

NEGOTIATIONS have become a new area of struggle for the people of South Africa.

Recently the ANC took the initiative after canvassing international and internal opinions of plotting a path to the settlement of political conflict through negotiations.

The Organisation for African Unity recently adopted a Declaration on Southern Africa which incorporates guidelines of the ANC. This Declaration was endorsed by the Conference for a Democratic Future. (CDF).

The apartheid regime, Western imperialist leaders like Britain's Margaret Thatcher and the USA's George Bush are all using the word "negotiations".

But their intentions and definitions are different from the struggling people of South Africa.

Firstly, although there is a lot of talk of negotiations it does not mean the regime has given up and is now prepared to sit down with the ANC and discuss the transfer of power to the people.

Secondly, by talk of negotiations now the regime and imperialists hope to lay down their own terms and confuse and divide anti-apartheid forces inside and outside South Africa.

The task for the democratic movement is to seize the initiative as far as negotiations go. It is important to see negotiations as a form of struggle to be waged alongside other forms of struggle such as guerilla warfare and mass action.

Winning state power can be attained through an uprising or an outright military defeat of the apartheid forces. Alternatively, the oppressed people could win their freedom through negotiations with the racist regime such as has happened recently in Namibia.

Negotiations are meetings between two or more opposing sides through which an attempt is made to resolve their conflict in a way which would be acceptable to all parties or sides.

Workers organised in trade unions attempt to resolve their conflict with the bosses by entering into negotiations.

Usually the outcome of such negotiations does not satisfy the opposing parties though the settlement is acceptable to both. The winning of higher wages and better working conditions by workers through negotiations does not eliminate exploitation of workers by the capitalists.

It is only when workers win political power and seize the means of producing wealth that they can satisfy their demands to the fullest.

Winning power

It is in this sense that we say negotiations always involve an element of compromise. The extent to which each side could compromise and win depends on its strength.

Negotiating a path to power

The regime and the people have very different ideas on what is meant by negotiations. The task facing the democratic movement is to build struggle on all fronts.



A main demand of the people around negotiations is all political prisoners and detainees must be released and organisations unbanned so that there can be a free political climate

Today we are talking of resolving the South African struggle through negotiations. On the one side the forces of democracy and progress are gathered under the leadership of the ANC, on the other side the National Party.

The National Party has been pushed into a position by the struggle of the people and overseas pressure where it has to start talking about negotiations.

The State of Emergency has failed to crush the militancy of the people. Imperialist countries like Britain and the USA have realised they can no longer depend on the regime's reform and repression policies to stop the march of the people to freedom.

By pushing the regime to negotiate now, they hope that the ANC and MDM are not strong enough to dictate the terms of negotiation.

They believe if De Klerk talks of negotiations now, he may be able to seize the initiative. The imperialists are worried the longer it takes De Klerk to negotiate, the stronger the ANC and MDM get.

So, for example Britain has promised Frontline countries like Zambia aid if it pressurises the ANC to stop the armed struggle and talk to the regime.

It has promised De Klerk

foreign capital and the rescheduling of its debts to recover economically.

The National Party hopes that by talking of negotiations now it can stop sanctions and international pressure, and confuse and divide the anti-apartheid forces. It remains committed to apartheid and "group rights".

Government "negotiations" would involve a "great indaba" situation with representatives of all race groups. The agenda would be decided by the National Party.

The ANC and MDM would be expected to sit alongside the Labour Party, homeland leaders, town councillors and any other black "representatives" the government can scrape up.

Empty words

Talk of negotiations by De Klerk are mere empty words aimed at creating false hopes amongst the oppressed and thus demobilising them.

The liberation alliance headed by the ANC support genuine negotiations that will lead to the transfer of political power to the majority of the people, black and white.

The ANC has always been prepared to negotiate to achieve the transfer of power to the people. However, to meet this new politi-

cal situation, the ANC developed a negotiation proposal after consultation with the MDM to show the world what the people of South Africa understand by negotiations.

The ANC proposal which is published next to this article forms the real basis through which our people can achieve political power through a negotiated settlement.

The ANC has said it is up to the government to show its commitment to negotiations by:

- releasing political prisoners and detainees and halting political prisoners and detainees and halting political trials and executions
- unbanning political organisations
- lifting the State of Emergency
- withdrawing the troops from the townships, and
- repealing all laws that allow the government to ban, restrict, detain and imprison people and to allow freedom of speech, association and press.

Such a step would create a "free political climate" and allow the ANC to consult the people to get a mandate for negotiations.

The MDM and ANC are guided by the principles of accountability and mandates from

the people. They reject any negotiations behind the backs or above the heads of the people.

The ANC negotiation plan does not in anyway change our strategic objective of winning political power. Negotiations are but one method of the ongoing struggle to realise this objective.

Even if De Klerk succumbs to pressure and come to genuine negotiations with the ANC, the issue of transfer of power to the people has to be addressed. Such genuine negotiations can only be the outcome of struggles waged by the masses rather than De Klerk's goodwill or change of heart.

Build organisation

Any form of relaxing the offensive on the apartheid system will strengthen the imperialists hand in imposing a sell-out settlement on our people. The non-racial democratic society as embodied in the Freedom Charter is a threat to white domination and imperialists investment.

For the white supremacists and their imperialist supporters, the last resort remains a black President with a predominantly black government to protect the apartheid economy and their profits. By talking about negotiations, the National Party is trying to buy itself time.

What is important now is that the masses keep up the pressure on the regime, build and strengthen organisation and intensify the struggle on all fronts.

The national democratic struggle can be viewed as being made up of "four pillars" or fronts. These fronts or pillars - mass mobilisation, armed struggle, international support and the political underground - are intertwined and are equally important for the struggle to succeed.

Mass action

Mass mobilisation means militant action by the oppressed against the apartheid regime such as strikes, consumer boycotts, stay-aways, or defiance campaigns. Armed struggle involves military activities by the armed masses led by Umkhonto we Sizwe.

Apartheid cannot survive without political, moral and economic support from foreign countries like Britain, USA, Japan and West Germany. And so, the democratic movement campaigns for the isolation of the apartheid regime by the international community.

The socialist countries under the leadership of the USSR, the Third World countries, the Scandinavian countries and African countries remain the main sources of political and material support for our struggle.

Apartheid state terror forced the ANC, SACP, SACTU and Umkhonto we Sizwe to fight apartheid clandestinely through the underground front.