabinet, Chris Heunis spoke of a South Africa governed by a single legislature — 'call it a congress or parliament if you will' — and a single executive — 'call it a cabinet if you will'.<sup>13</sup> NP leader FW de Klerk responded that Heunis's speech, though not departing in any fundamentals from stated NP policy, was 'exploratory'.<sup>14</sup>

De Klerk declared himself in favour of four separate 'constituent assemblies' for 'own affairs', continuing devolution of power to 'own affairs' authorities and some sort of consensus-based multi-racial executive 'without any one group dominating any other group' for general affairs.<sup>15</sup>

The predominant NP idea at the Federal Congress revolves around the concept of 'concurrent majorities'.<sup>16</sup> This seems to imply a 'consensus' form of government in which the majority representatives of all four racial groups (and possibly the representatives of the 'non-group' group) would have to separately agree on an issue for it to become law. White rule — through a white veto over state policies contrary to white group interests — would therefore be exercised negatively, to overrule undesirable policies, rather than positively. But groups would still form the basis of government.

## State-ANC negotiations — the crunch issue

During the recent rule of the seurocrats, instructions were issued by the state to all its officials not to talk to 'revolutionaries' under any circumstances. Together with mass repression of community based organisations, this order aimed to end for good the negotiations between local administrations and organised communities which had become common in 1985 and 1986 and even reached right up to the central state, as in the series of talks between the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) and the Department of Education and Training.

The securocrats believed that talking to UDF affiliates gave the MDM legitimacy. Their concern was to crush it and build a black middle ground as an alternative negotiating partner. However, with the increasingly apparent failure of the securocratic strategy, many forces within the state fold have come to disagree with such directives.

*The failure of the emergency to achieve its objectives, the precarious economic and international debt situation, the survival and broadening of the MDM, the increasing prominence of the ANC, the end of the cold war, the general isolation of the state and the consequent increased leverage of the US and British states have combined to create a qualitatively different situation from that of 1985 when the securocrats dumped the Eminent Persons Group negotiation initiative by bombing Harare, Gaborone and Lusaka.*

Negotiations with the ANC are the crunch issue for the NP state. This is the symbolic significance of PW Botha's meeting with Nelson Mandela on 5 July. The meeting was the culmination of an initial phase in which a variety of forces in the NP establishment began to prepare for what they believed was an inevitable negotiating process. The lead was taken by students and academics at the Afrikaans campuses. At least one cabinet minister was reported in 1987 to be investigating the possibility of a meeting with the ANC. Following an NP 'dinkskrum' meeting earlier this year, the Transvaal NP-supporting daily *Beeld* editorialised that negotiations with the ANC were not as unthinkable as was often thought.<sup>17</sup>

Two top officials in the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning had their security clearance withdrawn last year by the security establishment, partly for their willingness to talk to members of the MDM. One of the two — former chief negotiator Kobus Jordaan — will now stand for the Democratic Party in Umhlanga in the September elections.

More recently, the legitimacy crisis of the newly elected Soweto Council has pushed it and the provincial administration into ongoing talks over the rent boycott with the Soweto People's Delegation and the restricted Soweto Civic Association, themselves under great popular pressure to negotiate a resolution to the impasse. Although efforts appear to have been made by the JMC to derail the Soweto talks, the negotiations are continuing.

NG Kerk moderator, Johan Heyns, has argued that the renunciation of violence — a key state demand since the destruction of the EPG mission — should be a result of negotiations, not a precondition for them.<sup>19</sup> And an NP MP claimed at an international conference in Bermuda that there were 'ways around the question of renunciation of violence'.<sup>20</sup> The NP caucus, he said, no longer saw this as a non-negotiable precondition for talks. The most recent NP statement declares that the NP is willing to talk to 'anyone who is committed to the pursuit of peaceful solutions'.<sup>21</sup>

Verligte Nat MP Albert Nothnagel was defended by PW Botha after saying that the government would have to negotiate with the ANC one day.<sup>22</sup> (He



has since been shipped out as ambassador to Holland). And though he says that no negotiations or policy discussions occurred,<sup>23</sup> PW Botha became the first white head of state to meet a leader of the ANC when he had Nelson Mandela to tea.

From inside his prison home Mandela, meanwhile, is involved in wide-ranging discussions with progressive leadership inside SA. These discussions are likely to continue, and to be allowed by the prison authorities. It is almost a foregone conclusion that Mandela will be released from jail soon after the September tricameral elections. The question for more and more Nationalists is not whether to negotiate, but what to do once negotiations start.

Not even the security establishment has been entirely consistent in implementing its line. It has frequently been pointed out that the successful negotiated conclusion to the war in Namibia involved some of the ANC's closest international allies. It was widely reported at the time of the Dakar conference between the ANC and predominantly Afrikaner white South Africans that the National Intelligence Service had tried to get a number of delegates to agree to report back to them on specific questions.<sup>24</sup> It is highly probable that in the numerous meetings between the ANC and internal South Africans in the last five years there have been delegates who speak for powerful interests within the state.

### 'Another kind of war'

Many NP supporters are worried that the government is not adequately prepared for the new situation which is developing. In April this year, *Beeld's* political correspondent Willie Kuhn, after describing debate as 'another kind of war', quoted the NP's information officer in the Transvaal, Dr Boy Geldenhuys, as saying the government will have to work out a plan with its eye on the day that the ANC drops armed struggle as a strategy. But, wrote Kuhn, 'in government thinking one doesn't yet get satisfactory evidence of a strategy. This may in itself be a reason why breakthroughs on the ANC are not yet possible'.<sup>25</sup>

The issue of releasing Nelson Mandela epitomises the state's dilemma. Its refusal to release him up till now has carried huge costs. But once he is released — and it will almost certainly have to be as an unrestricted activist — the state will effectively be allowing the leader of the ANC to operate openly within the country. His imprisonment is currently put forward as the key obstacle to negotiations by everybody from homeland and local authority leaders, through Western governments to the ANC itself.

The release of Mandela, Kuhn wrote, implies that the ANC will be able to participate in the political process and will therefore have to begin to pursue its war like a debate. 'This could actually be a much greater challenge to the government than the fight against terrorism which has been executed so exceptionally... and is one of the great success stories of the threatened Boers'.

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According to Kuhn, the government must start to develop clear objectives, it must have a plan and a vision. 'It will have to be able to defend this plan not only against smaller powers like those participating in the present three-chamber parliament, but ultimately against much stronger powers who also represent UDF/ANC interests. The party which cannot properly pursue that debate, ultimately loses the war. That is the hidden danger when war is pursued as debate'.

### The NP's current position

It is always possible that the state could use a strategy of negotiations as a sophisticated holding device to prolong white minority rule as long as possible, no matter the socially and economically debilitating consequences. It might hope for an inflexible liberation movement negotiating stance which would allow it to gradually bring into state structures the majority of black moderates while refusing to accede to genuine democratic demands. If it was under less pressure internally and externally, negotiations could become little more than another in the long line of strategies which successive governments have pursued to defend the white minority state.

For the first time, however, some NP sources are starting to look beyond reform and containment to questions of transition to majority rule. This is the import of Willie Kuhn's talk of the NP debating and defending its policies with representatives of the UDF and the ANC. It is also the clear intent of Professor Willie Esterhuyse, a Stellenbosch academic with close links with the NP hierarchy. Esterhuyse wrote in a recent paper presented to the Bermuda Conference at which the ANC was also represented that:

On South Africa's present political agenda is not the abolition of racially discriminatory measures per se, but the abolition of white domination and the initiation of a bargaining process to that end.<sup>26</sup>

While the dominant NP position is still a long way from considering abolishing white domination or negotiating with the liberation movement, it may soon be forced to at least negotiate, despite the fears of the right-wing. These fears are clearly expressed in the April 1989 edition of *Update*, published by the right-wing Victims Against Terrorism organisation:

Organisations such as SWAPO who are guided by the principles of Marxism-Leninism see negotiations as an offensive tactic or instrument which enables them to rebuild their strength, engage in a barrage of propaganda and more importantly to place their opponents on the defensive.

This tactic was skillfully used by the Vietnamese during the Paris peace talks and its effectiveness demonstrated by the diplomatic victory which they scored... A look at history shows that negotiations with the Soviets or any of their proxy forces be it Korea, Berlin, Vietnam, Teheran or Geneva have largely resulted in diplomatic defeats for the West.

Since becoming leader of the NP, De Klerk has engaged in a series of discussions with moderate and conservative black forces such as the new local authority based National Forum, Gazankulu Chief Minister Hudson Ntsanwisi, Lebowa's Nelson Ramodike, Enos Mabuza of Kangwane and Buthelezi's Inkatha. These discussions have been billed as evidence of the NP's serious intent to 'negotiate' a new constitution. In fact, these discussions would be better seen as evidence of De Klerk's continuing intent not to negotiate with the ANC, to keep it on the outside and to continue in the attempt to construct a reformist, multi-racial power-sharing formula.

The NP may well hope that if the ANC is intransigent over negotiations - or its preconditions for them — it will be able to begin constructing a multi-racial administration with conservative black participation without having to meet demands for a non-racial democracy. Eventually, the newly unfolding multi-racial state would become the focus of attention and would begin to gain substantial black support. As this happened, the liberation movement, to avoid marginalisation from the political scene, would feel impelled to join the negotiating process and work within the system, but from a 'Johnny-come-lately' position of weakness.

But in all of these scenarios De Klerk is faced again and again with the dilemmas of Nelson Mandela, the lifting of the emergency and the freeing of the political process. All NP initiated processes which fail to meet these demands are doomed to be still-born. Yet on the other hand it is the very fear of such developments which is contributing to the growth in Conservative Party (CP) support. The NP is caught between powerful forces to its left and to its right. Either way it moves, it loses.

The NP attempt to build a bulwark against negotiations with the ANC is confronted with four other seemingly insurmountable obstacles: the limited

legitimacy of black 'moderates', the NP's inability to sell its group-based constitutional formulas to anyone to its left, the power of the MDM and intense international pressure for all-party talks, including the liberation movement.

We will discuss some of the reasons for this international pressure, before turning to an assessment of the implications of negotiations for the MDM.

## International pressure on the South African State

### New developments

The success of the the ANC's international and diplomatic offensive has meant that the struggle in South Africa has been internationalised to an extent unprecedented in the history of national liberation struggles. The variety of activist and mass-based anti-apartheid organisations, forums and events and the broad support from millions of ordinary people and from most member countries of the UN for sanctions and other forms of punitive pressure against apartheid eclipse even the internationalisation of the national liberation struggle in Vietnam achieved through 30 years of war and negotiations from the 1940s to the early 1970s.

In a recent Centre for Policy Studies paper, Mark Swilling noted some of the changing international developments impacting on SA.<sup>27</sup> He pointed in the US to a less ideological administration which accepts the efficacy of sanctions as one among other strategies to force change in South Africa. The Bush Administration is attempting to construct a bi-partisan (joint Republican-Democrat) approach to SA around an all-party negotiated settlement which includes the ANC.<sup>28</sup>

Margaret Thatcher in Britain is attempting to use the leverage which her position on sanctions gives her over the SA government to press it to release Mandela, and her influence in the frontline states to help pressure the ANC to suspend the armed struggle as one of its strategies. This, she hopes, will lead the two prime protagonists into 'all-party' negotiations on the country's future.

While the anti-apartheid movements of the west exert intense internal pressure on some governments, a remarkable international consensus of third world, Commonwealth and socialist bloc states for the eradication of apartheid — a consensus which may extend to the entire European community after the establishment of European market unity in 1992 — places strong external diplomatic pressure on the SA government's traditional allies.

The reduction in international tension as a result of the Soviet Union's policies of glasnost and perestroika has gone a long way to removing the

South African question from the sphere of east-west conflict. At the rhetorical level at least, there is now an almost complete international consensus on the need for political initiatives — including negotiations between the state and the ANC — to bring the system of apartheid to an end.

*What are the interests which lie behind these worldwide initiatives on apartheid? Why, after many years of being seen as being in cahoots with SA's white rulers, are the British and Americans now pushing for an all-party settlement? The explanation lies in a mixture of pressures, special circumstances, political and economic interests, political styles and the development of the struggle inside SA which have combined to cause significant changes in these countries' relationships to SA.*

### **The United States — a changing policy**

The anti-apartheid movement in the US has succeeded in integrating the issue of apartheid into the domestic civil rights issue. In 1986 this was probably the primary motor force within the US congress to win limited mandatory sanctions against apartheid, despite executive opposition and a presidential veto.

The increasing tempo of the struggle within SA has led to a revaluation of traditional US policy. The Kissinger doctrine which underlay US policy in the seventies held that the strength of the white minority regimes in Southern Africa (particularly the SA state), the weakness and divisions in the nationalist resistance and the dictates of the cold war conflict made it logical for the US to provide tacit backing for these states, on the assumption that change could only come through them.<sup>29</sup>

The independence of Zimbabwe in 1980 weakened the doctrine, but it continued to underlie Chester Crocker and the Reagan administration's 'constructive engagement' policy. But the failure of US-backed top-down reform in SA became very evident by 1986, a year which heralded unprecedented resistance and a newly assertive ANC. The 1986 Schultz report concluded that on its own change from above could not work and that no solution was possible without the participation of the ANC.<sup>30</sup>

This conclusion has led to a new US emphasis on the concept of negotiations. Unlike the Reagan administration, the Bush administration accepts the utility of sanctions as one aspect of an overall carrot-and-stick approach to South Africa. Chester Crocker's replacement as Under-Secretary of State for Africa, Herman Cohen, does not at this stage support further sanctions against apartheid, but he does accept those that are now in place and admits they have been successful in 'causing the South Africans a great deal of difficulty'.<sup>31</sup>

The US, along with Britain, hopes that the regional settlements which are developing in Namibia, Angola and possibly Mozambique will serve as

precursor and model to the eventual resolution of the SA conflict itself. The US government is now convinced that this resolution must involve negotiated compromise involving all parties, including the NP state and the ANC.

While the ANC has privately been warned that it runs the risk of isolating and marginalising itself from an internationally approved process should it refuse to talk, the government is under great pressure to follow through the logic of its new regional politics and allow the creation of an environment conducive to talks back at home.

The stick is the threat of continuing or even greater economic and diplomatic isolation. The carrot is diplomatic kudos (which are of great importance to a state as vulnerable and isolated as SA) and, most importantly, an easing of economic pressures.<sup>32</sup> In addition the weight of the western world would probably be brought to bear to encourage compromises to protect key cultural, economic and possibly political interests of whites in any future negotiations.

### **Thatcher's Britain — international pariah or tomorrow's saviour?**

Margaret Thatcher's Britain has increasingly become an international pariah on the SA issue. Along with the US — which has its own set of limited sanctions — it is the only power which regularly vetoes mandatory sanctions in the UN. Thatcher's consistent opposition to sanctions had led the SA government and many whites to her as their only reliable protector in the outside world. Yet it is this very opposition to sanctions which has given Thatcher considerable leverage over the SA state.

Britain, with the largest single stake in the SA economy, was the only stalwart opponent of sanctions at the last Commonwealth conference. The Commonwealth conference this October will bring even greater pressure on Britain to either fall into line or prove that its non-sanctions policy is showing results. The Commonwealth secretariat has completed the most thorough sanctions study to date and its conclusions are supportive of the pro-sanctions lobby. In addition the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) is reported to be preparing a series of resolutions on SA for the Commonwealth and the United Nations (UN) which will isolate Thatcher's policies still further.<sup>33</sup>

Current British policy is also under pressure in Europe. A united Europe in 1992 may well overrule British objections to strong economic measures against SA, particularly if social-democrats and greens win the 1990 elections in West Germany and establish a consensus position with

vote. The issue is to reconcile the exercise of those normal democratic rights, which cannot be denied, with the reasonable protection of minority interests. How that is to be done has to be negotiated between South Africans'.

Of course, British policy remains ultimately closely tied in with that of Britain's big brother, the US — a connection symbolised by the concept of a 'special relationship' between the two western powers. But Thatcher does not like the idea of being left out of the picture and was by all accounts unhappy at not being able to play a role in the Namibian settlement.<sup>36</sup>

For the moment, Thatcher's persuasive approach has the support of the US. Because British foreign policy is determined by the executive (Thatcher and her closest advisors) without congressional constraints, it is more easy for her to offer the carrots while the US waits behind with the sanctions stick. But already there is talk in the US of making US sanctions mandatory for one year renewable periods through the UN. If persuasion doesn't deliver, Margaret Thatcher may just have to fall in line with a little bit of stick, or be left out in the cold.

### Extending Western options

There are many additional factors which have influenced both the US and British governments to become more assertive on SA. The dwindling support for KwaZulu Chief Minister Gatsha Buthelezi among black South Africans (surveys in his Natal base gave him some 60% of support in the mid-1970s, 30% by the mid-1980s and just over 20% today<sup>37</sup>) and the corresponding weakness of a Muzorewa-type option have forced them to seek to broaden their contacts with anti-apartheid forces. This has recently extended to meetings with the ANC which both Bush and Thatcher now recognise as a 'factor' in SA politics that cannot be by-passed.

Some of the urgency in foreign capitals also stems from the growing internal and international prestige of the ANC, the corresponding deepening of the SA crisis and the possible rapid extension of the ANC's internal underground. A relatively early internationally brokered solution would have three important advantages for the West: firstly, it would safeguard the economy — and therefore investment and trading interests — from dangerous collapse; secondly, it would be seen as less threatening to western economic and strategic interests than one in which the balance of power had shifted decisively to the mass-based anti-apartheid opposition; and, thirdly, it would remove this embarrassing political issue from their domestic political agendas.

The fear of growing diplomatic isolation, the possibility of a more flexible NP state under FW De Klerk and a desire to test the Soviet Union on its new policy of working toward a resolution of regional conflicts all contribute to the urgency with which Thatcher and Bush are moving on the SA issue.

After the meeting the two of them held in London on the 1st of June, following the 40th anniversary NATO summit meeting, Thatcher said that their aim was to get the new FW de Klerk state to release Mandela and other key political prisoners 'into an atmosphere of non-violence' without a state of emergency and to draw the SA government into negotiations on the basis of an 'all-party indaba'.<sup>38</sup>

The bottom lines for this indaba are the release of political prisoners, the lifting of the emergency and negotiating a system of votes for all.<sup>39</sup> The US, under new policy maker Herman Cohen, is happy to let Margaret Thatcher take the lead for the moment in attempting to resolve the South African conflict. But should Thatcher fail, the Bush administration may be ready to step in and project the US's far greater power on the basis of a bi-partisan consensus to force change.

### The Soviet Union — bringing glasnost to Southern Africa?

US and British strategies for a negotiated compromise rely to a large extent on Soviet cooperation. The US and Britain's hope is that if they can deliver the NP government to the negotiating table, the Soviets will deliver the ANC. Under current diplomatic conditions, this gives the Soviets considerable power in the unfolding political process. But the new Soviet emphasis on the resolution of regional conflicts by no means implies either a break with the ANC or an uncritical acceptance of the US and British agendas for Southern Africa.

Soviet 'new thinking' means the end of the 'push-button' politics of the past. The Soviets no longer pretend to have automatic answers to political problems. Just like domestic policy, foreign policy is open to debate, discussion and dissension. For this reason there has been considerable variety of comment and opinion on SA from the Soviet Union in the post-glasnost period.<sup>40</sup>

Particularly from Soviet academics there have been suggestions that SA is ripe for political compromises which will protect important white interests while guaranteeing blacks political rights. Some Soviet commentators have posed negotiations as an alternative to armed struggle and other forms of direct pressure on the SA state.

Reports of ANC meetings with Soviet government and Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee representatives have emphasised a preference for 'political' solutions to the SA conflict and de-emphasised the fact that Soviet backing of the armed struggle continues. There are even occasional rumours of East-bloc countries re-establishing diplomatic relations with South Africa before the demise of apartheid.<sup>41</sup> These have been officially scotched by senior government spokesmen.<sup>42</sup>

A more realistic understanding of the parameters of Soviet policy toward SA is gradually taking shape. Perhaps one of the most accurate accounts of



current Soviet policy is contained in a recent paper prepared by senior Foreign Ministry official AA Makarov, partly because the account comes from within the government itself and therefore carries more weight than scholarly proposals, and partly because it is reported to have been prepared in close consultation with all the major bodies involved in Southern Africa policy: the universities, the Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, the Communist Party and the government.<sup>43</sup>

According to the consensus position put forward by Makarov, the Soviet Union analyses the SA crisis as having 'been generated mostly by contradictions between the development of South African productive forces in the age of the revolution in science and technology and the apartheid based institutionalised system of monopolistic state control and regulations governing national manpower... South Africa's intensive economic development has been made directly contingent on freedom... from racial discrimination and political rights. Entrenched Afrikaner nationalism and racism stand in the way of an early resolution of that contradiction and of the emancipation of the country's productive forces'.

Soviet foreign policy is said to proceed from an assessment that the balance of forces around this contradiction in SA today 'is characterised by relative stability: organisationally, politically and militarily the anti-racist resistance movement is not yet ready to topple the regime and capture power, while the regime is no longer capable of curbing the growth of resistance'.

In this context, the Soviets believe, the SA government will continue with its reform programme. This can at best provide it with a respite. The other possibility, consolidation of reaction, can only lead to growing international isolation of SA including comprehensive economic sanctions, economic stagnation, increased social problems, deeper divisions in the ruling elite, and intensified anti-apartheid protest. But in the end either option 'will lead only to the aggravation of contradictions'.

Although Makarov argues that a revolutionary overthrow of the State remains possible, he emphasises that objective conditions still militate against it. These include the state's powerful apparatus of repression, the fact that the SADF is fully loyal to the state, the heterogeneous nature of the resistance, the lack of a strong political centre or comprehensive underground structure and the fact that MK 'cannot yet be regarded as a people's revolutionary army'.

It is on the basis of this assessment that the Soviets are emphasising the importance of talks and a political solution to the conflict. But at the moment, according to Makarov, for the SA state talks would be little more than a 'tactical ploy' aimed at misleading public opinion and dividing the ANC. For this reason, he writes, a political solution to the SA conflict is only possible when the state is weakened by internal contradictions and popular resistance so much that that it either has to cede state power altogether or to share it on terms laid down largely by the national liberation movement.

Makarov writes that although 'talks are the only reasonable way towards political settlement of the conflict in the country and in the region as a whole', any compromise which aims to balance the interests of the oppressed majority and the racist regime, if possible at all, will be unstable and short-lived. 'The mass struggle can hardly be stopped until all contradictions caused by apartheid are fully resolved which is feasible first and foremost as a result of the destruction of the existing political power'.

## Internal forces for change

### The Democratic Party — winning support for negotiations?

The Democratic Party (DP) shares a good deal of common ground with Western governments in its program for South Africa. The Party's principles and objectives affirm 'an orderly transition towards a non-racial, democratic constitution' and commit the DP to strive towards 'a new political system determined by negotiation'. To this end the DP encourages 'interaction with groups and individuals... to promote negotiation, settlement and agreement' while speaking out against violence and sanctions.<sup>44</sup>

The content of this 'settlement' envisages a new constitution enshrining the principle of universal adult suffrage in a federal state with minority veto rights. Its self professed preference for a 'Western-style' constitutional system has as its objective the removal of 'permanent conflict in the structures of society'.

For our purposes the DP is important for three reasons. Firstly, it may provide a significant platform for encouraging whites to accept the desirability of a political solution which incorporates the liberation movement. Some of the DP's leaders are doing just this. At a municipal election meeting in Linden, Johannesburg, Wynand Malan, for example, was reported as having called on whites to view the ANC as an ally in the struggle to rid SA of apartheid.<sup>45</sup>

The DP election platform clearly links white's economic concerns with negotiating a resolution to conflict and a re-entry of SA into international diplomatic, cultural, sporting and economic relations. The DP is divided over the terms for negotiations, specifically on the question of whether the ANC should renounce violence as a precondition. It does, however, fully endorse the liberation movement's insistence on the right of free association as a necessary precondition to meaningful talks.

Secondly, surveys indicate that by early July DP support had risen to almost 30% of the white electorate.<sup>46</sup> The ideological and strategic divisions within the DP may undermine their ability to convince the white electorate that NP-style reform is no solution to economic and political crisis. So far, however, widely reported dissension within the DP over economic policy, participation in the coloured and Indian houses of the Tricameral Parliament

and the party leadership do not seem to have dented its ability to attract support, which may be as much as double that of the Progressive Federal Party (PFP) at its demise.

Just as the Conservative Party has drawn substantial support from the NP's right, so the DP is starting to draw substantial support from its left. Between them, the two have reduced the NP's support to considerably less than half the electorate.

Thirdly, the DP's policy of 'federalism, decentralised government and local autonomy' aims to guarantee electoral rights, while restricting the power of the central state. Such a constitutional formula might inhibit the capacity of a post-apartheid government to intervene actively in the economy and polity and, if successfully implemented, would tend to conserve existing relations of power and wealth. As the DP is unlikely ever to win an election on its own, however, its policies stand more as genuinely held negotiating positions — either with respect to the NP in the event of a hung parliament, or with respect to the liberation movement in the event of national constitutional talks.

### Capital — searching for stability

The deteriorating economic situation brought on by a low gold price, a huge outflow of capital, excessive growth of money supply, high inflation, the weakening rand, no access to international financial markets, restricted export markets, the huge apartheid bureaucracy and increasingly burdensome expenditure on defence has at its roots the political context within which the economy is operating. For this reason annual Chairman's reports remain explicit about the need for political flexibility and movement. A recent example is the 1988 report of De Beers chairman Julian Ogilvie Thompson.

Ogilvie Thompson spoke of the Namibian settlement as being of 'historic importance' to all Southern Africa, because it has fostered a spirit of negotiation and compromise. Referring to the 'silent revolution' in urbanisation, unionisation, the growth of the informal economy and of black spending power, he said that 'the reimposition of racial discrimination by right-wing councils, particularly Boksburg and Carletonville, has been helpful in demonstrating to many conservative whites just how unacceptable and economically impractical such measures are in a modernising South Africa'.

He said that the manner in which the detainees hunger strike was handled and the final discrediting of the theory that South Africa is the victim of a 'total onslaught' have helped to create an opportunity which the South African government would be wise to exploit. Action would have to include the release of Nelson Mandela and other detainees, the unbanning of various organisations and a clear commitment to the final elimination of apartheid. 'Only a determined initiative, with continuing evidence of political progress, can restore the confidence of investors, businessmen and international bankers'.

Most business leaders of significance agree that business has a political role to play. Apartheid related constraints on the labour market (eg skills shortages) and on capital accumulation have combined with internal and international pressure to push many businessmen to consider talking to the extra-parliamentary opposition.

Many of the more politically active business leaders who are looking beyond the current policies of the NP state have joined the Consultative Business Movement (CBM). Its policy of 'consultation with all interest groups' to 'create a non-racial democracy' and 'achieve full international relations in a post-apartheid society' emerges out of a belief that business leaders have to encourage political change so as to establish 'the conditions and structures for strong economic growth and just distribution of wealth'.<sup>47</sup> This role is to be played primarily by establishing relationships with extra-parliamentary groups while maintaining its influence with the government.

Capital is, however, fragmented in its strategies and its views on apartheid. Some business leaders remain complacent within the status quo, while many of those who do recognise the need for political reform to lay the basis for economic development look to the Nationalists and their new leader FW De Klerk for this change. These differences within its ranks, combined with public vilification of some business leaders seen to be opposing the government in a high profile way, such as Chris Ball, are constraints on greater business activism.

In party political terms, while the DP may receive moral and financial support from big business (a recent survey of the readership of *Leadership* magazine showed 70% of its readers supporting the DP),<sup>48</sup> it is largely true to say that this is on the basis of a perception that the DP is a pressure on the Nats to accelerate 'reform'.

Major sectors of big business, especially Afrikaans business interests, still fall squarely behind the Nationalist Party or at least refuse to support any liberal alternative. Even the financial press is at best equivocal about the DP. In the *Financial Mail's* terms 'FW de Klerk is making all the right sounds' and all that is needed is for him to produce the action.<sup>49</sup> But as political constraints on capital accumulation grow, so it becomes increasingly likely that business will use its influence and strategic location to help catalyze a process of negotiation.

### **Black moderates — not talking yet**

None of the well known conservative or moderate black politicians are prepared to enter into constitutional negotiations with the government until conditions very similar to the democratic movement's demand for the right of free association is met. Even John Mavuso, the former Inkatha Central Committee member and 1956 treason trialist who now serves on the executive of the Transvaal Provincial Administration, recently rejected the idea of blacks

being incorporated into the President's Council as unacceptable co-option politics. It was not possible to negotiate, he said, without a mandate from voters.

Prominent figures such as Inkatha's Gatsha Buthelezi, Daveyton municipal councillor Tom Boya and KaNgwane Chief Minister Enos Mabuza all call for the release of Mandela and other political prisoners, the unbanning of the ANC and the lifting of the state of emergency before talks begin. In Inkatha's case the abandonment of the NP's group-based approach to constitutional issues is put forward as a further precondition for successful negotiations.<sup>50</sup>

Many conservative black politicians believe that should the ANC then refuse to participate in the talks, they will be ruling themselves out of the process and marginalising themselves from the development of a multi-racial state. But attempts to broaden the anti-apartheid coalition, with the likely inclusion of the National African Federated Chamber of Commerce (NAF-COC), Mabuza's Inyandza movement and other middle ground black forces will tend to encourage the development of common positions on the purposes of negotiations with the NP government.

## The Liberation Movement

### The ANC — negotiating for people's power?

ANC publications and reports of discussions with ANC representatives reveal an open and critical examination of the achievements and failures of the 'people's power' period of the mid-1980s.<sup>51</sup> While the ANC believes that, together with its internal allies, it delivered powerful blows to the apartheid state and helped inspire mass action and resistance, it recognises that it was not able to take full advantage of the favourable conditions that materialised. Some of the most important points of self-criticisms levelled are:

- the failure to deploy sufficient forces inside South Africa;
- the difficulties experienced in basing itself organisationally amongst the masses;
- the weakness of the underground;
- a lack of political coordination;
- an over-reliance on the ability of an externally based Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) to deliver blows to the enemy; and
- due to the failure to integrate armed struggle with mass democratic struggle, the fact that the masses remained unarmed in the face of the security forces and vigilantes.

While this examination has been taking place, there has been a re-assertion and re-emphasis of the necessity for political strategy to lead and determine military strategy. This is allied to the belief that armed struggle must comple-

ment mass struggle. But it is frankly admitted that the armed struggle is still at an extremely low stage of development. MK, it is believed, is no more than the core of a people's army. The security forces are seen to be the main obstacle to achieving liberation, but it is recognised that MK is only at present the nucleus of an army capable of overcoming this obstacle.

This realisation has reopened the debate of how to build the forces and the means for a seizure of power. While there are differing views in the ANC over whether a military based seizure of power is a likely (or even possible) outcome of the struggle, what is generally agreed is that the armed pillar is indispensable as one strategy among others for the attainment of power. Despite its weaknesses, the ANC believes that MK has made a vital contribution to its overall offensive. The creation of a revolutionary army with three component parts — rural guerilla units, urban combat groups and a popular self-defence militia — is thus seen as a most crucial current and future task.

At the same time there is a growing emphasis within the ANC on the concept of a negotiated settlement. Here again there is vigorous debate and there are many differences of opinion. Questions are being posed as to whether there are irreconcilable contradictions between concepts such as peoples' war and a negotiated settlement, between "partial" and "absolute" victories and between the armed seizure of power on the one hand, and, on the other, a possible strategic objective of a negotiated transfer of power from the white minority to the majority.

For the ANC, the urgency of the issue is increased by the pressure it feels from the weight of the developing global initiative on SA. There is considerable pressure from the US and other Western powers for the ANC to moderate its stance, suspend violence and start talking. It must finalise its position on negotiation before the OAU meets; the OAU in turn must formulate its proposals before the Commonwealth conference in October. The ANC is currently circulating a discussion document within SA to ensure as effective an internal contribution to the process as is possible under emergency conditions. The document achieved unusual prominence when *Business Day* published it on its editorial page.<sup>52</sup>

Another point of pressure focuses on the ANC's alliance with the South African Communist Party (SACP). The ANC has consistently defended its relationship to the SACP, but there is little doubt that the alliance will come under heavy attack from conservatives and liberals at home as well as in the West in the years to come. The Communist Party, although it is wary of attempts to push the liberation movement into negotiations before it has the organised strength on the ground to back up its demands, accepts that the strategies of armed struggle and popular insurrection do not rule out the possibility of negotiations and compromise.<sup>53</sup>

The 9 October 1987 statement of the ANC National Executive Committee (NEC) stressed that the 'ANC has never been opposed to a negotiated settle-

ment of the South African question. The ANC and the masses as a whole', it continued, 'are ready and willing to enter genuine negotiations provided they are aimed at the transformation of our country into a united and non-racial democracy'.

In this and subsequent statements the ANC has set out specific steps that the government would have to take to 'demonstrate its seriousness' and to create a climate for negotiations. These 'preconditions' stipulate that:

- all political prisoners and detainees must be released;
- the state of emergency must be lifted;
- troops and paramilitary police must be withdrawn from the townships;
- the ANC and other banned organisations must be unbanned; and
- all repressive legislation must be repealed, ie security laws that limit freedom of assembly, speech, association and the press must be scrapped.

This list can essentially be summarised in two brief inter-related demands: allow freedom of association and withdraw combat units from residential areas. Included in the ANC's concept of free association would be that all exiles must be allowed to return home, all treason trials must be halted and all political executions must stop. The meeting of these conditions also forms the basis for a possible suspension of armed struggle and the sanctions campaign.

The ANC has recently gone further to propose what it calls a 'new negotiation concept'. This involves ensuring mass participation in the negotiations process by calling for elections to a constituent assembly which would draft a new constitutional order. Negotiations for a non-racial democratic South Africa would therefore be conducted by representative, elected leaders on terms determined by the electorate (all South Africans).

In the meantime, the ANC may be ready to consider participation in some form of interim government — perhaps a transitional government of national unity to oversee the election of a popular assembly and the negotiation process in it. This negotiation concept draws on the transitional experience of both Namibia and Mozambique. It has a number of aims:

- to seize the initiative on this issue;
- to put the claims of different groups to be parties to the negotiation process to the democratic test; and
- to involve the masses in the democratic process.

The ANC has also put forward a set of constitutional guidelines for discussion among its supporters in SA.

According to Ian Phillips, 'negotiation and armed struggle are inter-related aspects of the broad strategy of the ANC'.<sup>54</sup> The transfer of political power is thus attainable peaceably or by force of arms, or through a combination of both. Negotiated settlement as a mechanism of resolving the armed conflict could conceivably occur when the state is forced by a combination of internal and international pressure to realise that it cannot defeat the liberation move-

ment and that prolonging the conflict would, to paraphrase John Vorster, have consequences 'too ghastly to contemplate'.

## The Mass Democratic Movement — winning space to organise

The mass campaigns of the 1980s placed the MDM, led by the UDF, as the most powerful counter to the NP government within the country. It is the development of national formations among youth, women, workers, pupils and students and the struggles conducted by them which is ensuring the participation of the masses of South Africans in securing their future.

COSATU general-secretary Jay Naidoo and the May 1989 National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA) congress have substantially confirmed and reiterated the ANC's position on negotiations. The July COSATU Congress provided a forum for federation wide debate on the issue. Similar conditions for the rolling over of foreign loans have been put to foreign banks by four church leaders, Desmond Tutu, Allan Boesak, Beyers Naude and Frank Chikane.

Negotiation strategies are not new to the MDM. Through-out the building of organs of people's power in the 1980s, negotiations occurred between UDF affiliates and provincial and local authorities. These helped build and legitimise organisation. Negotiations over the education crisis led by the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) went right up into the cabinet.

Though the emergency put a drastic stop to these, we have suggested in this paper that conditions are once again changing. The current negotiations between the Soweto Council and the Soweto People's Delegation (SPD) confirm this assessment. They have helped maintain space for organisation while once again exposing the Soweto Council as an unrepresentative puppet body.

The MDM has not made the lifting of restriction orders a precondition for local-level talks. But the question of national negotiations is very different. A consistent prior demand of the MDM has been that the political process must be freed. This is linked to a rejection of 'behind closed doors' talks leading to compromises and bargains which exclude the mass of South Africans.

The MDM's position is straightforward — negotiations can only occur with a mandate, and mandates can only be democratically granted under conditions of free and open political activity. This position is based on the belief that, organised within the ranks of the MDM, the masses remain the most important guarantee of democratisation and social transformation.

It is in this context that the liberation movement's stated preconditions for national negotiation are so significant. As articulated by the ANC, by the NUMSA congress, and by COSATU general-secretary Jay Naidoo, they are a powerful guarantee *against* a negotiation process designed to bypass the South African people. In Naidoo's words: 'The condition we stress is freedom of association and freedom of speech. In order for us to have negotiations, or-



ganisations will have to put their programs to the people, to canvas the people and get mandates. That implies that any negotiations have to be open'.<sup>55</sup>

## Conclusion

### The battlefield of negotiations

On the battlefield of negotiations no one party is guaranteed victory or defeat. The issue of negotiations is one terrain of struggle, among others. Both the state and the liberation movement will mobilise to advance their interests to the maximum. Victims Against Terrorism views negotiations 'as an offensive technique used to place opponents on the defensive'. *Beeld* political correspondent Willie Kuhn sees negotiations as a 'different kind of war' more testing to the state than the 'fight against terrorism'.

The liberation movement has hopes, suspicions and fears about the process. Some aspects of the Namibian settlement are an everyday reminder to it of the pitfalls of this route. Yet the release of Mandela, the lifting or relaxation of the emergency and security legislation and increased local and international pressure for one person, one vote will be important steps on the path to a non-racial democracy. What then are the likely dynamics of this different kind of war?

By entering the terrain of negotiations the state stands to wage a diplomatic offensive, designed to break its international isolation. It may prolong these negotiations while playing off social classes and political groups against one another and attempting to demobilise, divide and disorganise the social base of the resistance movement.

It could attempt to combine its long-term strategy of marginalising the democratic movement with a strategy of negotiations. This could take the form of expressing a rhetorical desire to negotiate, while in fact ensuring the maintenance of an approach which the liberation movement could never accept — such as demanding the renunciation of violence or the acceptance of a group-based constitutional dispensation. On this basis it could talk to co-optable moderates and attempt to draw them into a compromise which gives them some power over 'general affairs' while ensuring that whites are not subjected to 'group domination'.

The long-term aim might be the establishment of a limited multi-racial power-sharing system which the ANC would find it increasingly difficult to boycott. In the words of a hopeful Stoffel van der Merwe, the ANC would then ultimately become 'as irrelevant as revolutionary organisations in Britain and the US'.<sup>56</sup>

However, this scenario is unlikely to gain international backing. The primary aim of Western states at the moment is to pressurise the NP state into releasing Mandela, lifting the emergency and starting to negotiate *with all*

*parties*. The first two are demands which a FW de Klerk state might easily meet. Were it to accede to these conditions and declare its willingness to talk to all those prepared to at least suspend violence, it would gain the powerful backing of the West. But the release of Mandela will signal another step toward the unbanning of the ANC — as did PW Botha's meeting with him. The ANC would then be under intense pressure to respond to this political flexibility by entering into talks with the government.

Even in the absence of significantly increased pressure on the state to negotiate a settlement, it may nevertheless enter into a protracted process of negotiations. There is a huge difference between negotiations, which may well begin, and a negotiated settlement, which remains a much more distant possibility.

Between them, the French and the US negotiated with the Vietnamese resistance for 30 years before the pressure was great enough to force them out of this conflict. Negotiations under the auspices of Resolution 435 lasted for 11 years before a combination of military setbacks and unbearable costs brought about a settlement in Namibia. In Rhodesia, talks between the Smith government, the British government and the nationalist forces were conducted for 12 years before the Lancaster House settlement was signed.

A willingness to negotiate once the political process is freed could be a powerful response to state attempts to win international backing for the construction of an authoritarian multi-racial system excluding the ANC. The readiness on the part of the liberation movement to negotiate a transition to democracy continues to make it difficult for moderates to strike deals involving less than one person, one vote democracy. As long as the liberation movement is faced with continuing state intransigence, its willingness to talk helps win the political high-ground which has been so important to gaining support internally and to the building of the anti-apartheid movement internationally.

In a period of negotiations the state may be less able to use high levels of repression against the MDM, thus creating space for popular organisation if the liberation movement's preconditions are met. This is not to say that repression will end altogether or will necessarily be consistently and permanently reduced. Some increase in extra-legal and informal forms of repression is quite possible and even likely.

Though attacks linked to the white right-wing will continue to be difficult to repulse, the best counter to vigilante type conflict within communities will be the building of strong, democratic and representative organisation. As with the current peace talks process in Natal, political methods which involve strategic compromises may be required to help unite communities. This would enable non-racial and black organisations to present a united front against NP attempts to win something less than one person, one vote in a non-racial democracy.

Negotiations through cycles of warfare and conflict are no less possible than they were in Vietnam, Rhodesia or Namibia. If negotiations are a terrain of struggle, then as in other struggles, there will be advances and retreats, gains and losses and ups and downs.

There are likely to be conflicts about 'talks about talks', the preconditions to talks and creation of a negotiating 'climate', the shape of the table and the parties to the talks, the nature of international participation and guarantees, about possible suspensions of violence and troop withdrawals, as well as about the agenda, over precisely what has or has not been agreed, and about how to implement possible agreements. But it is also likely that a prolonged negotiations process will contain periods of lessened repression which may well give the MDM a crucial organisational advantage in organising for political power.

### **Building mass democratic organisation**

There is a great need for the MDM to popularise and legitimise its primary preconditions for negotiations amongst the oppressed as well as the white and international communities. These preconditions are really nothing more than the basic measures without which talks would be meaningless. But the greatest challenge as questions of transition become more immediate is the deepening of organisation and the building of the broadest possible unity of anti-apartheid forces.

First base is establishing the unity of the oppressed. The Natal peace talks and the forthcoming worker summit are the most important initiatives here. The reorganisation, consolidation, and advance of the MDM, the engine room for the achievement of this unity, remains a crucial priority.

It is in this context that the emphasis on freedom of association as a precondition to constitutional talks becomes so important. It has been an inevitable consequence of the state of emergency that leadership has sometimes lost touch with its base — this is the result of weakened and fragmented organisation. For the MDM to be able to carry its strengths into a process of talks, its principles must be firmly in place. Organisation must be strong and it must unite communities.

Strong lines of communication need to exist between organisations and their political leadership. This leadership needs to secure its ability to consult directly and obtain regular mandates from membership. A willingness to talk will be an important condition for rebuilding more democratic relationships between leadership and membership.

*It is in the MDM's interest to pursue any strategy which enhances its ability to organise the masses. They are the motor force of change, and the best guarantee of accountable and genuinely representative leadership. Raising the profile of the MDM through rebuilding and taking forward organisation is the number one priority of the MDM. This priority is also the*

*benchmark for any compromises which the process of talking may demand: do they improve or inhibit the MDM's ability to build democratic organisation?*

Community organisations can learn from the experience of trade unions who have used the space provided by talking to management to organise for greater gains. On the basis of strong and deep organisation and directly representative leadership it will be possible to unite communities around popular demands. This in turn will mean attempts to create or perpetuate divisions amongst the oppressed communities will be more easily rejected. This will intensify the pressure on the state, exacerbate its internal divisions and render inoperable its neo-apartheid plans. The widespread, open and democratic debate around negotiations carried on in COSATU unions in the lead up to the national congress in July should stand as a model discussion process.

The coming September elections, struggles over the Labour Relations Amendment Act and the growing education crisis all point to a likely upsurge in MDM activity in the near future. As struggles intensify and the state comes under increasing pressure to respond, a united front of mass organisations and apartheid opponents will be impossible to marginalise.

The September 1988 Anti-Apartheid Conference was the beginning of a process toward this end. Future developments of this process need to take into account the development of an era of negotiations strategies. The defence of democratic gains, the development of organised mass-based power and the broadening of the MDM could combine with an assertion of the politics of negotiation to bring our democratic objectives much closer.

## Notes

1. Quoted in *The Star*, 11.04.89.
2. Herman Cohen, United States Under Secretary of State for Africa, May 1989, quoted in *Business Day*, 17.05.89.
3. For analysis of the PW Botha state see M Swilling and M Phillips (1989) - 'The Powers of the Thunderbird', in *South Africa at the End of the Eighties: Policy Perspectives* (Centre for Policy Studies).
4. See comments by Law and Order Minister Adriaan Vlok at an election meeting in Ventersdorp (4 July 1989) and at Secunda (reported in *Business Day*, 19.07.89) and comment on Gerhard de Kock's May address to a pensions conference in Cape Town in *Finance Week*, 18.05.89.
5. For analysis of counter-revolutionary warfare strategy and its failure see M Swilling and M Phillips (1989) - 'The Power and Limits of the Emergency State', in *South African Review 5* (forthcoming); A Boraine (1989) - 'Security Management Upgrading in the Black Townships', in *Transformation*, 8.
6. M Swilling (1989) - 'Waiting for a Negotiated Settlement: South Africans in a Changing World' (Unpublished paper).
7. See survey results in *Rapport*, 23.07.89, and *Sunday Times*, 23.07.89.
8. For more detail on divisions and differences within the state see M Phillips in *Weekly Mail*, 28.07.89.
9. 'Die Man Wat Weet', in *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, April/May 1988.
10. Discussion with government official who wished to remain anonymous.

11. South African Law Commission (1989) — *Working Paper 25 Project 58 Group and Human Rights*
12. See *Vrye Weekblad* (07.07.89) and 'Working Document. Basic Political Preconditions for the Survival of the Afrikaner' (Internal Broederbond memorandum, 1986. Translated from the Afrikaans).
13. C Heunis, Introductory Speech to Parliament, 05.05.89.
14. M Acutt — 'Nats look at equal rights democracy in different ways' (*Business Day*, 12.07.89).
15. FW De Klerk speaking on *Network*, 07.05.89.
16. For detail of legislative and executive proposals see 'Proposed Plan of Action of the National Party', Election, 6 September 1989.
17. *Beeld*, 16.01.89.
18. Discussion with civic activist.
19. *Sunday Times*, 05.03.89.
20. M Swilling, op cit.
21. Proposed Plan of Action, op cit.
22. *Business Day*, 21.04.88.
23. *Business Day*, 10.07.89.
24. Discussion with Dakar delegate.
25. *Beeld*, 28.04.89.
26. W Esterhuysen (1989) — 'Through White Eyes: South Africa Today' (*Southern Africa Policy Forum*. Aspen Institute).
27. M Swilling, op cit.
28. R Kramer — 'A Quiet American Change in Style', in *Weekly Mail*, 02.06.89; H Cohen, interviewed in *Leadership SA*, April 1989. See also 'Cohen's Bottom Line', *Business Day*, 12.07.89.
29. 'National Security Study Memorandum 39, April 10 1969', in B Cohen and M El-Khawass (1975) — *The Kissinger Study of Southern Africa* (Spokesman).
30. Final Report, Secretary's Advisory Committee on Southern Africa, 1987.
31. H Cohen, 1989, op cit.
32. 'End of Illusion', in *Finance Week*, 18.05.89; 'New Figures Confirm an Ill Economy', *Business Day*, 25.07.89; 'Boers Besieged', *Economist*, 12.11.88; M Coleman (1989) — 'The Impact of the Economy on the Course of Repression in South Africa' (Unpublished conference paper).
33. M Swilling, op cit.
34. *The Star*, 29.03.89.
35. Cited in *South Africa Foundation Review*, April 1989.
36. M Swilling, op cit.
37. Discussion with Mark Orkin of Community Agency for Social Enquiry.
38. *Business Day*, 02.06.89.
39. *Business Day*, 11.07.89; 12.07.89.
40. See for example: A Devitt — 'From the Mouth of the Bear: Moscow on Pretoria', *Weekly Mail*, 17.06.89; V Tikhomorov — 'South Africa: Is a Political Settlement Possible?', *Sapem*, May 1989; H Barrell (1987) — 'Interview with Goncharev', in *Work in Progress*, July; A Makarov — 'South Africa: Its Domestic Situation and Prospects of Development' (nd).
41. *The Star*, 24.07.89.
42. Boris Asoyan in *Business Day*, 02.05.89; *New Era* (June 1989) recently quoted a Foreign Ministry official as follows:  
'Scholars can hold their own views differing from official ones. I welcome the pluralism of opinions. Let scholars argue, search for new approaches and hold non-standard viewpoints. But one thing is certain. The USSR will continue backing the democratic forces in South Africa who combat apartheid under ANC leadership'.
43. A Makarov, op cit.
44. 'Democratic Party: Selling Equal Votes', *Financial Mail*, 17.02.89.
45. 'ANC must be allies, Linden voters told', *Citizen*, 02.05.89.
46. *Rapport*, 23.07.89.

47. 'Principles and Objectives of the Consultative Business Movement' (Brochure on CBM formation).
48. *Leadership SA*, March 1989.
49. *Business Day*, 12.05.89.
50. For Inkatha's position see *Sunday Times*, 16.07.89; for Boya's see *Business Day*, 25.04.89; for Mabuza's see *Citizen*, 02.08.88.
51. This section drawn from Five Freedoms Forum Lusaka conference discussion papers (July 1989) and report-backs as well as A Mashanini (1988) — 'People's War and Negotiations Are They Fire and Water?', in *Sechaba*, August; R Kasrils (1988) — 'The Revolutionary Army', *Sechaba*, August; N Zumana (1989) — 'Revolution or Negotiations?', *Sechaba*, April.
52. *Business Day*, 20.07.89.
53. *Weekly Mail*, 23.06.89.
54. *Transformation*, 6, 1988.
55. *Southscan*, 24.05.89
56. S Van Der Merwe, interviewed in *Leadership SA*, April 1988.