

## NOTES ON THE POLITICAL SITUATION.

### Introduction:

1. The situation in SA is developing at a rapid pace. Internationally the issue of apartheid features high on the agenda of tasks humanity has committed itself to tackle with utmost urgency. Different forces within and without SA offer their own reading of the situation, the ways and means of resolving the crisis and the concept of an apartheid-free SA.
2. Similarly, the ANC views developments within the country from its own point of view. Our approach is based on the analysis of the fundamental contradictions within apartheid colonialism, the interests and aspirations of our people, as well as the tasks our people are fulfilling in action.
3. In this particular item on the agenda we seek to share views on these developments. Flowing from such a discussion will be the pertinent question, what is to be done in order to move even faster to the goal of a free, democratic, united and non-racial South Africa.

### The General Crisis of Apartheid Colonialism:

1. The system of apartheid colonialism is experiencing an enormous general crisis. Like all archaic systems at the point of their decline, the factors which have always made it a colossus with inherent energies for self-destruction have been unleashed.
2. The mass of the oppressed and democratic forces have risen in the most consistent, most resolute and most decisive revolt ever to be witnessed in our country. This revolt combines both mass and armed actions, in which the revolutionary movement, the ANC and its allies are playing a leading role. It is reinforced by the growing anti-apartheid movement all over the globe. On the other hand, the apartheid economy is experiencing a crisis that is structural in its essence, affecting its very marrow. These factors are precipitating a crisis of the ruling class, including the further worsening of divisions wrecking this bloc.
3. The regime has therefore lost the strategic initiative. As we stated on January 5th, "strategically the enemy is on the defensive. The critical point is that any counter-offensive the oppressors may launch to gain some tactical advances will, at the same time, only result in further worsening their strategic position". The historical initiative is in our hands.

### The Economic Crisis and its Significance:

1. Volumes have been written on the current economic crisis which is the worst in over half a century. It is a crisis affecting the entire structure of the SAN economy, leading to the criminal underutilisation of the country's human and material resources.

and above all to the further worsening of the terrible conditions of the working people. The effects of this devastating crisis are now also being felt increasingly among white workers as well. Production has fallen; whole industries and regions are on the decline; unemployment has reached alarming proportions. And, in the same measure as the wretched conditions of the poor deteriorate, the rich continue to laugh all the way to the banks, and to amass more property in their hands.

There are certain issues pertaining to this crisis which we need to identify, affecting both our strategy and our tactics. For the sake of emphasis we shall isolate only a few.

2. The decline of the Rand and other woes are linked primarily to the fall in gold prices. Despite declarations to the contrary by spokesmen of apartheid, the SA economy depends to a decisive extent on the mining industry. This raises the question of the strategic position occupied by workers in this industry. Their history is an epitome of struggle, their revolutionary example lofty. They are yet to play the decisive role that history has placed on them.

The outflow of capital has further weakened the economy. Our resolute struggles on all fronts and the disinvestment campaign in particular have contributed to this development.

A lot could be said about the question of loans. What has become obvious is the fact that, in a situation of serious crisis, they could make or break the system. Though the creditors are interested in bailing the regime, the hard facts of the politico-economic equation in SA today forces them to consider the broader question of political change.

3. The albatross of government spending weighs down heavily upon the economy: the war machine, the bureaucracy, influx control, bantustans, etc. This emphasises in a very direct manner the link between the political and economic developments, our oppression and our exploitation. As COSATU and the rest of the democratic movement have always emphasised, the economic and political struggles cannot be separated.

In spite of the economic downturn, and because of it, the mass actions of the working people have intensified. In 1985 the strike movement was more massive than ever. This trend cannot be divorced from the popular mass offensive. The question that arises here is, how do we maintain such an offensive on the factory-floor, prevent the bosses from shifting the economic burden onto us, and at the same time make it difficult for them to weaken our actions by exploiting the fact of the existence of the army of the unemployed and the drive to cut production. This goes to emphasise the need for a strategy that is coherent, to address the crisis, to include such important questions as a national drive to fight retrenchment, organisation of the unemployed, united action both among workers within SA and abroad and joint worker-community actions.

4. In the overall, the crisis can be traced to the capitalist system and its specifics under apartheid colonialism. Its solution cannot be divorced from the political issues confronting the people and the goal of a free and democratic SA. The corner-stone of such freedom and democracy is the return of the wealth to the people. In the words of

the Freedom Charter, "The people shall share in the country's wealth"; "The land shall be shared among those who work it".

### The Ruling Class:

1. Botha and his clique are experiencing a very serious crisis of policy. Total Strategy has, in the broad sense, collapsed. A profound expression of this is the admission by all and sundry that apartheid is a failure. Each of the ruling class camps has its own perception of what apartheid is, of the reasons for its failure and the way out of the quagmire. But the ruling class in its totality admits that it can no more rule in the old way. The serious contradictions within this bloc have come out into the open.
2. Within Afrikanerdom, the parting of ways expresses itself in three basic directions:
  - a) The forces to the right of the NP continue to consolidate their positions. Driven to panic by the decisiveness of the revolt and Botha's floundering, these forces are dutifully seeking solace in the past.
  - b) Despite attempts to paper over the cracks, it has become an open secret that all is not well within the NP, including at cabinet level. The differences are on how to extricate the system out of the all-round crisis - how far and how fast!
  - c) The voice of dissent to the "left" of the NP - the few youth, academics and clergy who openly acknowledge the legitimacy of the liberation struggle and favour a just resolution of the crisis - has become louder. Their defiant self-expression shows that there is growing dissent beneath the surface.
3. In the place of the "politics of consensus" that characterised ruling class politics for close on to 7 years, 1985 witnessed the deepest divisions ever between monopoly capital and the ruling clique. They criticise Botha more openly and more scathingly. They have gone ahead to initiate the Convention Alliance, held consultations with the ANC, formulated the Business Charter, etc. The resignation of two leaders of the PFP from parliament has had a profound effect in that, a.o., complete rejection of "reform" came from quarters which can hardly be called revolutionary, and it has shifted, in the most dramatic manner, attention away from the racist parliament.
4. Unlike Botha who believes repression, like in the early '60's, will quell the revolt, big business fears the outbreak of revolution. They are demanding far-reaching decisions including negotiations with the ANC in order to avert revolutionary change and protect the system of monopoly capitalism. Also, they seek to maintain their position as representatives of whites who are becoming disillusioned with the vicious system, to ease international pressure, and to diffuse the revolt and achieve political and economic stability. These aims are inter-related; some are short-term and some long-term; and they entail many gambles on their part. For them, a "peaceful solution" - couched in such terms as "confederalism" and "consociationalism" - means that the regime should negotiate from a position of strength so that it can determine the final outcome, that the system of monopoly capitalism should not be tempered with,

and that the privileges of the white minority and the ethnic divisions fostered by apartheid should be maintained though in a slightly modified form.

5. The fact that these forces elected to confer with the ANC is an acknowledgement on their part that the ANC is central to the solution of the crisis in SA. These discussions were a mere exchange of views, not negotiations. The ANC position on the latter is quite clear: we cannot negotiate behind the backs of our people, when our leaders and other patriots are behind bars, when there is no intention on the part of Pretoria to dismantle apartheid colonialism, etc.

6. Naturally, there were differences of opinion on such fundamental questions as armed struggle, "reforms", our concept of a free and democratic SA, etc. For our part, nothing in SA warrants even a consideration of change of strategy; rather we are called upon to intensify the mass and armed offensive, including against those who exploit and harass workers and bolster the political, military and other programmes of the regime. At the same time, without compromising our basic policy positions, we encourage all trends that move in the direction of weakening the regime, and all those who sincerely seek a just settlement of the crisis. We shall also continue to wage a political struggle against forces which want to derail the liberation struggle, by proposing a middle course which entails nothing more than tinkering with the apartheid system without fundamentally changing it.

7. In the same vein, while dealing with the difficulties imposed by the regime's repressive actions, we should also work towards defeating in action the regime's counter-offensive of 'reform': co-optation and divide-and-rule, in particular, the latest "package" in the form of Regional Service Councils, National Statutory Council, regulations on 'urban' Africans, etc.

#### The Forces of Change:

1. The concrete issues pertaining to the forces of opposition will be dealt with when we thrash out strategies for change and the programme for 1986. We shall now briefly characterise the level of development of struggle: the strategic and tactical considerations which necessitated our programme of action for this year and the near future.

2. For many months now our country has witnessed an uninterrupted revolt by the oppressed and democratic forces. There have been ebbs and flows, but the offensive has been sustained and it is escalating. The regime's only battle weapons, 'reform' and repression only fan the fires of revolt. Despite the state of seige, the revolt continues to mature into a revolutionary situation. What are the characteristics of this revolt?

3. a) The determination and resolution of the people has never been more solid. Openly and in large numbers they defy death, display mass heroism at a scale unheard of in many, many years. United action is the order of the day.

b) The people are not only refusing to be ruled in the old way; they are refusing to be

governed by anybody but themselves. The legitimacy of the regime has collapsed.

c) In addressing the fundamental question of the transfer of power, they have gone ahead to smash the regime's institutions and created in many areas rudimentary organs of power: democratic organs which represent their aspirations and effect popular legitimacy.

d) Elements from among the people, especially the youth, have gone ahead to create combat groups which are essentially an important layer of the people's army. The mass of the people continue to master mass battle tactics of confronting the enemy, and where necessary carry out mass revolutionary violence and popular justice.

e) At appropriate moments, the weapon of the general strike has been put to good use. Also, the experience of the consumer boycott has shown what mighty weapon we wield in our hands.

f) Steadily the struggle is spreading to the white areas. This entails workers' mass and armed actions, greater involvement of white democrats, actions against enemy institutions and personnel in these areas and so on.

g) Having built their democratic organisations, the people continue to evolve organisational formations suitable for the State of Emergency.

h) The overwhelming majority identify with the ANC and its revolutionary perspectives as enshrined in the Freedom Charter.

4. Linked to all these developments is the uninterrupted escalation of the armed struggle. Despite Pretoria's attempts to emasculate the movement and the people's army within SA and abroad, armed actions have increased tremendously in scope and quality. Gradually, armed struggle is involving the mass of the people at different levels - assuming the form of people's war. We can say today that MK has irreversibly rooted itself among the people and, with them, possess the potential for a rapid intensification of the armed offensive.

5. The ANC holds the view that the working class, in particular black workers, are the vanguard of the the national democratic revolution. In this regard, the following questions emerge: Are black workers sufficiently engaged in mass action around their day-to-day demands? Do they link these struggles to the broad political issues? Are they sufficiently organised and united in their trade unions? Are they, as individuals and in their organised contingents participating in community struggles? Are they to be found in the forefront in these struggles? To most of these questions we can confidently reply in the affirmative. Yet as leaders of the broad democratic movement we shall have to further examine these questions frankly so as to find ways of ensuring that this role manifests itself in word and in fact. For only in this way can the victory of genuine people's democracy be assured.

We are proud that we have in our liberation alliance the vanguard party of the working class and revolutionary trade union federation which are playing an important role in the national democratic struggle and in particular the organisation and mobilisation of the working class.

We would also like to seize this opportunity, on behalf of the NEC of the ANC, the

soldiers of MK and our general membership, to express our gratitude to the leaders and members of the NUM for their historic and bold decision to confer on Nelson Mandela the title of president of the NUM. We hail also their resolution to transform this decision into action.

6. a) The extent of the education crisis is well-known to all of us. Credit for such stoicism goes to the students who, despite all odds, have sustained the offensive against gutter education; it goes to the teachers, parents and the rest of the community. In this respect, note must be made of the growing spirit of defiance among the teachers reflected in recent actions, the formation of progressive teachers' unions and at the 54th Annual Conference of ATASA. As this trend gathers momentum, the question of their link with the democratic union movement will arise.

b) The crisis of apartheid is a result also of the actions of people in the rural areas, youth, women, democratic religious leaders, black businesspeople and democratic whites. Much can be said about the epic battles that these sections of society have fought, singly and collectively. At the appropriate moment we shall outline our programme also in respect of these forces.

c) The same can be said about community struggles around such issues as rents, high r<sup>h</sup>prices and fares. Suffice it to note that the rent strike so steadfastly sustained in such areas as the Vaal Triangle has been taken up in the Cape Town African townships.

#### Conclusion:

1. These are the major factors which underline the enormity of the crisis of apartheid colonialism. Taking into account this situation, the ANC has come to the conclusion that the democratic movement possesses the power and is duty bound to capture the historical moment by going onto a massive offensive on all fronts. The rapid escalation of the armed struggle is an important element of this offensive, in this the Year of MK - the People's Army.

2. As we stated on January 8th: "Our strategic goal must be to shift the balance of strength decisively in favour of our struggle, through the further ripening of the revolutionary situation beyond the point where the regime is not able to rule in the old way to a stage where it is in fact unable to govern.

"...we must build our forces into an ever more formidable united mass army of liberation, an army that must grow in strength continuously, able to deliver and actually delivering bigger blows at every stage and fighting as a conscious force with its eyes firmly fixed on the goal of the destruction of the apartheid regime and the transfer of power to the people".