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Liberation Movements and
TranSitiOn, to Democracy: the
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by MARINA OTTAWAY"
South African scholars writing about the end of apartheid have been unanimous in the contention that it is useless to seek parallels and learn lessons from what has happened elsewhere in the continent in the process of decolonisation.l South Africa was not a colony but an independent country, they argued. No metropolitan power had the ultimate say concerning its future, let alone the ability to impose a settlement on the white minority that meant handing over power to a ,-’ new black government. WWW
’ meJLILAW inmauthQLtaggmgm to democraqy like that.
meggiced in Latin rica durin the 1 805.2
1W1, the transition-to-democracy paradigm was understandable. It was not surprising that white South Africans should avoid thinking of the end of apartheid as decolonisation. Although the often-predicted bloodbath did not take place in any country, the exodus of W31 fegggggf inciegggggice. In fact, the more prolonged and bitter theitruggle, thehhore massive and swift the exodus, as shown in Algeria and later in the -Portuguese ’ ’es.
Even in Zimbabwe, the one settler colony purportedly offering a model of racial reconciliation after a_ bitter struggle, the white population had decreased by about 50 per’ cent within five years ofindependence.3
Black South Africans have been much less likely to reject the

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1 See, for example, Peter L. Berger and Bobby Godsell (eds.), A Future South Afrita: visi om, strategiu, and militia: (Boulder and London, 1988), pp. 2685.; David Welsh, T. W. dc Kler k and Constitutional Change), in km: : ajaumal afopinion (Atlanta), xviii, 2, Summer 1990, p. 9 ; or, in a somewhat different vein, Herman Giliomec and Lawrence Schlemmer, From Apartheid to Nati on-Building (Cape Town, 1989), pp. 180E.

’ iSee, for example, Andre du Toit, iApplying the Framework: South Africa as another case of transition from authoritarian ruleP’, Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Af rica (IDASA) Conference on South Africa in Transitioni, Port Elizabeth, 21-23 June 1990; and Allister Sparks, The Mind QfSout/I Africa (New York, 1990). pp. 37911". The study by Guil lermo O’Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead (eds.), Tmruilion from Authoritar ian Rule (Baltimore, 1986) is frequently cited. 3 The Washington Post, 7 January 1985.

decolonisation parallel, in part because of a desire to identify with the rest of Africa. The South African Communist Party (S.A.C.P.) even described apartheid as lcolonialism of a special typel.4 Nevertheless, the outcome of decolonisation has not been an encouraging example for blacks, either. lMainMgeationdgLagthoritarian,
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dmsommmhimmmwjyga mgubayiapglitiFJ
The interest in the transition to democracy was quite understandable for another reason as well. With the unbanning of the African National Congress (A.N.C) and other movements, and the release of Nelson ’Mandela in February 1990, it became clear that the end of apartheid would be the result of negotiations, rather than of a revolutionary ’ _ The democratic progress experienced in Latin America during the 19805 was also the result of negotiations and pact-making, rather than of popular upheavals that suddenly swept away authoritarian regimes. A careful study of other countries might thus offer valuable lessons about the techniques of a negotiated transition.
As an analytical model of what was happening in South Africa, however, the transition-to-democracy paradigm was rather questionable. The major problem was not that the National Party (N.P.) still appeared determined to safeguard as much power as possible for whites, and certainly much more than their numerical weight entitled them to in a one-man one-vote system.5 Such resistance on the part of -th$_i_ngnmhent__gonemment and amniir’atwn must be considered normal. Rather, the relevance of the above paradigm was challenged by the fact that the opposition organisations, and above all the A.N.C., were liberation movements - and nowhere in Africa have they spawned democratic regimes. This was not a historical accident. Nor was it the eHect 0f the socialist ideologies prevalent at the height of the decolonisation process, although they undoubtedly helped. Rather, the

K For a recent discussion of the issue, see Jeremy Cronin, lInside Which Circle?, in Tramformatian (Durban), to, 1989, pp. 70-8.

5 Government thinking about the new constitution evolved rapidly in 1990, albeit dominated by the search for a mechanism to prevent what was dubbed lsimplistic majoritarianismll The Minister for Constitutional Development, Gerrit Viljoen, hinted in February that ethnic groups would still be represented in a new parliament, then suggested in June that groups would be based on language and culture rather than race; The Star (Johannesburg), 29 June 1990. Although the Deputy Minister for Constitutional Development explained to the Foreign Correspondents Association in October that regions and/or parties would have equal representation in one chamber of parliament, and that there would be no groups based on race, language, or culture, this statement was soon contradicted by Viljoen, who reintroduced the idealof group rights (Tilt Washington Post, 4 November 1990).

single-party outcome was due to structural reasons. The conditions that -
allow a movement to conduct a successful liberation struggle are very
different from those that encourage the emergence of democracy.
Although the transition from one to the other is probably not
impossible, it is not the most likely outcome. The problem was evident
in South Africa in. 1990.
The A. N. C. remained a liberation movement not because of
ideological reasons Or of inherent flaws of its leadership, but rather
beeauWiW-mdnmmWemainsnch. In theory,v/
the Congress was committed to the creation of apnon- racial democracy,
as all its documents -since;the 1955 Freedom Charter reiterated. Raising
doubts about theicredibility of these statements would be a pointless
exercise. But regardless of their sincerity, the A N. C. is history, and the
conditions under .which it operated in 1990, created pressures
contribuung t0 the rgtcnmmibemtianmommmmhamgmm, t/
and these have hindered it from becoming a political party.
An organisation which had grown and operated for almost 70 years
in a very Wt, including 30 years in exile and
clandestinity, could not be democratic-at least not yet. In 1990,
furthermore, apartheid was still a reality. While progress had been made
towards change, and a return to the Verwoerdian grand scheme of
separate development was inconceivable, the major apartheid laws were
still in place and the Government appeared determined to preserve a
special position for minorities-i.e. for whites-in the new political
system. Finally, the transformation to political party entailed, almost
by definition; Wm. As a
liberation movement symbolising the anti-apart/zez’d struggle, the A.N.C.
enjoyed automatic acceptance from many constituencies at home and
abroad Wigs AS one of the
several political partiesxit would no longer be able to wrap itself in the
anti aQaLMeid mantle, and its flaws were bound to be noticed.
This article will examine the difficulties experienced by the A.N.C.
in 1990 during the process of transformation from liberation movement
to political party. By doing this we hope to achieve two goals: looking
backward, we shall re-examine some of the reasons for the emergence
Wm; looking forward, we shall try to gain
a better understanding of the O_bsti9125&a.EtansiLiQnJngchracy in
South Africa and to the A.N.C.,s contribution to that process.
3 ’ MOA29

enabled it anore the rigidities of ecclesial control. As a result, the movement as been able to take initiatives and to make contentious . .commitmcnts well in advance of most church hierarchies.

As we have seen, the first strains of prophetic Christianity emerged after the crushing of the A.N.C. and P.A.C. in 1960. Following the 1977 bannings of the Christian Institute ,and Black Consciousness organisations, this numerically small movement continued to grow under the leadership of a number of talented and charismatic activists. Its organisational base was centred in the South African Council of Churches, the Catholic Bishops, Conference, the Sending Kerk, the Institute for Contextual Theology, Diakonia, and a network of allied groups. Financially speaking, they relied heavily on the universal church - on overseas donors - having failed to elicit sufficient support from within South Africa.

While prophetic Christianity at first was more forthright in its declarations than impressive in its actions, the formation of the U.D.F. in 1983, and the declaration of a state ofemergency and the publication of the Kairos Document in 1985, meant that the movement meshed more fully with the liberation struggle. By 1988 several high-profile church leaders had moved more obviously into the political vacuum created by the banning of the last remnants of legal protest. The result was a new defiance campaign. In other words, forced into serious social analysis, some Christians moved beyond charity by joining the struggle for justice. In this way the circle was completed. At first generated as a response to the challenge of the liberation movement, prophetic Christianity was later able to sustain and re-invigorate that struggle by helping to delegitimate the apartheid regime and empower the dispossessed. Its growing membership not only condemened harsh repression and systemic exploitation, but also had the capacity fully to identify with, and to be absorbed into, the liberation movement. Formed in part by the Christian values of its early leaders, black political culture could resonate with the voices of a contextual theology that engendered a politics of hope.

It needs to be emphasised that prophetic Christianity has maintained its own base in church and ecumenical organisations. With this element ofindependence such a socially radical movement is likely to challenge any future system, particularly as regards greater economic justice and womenis rights. Even if South Africans negotiate a new, non-racial constitution, prophetic Christianity may have to confront, again and again, the entrenched patterns of economic privilege and sexist exploitation that will not be easily removed in South Africa - or elsewhere.

LIBERATION MOVEMENTS REVISITED

The 19803 saw a growing malaise in Africa concerning the domination by single-party regimes. They had not kept their promise of fostering national unity and reconciliation, and they had not administered their countries efiiciently pr ’protnoted faster economic development. Most African countries werewheayily in debt and/or bankrupt. Far from promoting reconciliation, the ruling parties had become instruments of domination by entrenched elites, often with an ethnic base. A combination of mounting internal dissatisfaction and the sobering example of the downfall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe led many African governments to accept, at least in theory, the principle of democratic competition. While it was too early in 1990 to assess the outcome, of this turmoil, the trend was unmistakable.

The transformation taking place in Eastern Europe, of which the change in Africa was seen as a refiection, encouraged ’ the rather complacent conclusion that the days of socialism and associated single-party systems were over. In South Africa, officials interpreted the upheaval in the communist world as a sign that the end of apartheid no longer entailed the possibility of the triumph of socialism. This view influenced the decision to unban the A.N.C. and other organisations.

The complacency was short-lived. On the day of his release Mandela, whose willingness to begin negotiations with the Government while in prison had become the symbol of the new A.N.C., shocked many by advocating’the nationalisation of major economic assets. The call was in keeping with the 1955 Freedom Charter, the A.N.Cfs basic platform.6 But ideas that were common place in the Third World in 1955 went against all trends in 1990. Mandela, murmured some, was a Rip van Winkle coming back to a changed world that he did not understand.

Six months later, in June 1990, the South African Communist Party, the A.N.C.,s long-standing ally, was relaunched as a legal party after 40 years of clandestine existence. Although the rally was less massive than the organisers had hoped for, the S.A.C.P. acquired the distinction ofbeing the worldls only growing communist party. South Africa, some again murmured, was caught in a time warp.

Indeed, the A.N.C. and the S.A.C.P. were bucking the trends. But

l The Freedom Charter was adopted in 1955 by the Congress of the People, attended by leaders and members of the African National Congress, the South African Indian Congress, the white radical Congress ofDemocrats, the South African Coloured Peoplels Organisation, and the South African Congress of Trade Unions.

policies would benefit the public interest, but they cannot argue they represent those voters who rejected them.

A furtherldiiference between liberation movements and parties is that the formerwarc engaged in a Manichean struggle which must end in an absoluteifi’victory elfreedomr ’or- death, victory is certainl. Typically; shehil’gro’ups-aim at. seizing power, wresting it once and for all away fifomrtheldbminantec010nial or white rEgime, and returning it where it rightfully belongs; to the people of the country. This change is just and irreverSible. Political parties, too, aim at controlling the government. Indeed, they aim at retaining power as long as possible -even in the most democratic system they would like never to be defeated at the polls. Nevertheless, they accept the fact that no victory is final or total, and that few political decisions are irreversible.

It would be easy with hindsight to reject the arguments of the 19605, dismissng many African leaders as self-serving politicians and western writers as naive. But this would overlook the fact that the arguments in favour of national unity and the fear that divisions could be manipulated had a cogent logic at the time. Looking at South Africa in 1990, the logic was still apparent. Divisions among black organisations were used by the authorities in Pretoria and right-wing white groups to retain as much power as possible. Some whites, for example, extolled the Zulus as different from other blacks, and hinted at the possibility of an alliance with the Inkat/la Freedom Party, led by Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi. Rivalry between political movements could easily turn, or be made’to turn, into ethnic strife, as happened to some extent on the Witwatersrand beginning in August 1990. The Governmentls insistence on protection ofminorities could easily become a denial of equal rights to the majority.

The difference betweenl the 19605 and 1990 was not that the arguments in favour oFthe liQeration-movement approach had become less valid, but that it had beeh amply proved that the very real need to preserve unity easily degenerated into ajustiflcation for authoritarian political systems.

THE A.N.C. AS LlBERATlON MOVEMENT

The African National Congress, its leaders constantly repeated, was committed to a non-racial democracy. That was the goal set forth in the 1955 Freedom Charter.M The Constitutional Guidelines for a New

1’ According to the 1955 Freedom Charter: Every man and woman shall have the right to vote for and stand as a candidate for all bodies which make law; All people shall be enti tled to

...1.n w." :n ma nrlminlc’r’lvlnn nmw rruvnvrv’ Thp rhvhrc nf-yll m-nnln shall hr the sam e rraardless

the reason was not that Mandela was an :old man, or th.he leaders -of both’horganisations hadxbeen so isolated by exile and imprisonment as to ,bevighetaptldf developments elsewhere in the world. And time warpsgohly eii’st 1n science ,tictiongvAn eitplanation of why these deviant trends wexefipapifested in South Africa should be sought not in the charaetetisties gfathejleadership orthe isolation of the country from contexhpdrary :changes elsewhere, but in the reality of the political situatiehLThe A.’N.C. appeared to be living in the 1960s because it was still fighting thebattle for fundamental political rights that other countrieshadwon 30 years earlier. It used the language and rhetdn’c, andvepro’pounded the policies, of an earlier period because they made political sense under the circumstances, whatever the long-term consequences might be.

We need to turn to the literature of the 1960s, when African independence struggles were a fashionable topic, to clarify these issues. A liberation movement, claimed Tom Mboya of Kenya, is tthe mouthpiece of an oppressed nationt and its leader embodies the nation.7 Similar formulations abound in much African writing of this period, explaining why most movements were tbroad frontsi without specific programmes beyond independence. They also justify the commitment-often honoured in the breach_by the African Lib-eration Committee of the Organisation of African Unity (O.A.U.) to promote the merger of rival groups in those colonies where several existed.a An oppressed nation needed a single mouthpiece to express its plight in’a powerful way, free.of partisan bickering.

The idea that the maintenance of unity was more important than democracy in the African conditions of the 19605 was accepted without much argument by western scholars sympathetic to the cause of decolonisation. Immanuelngllerstein, for example, saw single parties, and the nationalist thqoesi heading them, as integrating institutions crucial in a period of rapid change:

For in. this transition to a social order in which the state will be able to rely on the loyalty ofa citizenry born to it and trained in it, the party and the hero can be seen somewhat as a pair of surgical clamps which hold the state together while the bonds of affection and legitimation grow."

Doubtsi about the lack of democracy inherent in the absence of

7’ Tdm ’Mboya, "The Party System and Democracy in Africa’, in Wilfred Carter and Martin Kilson (eds.), The Africa Reader: independent Africa (New York, 1970), p. 215.

a ’Immanuel Wallerstein, Africa - the Polilias q/ Unit): an mum of a contemporary xocial movement (New York; 1967), ch. 9.

’ Immanuel Wallerstein, Africa -l/u Politics of Independence: an interpretation of modem African hixtorj (New York, 1961), p. 95.

competition arose but were brushed aside. One-party states, admitted Gwendolcn Carter, were associated with dictatorship in the European experience, but this was not necessarily the case in Africa. Conditions there called for a lsearching reconsideration of politiEal conceptsi. Although Carter, writing in 1962, withheld judgement, she stressed that the new African political system appeared to provide badly needed lstability and continuityi.lo I ,

African writers also offered another defence for .the existencle of a single and supposedly all-embracing political front. Divisions within the ranks of the nationalists became a tool through which the colonial powers maintained their domination. Since colonialism imposed the same idisabilities and indignities, on all; victims combined to form a single movement based on race, argued Mboya. But this unity was threatening to the colonial powers, who tried to destroy it.

To establish a counterweight, the rulers choose dissident individuals and groups and build them up. When the nationalist majority, naturally, demands a one-man one-vote democracy on the Westminster model, the favourite minority oppose it and ask for safeguards against majority rule. The rulers side with the minorities and a democratic system crippled by a crop of entrenched clauses is ultimately introduced. The majority party has to agree to this crippling in order to get rid of foreign rule.11

In the same vein, Kwame Nkrumah justified the suppression of rival organisations in Ghana. Opposition forces, he argued, were sacrificing the interests of the country by ldisrupting the essential national unityi.12 They had regional and tribal roots, but worse yet they found willing allies among tribal chiefs jealous of their privileges, and willing followers among an uneducated population which could fall easily prey to unscrupulous politicians:

It has been the unfortunate experience in all colonial countries where the national awakening has crystallized into a popular movement seeking the fundamental democratic right to the rule of the majority, that vested interests have come to the aid of minority separatist groups.13

x What characterised liberation movements, thus, was the stress on unity, the rejection of partisan divisions as destructive of the new nation, and the illusion that an entire country could have a single purpose and accept a single representative to speak as the imouthpiece of an oppressed nationi. Political parties operating in a democratic framework, on the other hand, do not pretend to represent a people or a nation, but specihc constituencies. To be sure, they often claim their

10 Gwendolcn M. Carter (ed.), African One-Partj Slate: (Ithaca, 1962), p. 1

11 Carter and Kilson (eds), op. cit, p. 216.

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people The conditions of colonialwoppy ’o
engendered resistance, and the ANC? merged as an organisation to
play the role of mouthpiece and leader. of; these struggles .15 Given this .
definition, the A. N. C. saw itself not as a player amohg rnany, but as the
major actor.1: ,, .
That was in 1912. In 1990, Mandela, the newly elected Deputy
President of the A. N. C. after 27 years imprisonment, still portrayed the
organisation in the same light:
The ANC has never been a political ’partyJIt was formed as a parliament of
the African people. Right from the start, up to now, the ANC is a coalition,
if you want, of people of various political affiliations. Some will support free
enterprise, others socialism. Some are conservatives, others are liberals. We are
united solely by our determination to oppose racial oppression. That is the
only thing that unites us. There is no question ofideology as- far as the odyssey
of the ANC ls concerned, because any question approaching ideology would
split the organization from top to bottom. Because we have no connection
whatsoever except this one, our determination to dismantle apartheid.17
The views expressed by Mandela were echoed 1n A.N.C. publications.
The aforementioned handbook argued that the transformation of
South African society was a task for the South African people as a
whole,. Thus the A.N.C. isees as its basic task the organisation and
mobilisation of the overwhelming majority of the South African people
to act against apartheid and to take part in the transformation of the
societyfm The South African Communist Party, tied in a symbiotic
relation to the A.N.C. since 1950, was even more explicit:
the ANC doesnit and shouldnit have a policy of choosing a different social
system such as socialism. It is a multi-class organization That is the strength
of the ANC and it would be a disaster if it was to move away from that
position. It is a forum of the people, the whole people."
of race, colour or sex) Joining the ANC: an introductory handbook to the African National
Congrm
(Johannesburg, May 1990), p. 56.
15 iConstitutionai Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa’, in ibid. p. 65.
1’ Joining the ANC, p. 5.
" Transcript of Interview with Nelson Mandela at The Washington Post, 26 June 1990 -not
published 1n its entirety. 1’ Joining 1h: ANC, p. 14.
" Interview with Joe Slovo, General Secretary of the S. A. C. P., The Daily Mail Oohanncs
burg),
26 July 1990
imposed On South Africa
. DEMOCRACY A111) THE "A.N.C. i ’ " 69 ,
In this role as mobihser of awnation and mouthpiece of oppressed .
V .;the .A.N C1 was extremely successful. It was not the
’ ’ :1 movement, but it was the one that had come to
States 1nJu11_ ,1 99o was aecot’ded net to. the leader of a specific party,
but to a man who had come to symbolise resistance to apartheid.
The A.N.C.?s success as spokesman for oppressed South Africans
made its transformation into a democratic party much more difficult.
It could not be both the mouthpiece of an entire people and just one i
of several contenders in the political fray. At some point, it would have
to choose. Faced with the same alternatives, African liberation
movements in the past chose the first: they proclaimed that unity was
imperative and that the nation should continue to speak with one
voice. The A.N.C. in 1990 was caught between the two options, unable
to make a clear choice. Furthermore, conditions did not facilitate a
democratic outcome.
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I. Reorganising the A.N.C.
As the A.N.C. started rebuilding its organisation inside South Africa
after 30 years of exile and clandestinity, it was caught in a paradoxical
situation. It was still a liberation movement trying to dismantle
apartheid, and thus needed to open its membership to as broad a range
of people as possible But italso expected to control South Africa 1n the
near future - or at least to play a central role 1n a governing coalition
- and thus was a party that had to formulate policies and make
concrete choices. But attracting a mass membership and constructing
detailed Rrogrammes are essentially incompatible goals. The liberation
movement and the party thus appeared to function on separate tracks.
The leadership was discussing options and policies, holding seminars
and producing position papers, very much 1n the style of a political

party. On the ground, however, the A. N. C. was trying to recruit a membership not on the basis of the policies it proposed to implement, but because of its role as the voice of the oppressed masses fighting to shake off the shackles of apartheid.
This ambiguity was probably inevitable under the circumstances,

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because. the A.N.C...needed toJentergQ’hegothtions4 with both lmrass
support and a clear programme;_;Butjgjt,.ealsofmeant that, likenman’y
African nationalist organisations, the A2N, lCS’vfwouldag wentualliizolaim
political support for its programme 0n:r3.the’,-,lpart,of3tmembersWho’lzhad
only chosen that the old system shouldgghegendeditx: 2:133 .
Another set of contradictions .emergegLfromthe necessity to bring
together in a single structure. thegdispatfateasegments of the liberation,
movement. This consisted, at the tirnej-to itheA.N.Cfsunban’njngQ.of
(i) an exiled political cadre, spread between Lusaka rand’Eurjopean
capitals; (ii) a small butinfluential ’groupA’ofleadersgreleased after long
imprisonment; (iii) a largely exiled military wing; Umkhonto we Sizwe,
with thousands of members in camps-ih several African countries;20
and (iv) a highly visible, large, vocal, militant but inchoate internal
mass movement, not formally part of’ the A.N.C. - and thus not
represented on its national executive Committee - consisting 0f1grass-
roots organisations in the townships and of labour unions. Thef’fomier,
most importantly the civic associations, were loosely grouped together
in the United Democratic Front (U.D.F). Hence the development of a
tradition of mobilisation and direct political action by virtually
autonomous groups that was totally alien to themore centralised and
bureaucratic A.N.C. in exile. Each of these components brought to the
emerging party a series of concerns, problems, and vested interests that
pushed the A.N.C. in different directions. I
A major problem in bringing together the segments was to sort out
the leadership positions because there were simply too many contenders
- in the incumbent national executive committee, among the released
prisoners, in Umkhonto, and in the U.D.F. To these were added the
ofhcials being elected in the new A.N.C. branches and regiOnal
committees inside South Africa. Competition was bound to be flerce.
At stake were not only personal ambitions, but also therfuture direction
of the organisation. The two individuals seen as major’rivals in 1990 for
the leadership of the A.N.C. after the retirement/demise of the
Eresident, Oliver Tambo, and the Deputy President, Nelson Mandela,
were Thabo Mbeki, director of international relations in the national
no Estimates of Umkhonto’s strength vary greatly, from between 2,000 and 4,000 (Institute of
Strategic Studies, Pretoria) to as many as 10,000, of whom 4.00 or so were operating inside South
Africa (according to Howard Barrell, a Zimbabwe-based journalist). See Tom Lodge, tState of
Exile: the African National Congress of South Africa, 1976-86’, in Philip F rankel, Noam Pines,
and Mark Swilling (eds.), Stale, Rexistanu and Change in South Africa (London, 1938), p. 233. In
addition to Umkhonlo personnel, 3. large number of civilian exiles, including children, were
organised by the A.N.C., estimated in the Weekly Mail Oohannesburg), 9-15 March 1990, to be
as many as 20,000 to 30,000, mainly in Tanzania. The Citizeh (Johannesburg), 2 October r990,
reported that the total number of A.N.C. exiles had been estimated by governmental sources to
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9 .agd._.:1lhe iCh’ttisfHairtii, ’Umkhontols chief of staff.
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party.
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The iSsue’waslsimple;Politiealparties ’do not have armies because the
monopoly over’legitimate force belongs to the state in a democratic
system’ongVCrnment and administration. Liberation movements have
armies and politicaJ/military cadres. In order to become a political

party, the A.N.C. had to separate itself from Umkhonto, but the actual process w’asethemelykdiHicult. , l
’ Members of the military wing could not just be dismissed, butlhad to be given a -r61e, possibly in the South African army. Military and political leadership overlapped. Joe Modise, the commander-in-chief of Umkhonto, as well as Hani, had participated in preliminary talks with the Government in May 1990. Indeed, Hani was a member of the joint working group that was to settle the issues still standing in the way of full-fiedged negotiations and,, to make things more complicated, belonged to the interirnilegdership of the South African Communist Party. a ’
The first step towards separating the A.N.C. and Umkhonto was the agreement in August 1990 to suspend the armed struggle in exchange for amnesty for political offenders, known as the lPretoria Minutel. But Um’khonto’ was not disbanded and apparently even continued recruiting. Hani defended the policy, arguing that if negotiations failed the A.N.C. would be forced to resume fightlng. Government revelations about a mysterious ldperation Vulal, although somewhattsuspeet because obviously aimed at discrediting South African communists, indicated at the very least disagreement in the A.N.C. concerning underground operations and armed resistance. 21 ’
:1 Immediately before the re-launching of the South African Communist Party in July 1990, the Government released information - some of which was later admitted to be inaccurate -

The problem was not thatllighting H
operations had always . been , extreni’ldyfl’l
A.N.C. could not becomeacredible asa i
an armed wing. ’But lindmgardl i
problems within the leadership"
relationship with the southiAfiiim
authorities in Pretoria thatUmkhani 5 "
to disappear; and conwncxngmanly a
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(ii) ’17:! United Democratic Front , , V 1 - ..
This issue of the relationship of the fortnal A.N.C.’ with the United Democratic Front and its affiliates, particularly the so-called l township civicsl, was extremely complex, with contradictory trends emerging. In the 19805, the U.D.F. had been a substitute for the banned A.N.C., maintaining its presence inside the country and thus giVing it a great advantage over other political rivals. After the U.D.F. had been banned in February 1988, it linked closely with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), as well as other anti-apartheid organisations, in a broad alliance that became known as the Mass Democratic Movement. Once the A.N.C. was legalised, the U.D.F. had to disband or redefine its function. As of late 1990, it had been unable to make a choice, postponing a decision and drifting on without direction. ,

The A.N.C. for its part decided to ignore the U.D.F. as an organisation, while absorbing some of the cadres in its own structures. The provisional constitution adopted by the national executive committee of the A.N.C. in early 1990 foresaw the need for it to be totally reorganised inside South Africa-the existence of A.N.C.: supporting groups was not even mentioned. An interim executive committee was appointed in each region to recruit members, to organise branches, and finally to prepare regional conferences tof’elect new officials.22 The regions would then send representatives to the A.N.C.,s national congress, where a new national executive cornmittee would be elected. Many U.D.F. activists were nominated to: the

concerning a l plot’ to prepare for armed struggle, supposedly hatched by members of thex S.A.C.P.

According to the A.N.C., a recent meeting had discussed issues related to lOperation Vula ’,
although this underground network had been launched previously.

a The 5m two of these regional conferences were held on 29.30 September 1990 in Cape Town and johannesburg.

I one official explained
’ ’ to’return,’depriving
f ’ enewANC on the U.D.F.
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bilityisn g sted by;lithe??b’iitcomefiofitheI’bonsultative conference of -.
December’1’9’90fwas’4that the7 U.D.F. was too decentralised and dethEFEtiCutosnit the more authoritarian leadership style of the national executive Committee.

(iii) The Township Civic:

While the U.D.F. did not even appear in the thinking of the A.N.C., the township civics were expected to remain in existence as separate and autonomous entities. This separation was justified by the argument that democracy required a balance between organisations representing state power and those representing lcivil society’, a concept derived from the writings of Antonio/Gramsci. Since the state was by definition coercive, democratic struggles could only take place within civil society, where the existence of representative groups safeguarded the possibility of democraby.23 ’

In this approach, the KNC. was not seen as representing civil society, but as an oiiganisatiop preparing to seize power,26 or as a government in waiting.25 But the civics represented civil society. Their . independence thus did not mean that they would compete with the A;N.C.’f0r state power. Rather, it glea’iit that the A.N.C., which acted in_the political realm, would be complemented by associations acting

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ii -" See; for example, MizanahMatiwana, Shirley Walters, and Zelda Greener, Th: Struggle far
Dammit) (Centrefor Adult and Continuing Education, University of the Watcm Cape, Cape To’wnl, 1989), pp. gff.

""ANC Sends War-Talk Man to Preach Peace’, in Sunday Time: (Johannesburg), 16
I
Se t Iber 1990. 9 ,
air; ’The Current Conjuncture, Programme of Action and the Restructuring of National
P0 l tieaMdated 6 April 1990, a document written and circulated by Mohammed Valli Moon, t
he
assistant seizretary-general of the U.D.F.

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74. "A . MlAliIivA OATTAWTNAK’VYZ
in the realm of civil society. These wouldlbe thc’civijcs, seeking ’to IV: .1 l ’
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their members, problems at the ncighbliurhood’level,eandviktheylaboh":__j
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Moosa, the U.D.Ffs assistantj’secfeiarys
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A.N.C.Vaiming at the lseizurelofsta pews
movement rather than tpolitieal li:hartil
argument that until the apartheid regi "
must aim at building ldgal powerlt-j-l
building up lorgans of people’ls’ powerl _ ’ ’ _ I
these would play after the seiiiire-df state t_ weibytsthe V
stated; j ’ " ’ .
ConclusiOns about the implications of thesA.N.C.lsqrelations with’j’the
U.D.F. and the civics can only be tentative; at this hoint. By Sidelining
the Front, the Congress appeared to be tfjring to preSet’ve itshdomiriant
position and rejecting possible competition; while atthe tsa’x’neltime
seeking democracy through the organisations of civil society,.aw1e1ich
existed in a different sphere and thus ecould notteompete’ ,Withlthe
A.N.C. The very insistence on the importance of the civics Suggested a
rejection of multi-party democracy. In competitive political systems,
parties are the mechanisms through which civil society has an impact
on the functioning of the state, but they’do not lseize state power, or,
even less, become the state. In a single-party system, party and stated:
facta become undistinguishable -_Sekou Tourels formulations con-
ceming’the party-state wefe realistic if not. democratic." It is’uhder
these conditions that the need arises for other devices to give a voice to
civil society. It is worth mentioning here that theleaders of Several
African states have claimed that it was possible to safeguard democracy
in a single-party system, but that they have failed. ’ ;
l The difhculty of maintaining the autonomy of civil society from an
overriding party was becoming apparent in South Africa in late 1999..
While the A.N.C. was still not properly established, and it certainly
" See, for exam 1:, Steve Friedman, ’Peo le’s Power: itls u to the civics’, in Weekly Mai
l,
P P P
27-49 July 1990. ’7 The Current Conjuncturcl, op. cit. ,
" See also David Niddrie, ’The Duel over Dual Power’, in Work in Progress Uohannuburg),
67, une 1990. . t e -
’ See Hmya (Conakry), 2204., loJanuary 1976, and Lansana Diane, in World Marxist Review
(Toronto), 19, 8, August 1976. e 1
B&_
,cjectntehe suggestion made.
waig’jitime for the A.N.C. to
Althoughlaeknowledging that some
hsisted in his closing speech
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,1 . e exp, edto consult the members
Used in 139.
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7 W A .W ’ ’rocess shOwed the A.N.C. trying
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litsearrhy. It attempted to create
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u f nsmgAlthBth theA.N3C. may have accepted mu1t1-
trac’y m theotjygitsgleadetfssaw themselves as poised to seize
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ml lAs’aclvoeat’od Jih thalihettior’iv’oh AB’ukiltilihghOrgans hf Peoplelsv Power’ in the programme of
.action adoptecl lij/Ethe,Watelh Cape A.N.C. regional conference on 30 Septemger 1990. The
distinctioxi betWee tpeopletsjand’harty grin was losttin. the instruction that lEach’ branch must
’ ’ 7W . " r. l v ’ ,
take some meals, eat up ’an infra: nrelfor’ meet committeal. .
h? The oiigihally tsehedtlle’d. fhlhcale, 1N.C;W congress was downgraded to the status of a
consultative confercnoethat could dischssgpoliciu but notelect leaders. The excuse men was that
it would. have beghi’unfair to hold h coughs: befbre most exiles had returned, but the real reason
was probablwtheidesireto delay thedaypfreckoning because a number of leaders were afraid of
losing their membership of the nationalt’executive’committee.

2. Relatioizs with Other drawing ’
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Liberation movements elseWhere in’ the
or fought each other, thereby’web i:-
outcome after independen’cyeiiiTlie
merger existed in SouthAfnca,
relations with the S.A.C.P. arid, Inka’tha
organisations in 1990, they formerxbecali
A.N.C., the latter because it hadialrriillid
ambitious leader. ’ ’i ’5
(i) The South African Communist Party 5
The ties between the A.N.C. and the SAWCP had evolved during more than 30 years of clandestinity’ancl exile to the point’where.the boundaries between them had become Jihdistinguishable to all but those directly involved.32 This virtual merging fitted in well with the liberation-front approach: unity against the enemy has priority, and Ldeological and programmatic differences must be put aside for the time emg.
Once unbanned, both organisations started setting up their own branches and regional councils. Paradoxically, this did not lead to a elarification of their relationship, because members of the S.A.C.P. J’omed the new A.N.C. branches. In fact, many were appointed to posts in the interim regional leadership and those in the national executive retained their positions. Creating even more confusion, not all communist cadres declared their affiliation. At the rally held to re-launch the now legal S.A.C.P. in July 1990, as many as 22 leaders were mtroduced, but it was also stated that others would continue to remain incognito, for fear of repression by the South African police.
Both Mandela, the Deputy President of the A.N.C., and Joe Slovo, the General Secretary of the S.A.C.P., defended this highly abnormal Situation, arguing that it was justified by the close alliance between the two organisations and their common goal of defeating apartheid. But the relationship with the S.A.C.P. remained a major obstacle to the-transformation of the A.N.C. into a political party, dimming the chances of a transition to democracy. The issue was not whether a
h " Estirgjages 0f.the mgmber 0f S.A.C.P. members in the A.N.C.’s national executive comm
ittee
ave van rom Just a ew to a large majority. See Africa Con tial London 1
1990, and Front File (London), 4, 13, October 1990. M" ( )l 31, , N.Iimuary
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utinue’djrtt) ,Smollhd’ the relationship
revealedfone’ A.N.C. trait as liberation
, _ yttideelogical and political clarity -
_ . ed another the intolerance of competition
ta; . y, a ’ j’bgilitical rivals. Inkatha itself was by
no’ixri’emns den) raucl"ahi’ltdidi’iiciitlfiaccept’ competition. But it is the x
chiractlehi"dftm 3N.C.7"tha’t c0ncer1is us here, and the discussion will
be lirxiitea’fbi’dthatfissuel 1 " , a ’
Launched in .1975 in the KwaZulu Homeland, Inkatha regarded itself as an anti-a’parthsid organisation, while at the same time relying on Bantustan institutions created by Pretoria to recruit members and strengthen’its position. Its Chairman, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, wasalso Chief Minister of KwaZulu. By the mid-19805, Inkathais mainly Zulu-speaking members were estimated’to number more than one million, a result achieved through a . mixture 0f nationalist appeals to 2qu identity, coercion of school children and civil servants, pressure exerted by chiefs in rural areas, and extensive patronage networks. Despite the constitutional amendments iii 1975 that removed numerous references to KwaZulu and opened membership to all Africans, Butheleziis constant appeals to i Zuluness, did not help to change the ethnic image of Inkat/za.33 ’
Buthelezi argued that his organisation operated in the tradition of the A.N.C., and origihally clgin’led to have its blessing in relying on the legally created institutions in his Homeland to organise the population. But by the late 19705 relations between Inkatha and the A.N.C. had deteriorhted seriously. To radical agti-dpartheid activists, the KwaZulu-based party smacked of collaboration with the regime in Pretoria. Buthelezi,s own personality, his readiness to take offence, and his

attempts to portray any criticism of himself as an insult to,the Zulu nation, further complicated matters. As the townships became more militant and better organised during the 19805, particularly after the

3’ See Colleen McCaul, "The Wild Card: Inkatha and contemporary black politics’, in Frankel, Pines, and Swilling (eds), op. cit. pp. 146-73.

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the areas where violence was taking place (
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areas apparently starte& shppmg, makm Buthelea evedt-
defensixfe and hostile.
Nb
taken by the A.N.C.a11_d Inkatha in 1990 uiEee’ sa "thk
the outcome 0f Sigmficant differei ces. . ’ t i-
The problem centred 011th haqdh
Inkatha, and pro-A. N. C. /_’
Durban-Pietermantzburg are
for the violence are open to dispute. Th IanmtV/ia.
that it was mainly gang warfare a .
unemployed youth Although the gangvaaguely 1dent1fiedfw1th0ne. v
t..w,,’.v,..h ,.
side or the other, their members did not Vreall ’ kan. what each stead
for. Far from having political sigriifieance e confiict was thus si111ply
a manifestation of’ social dislocation. 34 ro-A.N.C.1nilitants 1n Natal
argued that the fighting stemmed from brutal attacks on theni by
supporters of Buthelezi, aided by the KwaZulu and South African
police. The motive for the attacks, 1n this interpretation, was Inkatha s
desperation over loss of support, as the more urbanised population of
the townships rejected tribalism and turned to the A. N. C. .- A
The A. N. C. called for peace in Natal, with Mandela initially even
appealing to his supporters to 5throw their pangas into the sea? ,3? and
reiterated that it recognised the right of Inkatlza to exist and operate as
a political party. In practice, however, the A. N. C. acted otherwise.
This was particularly true in Natal, and among young supporters
everywheref" A 301m peace rally to be addressed by both Mandela and
Buthelezi 1n April 1990 was cancelled by Mandela at the mstigation 0f
1.x
" Gavin Woods, ’Black Violence: a comprehensive analysis , lnlmtha Foundation, November
1989. For a very different analysis, see John Aitchison, iThc Pietermaritzburg Conflict -
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Experience and Analysis , Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal, Pietermaritzbu
rg,
I990-
" Made at a rally held in Durban on 25 February 1990, Mandela’ 1 call met with no applaus
e
from the audience of over 100,000.
’The South African Youth Congress, the largest of the U. D. F. affiliates and slated to b
ecome
the A. N. C. 3 Youth League, resolved in April 1990 to isolate Buthelezi, declare him an
enemy
of the people and urge Mandela not to meet with him. It also called upon Umkhonto to help
people
in Natal defend themselves against Inkatha, and demanded the removal of KwaZulu police fr
om
The New Nation (Johannesburg), 20-26 April 1990).
igh01ing it’.V’ 1.
figures who ;,
3. The Negatmtzng Precast V
The approachihg negot1at10ns brought 111to the open most clearly the
difficulties inherent in the transitio _f1:orVn liberation movement to
p01itical party, as well as the prbbl 1115 created by the Government 3
strategy. The ehtral 1Ssue was whether the new constitution would
emerge from negot1at10ns between the ruling regime, the A. MC, and
possibly other parties, or Whether it would be approved by the elected
members of a" onstituent assembly
The latter approach was undoubtedly the most democratic, and’ it
was favoured by the A. N. C. and most other anti- apartheid groups. The
South African Cabinet wanted a new system of government and

A. N. C., d: facto making the law I mo 11151101115313.1110: the entire black population of South Aftica.; Bu ali: discussions about the constitution, officials maintained, Wouldgbc multilateral or round-table. Not so, insisted the A. N C. First, then: would be no. negotiations over the constitution, but only over theAmodalities of electing the constituent assembly. Second, the table would be rectangular, and all participants would have to choose whether to sit on the side of the Government or opposite with the A.N.C. Already in 1990, Mandela and his colleagues were busy wooing those that de Klerk hoped might be lindependenti, notably Homeland leaders and traditional chiefs. Negotiations thus reinforced the trendtowards the emergence of a national alliance led by the A.N.C. Unfortunately, such a movement, however understandable, dimmed the prospects for a transition to democracy. Although elections for a constituent assembly would offer no certainty of a democratic outcome, pluralism had better chances to emerge from competition for votes than from the creation of a united front.

By mid-Iggo, other organisations were beginning to suspect that the preliminary talks had given the A.N.C. leaders such a prominent role that they were ready to forgo elections for a yconstituent assembly, Instead, they would bargain directly with the Government, leaving other groups out in the cold. By September, rumours to that effect were rife enough for the A. N. C to feel compelled to deny any intention to" ’ conclude deals on its own.

In January 1991 the A. N. C. called for an al-l -party congress to be held, after the Pretoria Minute had been fully implemented, 1n order (1) to establish the broad principles to be embedded in the constitution; (ii) to determine which body would draw up that all-important document; and (iii) to establish an interim government to oversee the O11 Ithe other hand InkIatliaI has operated as the dominant political force i11 KwaZulu from its inception, de facto obliterating the distinctio11 between party and state, while even the ruling National Party may be considered as a liberation movement that has made an imperfect transition to a political organisation. Afrikaner nationalism, it has been argued, blurred the distinction between party and state.a ’ 1

Will the character of the ANN C. and other organisations make transition to democracy impossiible? The historical record elsewhere in Africa suggests a pessimistic conclusion. The pattern established over time, from the independence or Ghana to that of Zimbabwe, is clear and offers almost no exceptions: liberation movements have given rise to single-party systems, not to democracies. When competing organisa-tions survived, as they didin Angola, the result has been not democracy but civil war. While in 1990 some African countries were perhaps embarking on a transitibn from iuthoritarianism to democracy, this was a new phenomenon, not the continuation of the original process of decolonisation.

The abhve observations should pot wautomatically lead to the conclusion that South Africa 15 doomed to witness the emergence of a one-party authoritarian system. The country is, indeed, very different from others on the continent. It has a much richer array 613 both

’7 Wear of Mass Action for the Transfer of Power to the People’, Statement of the Nationa l
Executive Committee on the Occasion of the 7gth Anniversary of the African National Congr esin,
8January 1991, p. 11 _ delivered by Nelson Mandela.

" Charles Simkins, The Prisoner: qf Tradition and the Politics of Nation-Building (South African
Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, 1988), pp 30-1.

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tarianism. The pol1t1cal p1ural1sm1 toso extentspu u
y.) .1
inside the country, it risks destroying 1r; side-lining many, I the
associations that had sprung up while iL was banned. The United
Democratic Front and the S0uth African Conncil of: Churches are
unsure of their role. The existing political parties, above all the white
ones, also have to undergo considerable transformation to remain
viable players 1n the future. The decisiOn by- the National Party in ’
September 1990 to open its ranks to all races is a clear indication of the
challenge it faces. Finally, there is no deterministic relationship
between political democracy and even a relatively well-developed
economy. ’ ,1
The beginning of negotiations in 1990 risked reinforcing the
dominant position of the A.N.C. and decreasing pluralism. Obviously
the leaders needed to create a united front and to display their strength
vis-(i-vis the Government. But there are inherent contradictions between
the pressure for unity, clarity of goals, and quick decision-making
required by the process of bilateral negotiations, and the decen-
tralisation and pluralism in the anti-apartheid movement necessary to
ensure a transition to democracy.
Here lies the difiiculty and paradox of the contemporary South
African situation, and of that in other African countgies in the past.
Transition from apartheid or decolonisation encourages, or even
requires, the maintenance of an all-encompassing, broadly represen-
tative front. Transition to democracy requires the breaking-up of that
movement into a variety of organisations, representing the different
interests and conflicts of a real country rather than of an idealised
1oppressed nationi. Early in 1991, the A.N.C. is still caught between
these two requirements. Transition to democracy is not impossible, but
neither is the much less attractive alternative of another form of
authoritarianism.
place. As the A. N. C. re-establishes itself Mallegal po . tieal org n1sat10ni
have attracte the ttentioni
superpowers, as E&Ig la.
.. 44w ,
the interhal s1tuat10n in’ Angola, and South Africas occupation of
Namibia. A short historical backgrOund will serve as prelude to an
extensive examinatiOn of the dynamics which fuelled the war in Angola
for such a long period of time. -, ,,_ .1, 1. .
Partly because Portugalls colonial presence in Africa was one of the
oldest in the wOrld, as well ah the most backward, brutal, and least
amenable t0.change, Angola remained mired 1n tutelage longer than
might otherwise have been the’case, with appeals for decolonisation or
improved conditions being rejected by the fascist regime 01’ Antonio de
Oliveira Salazar. Complicating matters also was the fact that Angola
was the most important of Porthgalist colonies from an economic
viewpoint.1 ’ 1- 2-1 " A -
However, anti-colonial feelings 1n- Angola could not be indefinitely
checked. By the early 19605, two main liberation movements (and a
variety of others) had developed. The M ovzmento Popular de Libertagao dc
Angola (MP L. A. 4), founded 1n 1956 a.?gd41eaded by Dr Agostinho Neto,
espoused an ideology which was Mamst 111 character, and received
some diplomatic and military support from Cuba, the Soviet Union,
and Algeria.a The Frent; National (lg Libertafao a’e Angola (F. NKL. A),
I 1’ 4.4 Oakridg e R5411: Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts. Graduate Student 1n Political S
cience
and International Relations, University of Pehnsylvania, Philadelphia, 1989-90.
1 For historical background on the long Portuguese colonial period, see Lawrence W.
Henderson, Angola: Me centuries of canfhct (Ithaca, NY, 1979), chs 3-5.
: Alvin Z. Rubinstein, Mascow’ .1 Third World Strategy (Princeton, NJ, 1988) p. 104,, and
John _..: