

UMSEBENZI



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VOICE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY



SCRAP RACE RULE!

**... not just
race laws**

When an oppressor declares his intention to stop oppressing, we might be pleased. But we don't go down on bended knees in gratitude.

FW De Klerk announced on February 1 his intention to repeal the Group Areas Act, the Land Acts, and the Population Registration Act.

The government has been forced by popular struggle to make concessions which are positive and real. But we do not thank them for repealing (very late in the day) laws which the whole world recognises as crimes against humanity.

It's true that De Klerk is now turning away from some of the legal Holy Grail of apartheid.

But let us not get over-excited. Let us not overlook the facts, and some of the really dangerous pitfalls.

Ending apartheid isn't just repealing racist laws.
• Apartheid is also the political power of an illegitimate minority regime, with its white-dominated police and army, buttressed with security legislation and with a whites-only judiciary.

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INTERIM GOVERNMENT NOW!

An illegitimate regime continues to rule by decree

• Apartheid is also the accumulated economic powers and privileges of whites. These are powers and privileges that they have pocketed with the help of colonial conquest, dispossession and decades of National Party oppression of our people.

So what does FW De Klerk's February 1 speech have to say about all these critical issues?

An illegitimate regime

As far as De Klerk is concerned, his illegitimate regime, which represents a small minority of South Africans, will dictate the pace and content of change in our country, from above.

He simply dismisses out of hand the call for an Interim Government and a democratic Constituent Assembly.

He has not scrapped security legislation. He is silent about a general amnesty for exiles and political prisoners. He praises the security forces which continue to harass, detain, and even kill our people. He says nothing about disbanding death squads and vigilante forces. He praises the whites-only judiciary, but nothing is said about ending political trials.

Is this the end of apartheid?

White privileges

And what about accumulated white economic power and privileges?

On the face of it, De Klerk has moved away from the racist group concept. But his speech is full of hints about protecting the accumulated privileges of whites. He speaks about 'protecting standards' and about 'the rights of communities' in housing, welfare and education.

These are all hidden ways of referring to the maintenance and protection of white privilege.



At present, the government's social spending is five times more per capita on whites than on blacks. But De Klerk tells us that to achieve the goal of "parity in social expenditure will require hard work and stern discipline over the next decade and beyond."

In other words, De Klerk expects equal government spending on blacks and whites to take ten years and more!

Is this the end of apartheid?

Removing the Land Acts is one thing, real redress for

ABOLISH THE RACIST PARLIAMENT!



3 million people forcibly removed and dumped like sacks of sand is another. Given the present racial inequalities, removing the Land Acts and the Group Areas Act may mean very little more than that whites will now also be buying up what little is valuable in the 13% of land presently designated 'black'.

It is true, there will be some tokens. The Land Bank Act is to be changed. A few token black farmers will now also be financed. But this goes nowhere near getting to the root of the land question.

In fact, De Klerk shows very little understanding of the immense suffering that his apartheid system has brought to our people.

He even blames inflation on workers and 'unjustifiable wage increases'. Does he realise that about 70% of black people are living below the poverty line?

We say: Scrap minority rule — not just racist legislation!

We say: We need a representative interim government now!

It must be an Interim Government with real powers, an Interim Government that can supervise free and fair elections for a democratic Constituent Assembly.

But De Klerk has dismissed the call for an Interim Government out of hand. Instead he has offered "certain transitional arrangements on the various legislative and executive levels to give the leaders of the negotiating parties a voice in the formulation of important policy decisions".

It is clear De Klerk is trying to draw us into an apparatus where he has the authority, but where we share the blame. He is asking us to climb on board one of Vlok's Casspirs.

Sorry. We are not hitch-hiking, and we certainly don't want any lifts from Vlok's Casspirs, destination unknown.

An Interim Government, which De Klerk summarily rejects, is a crucial component for a democratic transition. One side, representing a small but powerful minority, cannot be both player and referee.

The Interim Government must have real power. An Interim Government installed, while the present army, police and administration exist unfettered and unchanged, will be an empty shell, not a government. The formation of an Interim Government must be linked to the beginnings of a new people's army and people's police force.

We need to consider what role, if any, an international monitoring force, like the UN can play in the transition.

The Interim Government must also have authority over all South Africa, otherwise it will be an accessory to another apartheid crime - the Bantustan system.

Bush, Major and other western leaders have saluted De Klerk for his announced intention to do away with

apartheid's corner-stone legislation. But neither they nor De Klerk have mentioned that essential corner-stone: the Bantustan system.

Forward to a democratically elected Constituent Assembly!

De Klerk, with all his nice words about democracy and participation, simply 'declares' his 'opposition to the idea of an elected constituent assembly'. He doesn't tell us why. If he is such a firm believer in democratic participation, what's the problem with a constituent assembly?

A democratic constitution is not something to be bargained over simply by the leadership of the ANC-led liberation alliance, the leadership of the NP, and by any other political leaders who happen to be at a multi-party conference.

The framing of a democratic constitution must be the responsibility of the elected representatives of the people as a whole.

If De Klerk is serious about his own '*Manifesto for The New South Africa*', then let him show it by implementing its very first principle: 'Participation'.

Let us have real participation when it comes to drawing up a new constitution.

Mass action remains the key

Not only does De Klerk want to lock the leadership of the ANC into a powerless co-option. He also wants to demobilise the masses.

In fact De Klerk is virtually taking over our own slogan. 'Your victory is certain', he is telling us.

'Those who are fighting about something which will disappear in any event', he wants us to believe, are wasting their time.

In fact, now is the time to redouble our efforts.

Let us not under-rate the cunning of De Klerk and his government. But let us also not exaggerate their strength. They have no longer-term workable solutions. They are juggling with ad hoc measures of all kinds. They are in a desperate hurry to get negotiations going.

With sustained mass action we can win our major demands. We can ensure that real democracy, and not minority rule in a new guise, is won.

We will not be demobilised!

The essence of De Klerk's speech is that he and his minority government will bring about the new South Africa. The rest of us can come along for the ride, if we want.

**Racist laws are about to be scrapped.
But the spirit of baasskap lives on!**

FORWARD TO A DEMOCRATIC CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY!

Shaft Number 4

The first Party branch in the Transvaal



9pm on January 9 1991, 45 miners are singing revolutionary songs and moving in that accustomed toyi-toyi rhythm. This was the mood in which the first *Transvaal branch of the SACP* was launched. The branch is drawn from just one mine shaft on a large gold mine.

For the purposes of defending our branch and members at this early stage we shall refrain from giving the exact location and names.

The threat of retrenchment is hanging over the head of many miners.

The meeting started just after 5.30pm. The manner in which it was organised brought back not-so-distant memories of the days of the underground. Only participants were in the vicinity. The premises were patrolled by marshalls who are part of the new Party branch. These miners know that class struggles can be a matter of life and death. Organisation is the only means of survival.

In the opening remarks a member of the Transvaal Regional Interim Leadership Group said: 'The Party is not a bus that indiscriminately collects whoever has a fare. The Party is an organisation of fighters committed to ending oppression and exploitation in this country. We are not interested in card collectors and armchair politicians. For example, no communist must take leave when workers are about to go on strike. We communists must strive to educate other workers mainly through force of example, in order to win their support and confidence.'

When election time came for the branch leadership it was clear that workers have high standards and



expectations. Nominees had to be motivated. One comrade had this to say about his nominee: 'I came to this shaft knowing almost nothing about the Party. The only thing I knew was 'viva SACP viva'. Comrade X played an important role in my education and that of others. Also of importance, cde X is in the forefront in building our union and Party in this shaft. Therefore, comrades, I believe he can make a good branch secretary.'

By contrast no-one was prepared to speak on behalf of cde M. Cde M had been nominated, but all those present objected. Although he was a good, hard-working communist he was already heavily involved in NUM

and ANC structures. There was a unanimous feeling that he could not devote enough attention also to serve on the leadership of the Party branch.

The launch of the Shaft Number 4 SACP branch comes as a result of an intensive education programme over six weeks. This programme covered topics like:

- building the Party
- history of the SACP
- the alliance
- what it means to be a communist
- the role of the Party branch in the community and its relationship with other structures like the ANC, the Cosatu local, and the civic.

This programme will be rounded off by taking the branch through the Party programme. After this orientation programme, the branch will be introduced to Marxist theory with emphasis on dialectical materialism.

In closing remarks, one new member had this to say about his

joining of the Party: 'I am a Christian, and a preacher in my church. But one thing that has been worrying me about the so-called 'Christian world' is that they never give material support to the deprived and oppressed. But communists from around the world always give material support. If you are fighting for liberation, communists will always give you AK47s.'

The process has begun. One Party branch has been launched in one shaft among dozens of shafts scattered over South Africa. The challenge is clear. Let all miners, communists and working class militants rise to the occasion. Let our battle cry be: **A Party branch in each and every shaft by May 1, 1991!**

A PARTY BRANCH IN EVERY SHAFT AND FACTORY!



Port Elizabeth, November 11 : 140 000 people at the Eastern Cape SACP launch rally, making it one of the biggest political rallies ever in South African history.

The success of the rally reflects the enormous support our Party enjoys in the region. But it was

also the result of hard work. 'For weeks before the rally we discussed it in all the locals,' says cde John Gomomo. 'We told shop stewards they must preach this in the factories at lunchtime.' The biggest political rally ever held under the Red Flag in South Africa, only cost the Party R7000.

East London's Daily Deceiver

The East London *Daily Dispatch* prides itself in being one of South Africa's leading liberal newspapers. But its liberal sentiments disappear when it comes to writing about the SACP.

On Friday January 18 the *Daily Dispatch* reported that the regional SACP launch rally would take place the next day, Saturday.

In fact, as the *Daily Dispatch* had been very carefully informed, the rally was due to take place on Sunday the 20th.

Was this a mistake? Well, it might have been. These things do happen.

But it soon looked less and less like

a mistake.

There were frantic calls from the SACP Border Region office for the newspaper to correct its error. And so the next day, Saturday, the newspaper helpfully published another story on the rally.

The headline read : 'SACP rally postponed'.

It was only right at the end of the article that it was mentioned, in passing, that the rally was 'postponed' to Sunday, that is the very next day.

Well, despite the *Daily Dispatch's* best attempts to sabotage it, the regional launch rally went ahead very successfully. It was attended by a

huge crowd of nearly 20 000 in the Zwelitsha Stadium.

But the *Daily Dispatch* still continued its campaign of distortion. In its report of the rally it quoted one of the main speakers, Raymond Mhlaba as saying: 'Christians should be imprisoned because they did not practise what they were preaching.'

In fact, what cde Mhlaba actually said was that if all Christians practised what they preached, they would be in the forefront of the struggle. As a result, the jails of apartheid South Africa would be overcrowded with millions of priests and believers.

Just a little bit different, no?

BUILD A MASS PARTY!

Umkhonto we Sizwe's chief of staff looks at

Umsebenzi: How do you rate the contribution of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) to our overall struggle?

Chris Hani: In the first place we must try to go to the historical background. MK was formed in 1961 to pressurise the government of the day. The aim was to give the government a last chance to call a round table conference. MK was not originally understood as an instrument for armed seizure of power. In the early years we went to great efforts to avoid loss of life even to enemy armed forces.

Now, the military achievements of MK cannot remotely be compared to those of the liberation armies in Cuba, Vietnam and Zimbabwe. We never liberated and administered territory, arms in hand.

The best achievements of MK were as inspirer. This was particularly during the very difficult 10 or 15 years after 1965. Our overall liberation movement had suffered badly. The morale of our people was low. By systematically attacking, by continuing to offer visible resistance, MK kept the flag flying for the entire liberation struggle.

There are interesting parallels with the Palestinian struggle. The PLO finds itself, as we did, in a difficult geo-political situation, pitted up against a very tough military opponent. In strict military terms the armed efforts of the PLO have also been limited. But their guerrilla activities kept the flame of resistance alight in the occupied territories, and inspired the mass uprisings (the Intifada).

Was this kind of role for MK always clearly understood within our movement?

Looking back we can see that the

1967 Wankie Campaign was the beginning of incipient armed propaganda. An important feature of Wankie was that it delivered a message: MK was still alive. The spirit of resistance was alive. The apartheid government was forced to send troops into Zimbabwe. And this was publicised inside South Africa.

It was no accident that the Black Consciousness Movement was launched inside the country at that time. I believe it was inspired, to

'The paramilitary skills of our MK cadres must be married with the local knowledge and political supervision of others'

some extent, by the 1967 Wankie Campaign.

In 1969 at the ANC's Morogoro Consultative Conference our movement began to elaborate more clearly the general role of MK. We were learning the lessons of Wankie. Morogoro asserted the primacy of political struggle. The Conference said that it was impossible to carry out successful military struggle without a mass political base. This strategic perspective was again re-affirmed in 1979.

What was the single greatest difficulty confronted by MK?

Without question it was the absence of a secure rear base. MK never grew,

in its exile years, to the size of a Plan or a Zanla. We had, all along, to accept the reality of the absence of a secure rear base bordering South Africa. This meant we had to limit and control our potential for recruiting. The absence of a secure rear base also led to internal difficulties. For instance, there were the mutinies in MK camps in Angola. It would be a gross oversimplification to say that all those involved in the mutinies were enemy agents or criminals. Our inability to send back into South Africa a large proportion of our cadres caused serious frustration.

You correctly underline the great mass mobilising role that MK has played. Is there a danger that the legend of MK will turn into something that blocks our ability to accurately understand our real strengths and limitations?

Yes, there is that possibility. For instance, with the wave of violence sweeping Natal and the townships of the Transvaal and elsewhere, we hear comrades repeating over and over: 'MK must defend the people'. MK on its own has never developed the ability to adequately defend our people. We must stop passively repeating 'MK must defend'. We must ensure that the people as a whole develop strong self-defence structures.

That brings us to the present role of MK. What views do you have on this?

In the first place, MK needs to prepare cadres for a future democratic South African army. That means we must recruit selectively, and send comrades to train as officers in mili-

CHRIS HANI

VIVA UMKHONTO WE SIZWE!

the role of the people's army

tary academies in the third world and in socialist countries. We must have a balanced army in the future. It must not be dominated by racist elements.

Would comrades trained in this way constitute the leadership core of our future army?

I don't like to think of it like that. We must be completely realistic and honest about our capacities. The future army needs to be set up in terms of guidelines laid down by a civilian authority. This authority itself needs to be appointed by and answerable to the elected and democratic future government. The complicated task of integrating the SADF, the various bantustan forces, MK, and even APLA will need to be handled sensibly and responsibly.

And one more thing. We, the liberation movement, obviously cannot maintain a private army after the democratic transition.

What other roles in the present can MK and MK cadres play?

Helping to build a paramilitary force inside the country to defend the people is a crucial role. They have skills and experience. These must be made available to the people at large.

Are there potential dangers of military elitism in using MK cadres in the task of building township self-defence structures?

Yes. We must avoid this danger by ensuring that the emerging self-defence structures are entirely answerable to branch and regional political structures. MK cadres have skills, but they must not become arrogant. The paramilitary skills of our MK cadres must be married with the local knowl-

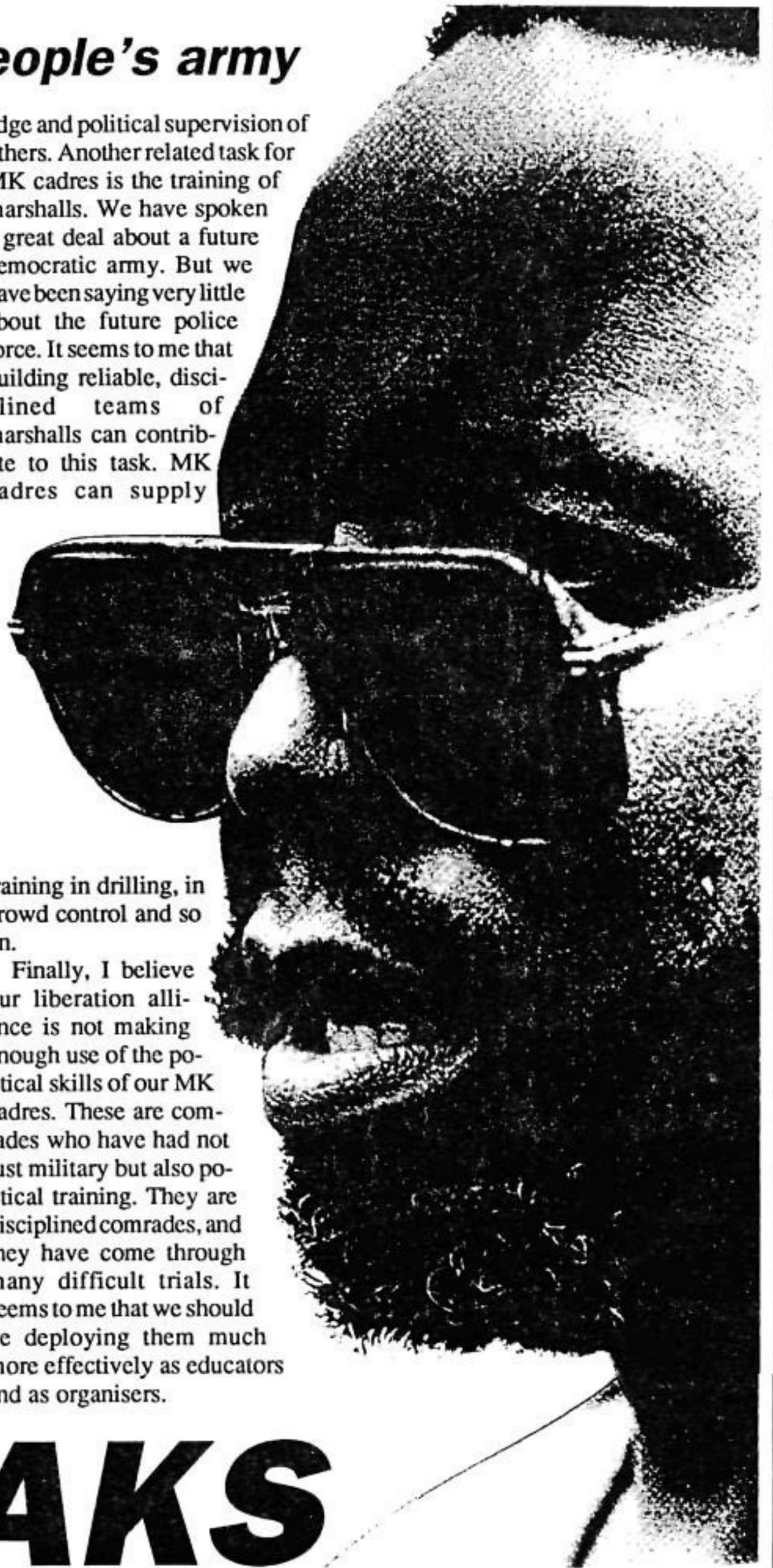
edge and political supervision of others. Another related task for MK cadres is the training of marshalls. We have spoken a great deal about a future democratic army. But we have been saying very little about the future police force. It seems to me that building reliable, disciplined teams of marshalls can contribute to this task. MK cadres can supply

training in drilling, in crowd control and so on.

Finally, I believe our liberation alliance is not making enough use of the political skills of our MK cadres. These are comrades who have had not just military but also political training. They are disciplined comrades, and they have come through many difficult trials. It seems to me that we should be deploying them much more effectively as educators and as organisers.

SPEAKS

BUILD THE ANC!



Counter-revolution before the revolution

The independence of Mozambique and Angola in 1975 seemed to mark a turning point in the freedom struggle in southern Africa. Hope was high that these countries, after years of colonialism, would begin to build their societies for the benefit of all the people.

Sixteen years later, we look back and see that neither country has known a moment's peace. Destabilisation on a massive scale, through forces such as MNR and Unita, has robbed these countries of the peace and prosperity independence should have brought.

Behind this destabilisation was the hand of apartheid South Africa. And now we see these same tactics used *inside our country, against the ANC-led alliance, even before power has been transferred to the people.*

The violence has been portrayed as Inkatha versus ANC, PAC versus ANC, Zulu versus Xhosa, etc. What is happening in every part of our

country is that, wherever the ANC begins to organise and establish a visible presence, forces are mobilised to act against it. Where tensions between organisations cannot be exploited, criminal gangs and vigilantes are used.

What we are witnessing today is the attempt to launch South Africa's own MNR and Unita. It is the start of an attempted destabilisation policy for the new South Africa, even before its birth. The intention is to prevent the ANC growing strong, with an organised, disciplined army of millions who demand freedom now.

The government is following a two-pronged strategy against the liberation movement. *On the one hand, it wants to negotiate. But on the other it wants to talk to an ANC that is weak. It is clear that elements of the police and security forces are behind this destabilisation strategy.*

Can we defeat the destabilisation

strategy? Yes we can. The most important issues we have to address are unity and developing a culture of political tolerance. Any tension within a community, or difference of opinion between organisations, is exploited by the enemy to provoke violent confrontation. *It is essential that we know and meet all political formations that exist at the local level.*

Communication channels must be established to allow discussion to take place before any potential conflict. We must do everything to build unity among the oppressed.

Despite the inhuman provocations, despite the criminal actions, we must still do what is politically correct. *Acts of revenge are not acceptable — they play into the hands of the very forces provoking the violence.*

We need to address how we deal with these problems. Without discipline we cannot respond properly to the attacks on our communities. If there is a lack of discipline in our ranks, we will give the enemy the opportunity to act against us. We will give them the chance to use our mistakes against us. *Anger that is undirected will be turned against us.*

The building of self-defence units is vital. But these units must operate in harmony with the political initiatives being taken at every level. Vital to the success of self-defence units is that they must recognise the right of people to hold different political opinions. There must be the iron will to defend our people against terrorist attacks. *But there must also be the iron will to develop a climate of political tolerance.*

We can defeat the enemy's counter-revolutionary tactics. But it will require mass organisation, high discipline, and a climate of political tolerance.

Ronnie Kasrils on the violence

The Editor,

Amongst the important decisions of the ANC Consultative Conference is the setting up of People's Self-Defence Units. The ANC and the liberation movement in general must proceed with the utmost urgency to encourage and guide our people in the building of these protective formations. But progress appears to be dangerously slow. Perhaps this is because there is still insufficient clarity on how to proceed. The *Umsebenzi* series provides an extremely useful approach to this question. It is based on the organisation of the people into broadly based, disciplined, para-military units - which in my view is the logical and practical way of proceeding.

To expect that Umkhonto we Sizwe can fulfill the function of defending our people in the present circumstances is wishful thinking. To believe that small MK units can protect our communities against the kind of orchestrated attacks we have witnessed is equally unrealistic. There is apparently even the view that defence units should simply monitor the situation and report on incidents. Such an approach flies in the face of Conference recommendations and leaves our people defenceless and paralysed when confronted by savage attacks.

Whilst, at present, MK might not have the capacity nor possibility of providing such defence, MK cadres do have the ability, given the correct guidance and structures, to show our people how they can best defend themselves.

Ronnie Kasrils

BUILD THE PATRIOTIC FRONT!

Lenin and Piet Muller's vision

In June and July of 1905 reactionary, backward Tsarist Russia was shaken by a massive uprising of the working people. Russia seemed to be on the threshold of a major democratic transition.

A wide range of forces, both bourgeois liberals and revolutionaries, were calling for 'democratic change'. But for the bourgeoisie this call meant change that would guarantee continued class exploitation, continued oppression.

It was in this situation that Lenin wrote a long pamphlet entitled '*Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*'. Among other things, Lenin tackled the question of the mechanisms for a democratic transition.

What were the correct strategies and what were the correct demands or slogans that should be advanced by the working masses? The first step, according to Lenin, would have to be the decisive defeat of the old regime in political struggle. In Russia of the time that defeat could only be by way of a popular insurrection.

Once this was done, how would a new democratic constitution be drawn up? This, said Lenin, should be the task of a **democratically elected constituent assembly**. But calling for a constituent assembly on its own was not enough.

In Lenin's words: 'Somebody must convene the constituent assembly; somebody must guarantee the freedom and fairness of the elections; somebody must invest such an assembly with full power and authority'.

And it was for this reason that Lenin called at the same time for an **interim government** or, in his words, a Provisional Revolutionary Govern-



LENIN: The first step is decisive defeat of the old regime in political struggle

ment (PRG).

'A PRG alone ... can secure full freedom to conduct an election campaign and convene an assembly that will really express the will of the people.'

For Lenin, then, the call for a democratically elected Constituent Assembly and the call for an Interim Government (or PRG) were absolutely linked together.

'Establishment of a PRG would signify the victory of the revolution in actual fact, whereas a 'decision' to set up a constituent assembly would signify a victory of the revolution in words only.'

So how relevant are Lenin's observations to the South African situation of today?

We must obviously guard against a mechanical application of theory from one situation to another. We are not *about to smash the apartheid regime* arms in hand. We are not in a position to unilaterally impose a Provisional Revolutionary Government.

But here, in South Africa, there is the real possibility of a negotiated transition to democracy. That transition will represent a negotiated retreat, enforced by our struggles, on a minority regime that still has considerable power. Such a negotiated process obviously represents a balance of forces that is different from one that emerges from the revolutionary overthrow of a regime.

There are important differences, then. But here in South Africa, as in Russia of 1905, there is a wide range of different forces calling for 'a new democratic South Africa'. And the mechanisms for this transition are absolutely crucial. They will have everything to do with whether the change is real or merely formal.

FW de Klerk in his February 1 speech calls for a 'multi-party conference'. On the face of it, this conference is much the same thing as the ANC-SACP-Cosatu alliance support for a congress of all parties and organisations.

But what exact role does de Klerk envisage for a multi-party congress? Perhaps the answer is provided by a senior National Party journalist, Piet Muller.

According to Muller the transition to a 'new South Africa' requires that 'a consortium of political forces, made up of both white and black leaders

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POWER TO THE PEOPLE!

What is an Interim Government?

An Interim Government is an authority created to oversee the process of transition. Interim means temporary. It is not a permanent structure, but a government established for a limited purpose.

It is a government established to take the place of the existing apartheid government. It should ensure that we complete the process of drawing up a new democratic constitution.

But what is the difference between that and a Constituent Assembly?

The constituent assembly is an elected body, created to make a new constitution. The interim government cannot make this constitution. It is there to create the conditions for a new constitution to be made.

But why do we need an interim government if we have got a constituent assembly?

In the first place, to ensure that elections for a constituent assembly are free and fair.

But the reasons are also broader. We cannot trust the apartheid government to rule over this period. Already it uses its power during this pre-negotiations period to favour some organisations at the expense of

What do we mean by an interim government?

others. It is also likely to use its power, as a government, to try to ensure that the process does not lead to fundamental change.

There has to be agreement as to the goals of the entire process.

The government will have to accept, as the Harare Declaration demands, that the result of negotiations must be a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic state. If that is agreed on, whoever manages the transition must ensure that the process proceeds in a way that ensures that those goals are met.

But will the government ever agree to an interim government or the creation of a democratic state?

If the government isn't going to give way to these demands, then we are obviously making a mistake in trying to negotiate. It was our struggle that forced them to talk in the first place. It was our struggle that unbanned the ANC and SACP. It was our struggle that freed our leaders.

And it is our struggles that will force them to realise that we need peace. Peace cannot exist while apartheid exists - that is something they may already recognise. They will also have to see that there cannot be lasting peace until we have a democratic state.

If we can force them to see this, they may find the idea of an interim government unavoidable. But ultimately our most persuasive argument is our strength on the ground. Our real negotiating strength lies with the people making the demands on the streets which the leaders make in discussion with the government.

Accepting that you can get an interim government, how can you ensure that the civil service and security forces are loyal and carry out the decisions of the government? That's a difficult question and obviously also a key one for the success of

Lenin on interim governments

• *Continued from Page 9*

with converging interests, must be brought into being. This consortium will decide that it has sufficient legitimacy to proceed on its own with a political settlement. It also follows logically that such a consortium would accept responsibility for the violent repression of radicals and revolutionaries.' (*Rapport*, January 20, 1991).

Chilling words. It is clear that for some leading NP ideologues all the talk about 'political tolerance' and 'a new democratic climate' have a very limited meaning.

Writing in 1905 Lenin, as we have seen, makes the central point that a Constituent Assembly without a legitimate, Interim Government, is unlikely to lay the basis for a real democratic transition.

Perhaps in South Africa in 1991 we should also assert the reverse. Some kind of Interim Government, Joint Authority, or multi-party Consortium, that is not linked directly to the objective of convening an elected Constituent Assembly, is a grave danger to the future democracy. We can't say that Piet Muller hasn't warned us.

FORWARD TO A PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENT!



any interim administration. We cannot replace the civil service in so short a time. In any case, we are not talking of an elected government. The interim government is a structure negotiated between the main parties. It cannot embark on substantial social change, nor set in place a new civil service.

This means that the question of the civil service in general and the security forces in particular are a big problem. Many civil servants are Conservative Party, or even AWB supporters.

Before we wilt under the pressure of this problem, we should remember one thing. The alternative right now is to have no authority over the civil service whatsoever, leaving that authority to the present government. Of course, an interim government might have the legal authority to command obedience, but it may very well have difficulty in enforcing it.

Having an interim government including the National Party may, on the one hand make it easier to secure enforcement. At the same time, it will mean the interim government will itself be a site of struggle. One side will be trying to limit or even frustrate the process of democratisation, the

other to see it through to the most progressive conclusion.

This is an area where we may have to consider some form of international monitoring force. But that still leaves the problem of how we ensure that the force functions loyally and effectively.

You've referred to the Interim Government as not being elected. How will it be created?

The composition and manner of es-

tablishment of an interim government will have to be negotiated. The tripartite (ANC- SACP-Cosatu) joint executives have just endorsed the January 8 call for a congress of all parties and organisations (*see separate article on this page*). Such a congress may be a suitable forum for securing agreement on the formation of an interim government.

To secure general confidence the interim government must, without the benefit of elections, be representative of the aspirations of most South Africans and reflect the present balance of power.

This would mean that the ANC, at the very least, should be in it, and so would the NP. Which other parties are in it, should perhaps be determined not merely by questions of legitimacy, but by considering whether their inclusion or exclusion will best facilitate the work of the interim government.

Can't this all turn into an elaborate form of cooption?

That's certainly what De Klerk wants. It's unacceptable. The ANC must have real authority in an interim government. The interim government must be part of the process of the transfer of power to the people. Otherwise we are playing games.

All-Party Congress or Constituent Assembly?

This is what the recent January 27 National Executives meeting of the ANC/SACP/Cosatu said on this crucial issue in their joint statement:

'The three national executives accepted the idea of a congress of all parties and organisations as a forum for an exchange of views on the process of advancing towards a post apartheid constitution.

'The precise objectives and character of the congress should be the subject of broad consultations throughout the democratic movement.

'The meeting was further of the view that such a congress could also exchange views on the form of interim state structures necessary to ensure the democratic adoption of a post apartheid constitution.

'The meeting, however, emphasised that such a congress cannot be a substitute for a constituent assembly and that it could only assume such functions if it were reconstituted. The representatives at such a congress must be elected in a non-racial election on the basis of one person one vote.'

FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS!

THE WAR IN

Some of the challenges facing pro

The outbreak of the war in the Persian Gulf presents a challenge to progressive forces world-wide to exert every effort to bring peace and stability to the region at the earliest possible moment. The longer the conflict rages, the greater the danger that more and more people will be sucked into it, and death and destruction will spread on a scale that threatens not only the health and wealth of nations but the very survival of humanity itself.

The ostensible cause of the war is Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait last August. Both Kuwait and Iraq are the creations of British imperialism following the collapse of the Ottoman empire and the carve-up of the Middle East after World War I. Kuwait had been a district of Basra province under the old Ottoman empire. But when Britain granted Iraq independence in 1932, it kept Kuwait separate. This was the traditional imperialist policy of divide and rule. Iraq was left under the control of a pro-British king. But Kuwait remained a British property until it was allowed its independence in 1961.

Independent Iraq has consistently laid claim to Kuwait. But until recently it has been unable to press this claim in the face of opposition from other states in the region. All these states have been functioning within the context of the imperialist settlement. A number of factors have totally altered the balance of forces in the region. In the first place has been the great oil boom of the recent decades. Then there is the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, and the subsequent wars of occupation by Israel (the West Bank, Gaza strip and Leba-

What the alliance says

A joint meeting of the ANC/SACP/Cosatu National Executives issued the following statement on the Gulf War: 'The joint executives condemn the resort to war. We call for an end to US led military intervention. We also call on Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, and for a comprehensive Middle East conference.'

'We fully support the right of the Palestinian people to an independent state, and call for the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories, and support the right of Israel to exist within safe and secure borders. We also call on our people to campaign for peace in the Middle East region.'

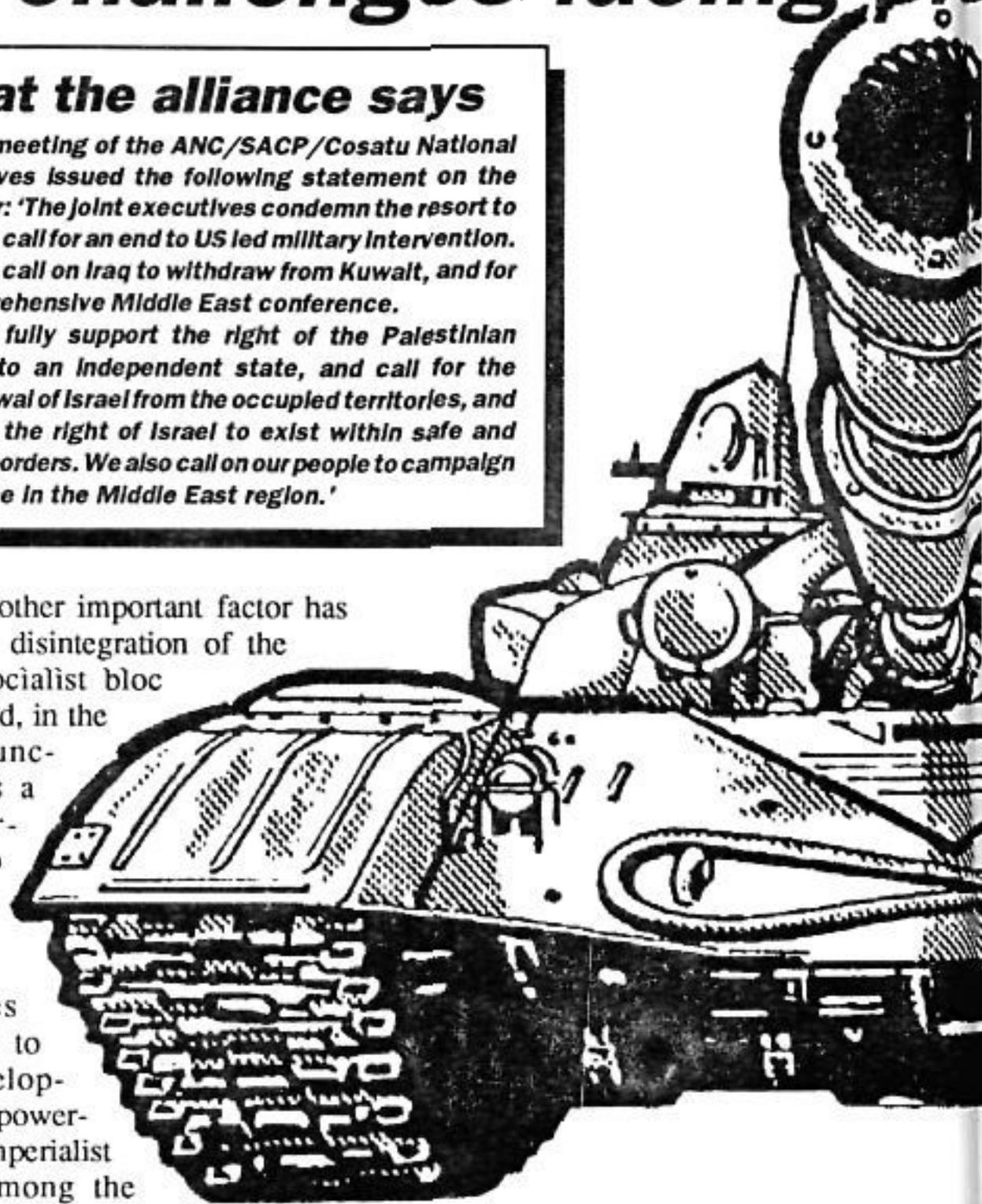
non). Another important factor has been the disintegration of the world socialist bloc which had, in the past, functioned as a counter-weight to imperialism.

These pressures have led to the development of powerful anti-imperialist forces among the peoples of the Middle East. These forces are seen by the imperialist powers as a threat to their interests.

The moral arguments which are being advanced by the United States and its supporters to justify their war effort against Iraq are hypocritical. We can accept their criticism of Saddam Hussein as an aggressor, dictator, and violator of human rights. But until August last year the US was quite happy to count Saddam Hussein

as one of their friends. They eagerly supplied him with weapons to carry out his assaults on Kurds, Iranians, Iraqi Communists and other democratic opposition forces in Iraq itself.

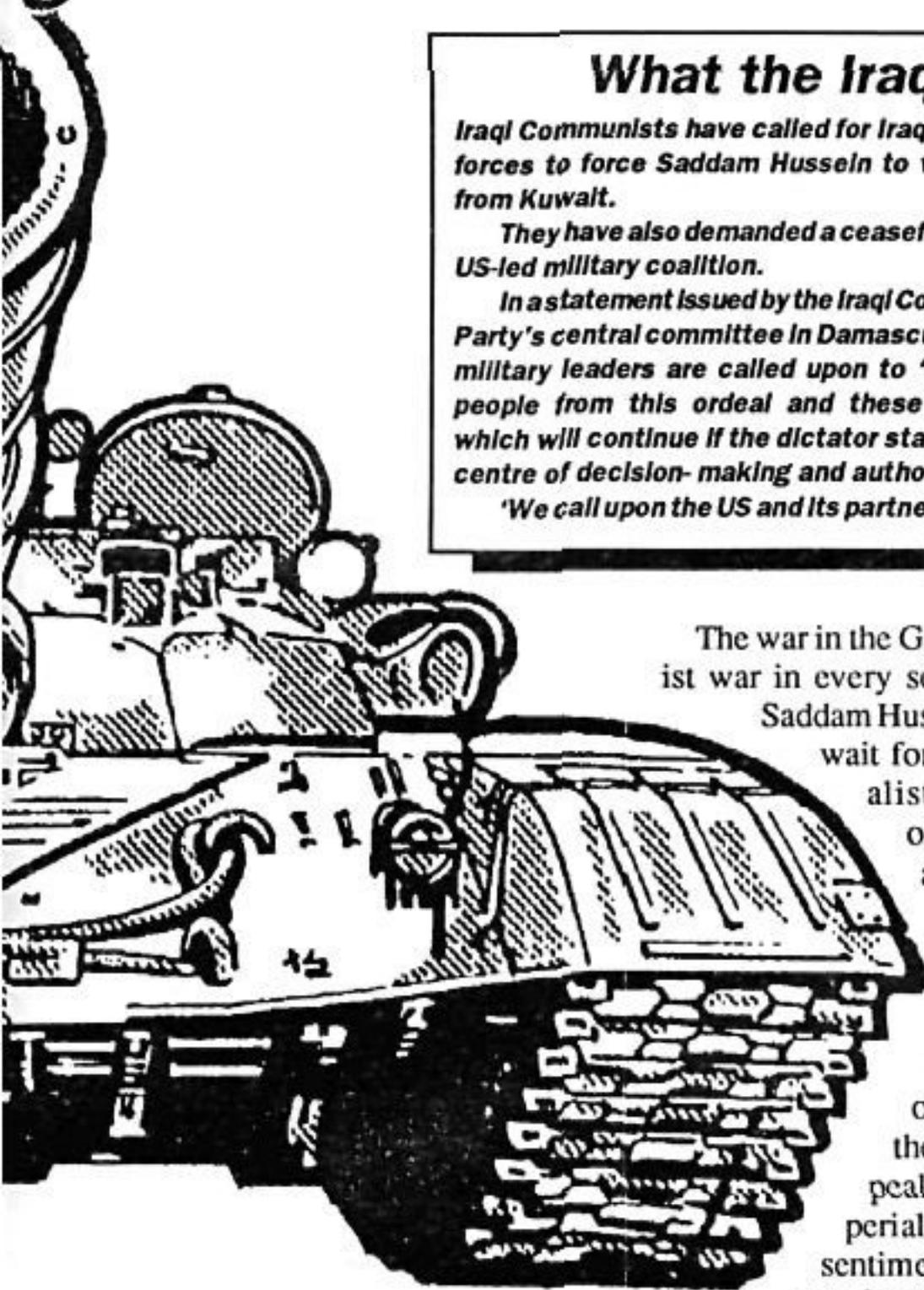
The US demands that the world condemn Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. But it expects the world to be silent about its own invasions of Grenada and Panama. It accuses Saddam Hussein of violations of international law. But it is silent about its own



HALT U.S. AGGRESSION!

IN THE GULF

Progressive forces around the world



What the Iraqi Communist Party says

Iraqi Communists have called for Iraq's armed forces to force Saddam Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait.

They have also demanded a ceasefire by the US-led military coalition.

In a statement issued by the Iraqi Communist Party's central committee in Damascus, Iraq's military leaders are called upon to 'save our people from this ordeal and these horrors, which will continue if the dictator stays at the centre of decision-making and authority'.

'We call upon the US and its partners to halt

military operations immediately. We also call upon our armed forces to take the initiative at this critical time and withdraw from Kuwait in order to eliminate any pretext for continuing military operations and the destruction of the economic and military infrastructure of our country.'

The Iraqi CP was one of the first targets in Iraq for the brutal Ba'athist dictatorship, which has been dominated by Saddam since 1979.

• Last year, the Iraqi CP joined a 16-party alliance in opposition to Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

The war in the Gulf is an imperialist war in every sense of the term.

Saddam Hussein attacked Kuwait for his own imperialist interests. Not only did he wish to add a new province to his empire. He also wanted to control the production and pricing of oil throughout the region. He is appealing to the anti-imperialist and anti-Israel sentiments of the entire people of the Middle East

in a bid to promote his own imperialist objectives.

For their part, the US and its imperialist allies are fighting in the Gulf to reinforce their domination of the third world and its resources. For them it is not just a question of oil, but of power. They want the power to distribute the wealth of the world in their own interests. Once again, it is the working people who are fighting and dying on the battlefield, while their masters

gamble on the stock exchange and send the price of oil rising and falling without thought of the casualties.

The United Nations unanimously and correctly condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The UN imposed sanctions in support of its demand that Iraq withdraw from the territory forthwith. But the UN was on less sure grounds in setting January 15 as a deadline after which military action against Iraq would be authorised. The CIA itself estimated that, given time, sanctions would be effective in undermining the Iraqi military potential. But the US military were impatient to test their new-fangled weaponry in action. Thousands are now dying, and millions more may die, because peace was never given a chance.

The international working class and all progressives must now work urgently to bring about a peaceful resolution to this conflict, the implementation of all relevant UN resolutions, and the holding of a conference at which all the problems of the Middle East can be settled in the interests of the peoples of the area.

offences in mining Nicaragua's harbours and bombing Libya. It demands military action to uphold United Nations authority over the issue of Kuwait.

But the US has consistently sabotaged UN decisions designed to punish Israel for its atrocities against Palestinians and Lebanese, or Turkey for its invasion of Cyprus. The US consistently refuses to support a Middle East peace conference.

PEACE IN THE GULF!

A new deal at the local level?

The whole black local authorities system has more or less collapsed under the weight of its unpopularity.

Faced with this fact De Klerk, in his February 1 speech, has spelled out a new approach.

On the one hand, De Klerk completely rejects the call for a national Interim Government to replace the present system of minority rule. But at the local level he has, in effect, made possible Interim Local Governments.

In some respects this is a real victory for our civics and other structures. We have been struggling for years for the principle of one municipality one tax base.

But apart from popular pressure, what other reasons are there for De Klerk accepting the possibility of Interim Local Governments?

In the first place, the new local government policy, means that the choice of whether or not to form a united, non-racial municipality lies with the existing white local authorities. They can dictate the terms, and they can choose not to participate.

This exempts those municipalities where reactionary white forces are strong, and areas where our civics are weak. This approach has several advantages for De Klerk:

- De Klerk keeps his "non-racial" image clean for the overseas and local audience. While urban apartheid is a national policy, removing it has become a local issue. If there are hundreds of racially divided municipalities that's not his fault, it's the fault of local white authorities.

- Giving more powers to the local



level in the name of 'democracy' is also part of the general process of weakening the central state before a new democratic government comes to power.

- Above all, De Klerk hopes to demobilise the masses at a point where our power has been at its strongest - in the townships. 'Those who are fighting about something which will disappear in any event', he tells us, are wasting their time. He does not want mobilised masses in the townships directing their demands all the way up to the national level.

How do we respond to all of this?

In the first place, we must intensify, not drop, our struggle for non-racial municipalities.

At the same time, we need urgently to strategise jointly at all levels of the

alliance. Local government struggles must not be removed from the civics and from local mass mobilisation.

But these struggles and this mobilisation, must also not be separated (as De Klerk hopes) from the national negotiating process. Our demand for a national Interim Government and for a democratic Constituent Assembly must be linked directly to the civic struggles on the ground.

Without an Interim Government the security forces will always be intervening against our communities. Without a democratic Constituent Assembly there can be no long-term and legitimate policies for local government.

We need to move beyond formulating general principles for local government

and actually construct a national local government policy. This policy must involve, not just models, but also the developing of skills and practical knowledge about local government.

Above all, the formation of a National Civic Movement is more urgent than ever before.

We cannot allow De Klerk's local government strategy to work. He hopes to fragment and disperse our civic struggles. Strong civics must help weaker civics. Civics confronting Democratic Party municipalities must not be content with their own victories.

We need a strong, mass-based national formation that keeps the question of local government on the national agenda.

ONE PERSON ONE VOTE!

Electric power to the people!

Electricity is one of the basic needs if we are to improve living standards, and if we are to build a more stable and peaceful country. But in South Africa electricity is a privilege for the minority who can afford it.

More than seven out of every ten people in South Africa do not have household electricity. About 208 African townships with more than 20 million people are without electricity.

And yet in a country like this, Escom has decided to retrench another 4700 workers.

Remember Escom's great 'electricity for all' campaign? It was launched in August 1987. In the same period, between 1986-87, about 9000 Escom workers were made redundant.

Last year the corporation informed the unions organising its work-force — NUM, Numsa and the Electrical Workers' Union — of its decision to make redundant another 4700 workers.

About 2700 of these workers were retrenched as a result of Escom's so-called 'streamlining'. The remaining 2000 workers will be made redundant due to Escom's mothballing of three of its older power stations: Camden, near Ermelo; Komati, in the Witbank region; and Grootvlei near Vereeniging.

In total, Escom has reduced its work-force from 66000 in 1985 to 50000 in 1990.

The decisions on both the streamlining and mothballing programmes have been taken without consulting

the unions.

Escom is of the opinion that the unions should have no say in any streamlining exercise, or decision on whether plants are to be mothballed or closed.

The question of jobs and the question of electricity for the people are directly linked.

Escom has failed to provide affordable electrification to all households, industries and farms. It has also failed to maintain, let alone increase, employment.

Escom is a parastatal corporation. But the role of government in Escom at present is very limited. It consists primarily in guaranteeing loans which are raised by Escom. The corporation receives no state subsidy.

Escom is controlled by the Electricity Council which is dominated by representatives from big business and the government.

What must be done?

- The Electricity Council must be democratised. Community organisations and trade unions must be represented strongly on this council.
- The state must subsidise electricity provision.
- Laws blocking Escom supplying electricity directly to households must be abolished. (At present Escom supplies electricity to municipalities on request. The wiring for distribution to households is then contracted out to private companies. Escom is legally prevented from doing this itself.)
- Escom must establish work teams to extend cables to houses, to instal metres and wire houses.
- Priority must be given to employing retrenched Escom workers in these work teams.

STRANGE BUT TRUE: ELECTRIC LIGHT IS CHEAPER THAN CANDLE-LIGHT.

FOR INSTANCE, IF YOU BURN A 40 W BULB FOR 10 HOURS, AT AVERAGE ESKOM ELECTRICITY PRICES, THE COST WILL BE LESS THAN 10 CENTS.

AND EVEN ADDING THE PRICE OF THE BULB WOULD INCREASE YOUR TOTAL COST BY LESS THAN 1 CENT.

BY CONTRAST YOU'D NOT ONLY HAVE TO USE 40 CANDLES TO GET THE SAME ILLUMINATION, BUT, AT AN AVERAGE OF 30 CENTS PER CANDLE, YOU'RE LOOKING AT A TOTAL COST OF R12.00.

IN ADDITION, ELECTRIC LIGHT IS ALSO MORE CONVENIENT, SAFER, MORE RELIABLE — AND GUARANTEED NEVER TO DRIP WAX ALL OVER YOUR TABLECLOTH.

SO NEXT TIME YOU HAVE A CANDLELIT CELEBRATION, REMEMBER THE CHAMPAGNE AND CAVIAR AREN'T THE ONLY COSTLY ITEMS ON THE TABLE.

COMPARED WITH ELECTRICITY, CANDLES AREN'T SO CHEAP!



MAKING YOUR LIFE A LITTLE EASIER.

A ROMANTIC CANDLELIT DINNER FOR TWO WOULD COST LESS IF YOU SWITCHED THE LIGHTS ON.

Escom is placing lavish adverts like this in magazines and newspapers — at the same time as it lays off thousands of workers

JOBS FOR ALL!

The world revolutionary process

This is the second part of our series looking at our Party's programme - *The Path to Power*. In this issue we will try to provoke some discussion around the first two chapters - 'The World Revolutionary Process' and 'The Revolutionary Process in Africa'.

These are the chapters of the programme that probably need the most changes.

The Path to Power says that in the present period of world history the main historical tendency is a transition from capitalism to socialism. It says that there are three main revolutionary forces in the world:

- the world socialist system;
- the national liberation movement and the anti-imperialist struggle of the developing countries;
- the working class movement in the advanced capitalist countries.

We need to decide whether this is still the correct way of looking at the world.

In many ways, the world situation today is much more negative than that portrayed in our programme.

During the past year many socialist countries (like East Germany and Poland) have rejected socialism and are moving back to capitalism. The world socialist system does not really exist anymore.

The Path to Power does say that imperialism uses all its forces to try to stop the transition from capitalism to socialism. But socialism did not collapse in eastern Europe because of imperialism. It collapsed because the people in the socialist countries re-

The Path to Power Discussion Series

jected the form of socialism under which they lived.

Of course, the collapse of socialism in eastern Europe does not mean that capitalism has changed its character. The majority of the world's people still live in dire poverty because of the world capitalist system. Capitalism has developed a few countries in Europe, North America and Japan. But the rest of the world pays for that wealth with the poverty of its people.

Capitalism is not capable of solving the enormous problems of poverty, hunger and disease facing the majority of the world's population living in developing countries. But is there any way out?

The effects

We need to look at the effect that the collapse of the world socialist system has on the world revolutionary movement. Is it correct to still talk about a historical tendency to move from capitalism to socialism?

The program says that the 'might of the socialist countries restricts imperialism's ability to export counter-revolution' (p.7). In the new situation, are the imperialists now free to stop countries choosing the path of socialism?

These are all pressing questions that we need to ask honestly and seriously.

It is clear that, in many ways, the

situation has deteriorated for progressive forces world-wide. We are faced with a much more confident imperialist enemy.

But all is not bleak. The fall of the Berlin Wall also represents a crisis for old-style, cold war anti-communism. Because of the new foreign policies of the USSR, tensions between the USA and the USSR have been reduced.

The tendency to drag Third World countries into a cold war super-power contest is diminishing. More and more countries are being allowed to determine their own future without the threat of foreign military pressure. Dictatorship and one party rule are being rejected in many countries of Africa, South America and Asia.

Is this tendency towards democracy not part of the world revolutionary process?

In the past we have supported regimes which were undemocratic. We supported them because their leaders or parties said they were 'socialist' or 'anti-imperialist'.

Here in South Africa we are fighting for one person, one vote in a multi-party system. Our Party has said it is impossible to achieve real democracy and socialism in a one party state. Can we continue to say that regimes that are thoroughly undemocratic are part of the world revolutionary forces?

Much of our understanding of the world revolutionary process came from Stalinism. It was mechanical, and often based on narrow foreign policy and military considerations. Diplomatic support for the Soviet Union was considered more important in assessing a developing country, than the presence or absence of internal democracy.

We have said that in South Africa the shortest route to socialism is through a democratic revolution. Surely the same is true about the world revolutionary process? It is only through the spread of democracy that a real world socialist system, rooted among the people, can emerge to defeat imperialism.

FORWARD TO DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM!

What is happening in the Orange Free State?

Comrades,

I am a student from the University of the Western Cape but I hail from Bloemfontein. My major point of concern is the lack of information on how the Party ideology and popularity is to be spread in the Free State. There seems to be a lack of substantial propaganda on Marxist philosophy and

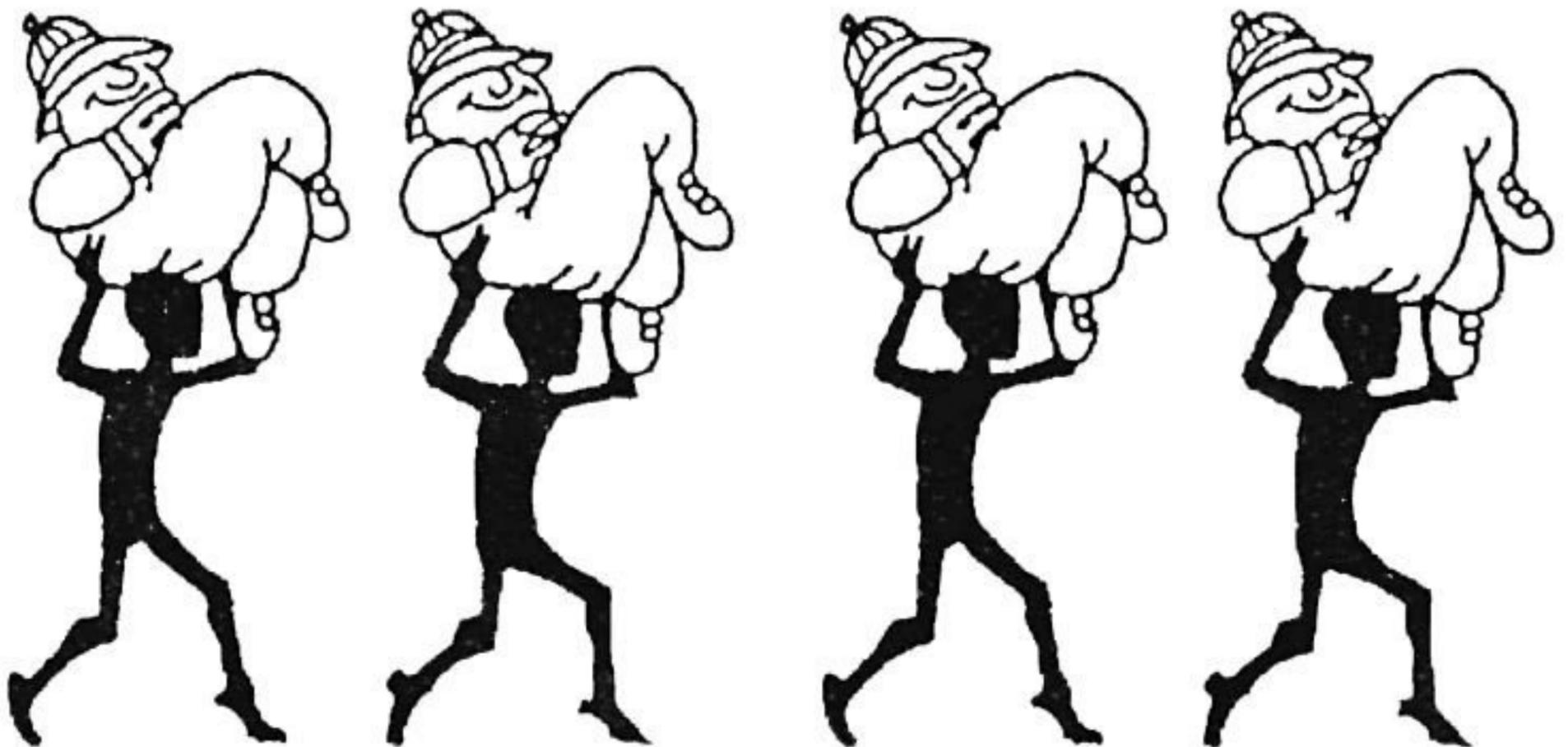
Party literature in this region.

Also, the silence of the Party on a Working (or Interim Leadership) Group in this region is very conspicuous. I say so in the light of the existence of a feasible social base in the form of workers in the mines and the revolutionary potential of the region as a whole.

I wish that these concerns should be given consideration so that as students we should know how to link up with the Party at home.

Yours in the struggle against colonialism of a special type and for a united, non-racial democracy in our country.

Noby Ngombane



Colonialism of a special type: Is it a lame concept?

Comrades,

Your journal (November 1990) tells us that the revised Party programme will retain some features - 'the core of the old programme' - which are still essentially accurate.

One of the items to be retained is Colonialism of a Special Type.

To stimulate discussion, I propose to add a little bit of Party history and Leninist theory.

The idea of comparing the relations between white supremacy and black oppression as a kind of colonialism was first put forward at the

1949 Party Conference, where it met with great enthusiasm. Delegates welcomed the model as a correct and convenient way of compressing the experiences of 300 years of colonial wars, robbery of land and forced labour into a neat package.

They were warned against giving the concept a literal meaning.

It should be regarded as no more than an analogy, which, in the words of the immortal Lenin, is not proof. 'Every analogy is lame', he said. 'These are incontrovertible and common truths; but it would do no harm to

see the limits of every analogy more clearly' (from *Notes of a Publicist*, written in February 1922).

The limits of our analogy were drawn by FW de Klerk on February 2 1990, when he lifted the ban on us and other forces of national liberation.

It is true that white domination remains the central issue of political conflict, but as Dr van Zyl Slabbert pointed out recently, the transition to a truly democratic society will, hopefully, come about by means of negotiation.

Jack Simons

LONG LIVE MARXISM!

Marxism and religion: Contradictory or complementary?

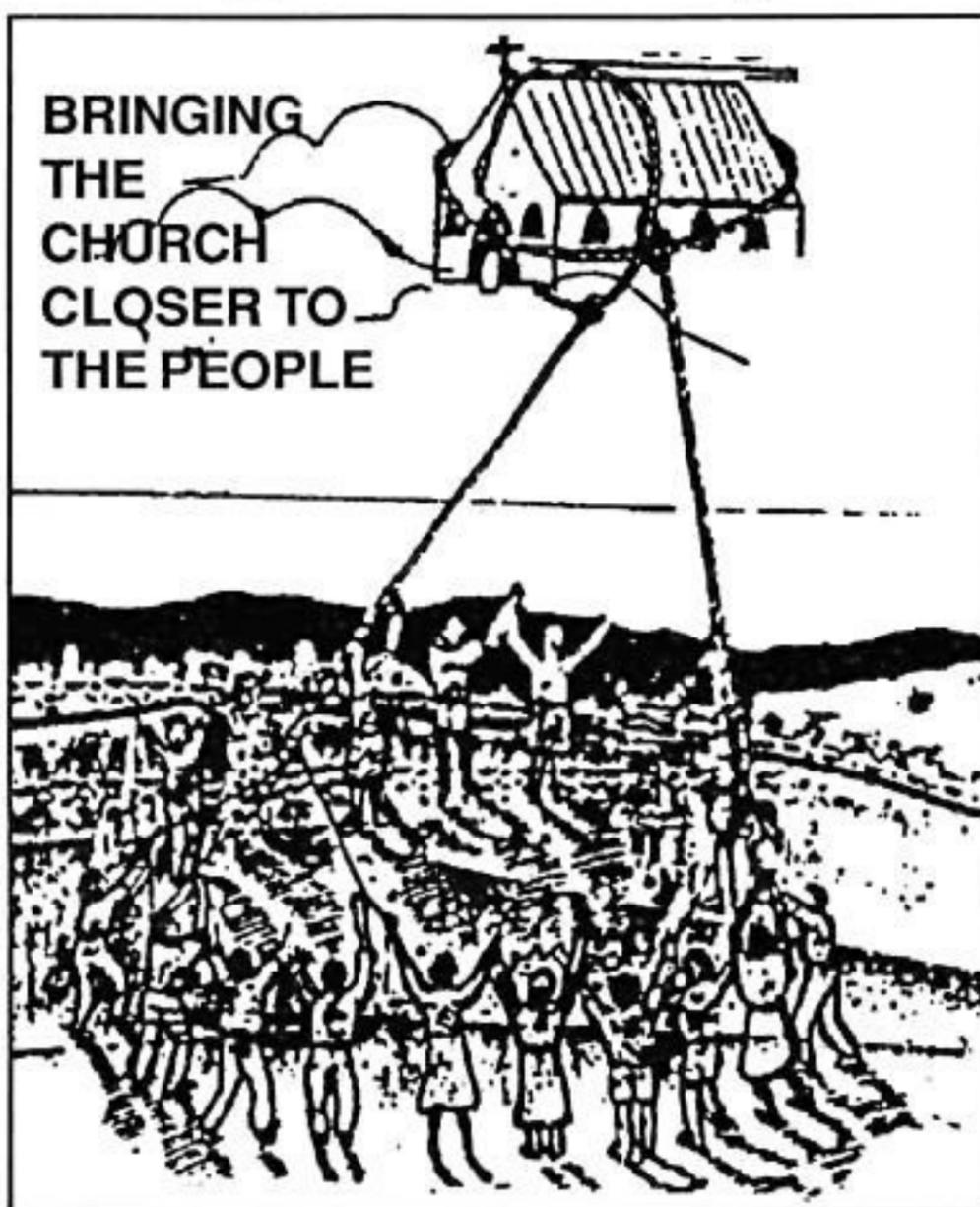
This article, by a group who describe themselves as 'Believing Comrades', is in response to recent contributions to Umsebenzi on religion

In the last issues of *Umsebenzi* there have been two contributions on religion. The first encouraged self-criticism by Party members in regard to previous dogmatic ideas on religion. On the other hand, the second article ('We need a scientific approach to religion') was wary of any 'liberal approach' obscuring the differences between Marxism and religion.

We are writing out of our own personal experience and practice as Christian Marxists. To be sure, there are real differences and some tensions between these two traditions. What needs to be understood, though, is that this can be a creative interaction which serves to refine and purify both, rather than merely diluting them.

We want to challenge the key assumption of the two previous articles. A materialist criticism of religion cannot stop short with the unquestioned assertion that the religious perspective is idealist. A scientific criticism needs to rest upon a detailed study of the actual material conditions of particular religious groups in particular times and places. Otherwise the supposed scientific criticism is itself idealist.

Today, just as in Marx's time, there is no shortage of idealistic religious groupings, and we are by no means defending all institutionalised religions. But in South Africa and in many third world countries there are reli-



gious groups whose belief in God is based on a materialist perspective.

Just as orthodox Marxism has been recently challenged, so orthodox Christianity has over the last few decades received a serious jolt from an emerging people's church.

The main distinction between traditional and liberation theology is not simply their contents. It is rather in their method of doing theology and acquiring knowledge. Traditional theology is based upon orthodoxy ('correct belief'), where the teachings are seen as absolute. The task of the theologian is simply to interpret the implications of these for people today.

Liberation theology begins instead from material experience and from reflecting upon the meaning of Christian values in the light of this lived reality. We call this ortho-praxis (that

is, we place emphasis on involvement, activity, on correct practice) - as opposed to orthodoxy (that is 'correct belief').

In South Africa our situation is quite different from the East European experience, and far closer to the Nicaraguan one, where the involvement of thousands of Christians in the revolution enabled people to proclaim 'between Christianity and the revolution there is no contradiction'.

The two previous contributions to *Umsebenzi* have asserted that there is the need for a tactical and strategic alliance between believers and non-believers. As religious Party members we fail to see what blocks us from a principled alliance.

In 1980 the Sandinistas stated: 'Our experience shows that when Christians, basing themselves on their faith, are capable of responding to the needs of the people and of history, these very beliefs lead them to revolutionary activism.'

Our struggle is born out of the blood and ashes of religious believers and atheists, fighting side by side in a common trench.

We may not yet have answers to all the theoretical tensions between Marxism and religion. What we should have is an attitude of respect and openness, to learn from each other.

We should avoid dogmatism that will only undermine the climate for creative growth. We believers find our values of faith and hope meaningful. We cannot help but notice the same values in many of our atheist comrades who are ... unable to explain from where these come.

COMRADELY DEBATE IS A WEAPON!



You can't go by how it sounds

Joe Slovo, SACP general secretary, recently delivered the key-note address to the third national congress of the Postal and Telecommunication Workers' Association (POTWA). The topic was alliances. Here are extracts from the speech:

When we speak of alliances we are obviously thinking, in the first place, about our tripartite ANC-SACP-Cosatu alliance. This is an alliance that has given great life to our whole struggle - and it will continue to do so. *The tripartite alliance is not popular with the regime, which is a sign that we are doing good work.*

While the tripartite alliance is what comes most immediately to mind, this is obviously not the only kind of alliance we need in South Africa. So with whom should revolutionary forces make alliances?

You never make alliances with your main enemy. Talks with this main enemy may become part of the situation. But never alliances with the main enemy.

There are three different kinds of alliance which are appropriate in the current phase of struggle:

- An alliance on an issue relating to one major campaign - for example violence in Natal or the amendments to the Labour Relations Act (LRA).
- A patriotic front which could aim to attract all who support an end to apartheid. This should not need complete agreement on the exact detail of a post-apartheid South Africa. But it is crucially important. De Klerk is working feverishly to create his own front, his own version of the Turnhalle Alliance in Namibia. So we must maximise all the forces on our side.
- A strategic alliance, such as the one between the ANC, the SACP and

Cosatu - based on a broad agreement on strategy and a readiness to engage in joint planning and implementation. This strategic alliance is based on the objectives of the national democratic revolution, and it constitutes the main core of our whole struggle.

But what do we mean by 'revolutionary'? What makes the ANC-SACP-Cosatu alliance different to, for example, the recent alliance between Cosatu and the bosses around the LRA?

The word 'revolutionary' doesn't just mean to make a lot of noise. There is only one test of what is revolutionary policy, and that is: Will it advance the revolution or not? You can't just go by how it sounds. You must go by its content. In making alliances it is also important to make a distinction between revolutionary forces, and forces for change. All revolutionary forces are forces for change. But not all forces for change are revolutionary forces.

Forexample, sections of the Church have played an important role in the struggle against apartheid, and in that sense are forces for change. There are also some bosses who want a transformation of the system of apartheid. They are not part of the forces of revolution, but they are definitely part of the forces for change.

They may have a different objective, but they have an interest in destroying apartheid.

By contrast, revolutionary forces are those who are totally against the forces of oppression, who accept the complete need to do away with oppression, and share a common strategic approach on the means required to do away with the system of oppression. But even here, the partners in a revolutionary alliance may have differences. For instance, the SACP stands ultimately for a socialist South Africa. But the ANC has no specific policy on this question. There are different views on the ultimate objective - but these are not antagonistic differences.

LONG LIVE THE ALLIANCE!

Party Pioneers: Alpheus Maliba and the Balemi Association

One of the greatest injustices in the history of South Africa was the dispossession of the land. In 1913, the government passed the Land Act. This law removed all but 10% of the land from African ownership. Over the years since then millions of dispossessed men and women have had to search for jobs in the cities in order to survive.

During the 1930s a very severe drought drove thousands of people off the land. In 1936 the government, under the Native Land and Trust Bill, bought up some land and held it 'in Trust' in order to 'consolidate' some of the reserve areas. But the land was not handed over to the people.

In 1939, the problem of land hunger came to a head in the Zoutpansberg area. Under the leadership of Alpheus Maliba, the peasants formed a resistance movement called the Zoutpansberg Balemi Association.

The Ploughers' Association

What was the Balemi Association? The word 'balemi' means ploughers - there was no more land for ploughing. The leader, Alpheus Maliba (or 'Madiba' in modern spelling) was a nightwatchman, a migrant worker from a village called Mjerere near Louis Trichardt.

He had been recruited into the Communist Party in 1936. The Party encouraged Maliba to organise a peasant movement. Maliba began to write articles for the Party journal *Inkululeko* to mobilise the support of fellow migrants.

Maliba began by organising Venda migrants on the Rand into a Zoutpansberg Cultural Association (ZCA). The organisation was based on 'homeboy' networks - stokvels, burial societies and cultural associations formed by workers with their kinsmen to support each other. These networks were formed to protect



ALPHEUS MALIBA: Organised peasants and migrant workers in the 1930s

themselves in the hostile world of the city.

Maliba began to politicise these societies. He discussed the causes of land hunger at home. He spoke about the foundations of the pass laws and the migrant labour system. He showed how all these things were linked. Meetings were held frequently. Report-backs were published regularly in *Inkululeko*.

The growth of the ZCA led to the formation of another association. This was based in the countryside, and it was called the Zoutpansberg Balemi Association. Migrants themselves became organisers. They carried the message of organisation whenever they went home on holidays, during the ploughing season.

The message found a ready response in the rural areas. The drought of the early 1930s had been followed by foot-and-mouth disease. Huge numbers of cattle died. This added to the already severe loss of mealies and other crops. The price of maize had shot up. People could not afford to buy their food. Still less could they

pay their taxes. In 1937, two out of every three homes in the area were behind in paying taxes.

The government's response was to introduce its 'betterment' scheme'. Clearly, there was a shortage of land. The answer, said government advisors, was to teach peasants modern farming methods so that they could live on smaller plots of land. People were moved to the new 'Trust' land. Each family was given only a few morgen in size. Their cattle were culled ('to prevent overstocking'). The cutting down of trees was forbidden ('for conservation purposes'). Tree cutting was punished by a heavy fine. Peasants were forbidden to plough near river banks, or to uproot bushes. They were left with mostly stony ground to plough.

Against this background, Maliba found no difficulty in organising the rural areas. Elias Motsoaledi, who was a young migrant worker in the early 1940s, recalls that Maliba's meetings attracted large crowds.

'He called big, big meetings. He addressed rallies. On a May Day he organised a May Day demonstration, and it was a big demonstration.'

'We will remove the sticks'

In October 1941, a meeting of some 2000 farmers in the Zoutpansberg area passed the following resolution:

'We people of the Northern Transvaal, have come together to save ourselves from starvation. We now solemnly decide that each and everyone of us will plough the land which we were accustomed to plough in past years. We will remove the sticks which the government has set up, and plough our own land.'

Then they took the land and ploughed. Motsoaledi remembers: 'Maliba said, "Remove these beacons and plough". So it is right that it was called the Ploughers Association -



Left: Alpheus Maliba with one of the articles he wrote on the Northern Transvaal

literally. And it became an organisation which defied, not because they wanted to. But because they had no land on which to plough.'

Soon afterwards, Maliba was arrested under the Riotous Assemblies Act. On 13 November he appeared in the Louis Trichard court. On the same day, 31 farmers from the Piesanghoek area were charged with unlawful ploughing. The trials received great popular support. Nearly a thousand people came to Louis Trichard to attend the proceedings.

People came to the court in ox wagons. They slept on the way because of the distance. They came from the Zoutpansberg, and all the surrounding areas. And the crowd was so big that they crushed all the flowers around the magistrate's court. The magistrate ordered the police to allow the people to crush the flowers - in the interests of peace!

The CPSA provided a senior lawyer, Party member George Findlay, for the defence of Maliba and the peasants. The case was postponed. A great demonstration was then formed. More people continued to arrive from afar. There was a mass march to the centre of the town. The Bavenda

military song was sung. People called out slogans such as 'We want vhuswa' (food); 'We want more land'; 'Down with Land Redivision'; and 'Long Live Maliba'. In the centre of the town, the crowd stopped to listen to speaker after speaker condemn the government's land policies, racial discrimination and the pass system. The police wisely did not intervene.

Eventually the case was dropped. But Maliba was banned from the area. Peasants continued to plough. From time to time they were arrested. But over the following few years the government seemed to hold back on the betterment scheme. Unfortunately, without Maliba's leadership and resources, the Balemi movement fizzled out.

Not the end of the story

Resistance to landlessness was not confined to the Zoutpansberg area. During the 1940s, the ANC and CPSA held many large meetings in the countryside. Zeerust, Sibasa, Witzieshoek and many other districts in the northern Transvaal, and in other parts of the country, were the scenes of well attended protest meetings. But they seldom went beyond resolutions.

But the action of the Zoutpansberg Balemi Association lived on in people's memory. The 1940s saw growing poverty in the rural areas. After the 2nd World War, the government reintroduced the betterment scheme in the form of a 'reclamation' project. It involved cattle culling and modern farming methods.

The programme did not make more land available. Nor did it allow for consultation with the people on the land. Resistance flared up again.

In the late 1940s another migrant member of the CPSA, Flag Boshielo began to organise in the northern Transvaal. Comrade Flag was from Sekhukhuniland. Working with burial societies in the city, he began organisations which threaded their way back to the rural areas - to Rustenburg, to the Lydenburg district, to Middelburg and farther afield. Flag Boshielo built on the experience of Maliba. In the words of Motsoaledi:

'What is interesting is that this (the Balemi Association) brought about the idea of a peasant organisation, which later became Sebatakgomo. It advanced further - it developed into branches, embracing from the Vaal to the Limpopo.

It became even more prominent with the promulgation of the Bantu Authorities Act, when there was this sporadic move by the peasants which permeated the whole area countrywide - the eastern Cape, the Pondo revolt, the Sekhukhuni revolt.'

What happened to Maliba? Maliba continued to write for *Inkululeko*. He was also a well known activist in Orlando. He continued to travel between his homestead and the city.

In the 1950s, like other members of the Party, Maliba was banned. But he remained active underground.

In 1967, Maliba was detained by the police. He was never seen alive again.

Training for self-defence

1. Introduction

In our series so far we have dealt with the suggested structure of a Township Defence Committee into companies, platoons and sections. Five sections of 20 volunteers each could make up a platoon, and five platoons of 100 volunteers could make up a company.

We also outlined a suggested street defence system with sections allocated to the defence of particular streets.

As soon as units are created their training can be started immediately.

2. Basic Programme

There will need to be a basic training programme for all volunteers and a specialised training programme for commanders and those dealing with specialised tasks such as communications, intelligence, etc.

Instructors will need to be appointed and in most cases given some training guides and assistance. Commanders and deputies from section, platoon and company levels will need to be given some initial training slightly in advance of their units so they in turn can act as instructors.

3. Physical Fitness

Volunteers need to be physically fit. Light physical training is best conducted at the section level.

Time will be a constraint, however, especially for those going off to work early and returning home late. Where possible the section should exercise as a unit.

Ten minutes light exercises followed by a 20-minute daily jog is sufficient. If the section can only exercise together on the weekend then individuals should be encouraged to exercise on their own on a daily basis.

The joint weekend run can be increased to 30 minutes and is strongly recommended. As well as developing strength and stamina, the joint run (or toyi-toyi) will develop a collec-

tive spirit.

A longer run is not recommended because time on the weekends will be needed for other training and activity.

4. Unarmed Self-Defence

The joining of martial arts classes like karate should be encouraged. Those with such skills should be used to teach the basic exercises to the others ('each one teach one').

Drilling time on weekends should be allotted to marching and drilling in formations from section to platoon and finally to company level. Units will have to be trained to speedily assemble ('fall in') and to rapidly move in formation from one point to another. They must become used to rapid 'on the double' movement.

Drilling is the basis of organised and disciplined manoeuvrability. It is also the way of conditioning the volunteers to respond to commands as a formation.

The units must be trained to immediately respond to various signals and alarms. The use of whistles should be used to convey certain commands.

For example three blasts of a whistle could be the order for a section to assemble at a particular point in their street.

There needs to be a signal that commands the sections to assemble in their platoon formations and another which brings the entire company together at a particular assembly point.

There need to be commands which order sections to take up defence positions in their streets and others which speedily bring the platoons and even companies to specific points of impending attack.

There need to be signals for ad-

vance and retreat and of course an alarm which mobilises the entire township into a state of battle readiness.

All these signals and manoeuvres must be practised until perfection is achieved.

5. Political Instruction

At least one evening class should be conducted every week. Initial lectures should deal with the reasons for self-defence and the role of the Township Self-Defence Force.

The syllabus should deal with the national liberation struggle, the current political situation, strategy and tactics, etc.

6. Weaponry

• Firearms

A political campaign will have to be waged for the arming of the self-defence units.

All avenues need to be explored, including the setting up of licensed security organisations. Licensed weapons can be obtained. Funds will have to be collected on a voluntary basis from the community.

Once even a few firearms have been obtained firearms training can begin. This should be handled by MK cadres and sympathetic township police.

For initial training purposes air-guns should be used. Air rifles and pistols (the pellet gun type) can be bought for about R200 each.

The advantage is that no licence is required and they are an excellent, cheap and safe way for teaching people how to aim and shoot correctly.

A suitable practice range needs to be organised.

BUILDING SELF-DEFENCE UNITS Umsebenzi series — Number 2





• Rudimentary weapons

While everything must be done to adequately arm the defence units, we should not scorn the use of rudimentary weapons.

From early times people have used clubs and stones, catapults and spears, bows and arrows, for hunting and self-defence. The martial arts demonstrate how formidable such weapons can be.

A history of township and rural resistance shows that rudimentary weapons can be effectively used. The Vietnamese peasants used rudimentary weapons extremely effectively against the mighty US invaders (for example traps of sharpened bamboo spikes, etc.).

In countries like El Salvador and Nicaragua home-made weapons have been used on a mass scale in the struggle against dictatorships (eg. petrol bombs, home-made grenades, dynamite).

Our people must be encouraged to make home-made weaponry purely for defensive purposes.

We need to face the fact that it is going to be a problem to obtain the necessary firearms. Until we do, we will simply have to make do with home-made weaponry.

In a country like South Africa, however, there are plenty of sophisticated means of protection that can be purchased legally - among them gas guns and sprays. Crossbows and bow-

and-arrow sets can also be bought without a licence.

Factory and engineering workers have the skills and the equipment to manufacture rudimentary weapons.

Volunteers who do not have firearms should at least be equipped with two stout sticks, clubs or iron bars and a home-made shield.

With training these can be used in a formidable way for self-defence against assailants armed with rudimentary weapons.

A section or platoon of determined volunteers, acting in unison, can offer stiff resistance.

Would-be aggressors will think twice before advancing on a company of 500 trained volunteers beating their shields with the sticks and displaying a militant attitude.

In fact in many countries this is how the police are equipped for riot control.

Neither should we scorn the use of missiles such as stones. A platoon or section of volunteers throwing stones on command and in unison can disrupt and put to flight a hostile attacking force.

If a few armed volunteers are reinforced by units hurling stones and other missiles, a very strong defence can be put up.

This means that training should be conducted to improve the throwing ability of the volunteers. The auxiliary forces, township youth etc. need

to be given this training as well.

In this way any hostile force can be met by a sustained hail of missiles which will make it impossible for them to advance and can actually put them to flight.

The auxiliary forces can be given the task of manufacturing home-made weapons and stock-piling reserves of missiles.

Work and storage places need to be organised for this and the weapons safely stored.

The logistics chief is responsible for the acquisition, manufacture and safe storage of all weapons and material. For this purpose he/she will need a small staff of assistants. They will issue instructions to all units and auxiliaries in this respect.

We can make up for our shortage of firearms by the well organised use of rudimentary weapons. When these are used by highly manoeuvrable battle formations and groups, following well prepared plans and employing flexible tactics, using a barricades system and other fortifications, and reinforced by the whole population acting as an auxiliary force, the township will be turned into a hornets' nest for the aggressor.

As the defence units become better equipped with modern firearms so their defence capacity will be increased. The prior use of rudimentary weapons will have served as useful training and practice, apart from having their own defence capacity.

7. Training Time-Table

A time-table for training might look like this:

- Physical Fitness - 30 minutes first thing every morning plus a longer group run on the weekends;
- Politics - evening class once a week;
- Drilling - two to three hours on the weekend;
- Firearms - one to two hours on the weekend.

Classes should not be too large and are therefore best conducted at section level (that is for 20 volunteers).

• *To be continued...*

ARM THE PEOPLE!

Where to contact the SACP

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EASTERN CAPE

The Co-operative
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BORDER

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Party Flashes

• At its 27th Congress at the end of December last year, the French Communist Party announced its decision to host a meeting of all **Communist Parties from the 12 European Economic Community countries**. This is in response to a request from SACP general secretary, Joe Slovo. The meeting, to which our general secretary has been invited, will address the question of maintaining EEC sanctions on apartheid South Africa.

• Since the story on **Shaft Number 4** was written (see inside, page 4) - a further 5 SACP branches have been launched on this and on an adjoining mine. Each branch represents a single shaft. A Party branch in every shaft!

• The **Natal SACP Interim Leadership Group** is: T Mohlomi, Jeff Radebe, Blade Nzimande, Ian Phillips, P Gordhan, Ben Martins, Importance Mkhize, Maggie Govender, Alec Erwin, Siphon Cele, Kisa Dlamini, Don Gumede, Yousuf Vawda, Dennis Nkosi, Jabulani Sithole, Rita Baantjies, Ian Mlazi, Cassius Lubisi, Shakes Cele, Hoosain Hassim, Siphon Gcabashe, Isiah Ntshangase, Moses Ndlovu, Bongsi Sithole, Michael Mabuyakhulu, Guy Mkhize, Nosizwe Madlala.

• The **Border SACP Interim Leadership Group** is: M Makalima, M Ndelela, B Soci, M Limba, T Mseleni, D Smoki, G Hawkes, N Payi, S Ngonyama, N Kondlo, L Meyer, M George, M Masala

BUILD THE PARTY!