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THE A.N.C. CHARTS A COURSE TO A PROPER SELL-OUT

Whenever reformist organisations wish to hide their true aims and the real meaning of the policy of their organisations, they resort to ambiguous language capable of vague, meaningless interpretations. A fine example of this is the latest version of the A.N.C. Freedom Charter. Obviously the Stalinists of South Africa and the leadership of the African National Congress have not changed the aims of their so-called struggle for freedom and their overall strategy. What they have done is to change the unambiguous language of the Freedom Charter, language which clearly expressed the road to a sell-out.

It is necessary to recapitulate the criticism against the old Freedom Charter in order to show clearly what the new Charter is trying to cover up.

In March 1984, the Unity Movement of South Africa, commenting on the recently unbanned A.N.C. Freedom Charter wrote, "The question that arises is: what made the Botha regime go out of its way to announce the fact that the Freedom Charter may now be legally propagated. Evidently it contains, inter alia, something, some sentiment or idea, which the Government wished to have propagated and that something must be in line with Government thinking on some major aspect of its policy. Indeed the policy of the government as well as that of all White parties in South Africa was at one on the question of multi-nationalism". The Unity Movement then pointed out that "... Multi-nationalism in the concrete situation of South Africa is another name for Bantustanism" ... 'it is this projected sell-out which is being organised by the racist regime with the able assistance of the White liberals. It is against this plot that all progressives should devote their time and energy mobilising the population ... the reason why all White parties in South Africa cling to the idea of multi-nationalism ... is because they see this as the last ideological bastion against the rising tide of nationalism amongst the oppressed.' " Thus the Congress now had to eliminate its unambiguity and present the same ideas in more suave language to give the impression of scholarly research and thought.

Slovo, who sometime ago indicated how hard he and the late Ruth First had worked on the original Congress Freedom Charter, now publishes a pamphlet at about the same time that the new A.N.C. Freedom Charter comes out. In it, he writes, to the astonishment of all those who knew Stalinist policy on this matter, "We stand for one united democratic South Africa based on universal adult suffrage". A new sentiment that is now to be found also in the new Charter. The full text of the official new version of the A.N.C. Freedom Charter is published in the Aug. 12-18 issue of the Weekly Mail of South Africa. Under the heading "The State", we read "South Africa shall be an independent, unitary, democratic and non-racial state ..."

Clause (c) states, "The institution of hereditary rulers and chiefs shall be transformed to serve the interests of the people as a whole in conformity with the democratic principles embodied in the constitution." Clause (d) announces, "All organs of government, including justice, security and armed forces shall be representative of the people as a whole, democratic in their structure and functioning and dedicated to defending the principles of the constitution."

The new Charter then goes on to deal with various subjects in full under the following headings, Franchise, National Identity, Bill of Rights, and Affirmative Action. Under "Economy" it asserts, "The state shall ensure that the entire economy serves the interests and well-being of the entire population." On "Land", it says, "the state shall devise and implement a land reform programme that will include and address the following issues: "Abolition of all racial restrictions on ownership and use of land, implementation of land reform in conformity with the principle of affirmative action, taking into account the status of victims of forced removals." On "Workers", it states: "A charter protecting workers' trade union rights especially the right to strike and collective bargaining shall be incorporated into the constitution."

No one knows better than the ANC or the SACP that these demands will not be granted by the capitalist state of South Africa. What then is the purpose of making them? Note that there is not a word about the class that will control the state which is supposed to grant these demands. They dare not mention the working-class state which alone is capable of granting these demands. Clearly the intention is firstly not to drive away the bourgeois liberals who themselves are opposed to the policy of apartheid on the ground that it now chokes the development of capitalism and secondly, to win over the Black petit bourgeois leadership who want to be incorporated into the bourgeois state so that those few who have capital may invest their money in profitable enterprises of imperialism. Thirdly, Clause (c) which seeks to establish the institution of hereditary rulers and chiefs is intended to woo P. W. Botha together with the apartheid diehards, for they will understand that the ANC and the SACP are not in fact opposed to multi-nationalism in spite of what they write to the contrary.

When we come down to earth from the airy-fairy spheres of hereditary rulers, we find that firstly in real life, the Whites in South Africa have no hereditary rulers or chiefs, secondly that the Coloured people and the people of Indian descent have no such chiefs or rulers either. Thirdly there is no such thing as democracy in a state ruled by hereditary rulers. The only creatures who bear such titles are to be found in the various tribal groups. These are nothing else but Bantustans which are supposed to be got rid of to facilitate negotiation and in real life the proposed rulers and chiefs referred to are the Matanzimas, the Sebes, the Mangopes and the Gatsha Buthelezis etc. Since no White Herrenvolk will agree to be ruled by chiefs and no other ethnic groups have chiefs, this provision is intended for the African tribes, each with its tribal chief. Thus we are back once more in the land of Bantustan.

It is clear from all this that even today when the people of South Africa have been awakened; when they unequivocally reject all that the Government and its White lackeys, the White liberals, have offered, in short, when the oppressed have rejected imperialist machinations, the Stalinist-led ANC still hopes their mythical state of South Africa shall grant their demands. This is what we call an UTOPIA in the sense that Lenin used the word when he wrote: "In politics Utopia is a wish that can never come true, neither now nor afterwards, a wish that is not based on social forces." A bourgeois state cannot achieve or grant any of the above-mentioned rights. It is an instrument for exerting pressure, of force under the control of a specific class which uses it against other classes. In South Africa the bourgeoisie uses state violence against the oppressed Blacks as well as against workers and peasants. There is not way that the Stalinist Communist Party and the African National Congress can achieve their aims

unless the working-class, the majority of whom are members of the oppressed, seizes power, that is the state, and uses its power to lay the basis for a socialist construction.

It is only a worker's state that can and is obliged to grant democracy to the workers and the peasantry and what Lenin called the semi-proletariat. It will be in their interests to do so. For in order to get to power it will have to help mobilize the poor and ride on the wave of the peasant's insurrection. And if it is to continue to remain in power, it will have to extend democracy to the oppressed and exploited. In this way a basis is laid down for the building of socialism on the bedrock of socialist democracy.

The problem that takes priority on the agenda at the first democratic assembly of a liberated South Africa for solution is the LAND QUESTION. The grotesque situation in which less than 5 million White people own 87% of the land while more than 25 million Blacks legally occupy 13% will have to be attended to. This question will not be discussed by the parliament of the bourgeoisie but by an assembly of the representatives of the oppressed and exploited people, the representatives of the working-class, the peasants, the semi-proletariat and the oppressed petty bourgeoisie. From this it is clear that the road to democracy for the oppressed and exploited in South Africa goes through the dictatorship of the proletariat. But what does the A.N.C. Charter say on these matters? Nothing. It prattles about the state shall do this and that. Is the bourgeoisie suddenly going to be converted, perhaps by the visit of the Pope or Botha's visit to Mobuto and concern itself with the problems of the oppressed and the exploited? Let us understand that capitalism-imperialism cannot change its nature. Indeed the Stalinist Communist Party which controls Congress knows this only too well. But it is vital to the success of its plans for a sell-out to pander to imperialism. It is not by mistake that even now at this stage of political development when South Africa has reached a crisis that it still talks about a nebulous people's state.

Let us now turn to what Joe Slovo, top theoretician of the South African Communist Party (SACP) has to say in his pamphlet, "The South African Working Class and the National Democratic Revolution".

"A struggle for democracy in the modern era has little, if anything, to do with the 'Bourgeois-democratic revolution'... The fascist experience exemplifies this point. But, in any case, in regard to our own situation, there are even more compelling reasons for rejecting the label bourgeois-democratic to describe the content of our liberation struggle."

It is partly due to this pre-occupation with what they consider to be linguistic inaccuracy that is responsible for the confusion in the Stalinist Communist Party. It is their great concern with words and syntax rather than concepts. It does not occur to them that fascism is capitalism, i.e. bourgeois democracy, in crisis. Bourgeois democracy is a term that describes the nature of rights accorded to the various classes of society in a state under the control of the bourgeoisie. From the time of bourgeois rule, all rights and lack of them were defined by the bourgeoisie.

Thus it was they who awarded themselves all the rights that would advance capitalism and denied them to the other classes - the working-class, the peasants and the poor. The latter despite being members of the community of the same country had no inherent rights of their own. This concept of the SACP seems to be the key to the understanding of Joe Slovo's pamphlet.

Here he has taken upon himself the role of showing how the Communist Party has always played a leading role in the struggle of the oppressed for liberation and that, there is no reason why it should not be trusted to guide the struggle to a successful end. He uses an ingenious quite original ploy. First he presents us with two successive organisations whose memberships are the same. The first and older one is called the Communist Party of South Africa, the second and new one is the South African Communist Party. But to his credit, we must mention that he remains Joe Slovo. He does not juggle with the names to cheat the reader. He simply forgets the grave mistakes of the older organisation, the Communist Party of South Africa, even though it is the source of the present confusion on the part of the new Stalinist party of the South African Communists. For instance, their difficulty in understanding the stage the oppressed has reached, flows from the original flaw of the old Stalinist CPSA which denied the legitimacy of the national struggle. Joe Slovo now uses pages and pages trying to prove its absolute necessity and indeed its centrality in the struggle for democracy. But, despite this, Slovo still fails to understand the relationship that exists amongst the various classes of the oppressed.

The second problem is that the old CPSA postulated a policy of "TWO STAGES". By this they meant that the Blacks would have to fight for bourgeois democratic rights, and having got them, they would in the fullness of time, fight for socialism. There was no dynamic connection between the two stages. Up to this day, it is clear from Slovo's pamphlet that even this new body, the SACP does not understand the dynamic connection between the national struggle for bourgeois democratic rights and the class struggle for socialism.

When Joe Slovo writes: "A struggle for democracy in the modern era has little or anything, to do with the bourgeois democratic revolution ... in any case, there are even more compelling reasons for rejecting the label bourgeois-democratic to describe the content of our liberation struggle", he reveals more than a lack of an unhistorical approach. It suggests that the national liberation movement has no past. Indeed the world-wide struggles for national liberation on the part of the oppressed for those bourgeois rights which have been denied to them by their oppressors, are meaningless. I suppose Joe Slovo would like to blot out of his mind the fact that the working-class as a class came out of the womb of the bourgeois capitalist system. The position of servitude was determined at its birth and it will only get rid of it by destroying the bourgeoisie as a class together with the system that gave birth to it. To do so, the working-class must know how it came into being; how the bourgeoisie reduced it to a position of servitude; how the bourgeoisie made use of it during the battles against the aristocracy and finally how the same bourgeoisie, using it, established its own system - the capitalist system which can only survive for as long as it is able to keep the working-class in bondage through the use of state power and violence and deception. The working-class needs to study past history and see through the manipulation of the state by the bourgeoisie for the sake of keeping themselves in power.

If Joe Slovo is to understand the process of liberation in which we are engaged, he must remember that, in addition to what has been mentioned above, that Britain conquered our country and reduced it to a colonial status. This complicated matters. For although the indigenous people adopted the capitalist system, all the colonial people irrespective of class, were denied what had come to be known as bourgeois democracy in addition to their being deprived of their land.

The following is what APDUSA writes on the matter: "Both these were calculated to facilitate super-exploitation ... Thus it followed that the whole of the oppressed - the workers, the peasants, and the petit bourgeoisie were to be mobilised around the demands for land for the peasantry, equal rights for the workers and full democratic rights for all, in short, it was necessary to organise a national movement which alone could have a compelling appeal to all the classes among the oppressed. This was the very antithesis of C.P. policy which denied the legitimacy of a national struggle." (Obviously this refers to the old CPSA, not to the present SACP). "It was essential to bring the various classes among the oppressed together under one federation on the basis of bourgeois democratic demands, and in this way to use the national movement as a vehicle to carry the oppressed masses forward along the road to socialism and in the process to acquire the concept of the class nature of the struggle and of the inter-dependence of the various classes, particularly that of the peasantry on the working-class."

The United Democratic Front (UDF) and its real purpose

The UDF as seen by Joe Slovo and his followers is the umbrella organisation covering all the organisations of the oppressed fighting for liberation in concert with so-called sympathetic White parties. The first most important questions to ask are: Whose brainchild is it? Who financed it then and finances it now? The UDF is the offspring of imperialism and its agents, the crafty liberals. Once the scheme was mooted (to form an organisation for the purpose of heading off the growing upsurge of militancy) millions of money poured in from Europe. It is significant that the UDF has no defined policy or programme, and this is no accident. It operates as an ad-hoc body that decides on each problem as it arises. The criticisms levelled against it come from the trade union movement, the many political parties of the oppressed and the various action committees set up by the people on national and local issues and which are run on democratic lines and whose officials are elected democratically. They accuse the UDF as being undemocratic, opportunist and of making bureaucratic decisions of its own while being answerable to no one.

As time went on, the White press began to make tentative suggestions and finally asserted that the UDF was the brainchild of the ANC and that it was the internal functioning body of the external ANC. To this suggestion the ANC took most kindly. Indeed this is not the first time that such a false claim has been attributed to Congress. The massacre that has gone down in history by the name of Sharpeville, was, without doubt, due to the activities of PAC. But, in course of time, the press attributed it to the mobilisation of the ANC. This deliberate manipulation of facts has its reasons into which we shall not go now.

The truth of these criticisms against the UDF is not denied by Slovo. He simply says that the effect "of this approach would be to downgrade the UDF as the umbrella legal liberation Front". He further makes the suggestion that "There is need for COSATU and the UDF to create permanent structures at national and regional level". In other words, the trade union movement must deliver itself hand and foot over to the UDF, which is under the leadership of the bourgeoisie. Is it not criminal at this stage of political development for a man who calls himself a Communist to advocate the formation of an umbrella organisation covering the imperialist representatives, that is the liberal

bourgeoisie and the working-class? Why does Slovo want to tie the working-class to the apron-strings of the bourgeoisie?

One would think that Joe Slovo has lost his sense of logic. That would be a great mistake. Slovo is strictly logical. From the beginning when the Unity Movement was formed in 1943, both the CPSA and Congress together with the liberals, were not so much bothered by its enunciated programme – the 10-Point Programme, except of course Point 7 which disturbed them because it implied that the land question could not be solved under capitalism. What troubled them most was that the policy of the Unity Movement was inseparable from its programme. This policy was known as “Non-collaboration with the oppressor”. Obviously because this was introducing a class concept into the politics of the oppressed. Now forty years after, the policy of non-collaboration has become common currency, that is, it has become the language of the people. It is this policy of “Non-collaboration with the oppressor” that Joe Slovo with all his rigmarole and deviousness is trying to obliterate and expunge from the minds of the people. It is this policy which stands in the way of a dialogue between the Government and its stooges who will be chosen by them to be the spokesmen of the oppressed. The UDF, which received millions not only from the rich in South Africa but also from Europe, has another underlying yet equally important function. It is to win over the Black petit bourgeoisie to accept a dialogue on the basis of apartheid as we have already seen in the new Freedom Charter with its suggestion of giving their hereditary rulers and chiefs a function within the system. To gain this objective they have to get the masses to reject the policy of “Non-collaboration with the oppressor”.

It is clear from Slovo's pamphlet that he regards it as particularly important to get the workers to fraternise with their bosses and to spread this camaraderie to cover the bourgeoisie as a whole. In this way, imperialism will have won a major victory in the present struggle that has created a deep crisis in South Africa.

WHY A REVOLUTIONARY MARXIST PARTY?

The crisis in South Africa, political, economic and social poses questions of greatest magnitude for revolutionary socialists. Which class should lead the national movement? Is socialism on the agenda and if so what strategy should be pursued to ensure its achievement?

The onslaught by the fascist regime on the organisations of the national movement in the 1960's created a vacuum in Black politics which was broken by the Soweto revolt in 1976. The revolt was detonated by the youth, who rejected Bantu Education and it spread to other layers of the population, developing into an attack on the whole apartheid system. The population came to accept a policy of non collaboration with the oppressor and unity of all Blacks, policies which had been initiated by the old Workers Party of South Africa and which the Unity Movement adopted in 1943. The workers played an important part in the revolt, staying away from work in solidarity with the youth. Some years before the revolt, the workers had staged a number of industrial strikes, which the bourgeoisie found virtually powerless to suppress because no negotiating machinery had been established. The bourgeoisie therefore applied pressure on the government to set up a commission headed by Wiehahn, to work out the conditions for the recognition of Black trade unions. The thrust of the recommendations of the Wiehahn report was to try to divorce the emerging trade unions from the political struggles of the Black workers for democratic rights. As if the Black workers could separate their demands for workers from their struggle for human rights.

Following Soweto, there was an acceleration in the political development of the masses. In the early eighties, the youth led the fight against racist education and set up committees which welded them into a disciplined force and involved the parents and teachers in the struggle. This period also saw the rise of the Black trade union movement. There were numerous strikes for recognition of the unions as well as for higher wages and better working conditions.

To counter the growing threat to white rule, the white liberal bourgeoisie planned to impose a leadership on the masses, which was reformist in outlook. It had in the past succeeded in making inroads into the organisation of the youth by engaging them in “self help” schemes which it funded. It now created and funded an organisation, the United Democratic Front, which embraced the white liberal organisations such as the Black Sash as well as the Black workers, the bourgeoisie and the youth. Being a loose body without a definite programme or policy, the front involved its supporters, particularly the youth who were most vulnerable to its tactics, in ad hoc campaigns and stunts which dissipated the energy of the most militant sections of the population and sowed widespread frustration and disillusionment.

The pressures building up internally as well as externally from imperialism forced the Government to consider whether it could change any of its policies. Botha told the whites they had to “adapt or die”. But no white government could implement policies which satisfied the aspirations of the Black population. The whole system of providing cheap black labour to the white mines, factories and farms depended on denying the Blacks political rights, depriving them of their land. The ruling class therefore resorted to a charade, creating a tricameral parliament with power remaining in the hands of the White Parliament while the so called Parliament of the Coloureds, the H