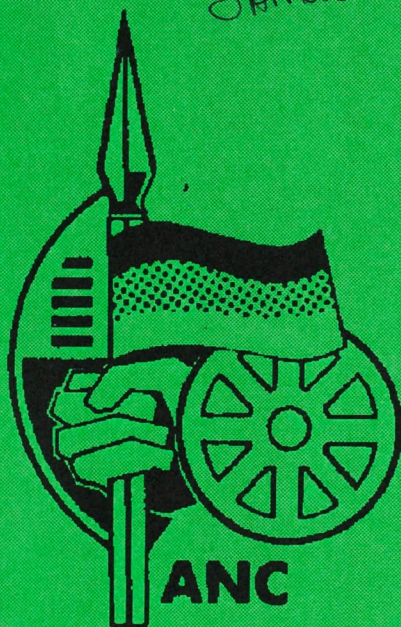


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**COUNTER-REVOLUTION
IN THE MAKING
TOWARDS A COMMON
PERCEPTION OF VIOLENCE IN THE
TRANSITIONAL PERIOD**

COUNTER-REVOLUTION IN THE MAKING

- towards a common perception of violence in the transitional period

I. INTRODUCTION:

1. Since the August 6 Pretoria Summit of the South African government and the ANC, there has been an upsurge of violence directed primarily against black communities. The forms it has assumed vary, but the scale of the attacks and their professional nature are unprecedented. In this Discussion Document, we seek to identify the character of this violence, the conjuncture within which it occurs, what objectives it pursues, and the crucial question of the response of the ANC and the rest of the liberation movement.

2. In approaching this situation, the following crucial issues need to be borne in mind:

2.1. In the sense that it reflects and affects the strategy and tactics of the main contending parties in the negotiations, the violence is redefining the political terrain. It is not a separate and incidental factor in an otherwise smooth transition. Neither is it ancillary to negotiations about a new constitution.

2.2. While the issue of multifaceted self-defence (both political and military) is central to the approach of the liberation movement, it is crucial for the democratic forces to assume an offensive posture. The violence has created a set of conditions allowing for a strategic advance on the part of the liberation movement on a variety of fronts.

It is therefore crucial for the liberation movement to adopt a much more creative and flexible approach to the new situation, and to rid our thinking of the mind sets of yesteryear.

II. THE STRATEGIC CONJUNCTURE

1. There is no gainsaying the fact that the changes that have taken place, especially since February 2 are a result of internal struggles and external pressure. The current phase of "talks about talks" as a prelude to actual negotiations is a reflection primarily of the deep, all-round crisis afflicting the apartheid system. Since the mid-eighties, the ANC has asserted that the system of apartheid has entered a profound crisis from which it cannot recover. The factors cited in this regard are:

- * the structural crisis of the apartheid economy, which reflects both the capitalist relations and, more important, the colonial/racial environment within which these relations are entrapped;
- * the refusal by the majority of the people to be governed by the apartheid state, and the corresponding crisis of policy facing the ruling group; and
- * related divisions and conflict within the ruling class as a whole.

2. It is these factors which set in motion the talk among the ruling classes about "co-optive negotiations" in the mid-eighties. In this milieu, the liberation movement took the initiative to define the terrain within which genuine negotiations should take place, as reflected in the OAU (Harare) and the United Nations Declarations. The actions of the state - to unban organisations, free some political prisoners, lift the State of Emergency in most parts of the country, etc - were taken on the basis of an agenda defined by the liberation movement and an approach enjoying the unanimous support of the international community. However, two fundamental issues need to be taken into account:

2.1. The balance of forces which made the beginning of negotiations possible is not necessarily the balance which would lead to a genuine resolution of the conflict. Negotiations therefore are a terrain of intense struggle - a terrain of contest about the fundamental question of the national democratic struggle, the issue of the transfer of political power.

2.2. While the movement set the arena within which the process of negotiations should take place and thus enjoys the strategic initiative, the tactical initiative will not always reside in its hands. In the contest characterising this phase of struggle, the liberation movement can lose the strategic initiative if it does not muster its forces properly.

3. Violence in any situation is not an end in itself. It pursues given political objectives. Therefore, in order to understand the root causes, the character and aims of the current violence, it is necessary to posit this within the broader strategy and tactics of the forces in power. The response of the regime to the all-round crisis of apartheid, characterised by the post-February 2 policies and actions should not be seen merely as desperate crisis-management. Locked within it are attempts by the

regime to seize the strategic initiative, by pursuing a political programme with the following main objectives:

- * to regain legitimacy in the eyes of the mass of the governed;
- * to present itself as a force indispensable to the process of transition both as the manager of this process and the force best placed to secure it;
- * to shift the ideological terrain by depriving the national democratic struggle of its national liberation character and present it as a contest between "free enterprise" and "socialism"; and
- * to pacify the masses and engender the psychology among them of being passive spectators and - as the case may be - victims or beneficiaries of this process.

4. In this period, too, the strategy and tactics of the liberation movement have somewhat changed. This reflects itself in the changing emphases and balances among the various forms of struggle.

4.1. Regarding "the pillars" of struggle, it is quite clear that mass organisation and mass mobilisation have become the main cutting edge of the struggle. In the period after February 2, emphasis in the approach to armed struggle has been shifting further away from armed action towards organisational questions related to the building and upgrading of MK. The suspension of armed actions in August is a culmination of this strategic shift. In the international arena, the terrain of contest revolves around the issue of the bona fides of the apartheid state in the context of the measures deemed necessary for the resolution of the conflict. The question, whose voice is heard most clearly, is crucial to the task of influencing perceptions within the international community.

4.2. The changing terrain of contest within the country places on the liberation movement an even greater responsibility to consolidate its mass base while at the same time striving for national hegemony, i.e., to be seen more and more as a representative of the interests of "the nation"/society as a whole. In a situation in which a peaceful resolution of the conflict is on the agenda, to be seen not only as being interested in peace, but also capable of achieving, maintaining and defending the peace is an important element in the contest for national hegemony.

4.3. With these changes of emphasis, the liberation movement has to weigh afresh the levers at its disposal in pursuit of its political objectives. In this regard, its capacity to wield and effectively utilise the mass support it enjoys is crucial. Further, having chosen the path of negotiations, it increasingly has to confront the question not so much whether the regime is or is not committed to negotiations, but to what extent it is forced by the conjuncture of circumstances described above as well as by continuous pressure to negotiate and negotiate in good faith.

III. CHARACTERISING THE VIOLENCE

1. The current wave of violence, therefore, needs to be understood in the context of the broader terrain outlined above, including the changes in emphases within the strategy and tactics pursued both by the liberation movement and the state. But if we have to approach it with any measure of accuracy, we also have to understand the unity and diversity of forces and interests within the ruling class as a whole. For purposes of this discussion, the following major forces can be identified:

- * big business
- * the more far-sighted forces within the government and the National Party
- * the security establishment, nurtured in the doctrine of the National Security Management System and Total Strategy
- * the extreme right-wing forces, with a significant presence in the state machinery.

1.1. Except for the right-wing fringe (which has its own agenda), all these elements within the ruling class agree on a number of fundamental questions regarding the transition:

- * to weaken the ANC and the rest of the democratic movement;
- * for the kind of transformation which serves the interests of capital and the privileges of the white minority;
- * long-term stability within the country; and
- * control and management of the transition by the regime.

1.2. They however differ on a number of related issues, among which are:

- * the methods which should be used to weaken the liberation movement, and the balance in this regard between coercive methods and ideological contest;
- * stability versus dislocation in the short-term in each given period;
- * the cost of repression reflected in such measures as the Iron Fist to the economy; and
- * sensitivity to international opinion both in terms of political image and investor confidence.

It is in these broad terms that these forces would define themselves in relation to the violence. Similarly, our approach to the resolution of this violence has to take these factors into account.

2. There is consensus among anti-apartheid forces on the character of the violence engulfing the PWV in particular.

2.1. It is organised counter-revolution carried out by well-trained, professional bandits. The actions are thoroughly planned and, while the immediate actors might

not have any political programme, the controllers are pursuing definite political objectives.

2.2. The actions are characterised by deliberate terrorism. In many instances, there is no immediate correspondence between the target of the attacks and the political aims being pursued. For instance, the victims of the train massacres could as well have been members of Inkatha, Ciskei National Independence Party or even off-duty black policemen.

2.3. The campaign is not being undertaken by an organisation independent of the state. The perpetrators form part of the state machinery; they are an arm of the establishment, with the backing or at least tacit support of forces from the highest government echelons, and they are commanded by circles well-established within the state machinery. The controllers and, in many cases, the immediate commanders are white. This applies also to those units which come from the KwaZulu bantustan structures.

2.4. The open, direct role of the SAP and SADF has been documented: both in support of the vigilante forces and as direct perpetrators - for instance, the September 4 Sebokeng massacre. The actions of these units is not an aberration, but reflects the confidence of forces acting within the ambit of state policy with the support of command structures all the way up.

2.5. The state itself has not attempted to blame the right-wing in the form of the AWB or any other such forces for the violence. Rather, the violence has been escalating in a period when the impression was being given that the networks of these forces were being weakened and their leaders arrested.

2.6. The timing, both generally and in relation to particular incidents was itself instructive:

- * immediately after the Pretoria summit where the ANC announced its decision to suspend armed actions;
- * when ANC branches were being launched in the build-up to the PWV Regional Conference;
- * attack on Sebokeng hostel dwellers at a time when NUMSA members - many of them living in the hostel - were on strike;
- * attacks on squatters in the midst of a campaign to occupy land; and
- * the switching of the violence on/off in relation to de Klerk's international visits.

3. The violence per se, has coincided with a more aggressive stance on the part of the government/NP against the liberation movement. Immediately prior to and during the violence, state propaganda against the ANC and its leadership intensified. Even "the men of integrity" were going out of their way to attack the ANC at the slightest pretence. Within the SABC-TV, the violence was preceded by restructuring

which, for eg., placed an individual notorious for hostility towards the liberation movement as the head of the desk dealing with extra-parliamentary organisations.

4. The political motives of the perpetrators of the violence are quite clear.

4.1. In the immediate sense, they aim to:

- * introduce fear, dispondency and general destabilisation within the black communities, and thus destroy the vibrant optimism of a people in political motion;
- * engender a sense of frustration among the people with the present order of things - for them to start wondering whether the pre-February situation was not better;
- * discredit the ANC which is seen as being unable to bring the violence to an end, unable to respond effectively to the request for arms, and having difficulties in selling its decision to suspend armed actions;
- * create an excuse for repressive measures such as Operation Iron Fist, and to then use these measures to further weaken the ANC and other democratic organisations;
- * by switching violence on/off at given moments, create the impression that the state is indispensable to the achievement of peace in the townships; and
- * for some of the forces, derail the whole negotiating process.

4.2. In the broader sense, it is quite clear to the state that, if the negotiating process were to proceed without any hitches, the outcome would most certainly be in the interest of the liberation movement. By creating complications within the process, they not only hope to weaken their main opponent, but also to strengthen the NP and its allies politically. As stated earlier, there is a deliberate strategy to deprive the national democratic struggle of its national liberation character. The violence and related propaganda serve this purpose by:

- * creating the impression that there are serious ethnic divisions among Africans;
- * fostering the idea that there is a battle between the ANC and Inkatha which represents an ideological struggle between "socialism" as represented by ANC and its allies and "free enterprise" as represented by Inkatha and its allies including the NP, big business et al;
- * in the same vein, portraying apartheid colonialism either as dead or irrelevant to present-day politics, allowing for the colonial establishment represented partly by the NP to form multi-racial alliances.

The violence, therefore, cannot be divorced from attempts to recruit blacks into the NP and the related campaign to revive the "National Parties" of the overthrown puppet regimes in TVC "states". It is quite instructive that, hand-in-hand with these attempts, is a concerted effort to train vigilantes in these areas.

5. If we have to eliminate this violence and prevent it from taking place in other areas, we also need to understand the conditions and factors that the regime exploits and uses as cover to bring in bandits.

5.1. The state exploits objective conditions bred by the system of apartheid such as the migratory labour system, unemployment and the housing crisis to recruit the individuals to carry out the acts of banditry.

5.2. It foments and takes advantage of secondary contradictions within the black communities:

- * between hostel-dwellers and settled communities;
- * between squatters and those who are housed, eg., in the Western Cape;
- * between traditional structures and the anti-apartheid forces, eg., Northern Tvl and Natal;
- * between militant youth and the elderly;
- * ethnic and racial diversity, eg., attempts to set up and arm "neighbourhood watches" within the Coloured community in the ECape.

5.3. Certain subjective weaknesses of the liberation movement lend themselves to manipulation by the state:

- * weaknesses in organisation;
- * low level of political consciousness within our ranks;
- * acts of indiscipline and lack of tolerance among forces identified with the liberation movement;
- * inability to deal with the problem of crime, eg., in the ETvl gangsters are being trained to attack SAYCO members;
- * inability to resolve problems existing among taxi associations, etc.

Therefore, throughout the country, there are a variety of conditions and factors which the regime will try to exploit to foment inter-communal conflict, and under its cover introduce devastating banditry.

IV. A STRATEGIC APPROACH

1. While the actions have subsided in the PWV, bandit violence as such has not come to pass. Information gathered by ANC/MDM monitors shows that it is bound to rear its ugly head in the Reef and other areas. Given the characterisation made earlier, it is logical to conclude that the perpetrators of this violence will seek to make it a permanent feature of the transition.

Objectively, terrorism and banditry are difficult to handle. As long as there are social roots providing the pool from which counter-revolutionary forces are able to recruit, it is extremely difficult to eliminate banditry altogether. The experience of Mozambique, Angola and Nicaragua graphically demonstrates this fact. And in this instance, we are referring to states with armies and a variety of resources at their disposal. Given our relative military weakness, the liberation movement is at a terrible disadvantage compared to the perpetrators of banditry. It should be emphasised, however, that this weakness is not a consequence of the suspension of armed actions by the ANC. The right to self-defence - a legitimate right - has not been forfeited. What is at issue is the actual capacity to implement effective military self-defence against roaming bandits who strike indiscriminately.

2. Having identified this, our strategic weakness, let us turn to the weaknesses of the ruling class. The features of banditry as carried out in Mozambique and other countries are:

- * its protracted nature
- * escalating and spreading geographically and in intensity
- * exacting maximum dislocation within society
- * a scorched-earth policy with regard to infrastructure.

The major difference in our country is that the establishment responsible for this violence is still in power. They therefore cannot afford a protracted, escalating bandit war which exacts maximum dislocation of society and infrastructure. Further:

2.1. Even if it could act in the form of measures such as the Iron Fist, the state cannot eliminate the instability and anarchy that results from this banditry. It is not always in control of the immediate actors; and such developments as the rampant sale of weapons are bound in the long run to turn against it, including in the spread of ordinary crime.

2.2. The repressive measures are costly. It is estimated that, in the PWV alone, the cost of keeping troops in the townships is between R2.5-m and R4.1-m per month. This excludes expenditure on the SAP.

2.3. Big business cannot afford even short-term instability and dislocation caused

by the violence: on the work-force, investor confidence, etc.

2.4. Within the apartheid security forces, differences are starting to emerge on the conduct of these forces against the communities. Many black policemen, especially those based in the affected areas, have come out against the attacks. Some have sought to assist the affected communities, in open defiance of their commanders.

2.5. Among those taking part in these actions are forces which seek to torpedo the whole negotiating process. Divisions are bound to emerge on the frequency with which the violence should be turned on/off, its intensity and the extent to which it should be carried out if the negotiating process is under threat.

2.6. Most certainly, the control of those originating from the KwaZulu bantustan machinery does not lie in the hands of Inkatha as a political party. While a number of leading figures are involved, control and command belongs to the central state machinery. The harm that this does on the party as a whole is bound to deepen contradictions within the IFP.

3. These are the real Archilles Heels of the state. On the one hand, it seeks to carry out a terrorist bandit war to destabilise and weaken the forces of opposition. On the other hand, as the government in power, it has to contain the cost of such a war to itself. What it then tries to do, is to conduct well-timed, well-controlled actions which are administered in doses at selected moments. The liberation movement must exploit this contradiction to the full. The strategic aim must be to raise the cost of the bandit war to the regime and its allies. At the same time, we need to identify the probable moments at which the regime will seek to switch banditry on (eg., major political activities of the ANC/SACP, election campaign for a Constituent Assembly) as well as the potential flash-points and the conditions and factors which the regime seeks to exploit.

4. Our approach has to be multi-faceted, and must first and foremost be political - bringing to the fore our strategic political strengths:

4.1. The ANC and its allies are **a liberation movement**. We should not allow the regime to subtract from our central thrust the main content of the struggle - the liberation of the black majority, especially the African people. The attempts to drive wedges within the black population must be confronted with a consistent theme accompanied by action to assert the mission of the ANC from its very foundation: the unity of the African people in particular and all anti-apartheid forces in general. In addition to the traditional methods we have all along pursued, the process of engaging bantustan leaders, chiefs and such forces as the independent churches must be pursued with greater vigour and a clear strategy. The agreements reached at the recent summit, which go beyond the issue of violence, must be followed up with a clear programme of action. The process to build a broad patriotic front needs

to be set in motion.

4.2. Our central message is that a just and lasting peace will come as a result of the destruction of apartheid. We must emphasise this, and link the programme against violence with the anti-apartheid struggle. But this message will sound hollow if we are seen to be incapable of dealing with banditry now. We need to clearly demonstrate the cost of the violence to society as a whole: to all who seek a peaceful transition to a new order, to business groups, the church, traditional structures in the rural areas, etc. On this basis we should mobilise all these forces to form a untied front against violence, and isolate the perpetrators. Preparations for the proposed Peace Conference must be expedited, with the involvement of as wide a spectrum of forces as possible.

5. There has to be a detailed Programme of Action addressing the following issues:

5.1. Co-ordination of all peace efforts, and the setting up of regional and local structures involving all interested parties.

5.2. The strategy of self-defence should include:

- * setting up of Street and Village Committees, Self-defence Units and effective networks to gather information and monitor developments in the localities;
- * selective and skilful usage of the information at our disposal for propaganda purposes;
- * a systematic high-profile "battle for the troops" which aims at weakening the capacity of the state to act against the people, and at the same time win over those who are interested in peace. The demands for a Code of Conduct, demilitarisation of the police, etc must be put forward in mass action which involves, at the forefront, sympathetic forces within the state security apparatus, eg., POPCRU;
- * a programme for the elimination of the hostel system which involves, at the forefront, the hostel-dwellers themselves; and
- * engaging the state in such areas as monitoring as outlined in the Groote Schuur and Pretoria Minutes (in addition to our own networks), the usage of funds for relief and development, etc.

5.3. At the level of national negotiations, the state must be made to feel that it cannot wage war and at the same time expect the liberation movement to negotiate with it. Selectively and with good timing, proper responses have to be given to specific incidents, without creating the image of the movement as an impetuous force that lacks seriousness. More particularly, we should effectively use the state's questionable bona fides to amplify the call for an Interim Government with impartial security arrangements. This needs to be turned into a mass campaign.

6. With regard to Natal, the following additional issues need to be borne in mind:

6.1. The local initiatives must be built upon, and the process of engaging the IFP and state structures must continue.

6.2. In the process of building a front against violence and preparations for the Peace Conference, it will be a costly error for the liberation movement to seek to isolate or exclude Inkatha.

6.3. We should reduce the list of excuses on the part of those in the IFP who are involved in violence, and give maximum space to those who genuinely want peace. On the basis of the engagement with Inkatha at various levels, particularly the local peace initiatives, a meeting should be held soon between ANC and IFP delegations led by NM and GB respectively.