

PERSPECTIVES OF OUR STRUGGLE

PART 4

QUESTION: Comrade Thabo, if we follow that line, we come to certain basic positions which we have taken as a people. There is the ANC and its allies which have taken the revolutionary path. You have another group which has taken what I would call an evolutionary path, you see. These basic positions do not meet anywhere... or let me put it in this way; given these two positions, do you think we would be united enough to be as strong as we are needed to be in order to push the enemy to a point where he is going to say "I've had it, let us negotiate?" You have just told me that the enemy, like it happened in Zimbabwe, had to realise certain hard facts, that if it does not succumb, if it does not go to Lancaster it is going to be swept out - "now let's go and talk to the united patriotic forces of Zimbabwe" and it did that. Now given these two positions in South Africa, where the ANC and its allies are revolutionary & there's another group which is evolutionary, do you think we can push?

CDE. THABO MBEKI: Well, I agree that there is a revolutionary tendency in South African politics and there is also an evolutionary tendency. I would say there is a third one, the fascist tendency, which some people would call conservative, that's a fascist tendency. Now it's true that there are all those three trends in South African politics. Now of course we forget about the fascist one, in terms of the issue that you are raising... Talk about this evolutionary and revolutionary one. Now you say that on the basis of this we are not united because these two schools of thought, these two political tendencies exist. Now you see I might throw the question back at you and say: "Who is not united because of the existence of these two tendencies?" I was saying last time and I will like to repeat it again that the ANC.. that the masses of the people are united around certain basic questions, including the question of how should change in South Africa be achieved. I think anywhere you go; you can go to the townships, you can go to villages, you can go to the resettlement camps, you can go anywhere in South Africa - the oppressed majority of the people of the country are saying: "Let us remove this regime." They are saying: "Give us weapons," because everyday they are confronted by

the armed might. As I was saying, people go on strike, they are confronted with guns. They protest about increases in rents, they are confronted with guns. Anything you do, you complain about Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, you are confronted with guns. The masses of the people are not saying that there is a possibility that something good can evolve out of the Apartheid system. I am still saying the masses of the people in the town and countryside are united in a revolutionary perspective, a perspective which says we must sweep away this regime and replace it with a democratic government of the people of South Africa. People are united in that. Now it doesn't mean that among the black people there, there is no tendency which is saying: "Let's have evolutionary change."

Now what is evolutionary change? Evolutionary change must mean that the Apartheid regime remains in power... that is the basic thesis of any evolutionary outlook. Then the next thing we'll say alright let's amend or scrap the immorality act - we're evolving out of the Apartheid system. Now I'm saying the Apartheid regime remains and for whatever reason it decides to remove things one by one. Botha is claiming that the fact that they have now said that African workers can belong to legally recognised unions, that is part of this evolutionary process - that's an evolutionary thesis. It presumes and assumes in the first instance the continued existence of that regime in power because revolution means that you must destroy, remove this regime - transfer power to the people and then they use that power which they have to change whatever they want to change in that system.

A precondition of any revolutionary change must be the destruction of the oppressive regime that is there. But I'm saying an evolutionary one does not pre-suppose that, now I'm quite sure of it. You forget these long English words like evolutionary and revolutionary. You go to the people and you say to them the perspective I'm putting forward to you is that let us leave P.W. Botha in power - let us leave his Apartheid system there. Let us through a process of consultation and negotiation persuade him to remove things bit by bit so that we can evolve into a situation where South Africa is better. So let's leave him there and wait for him to open the hotel, to be kind-hearted. Open the hotel then wait for six months he removes the immorality act or whatever important that immorality is and then wait for another six months and he does something else, wait for another six months and he builds a school so on and you say: "You see now." Go to the masses of the oppressed people and say: "That's my strategy."

think you wouldn't leave such a meeting alive because the people are not saying please 'Baas Botha' can you please change things for us nicely, steadily according to your own timetable, according to your pace so that one day in a hundred years' time you say: "Ah! South Africa is now evolved out of the Apartheid system and it is now a nice country." The people say: "We don't want apartheid now, it must go now. Botha must go now, his government must go now; their system must go now." If you go to the people and say let us allow Botha to evolve out of apartheid, the people will stone you and that's why I'm saying that the masses of the people are united in wanting to uproot the Apartheid system.

There are black people who out of whatever reason believe that it is possible for a better South Africa, for a democratic South Africa to evolve out of the apartheid system. I don't quite know why anybody would want to believe a thing like that, to believe essentially that the racists of South Africa are tomorrow, for some reason, going to have a change of heart and cease to be racist. That the exploiters of South Africa are again for some unknown reason going to cease to be exploiters and say no, let's stop exploiting the people; let us now give them their rights and so on. I don't know why anybody wants to think that the South African oppressors and exploiters are exceptional, that they will do something that no other exploiter and oppressor has done to suffer the change of heart and then decide: "Ok, now let us evolve out of this system." I think it's an illusion. It's not going to happen. It is in another sense an avoidance of struggle, a notion that you can shout and bang tables and scream at the regime, and you scream so loudly that the regime will get frightened into an evolutionary position. If the enemy is not going to be changed by militant statements that are made, it's not going to be changed even by militant threats that are made.

You know people say look, we have not used our labour power sufficiently, one day we'll use our labour power to change our conditions sufficiently. Use it, what are you waiting for? Anybody in South Africa today who can say here is the oppressor regime celebrating 20 years of its fascist republic, no more, I've got the strength and the following, the power and everything to call out these millions of black workers on strike to protest and to demonstrate to show their hostility to this fascist regime. Let them do it today. What is the point of a threat? You can threaten, as I say you can scream as loudly as you want against the regime, that's not going to change the regime. I'm saying that the

oppressors of South Africa are not exceptional. They are not going to have a change of heart today, tomorrow or the day after and decide as a result of a change of heart, decide that oh no, Ok let's reform the system, let's evolve toward a South Africa that is acceptable to the people of South Africa. They are not going to do that. The only way South Africa is going to change is if the people themselves moving from this position of complete rejection of the Apartheid system and the Apartheid regime, make sure that that regime goes, that system goes; that they use the power that is in their hands to change that South Africa in whatever direction the masses of the people think it is a direction that they want for their country.

QUESTION: But Comrade Thabo, the problem with revolution, as I said is that it is a very unruly horse. Once you get astride this horse, you never know where it's going to lead you because you know, I don't think it's possible to plan what is going to happen after the revolution, because it depends on the revolutionary situation if it exist. Now if it exists in South Africa it means, therefore, that the people are ready to do something about their lot and they are ready to pick up arms and do something. Now whoever is there at that moment if the situation is opportune, whoever is there can lead them anywhere. Now that's why I'm saying it's an unruly horse. And here you are saying we are a revolutionary movement, we want to overthrow the regime and after that replace it with a democratic people's government. That cannot be said if we are going to move according to revolutionary principles.

CDE. THABO MBEKI: No! I think that this is wrong. You see it has been said that a revolution is a locomotive of history. That means that history is pulled forward by this locomotive which we call revolution as a train is pulled by a locomotive at the head there. It is also said that revolutions are a celebration of the oppressed. Now you see the notion that you are putting forward, that revolutions are an unruly horse, and that they can end where one doesn't know - you see it's a reflection of contempt for the people, for the masses, a belief that the masses do not know what they want, a belief that there are some very clever people - demagogues who can come and sway the masses of the people this way and that way; what Botha and his crowd call 'agitators'. It's a wrong conception, any revolutionary to be a revolutionary has to have a very sound respect for the masses of the people. I think that the African National Congress has that respect, I hope so, for the masses of the people.

You see, we say here is the ANC, its allies, other patriotic forces of South Africa, have a view of what kind of South Africa they want. It's in the Freedom Charter. We were all of us discussing the Freedom Charter last year. It's there in the Freedom Charter, we want that. This is the kind of South Africa we want. We want that understanding of that kind of South Africa. Not to be just an understanding between Thabo and somebody else. The masses of the people themselves must have this picture. We are very fortunate, with regard to the Freedom Charter, of course, in that the masses of the people participated in the drafting of the Freedom Charter. These masses therefore have a view about where South Africa is going when we say we are going to take up arms and fight and die in the process some of us. They know what they are dying for. Therefore, when a revolutionary transformation takes place, when the oppressed masses have this celebration because of revolutionary change, they know what they are celebrating. And if a demagogue is going to come tomorrow and say: "No, the revolution that we were fighting for was not for a united South Africa but a ...", the people will say: "No, we knew what we were fighting for. We knew that these are our objectives, we have achieved those objectives". And it's not in any sense an unruly thing because no revolution can take place without conscious and active participation of the masses of the people who must know what they are fighting for.

DAWN politiXword No. 8 - Answers

ACROSS: 1. Con 3. Mhlaba 6. Renegade 8. Mew
9. Ambush 13. Agenda 15. Marxism 16. Tar

DOWN: 1. Communism 2. Norway 3. Man 4. Leg
5. Ape 7. Ash 10. Bhayi 11. Steam
12. Radar 14. Try