

**SPECIAL ISSUE**

# UMSEBENZI

SPECIAL ISSUE, NOVEMBER 1989

VOICE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY

## BEWARE THE TRAPS AHEAD!

**The situation is full of promise for a major advance. But it is also full of traps. And the key question facing all of us is how to guide the advance without falling into the traps.**

In general, there are two extreme positions which spell danger for the future of our struggle. The one is to maintain that nothing has really changed. This would close our minds to certain tactical readjustments needed to build on the victories already scored. The other is to exaggerate the meaning of the changes. This could lead to an abandonment or toning down of those aspects of our strategy which made those victories possible and which will lay the basis for the ultimate victory.

**The need, therefore, to reflect on the relationship between our strategy and tactics in our developing situation has never been greater. It calls for both flexibility and adherence to principle.**

It is plain that the regime's tactical approach has shifted. It is responding to mounting internal struggle and external pressure and its failure to contain and reverse the people's militancy. There is, however, no doubt that, in all essential respects, De Klerk's shift is designed to continue old policies by other means. **But merely to say this is not enough.** In order to assess the significance of the shift for our own tactical approaches, we need to go further.

**Firstly**, the fact that the regime is forced to change course creates certain new conditions of struggle which cannot be ignored. Events have already shown that the 'new means' have also opened **new space** for advance.

**Secondly**, we should not judge the effect of an enemy's initiatives solely by its intentions. History has shown over and over again that the objective results of an action often turn out to be the very opposite of what was intended.

In short, it is, above all, our responses which will play the key role in determining whether De Klerk's tactical readjustment will result in holding back or advancing our cause. We must undoubtedly make full use of whatever new space has opened up. But in doing so we must not be trapped into positions which will play into the regime's hands.

What are the main danger areas, and how do we avoid them?

- We must frustrate the regime's intention to trap us into substituting 'legal' protest politics for active resistance, defiance and armed challenge. These terrains of struggle must be pursued with mounting vigour; they must not be treated as alternatives.
- A new relationship is clearly beginning to emerge between legal and illegal work. But this should not tempt us to overlook the borderline between the two. **The style of our legal work must make it less easy for the regime to 'justify' going back to its previous positions. At the same time, we must use the space won and even expand it without burning our strategic boats.** Legal and illegal work are both separate and inter-connected terrains of





struggle. A clumsy collapse of the one into the other will do damage to both.

- As yet, De Klerk is doing little more than experimenting with new safety valves to take the steam out of the militancy which the old methods failed to dampen. We need to prepare ourselves organisationally to meet a possible backlash and resist being lulled into pure 'legalism'. **The consolidation and strengthening of the underground and the spread of grassroots people's organisation remains top priority.**
- We have never rejected the possibility of meaningful negotiation. But it is political suicide to spread the illusion that this could come about through anything short of intensified struggle and pressure on all fronts. A key tactic in the regime's attempts to demobilise our people is to present De Klerk as a leader who has both the will and the capacity, in the long run, to 'dismantle apartheid'. We must be on the alert to frustrate this deception in everything we say and do.
- The recent outstanding gains in the international arena, including the widespread acceptance of the ANC-sponsored negotiating concept, must be consolidated and expanded. In particular, we must actively thwart pressures from Pretoria's allies, and even isolated tendencies among some of our friends, which objectively encourage the idea of 'peace at any price'. It is, of course, important to counter the enemy-fed slanders that we are unreasonable and wild in the pursuit of our objectives. But in doing so we should not put at risk our standing among our people as militants and revolutionaries.

**If a time ever arrives when the regime is ready to genuinely negotiate the process of moving to democracy as understood by the whole civilised world, it will come as a wonderful surprise. And if the preconditions for talks are met, a dialogue about the process may become possible. Until then there can be no retreat from our policy of mounting even greater pressures on all fronts of struggle, internal and external, legal and illegal.**

**There is nothing in the present situation which justifies a departure from the perspective of a seizure of power. We must skilfully use the new space which De Klerk has been forced to concede to advance this perspective.**



- We stand four-square behind the immediate objectives of the National Democratic Revolution. This will bring about a multi-party, non-racist democracy based on one person one vote, a mixed economy and constitutional safeguards for the social, cultural, linguistic and religious rights of all individuals. The struggle to achieve this calls for the broadest coalition of all class and democratic forces who support these aims and who are not hostile to the ANC and the Mass Democratic Movement. We must also be on our guard against the pseudo-revolutionaries who attempt to narrow the base of such a coalition. At the same time the working class and its political and mass organisations must maintain their independence and vigorously spread their ultimate perspective of socialism.