

FEBRUARY 1st 1985

A CONTRIBUTION FROM THE LUSAKA REGIONAL COMMITTEE (LRC) TO THE DISCUSSION INITIATED BY COMRADE MOTSHABI'S MEMORANDUM ENTITLED "COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS ON THE ISSUES TO BE RAISED AT THE FORTHCOMING CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE" by JOHN PULE MOTSHABI (JPM) DATED DECEMBER 1984

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JPM'S memorandum is a contribution to discussions taking place in preparation for the Conference. He is a veteran leader of the ANC, with many years service on its NEC; and also a longstanding former member of the S.A. Communist Party. Because of his high standing in the movement and the importance of the questions he raises, his memorandum ought to be studied with the care it deserves.

The memorandum opens with an outline of the background to the Morogoro Conference of 1969 and includes reference to the formation of MK, the Wankie operation of 1967, the emergence of dissident groups within MK and the ANC, and the preparations for the Morogoro Conference (p.1-4). JPM then turns to the two major issues that form the subject matter of his paper. One is 'tribalism'; the other 'open membership'. We shall summarise his opinions on each of these concepts in turn and add our comments at the end of the summary.

#### TRIBALISM

JPM considers that 'the problem of tribalism has been with us for a fairly long time'. It cropped up, he says, in the Youth League in 1959, attacked the MK leadership from 1965 onwards, manifested itself in Congwa, Zambia and even in Somafco. He personally presided over eight investigative commissions in which the issue of tribalism raised its head. He complains that he met with no response from the NEC when he drew attention to the problem. On the contrary, the NEC 'made every effort to play down the issue'. Nevertheless, he continued to bring it to the notice of the NEC, most recently after encountering 'a one-sided development of cadres, in seemingly tribal lines'. In this particular incident, he records 'the very cadres who were of the majority tribe raised it with me' (p.6). From this remark we may conclude that our cadres are divided into 'major' and 'minor' tribes, but JPM does not give them a name. Instead, he reports that his efforts to have the matter discussed by colleagues backfired into a campaign directed against him for allegedly 'building a power base for myself by holding discussions with cadres, thereby

jockeying for the presidency of the ANC' (p.7; our emphasis)

Apart from being misunderstood, he complains of being condemned without having an opportunity to explain. He then broadens the area of attack by accusing the Working Committee of resisting his attempts to discuss 'tribalism' and other sensitive issues. Because of this refusal he had no choice but to issue the memorandum since it became 'almost impossible to let the matter be treated as private'.

There may be a link between his complaint of 'tribalism' in the movement and the 'false allegation' that he is busy 'building power bases, campaigning for the presidency etc.'. But the connection is not clear. These are separate issues; one may make a bid for presidency without practising 'tribalism'. However he repudiates both accusations. 'None of these allegations are true, and I treat this (accusation) with the contempt it deserves'. We may therefore conclude that JPM will not practise tribalism, build power bases or compete for the presidency at any time in the foreseeable future. A precise statement to this effect would help to clear the air !

Meanwhile, says JPM, he will 'continue to criticise when and where necessary in order to build it'. The logic of the passage is such that 'it' may refer to power bases or campaigning for the presidency. Since he has rejected both activities we must assume that he vows to build the ANC and our revolutionary struggle.

#### OPEN MEMBERSHIP

This issue to which he gives much attention (p.8-11) has to do with the admission of non-Africans to the NEC or, in his words, the 'problem before us is open membership to other racial groups' (p.8). He divides the groups into three categories:

- 1) members of the SACP and SACTU who are co-partners with Africans in the liberation struggle;
- 2) non-Africans who support both ANC and MK; and,
- 3) those who support the ANC, but not armed struggle.

In the discussion that follows, he virtually ignores his classification and lumps all non-Africans together, whether they belong to the CP, SACTU or categories (2) and (3). All, in his opinion, should be barred from the NEC or even, as appears in some passages, from membership of the ANC.

A fourth category, not mentioned in the memorandum, consists of people

including Africans who support neither the ANC nor the armed struggle, or support armed struggle but not the ANC. Such persons may actively oppose our cause or be politically inert. The latter may well form a majority of the population and can hardly be ignored as being irrelevant.

Indeed, JPM argues that our immediate aim should be to increase political and military offensive at home and that for this purpose 'all racial groups should participate in preparation for a people's war' (p.8). He repeats this appeal towards the end of his memorandum when proposing a motto for the 1985 Conference : 'Mobilise all patriots of different races to actively and physically participate in the support of MK'. This participation, he adds, would 'guarantee a united effort of the oppressed and democratic patriots in building a wall of unity in action both militarily and politically' (p.12).

It must be obvious to so experienced and astute a leader as JPM that if we want to attract tens of thousands of South Africans of 'all racial groups', including Africans, we must tell them the conditions under which they are allowed to become fighters for freedom in our ranks.

Are they to become members of MK but not of the ANC unless they black? The 'problem' of recruiting the politically inert masses introduces another factor into our calculations. When taken into account, the 'silent majority' may very well produce the kind of equation far removed from the one contemplated by JPM in his one-sided approach.

He advises 'all racial groups' to busy themselves with grassroots organisation in their respective communities and not bother their heads about obtaining 'a place in the ANC and NEC' (p.8). He clinches this argument with the bold assertion that 'There is therefore, at this stage of our revolution, no need for an open membership'. Though he refers twice in this key passage to 'all racial groups', it would insult his intelligence and reputation to take the phrase literally and assume that he wants Africans also to confine their activities to grassroots organisations and to forget the ANC and its leadership. Let us therefore conclude that his advice is

meant only for non-Africans. If that is his intention, we need to know why he discriminates between freedom fighters on racial grounds. The following paragraph in the text provides an answer and deserves to be quoted in full (p.8.)

"If those who champion the present political development have reached a stage where they see the need for a new multiracial organisation, which would alter the national content of our struggle as accepted by the ANC, SACTU, and SACP - then let us say so, and not make reference to Morogoro Conference as having decided on open membership. Then we shall be debating on a different platform, suggesting that the ANC be dissolved in favour of the new organisation, and we shall have to decide whether to make the choice in exile, without the owners of the ANC back home"

JPM argues in this passage that any decision taken by the Morogoro Conference should not bind us when making up our minds on the issue of 'open membership'. He appears to be uncertain about the actual nature of any ruling that might have been taken for he states (p.9) that 'It is extremely important for the whole record of the 1969 Morogoro Conference to be made available to the entire membership'. Apart from this uncertainty, we might readily agree that the question should be decided on the basis of principle rather than precedent. The question to ask is; What suits the movement best at this stage of the struggle for a free, united and democratic South Africa ?

JPM's answer is that terrible things would happen if the Consultative Conference were to decide on an 'open membership' policy. He predicts the following scenario:

1. Dissolution of the existing ANC, which forecast is puzzling since the ANC in exile has had an open membership for nearly a quarter of a century without being involved in 'racial disputes.
2. Formation of a new ANC with open membership, which would be 'liberal', for unstated reasons and contrary to our experience of the revolutionary ANC.
3. The SACP would remain, and continue to be a militant party, It has always had an open membership, but JPM raises no objection to the Party's firm rejection of discrimination within its ranks on any grounds.
4. 'Even with all this, there would still be a need for an African organisation' That in many ways is the most interesting prediction. In making this assertion, JPM comes closely to the BCM and New Forum position of rejecting 'whites' in their organisation, but he is even more exclusively Africanist, since he allows no place in the 'African

organisation' for members of oppressed minority groups, the Coloured and Indians who are not rejected at home.

5. The CP, the new ANC and presumably the 'African organisation' would compete for African support on the issue whether the armed struggle should continue or be abandoned. This forecast is also puzzling. Why should an 'open membership' ANC abandon the armed struggle or even question its legitimacy after nearly 25 years of MK activities? we can only assume that JPM doubts the sincerity, loyalty and commitment of existing non-African members of the ANC and wants them out. Hence his urgent plea: 'Let us not make an opening at this stage' (p.9)

### SOUTH AFRICA FOR AFRICANS

JPM's doubts and fears come to the surface in a number of assertions about the activities of Indians in Natal, opportunist elements in the liberation movement and attempts by unnamed persons to 'lead Africans or being more African than Africans' (p.9). "Africans must unite and fight vigorously," he says, to 'stop this unwelcome inroad'. He probably suspects the handful of whites in the ANC of harbouring such wicked thoughts, because in the following paragraph (p.10) he claims- that he cannot possibly be accused of 'anti-whitism' in view of his communist past and socialist outlook,

He then acknowledges that 'other national groups' have a useful contribution to make to our struggle. They have had the privilege of acquiring skills which they can impart, It seems from this remark that JPM/<sup>would</sup>accepts whites and other non-Africans if they were restricted to the role of 'expatriate experts', backroom boys who do the thinking and technical work for their 'bosses' in the NEC and, looking ahead, in the cabinet of a liberated South Africa.

His firm belief, he says, is that Africans must liberate themselves from the stranglehold exercised by the white minority which rejects equality and denies that Africans are competent to rule themselves.

THE OVERRIDING FACTOR WHICH FINDS US WHERE WE ARE TODAY IS WHITE DOMINATION (JPM'S emphasis) Whoever raised the issue of including members of non-African groups in the NEC should avoid giving the impression that Africans must be led by non-Africans to liberate

themselves 'The point that the leadership of our struggle must remain in the hands of the Africans must never be missed' (p.10)

That principle has surely never been challenged within or outside the ANC; but it does not necessarily rule out the possibility of admitting non-Africans on grounds of merit to the NEC. JPM insists, however, on giving the issue a racial dimension. He claims that the case for 'open membership' comes from 'other racial groups'. They demand full membership, making them eligible for the NEC in return for the 'supreme sacrifice' demanded of them by contributing to the destruction of the racist regime. He asks: are these 'patriots doing the African a favour? Are these dear revolutionaries putting the ANC to blackmail'?

The sarcasm is more significant than a mere literary device to impress readers. It arises from a degree of uncertainty in the writer, a lack of confidence in his position which appears also in his appeal to avoid the mistakes of the Morogoro Conference of 1969.

'Controversial issues like open membership and the Morogoro type of conference should be postponed', he argues, 'until we reach home' (p.12) Postponement could, however, be interpreted also as a self-seeking device to protect vested interests. Postponement may enable us to draw a blanket of silence over the issues that JPM has discussed at some length in the open, but they will not disappear and must be expected to raise their head time and again in our ranks and at home. He is no doubt aware of the anomalies and contradictions in our position: contradictions between a non-African membership in the ANC and its exclusion from the top leadership, thereby creating first and second class members; between racial exclusiveness in the ANC and the trend at home towards open doors for Coloured, Indians and even Africans; between a racial bias in our ranks and our attempts to create a united front.

JPM ends with a rousing appeal for a united front. He proposes that 'our motto for the forthcoming 1985 Conference should be to mobilise all patriots of different races to actively and physically participate in the support of MK, which will guarantee a united

effort of the oppressed and democratic patriots in building a wall of unity in action both militarily and politically' (p.12). His eloquent appeal is a good statement of existing policy, but may be less than convincing to supporters who are told that while they are welcome to enlist in MK their position in the ANC is uncertain and only Africans will be allowed to rise to the top.

### TWO REVOLUTIONS

1. Tribalism and racialism are basically the same social phenomenon. They have an origin in actual cultural and physical differences but these are significant only in social systems divided into classes. In a class society 'natural' divisions like those between the sexes, nationalities and races attract discriminations to suit the interest of the ruling class in ways well known to us. Our history is saturated with <sup>the</sup> 'divide and rule' strategy used by colonists, settlers and their governments to conquer and subdue.

Bantustans, the tri-racial parliament, an emerging black bourgeoisie are products of this divisive strategy. The liberation movement has responded with calls for a United Front of South Africans committed in the words of our President 'to the revolutionary perspective of the seizure of power by the people and the building of a new society in a united, democratic and non-racial South Africa' (address delivered by Comrade President O.R.Tambo on the occasion of 8th January, 1985). It is an inclusive appeal embracing members of all national communities. Our cadres, the President said in his address, 'are men and women, young and old, black and white who are involved in daily struggles, making sacrifices in pursuit of the people's cause' <sup>(p13)</sup> His call for unity in action of all national groups repeats the message delivered January 8 1979 in Luanda when he said 'It is our conviction and hope that 1982 will find the ANC with a membership representative of a cross section of our entire population, a membership which will include a substantial percentage of those South Africans now living under the doubtful privilege of being "White"'. Comrade Nelson Mandela also called for an 'open door' in his recent interview with the Conservative Party peer Lord Bethel. He is reported as saying:

'Personally, I am a socialist and I believe in a classless society. But I see no reason to belong to any political party at the moment. Businessmen and farmers, **white** or black, can join our movement to fight against racial discrimination. It would be a blunder to narrow it' (Sunday Mail, London 27th January, 1985).

2. There is no need to remind ourselves that the ANC was founded in 1912 to unite organisations formed to promote African interests; but clause 12(6) of the 1919 Constitution might be quoted in full because of its relevance. It states that one of the ANC's aims is 'To encourage mutual understanding and to bring together into common action as one political people all tribes and clans of various tribes or races and by means of combined effort and united political organisation to defend their freedom, rights and privileges'. According to sub-section (7), the ANC would combat racialism and tribal feuds; while sub-section (9) pledged the ANC to agitate for the removal of the 'Colour Bar' in political education and industry. Membership was open to persons 'belonging to the aboriginal races of Africa', including Coloured. Women qualified for 'auxiliary membership' without voting rights if they belonged to the African Womens National League.

A new Constitution adopted in 1943, removed both restrictions. Clause 3 provided that 'Any person over 17 years of age who is willing to subscribe to the aims of Congress and to abide by its Constitution and Rules may become an individual member upon application to the nearest branch,

The 1958 Constitution retained the open membership clause by declaring that 'Membersh<sup>ip</sup> of the Congress shall be open to any person above the age of 18, who accepts its principles, policy and programme and is prepared to abide by its Constitution and Rules (Clause 3 (a) ). Under 'Rights and Duties' the Constitution provides that a member shall have the right 'To take part in the elections and to be elected to any committee, commission or

delegation of the Congress' (Clause 6(a) (iii) ).

3. JPM alleges that he and others for whom he speaks are victims of tribal prejudice and discrimination within Congress. It is for this reason and because of inability to obtain a hearing in the NEC that he wrote and circulated his memorandum without its prior approval. The complaints are serious and should be investigated at the highest level.
4. Whereas JPM's efforts to combat tribalism are in keeping with traditional ANC policy, his campaign against the 'open membership' clause calls for a closer analysis on two grounds. Firstly, it challenges established practice and the existing constitution; secondly, it raises important principles of policy and strategy. To avoid misunderstanding, the LRC repeats the summary of his argument on p.10 of the memorandum:
  - \*Our struggle is first and foremost against White Domination;
  - \*Africans can and should liberate themselves under their own leadership;
  - \*People who want to include non-Africans in the NEC may create an impression that Africans are incapable of doing the job on their own.
5. JPM's approach amounts to an inverted racialism, in which <sup>the</sup> colour bar is raised against non-Africans. The exclusion is necessary, he claims, to prevent them from seizing control of the ANC and the liberation movement.

One might debate the issue at his chosen level, by probing his fears and assessing the reasons for them against the performance of Africans in the ANC or in the government of independent African states. Another angle, is to relate his argument to the appropriate philosophical or ideological concepts. We suggest a class approach, which JPM, being a former communist and present socialist would surely approve. Indeed, it is surprising that his memorandum makes no mention of the class divisions in our country and their impact on the revolutionary struggle.

Our struggle is against white domination, which is a system of national oppression, and, in the President's words for 'a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa' which means a society of equals.

There are two kinds of equality. One is equality before the law - a 'formal' equality that guarantees equal rights to all people. This is what the Freedom Charter demands: 'All national groups shall have equal rights'. Formal, legal equality of rights is an essential element of democracy.

The other is 'factual' equality that guarantees equality of power and opportunity in relation to the ownership of the means of production; and distributes wealth under the rule: 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs'. That kind of equality exists only under socialism, which the Freedom Charter does not contemplate.

At the present stage of our struggle the goal of national liberation is to destroy all forms of national oppression and multinational control of the economy. The national democratic revolution is directed against the oppressing nation and not against the owners of capital. This fact gives rise to such deviations as Black Consciousness or JPM's racial exclusiveness on the one hand, and to 'workerist' tendencies on the other hand. The correct position is to recognise that just as there are two kinds of equality, so there are two kinds of revolution, separate yet intertwined. The struggle for equal rights is the national liberation revolution; the struggle for equal ownership and a classless society is a socialist revolution. The national liberation revolution for equal rights is the special province of the oppressed nationalities; the socialist revolution is the class struggle led by the working class which is non-racial. Both revolutions co-exist, operating side by side. They also interact, blending and fructifying each other. Who of us would deny that association has strengthened/ the class struggle, or that  
and enriches

the national revolution owes much of its tactics, strategy and indeed the armed struggle itself, to the forces of the socialist revolution at home and abroad?

This is not the place to debate the merits of each or of the alliance between them. The partnership is an established reality, born out of struggle against the common enemy, cemented by sacrifices on the battlefield and watered by the blood of our martyrs. They are as closely knit as Siamese twins. To separate them would need a surgical operation which might kill or cripple both.

JPM does not question the existence of the alliance in the building of which he made an important contribution. To preserve and strengthen the partnership, which the enemy desperately seeks to destroy, is a good reason for pursuing our cadre policy of recruiting militants and progressives from all national groups and all sections of the working class.

ENDS.