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WHAT OPTIONS FOR THE BLACKS OF SOUTH AFRICA?

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It would seem appropriate than when discussing the topic before us we start off by answering the question - what do the black people want anyway? An answer to that question should also provide indicators pointing towards the options available to the black people for the achievement of this goal.

Somebody else might of course argue that the black people of South Africa do not necessarily fight for nor are they united in aspiring towards one definite integrated set of goals - that there might very well be a number of such integrated sets of goals which should also be considered as part of this assessment of different options potentially or theoretically open to us.

True enough a good number of such goals are offered by many people and groups including, perhaps more hazily, the ways and means to attain these objectives. We hope to reflect on some of these without however falling into a relativist fallacy which would suggest that in the concrete reality of South Africa all such "optional" goals are equally valid or carry the same weight in terms of historical validity.

Now for our last introductory remark: a nameless peasant hut in the Transkei and the Empire State Building in New York are related to the extent that they are both described generically as buildings. But the similarity ends there. The construction of the Empire State Building requires means, materials and methods so far removed from the construction of the peasant hut, the end results of construction are themselves so widely different that to describe the two as buildings reflects more the deficiencies of language than a reflection of reality. Even the common and decisive factor in the construction process, man himself, is so differentiated as between the peasant builder and construction engineer as to represent different quantities.

By this we want to suggest and persuade you to agree with us at least on this one issue that ends and means are as they

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can do without it

here inextricably bound together in much the same way as they are bound together in the consideration of the question, how to resolve the South African problem!

What then do the black people of South Africa want? In common with the former struggles of the peoples of Africa who are now independent and those currently raging in Namibia and Zimbabwe, ours is also an anti-colonial struggle. It therefore has as its central aim the ending of all national oppression, the realisation of our people's right to self-determination, the creation of a united and democratic South Africa.

The justice, inviolability and inalienability of these objectives and principles is accepted by the whole international community both generally and with specific reference to our own people. This position has certainly been stated repeatedly in the decisions and major documents of the OAU, the non-aligned movement, the United Nations and by the democratic international community in general.

Therefore as far as these fundamental objectives of our struggle are concerned there surely can be no debate in which other options would be posed because in reality the choice can only be between national oppression and national liberation. The very condition of our existence, imposed on us by apartheid rule, necessarily demands that we must opt for liberation because the opposite of that is what we experience today, national degradation, mass hunger and deprivation, consistent and daily police terror and the denial of our very humanity. No people has ever chosen or can choose such a life. We are no exception to this.

The whole course of our history since the arrival of European settlers more than 300 years has in any case been characterised by the unwavering struggle of our people to realise our right to self-determination. Our heroic people continue to this day to make enormous sacrifices, in the face of a well-armed and brutal enemy, because the choice we have is that between freedom or death. To borrow an expression from President Samora Machel, the slaves who have today taken up arms can no longer be asked whether they want to rule themselves or be ruled by the slave-owners.

We have answered and are answering that question by our own practical deeds.

The question that is posed most persistently today is not whether we should or should not be free. The question that is asked is how best can the goal of freedom in a democratic South Africa be reached. Should it come about by peaceful means or in a violent way!

Conference participants know the answer of the ANC to this question that it is only through armed struggle that we can achieve our liberation. The participants know equally well that the Western countries as well as certain circles inside South Africa which are professedly against apartheid are putting forward the thesis that a peaceful evolution to liberation is both necessary and possible.

Since we are dealing with a real situation we have to contend with the fact that the Vorster-Botha regime is fascist and colonial. The denial of democratic rights to the majority of the people of South Africa is therefore neither an aberration nor a transitory feature as far as the regime is concerned. Rather, in our situation, it is the very essence of fascist and colonial rule.

Therefore to expect that this regime could, by a miracle, decide and actually carry out a programme for the democratisation of South Africa would be to entertain a foolhardy illusion that a fascist can transform himself into a democrat, and a colonialist into a liberator. *h.c.*

In any case, the apartheid regime has given ample proof of its determination to hold on to its positions at all costs. One need only refer to the thousands killed and injured in cold blood in South Africa since June 16, 1976. A cursory look at the military programme of the regime as it relates to the build-up of both its conventional and unconventional capability is enough to convince any honest and thinking person that here we are dealing with a group of people whose power is underpinned and guaranteed, in their own calculations, by brute force.

In the past an argument has been advanced that the uninterrupted development of the South African economy would inevitably lead

to the dismantling of the apartheid structures, starting with the sphere of economic relations. The point is then made that in the end result fascist and colonial rule will wither away thanks to these pressures of objective social development.

In this case the thesis is that we do not have to bother ourselves about the political evolution of the regime from fascist to democrat and from coloniser to liberator. Rather, the ineluctable evolution of the material world will sort everything out., forcing the fascist and the coloniser to turn themselves into their own opposites.

All of us present here know that this is part of the argument that has been used to justify the flow of foreign investment into South Africa, against disinvestment and the imposition of economic sanctions against the apartheid regime. The world is perfectly entitled to suspect that this argument is self-serving to the extent that its most vociferous exponents are the British Barclays Bank, the American Chase Manhattan, the West German Dresdner Bank and the French Bank of Paris as well as ITT, ICI, Anglo-American, Siemens, IBM, General Motors, Montecatini - Edison and the other multi-nationals that occupy such dominant positions in a great part of the world economy.

Of course the multi-nationals have cause to put forward this argument because it gives them the opportunity to appear as defenders of human rights in the long term while at present accumulating maximum profit presumably for our ultimate good.- for the preacher a goodly life here and now; for the rest of us, bliss in the hereafter.

The fact of the matter is that the South African economy is capitalist. Its prime motive force is the maximisation of profit. Its peculiar characteristic is that it describes all the black people, automatically and by virtue of their colour, as falling within the category of the propertyless and the exploited, and all the white people, automatically and by virtue of their colour, as falling within the category of the property-owners and the exploiters.

Therefore wealth inevitably accumulates at one pole and not the other; knowledge, science and technology serves the exploiters

and not the exploited; the increased ability rationally to organise human society inevitably leads to greater control of the propertyless by the property-owners for the enrichment of the latter. This is what investment in the South African economy foreign or otherwise means.

South African apartheid society provides a ready case for a dissertation on the role of force in the ordering of human relations. It provides a classic study of colonialism as the use and legitimisation of force by one nationality against another; of capitalism as a system of social relations in which a minority which owns all productive wealth can only give life to these possessions by the exercise of terror against the majority that creates wealth.

Taken even to the family level, it discloses relations in which husband and wife stand in juxtaposition to each other as disposable assets, the disposer being the one who has the power to do violence to the other in the first instance by imposing starvation.

Hence you get in white South African society the in-built necessity for the white madame to hire black domestic help to relieve the mistress of all domestic chores so that she can be better able to attend to the serious business of beautifying herself not only to be attractive to her husband but also to use that attractiveness as a weapon to threaten the inattentive husband with the prospect of attracting other more observant and appreciative males. The open and consistent regression to governance by animal instincts naturally leads to the most extreme measures to guard this prized and perfumed object with walls, guns, burglar alarms and all sorts of legislation to keep out in the last analysis the black male and thereby results in the intensification of violence against the white female.

Such a society does by its nature define for the victims of its institutionalised violence the way out of their condition. And the way out of that condition is for the victims to build-up their own capacity to confront their oppressors with violence if only in the exercise of their right to self-defence. Of course in the finalise analysis the best guarantee that the minority does

not again impose itself over the majority is to ensure that all power transfers into the hands of the people. We are saying therefore that the only option that apartheid South Africa leaves for the black people is that of armed struggle.

All other options and essentially the thesis in favour of a peaceful and gradual transition to democratic rule is in fact for us no option at all because it presupposes continued domination by the white minority regime.

The thesis in favour of a peaceful and gradual transition to democratic rule at its most consistently militant, visualises a situation in which the regime is under continuous internal and external non-violent pressure to such a degree that it is forced to succumb and initiate the process of progressive change. These pressures are conceived as being mass political struggles inside the country coupled with the imposition of sanctions against the regime by the rest of the world.

At its intermediate stages this thesis quite simply does not touch the central question of state power. All the argument in favour of a code of conduct for foreign firms for instance, viewed by its proponents as part of their intermediate plans for peaceful change, constitutes an attempt to bribe the black people to accept the continued stay of the firms in South Africa and the continued inflow of foreign investment.

Surely the point is that the slave-owner will grant improvements to the slave for the purpose of ensuring that the slave becomes more hard-working and less rebellious. The slave-owner therefore appears to be conceding ground to the slave whereas in fact he is strengthening his dominion over the slave.

This is not to say that our people should not fight to improve their lives. Indeed if we were foolish enough to say to them that they must not fight to achieve a higher standard of living, free and better education, freedom of movement and so on, they would most assuredly ignore us and in the end dismiss us as infantile dreamers.

The essential point is that we cannot make it our life's ambition merely to struggle for improvement in our condition. A slave who is less hungry and less whipped is a slave nonetheless.

For us the struggle for reforms must be directly connected with the struggle for the revolutionary transformation of our country. When the heroic youth of our country took up the issue of the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction and the whole Bantu Education system they were simultaneously training themselves in the hard school of actual struggle to fight in future as a better, more organised and more purposeful force for the seizure of power by the people.

✓ To return to the ultimate as opposed to the intermediate stage of the peaceful thesis: one of the fundamental faults of that thesis is that it aims to weaken exactly the people whom it pretends to support. To say we must consciously take the decision that we shall deliberately not arm ourselves is in fact to ask us to concede to the enemy the exclusive right to maintain the monopoly of the principal instruments of state power.

Eventually, this thesis therefore has in mind a situation in which as we have said sufficient pressure is put on the apartheid regime to the point that it feels compelled to initiate changes. Yet again this is in fact to say that power shall remain in the hands of the regime and that it shall use that power at a pace and in the directions it decides, gradually to dismantle apartheid and in fact to produce a result which does not threaten the fundamental interests of the white minority - a result therefore which does not meet the aspirations of the majority.

The Western countries whose support and assistance is responsible for the continued existence of the apartheid regime, know this to be true. Hence their feverish activity in Southern Africa in search of peaceful solutions.

In Zimbabwe and Namibia the use of a combination of pressures and methods of struggle, armed struggle, mass political struggle and international pressure has produced the result that we have today. The white minority regimes are weakened to the extent that they are forced to hold out the flag of a negotiated settlement even if this constitutes a deceitful manoeuvre.

In these cases the use of force by the oppressed people has,

to the extent that the Western countries are interested in ^{seeing} seeing some changes in Southern Africa, helped these countries to reach the position where they can talk to Botha and Smith to say to them change is imperative.

What is of interest is that when they do intervene as supposed agents of change, these Western countries seek to subtract from the strength of the struggling peoples exactly this element of popular armed force. This is to ensure that the balance of military strength does not continue to shift in favour of the liberation movements and thus lead to a situation in which the white minority regimes will be forced to cede all power to the peoples of Namibia and Zimbabwe.

The question of what options are open to the black people of South Africa, whether violent or peaceful change therefore has also to do with the kind of change that we seek. The majority of our people seek a fundamental transformation of South Africa.

To recreate South Africa in such a way that it becomes a society designed to serve the interests of the majority means that the people must have sufficient power to impose on the fascist and colonialist clique not just a solution which guarantees democratic political rights for all. It means also that we must transfer the wealth of the country into the hands of the people as well as dismantle completely the state structures of white minority rule including the army, the police and the civil service and replace them with new democratic organs. Any results short of this would in fact mean that the struggle against colonial domination in a new guise continues. Fred. Ch.

We have no option but to struggle for our liberation using all means and methods available to us. We have no option but to intensify the armed offensive against the apartheid regime, to work to involve the masses of our people in struggle, to fight for the complete international isolation of the Botha-Vorster regime.

It is only the people in power that can undertake the necessary and meaningful dismantling of apartheid. It is because they understand this that all peoples who are genuinely opposed to apartheid support us in our struggle for the seizure of power by

the people, for the democratisation of South Africa, for the removal of the threat to international peace and security that is posed by the existence of fascism and colonialism in our country. We are convinced that this conference will serve to widen that support.

The struggle continues!

Victory is certain!

Power to the people!

National Executive Committee,
African National Congress (SA).