

STATEMENT OF THE
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS
ON THE QUESTION OF NEGOTIATIONS
October 9th, 1987

In the recent period, both the Pretoria regime and Various Western powers have been raising the issue of a negotiated resolution of the South African question. Inspired by the deep-seated desire and unwavering commitment to end the apartheid system as as soon as possible and with minimum loss of life and property, the National Executive Committee met and considered this matter with all due seriousness and attention. ' ----- ~ -

We are convinced that the Botha regime has neither the desire nor the intention to engage in any meaningful negotiations. On the contrary, everything this regime does is directed at the destruction of the national liberation movement, the suppression of the democratic movement and the entrenchment and perpetuation of the apartheid system of white minority domination.

The racist regime has raised the issue of negotiations to achieve two major objectives. The first of these is to defuse the struggle inside our country by holding out false hopes of a just political settlement which the Pretoria regime has every intention to block. Secondly, this regime hopes to defeat the continuing campaign for comprehensive and mandatory sanctions by sending out bogus signals that it is ready to talk seriously to the genuine representatives of our people.

Fundamental to the understanding of the apartheid regime's concept of negotiations is the notion that it must impose its will on those it is talking to and force them to accept its dictates. In practice, the Botha regime is conducting a determined campaign of repression against the ANC and the mass democratic movement. This includes the assassination of leaders, mass detentions, military occupation of townships and a programme of pacification carried out by the so-called Joint Management Centres (JMC's).

The racists are out to terrorise our people into submission, crush their democratic organisations and force us to surrender.

All these efforts will fail. Rather than create a climate conducive to genuine negotiations; they will only serve further to sharpen the confrontation with in our country and bring to the fore the prospect of the bloodiest conflict that our continent has ever seen.'

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Our struggle will not end until South Africa is transformed into a united, democratic and non-racial country. This is the only solution which would enable all our people, both black and white, to live as equals in conditions of peace and prosperity. The overwhelming majority of our people accept that the Freedom-Charter provides a reasonable and viable framework for the construction of a new society.

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We wish here to reiterate that the ANC has never been opposed to a negotiated settlement of the South African question. On various occasions in the past we have, in vain, called on the apartheid regime to talk to the genuine leaders of our people. Once more, we would like to reaffirm that the ANC and the masses of our people as a whole are ready and willing to enter into genuine negotiations provided they are aimed at the transformation of our country into a united and non-racial democracy. This, and only this, should be the objective of any negotiating process. Accordingly no meaningful negotiations can take place until all those concerned, and specifically the Pretoria regime, accept this perspective which we share with the whole of humanity.

We further wish to state again that the questions whether or not to negotiate, and on what conditions, should be put to our entire leadership, including those who are imprisoned and who should be released unconditionally. While considering these questions our leadership would have to be free to consult and discuss with the people without let or hindrance.

We reject unequivocally the cynical demand of the Pretoria regime that we should unilaterally abandon or suspend the armed struggle. The source of violence in our country is the apartheid system. It is that violence which must end. Any cessation of hostilities would have to be negotiated and entail agreed action by both sides as part of the process of the creation of a democratic South Africa.

Equally, we reject all efforts to dictate to us who our allies should or should not be, and how our membership should be composed. Specifically, we will not bow down to pressures intended to drive a wedge between the ANC and the South African Communist Party, a tried and tested ally in the struggle for a democratic South Africa. Neither shall we submit to attempts to divide and weaken our movement by carrying out a witch hunt against various members on the basis of their ideological beliefs.

The conflict in our country is between the forces of national liberation and democracy on the one hand and those of racism and reaction on the other. Any negotiations would have to be conducted by these two forces as represented by their various organisational formations.

We reject without qualification the proposed National Statutory Council (NSC) which the Botha regime seeks to establish through legislation to be enacted by the apartheid parliament. This can never be a genuine and acceptable mechanism to negotiate a democratic constitution for our country.

In practice, the National Statutory Council can never be anything more than an advisory body which would put its views to the apartheid parliament and the regime itself, which retains the right to accept or reject those views. What the Botha regime proposes is a constitution-making forum - the National Statutory Council - is therefore nothing but a device intended to enmesh all who sit on it in a bogus process of meaningless talk which has nothing to do with any genuine attempt to design a democratic constitution for our country.

In addition, this National Statutory Council seeks to entrench and legitimise

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the very structures of apartheid that our struggle, in all its forms, seeks to abolish.

The unrepresentative organs of the apartheid structure of repression, such as the racist tri-cameral parliament and the bantustans, cannot be used as instruments

for the liquidation of the very same system they have been established to maintain.

An essential part of the apartheid system is the definition and division of our people according to racial and ethnic groups, dominated by the white minority.

To end apartheid means, among other things, to define and treat all our people

as equal citizens of our country, without regard to race, colour or ethnicity. To

guarantee this, the ANC accepts that a new constitution for South Africa could

include an entrenched Bill of Rights to safeguard the rights of the individual. We

are, however, opposed to any attempt to perpetuate the apartheid system by advancing the concept of so-called group and minority rights.

Our region is fully conversant with the treacherous and deceitful nature of the

apartheid regime. There are more than enough examples of agreements which

this regime has shamelessly dishonoured. Taking this experience into account,

we insist that before any negotiations take place, the apartheid regime would have

to demonstrate its seriousness by implementing various measures to create a climate

conducive to such negotiations.

These would include the unconditional release of all political prisoners, detainees,

all captured freedom fighters and prisoners of war as well as the cessation

of all political trials. The state of emergency would have to be lifted, the

army and the police withdrawn from the townships and confined to their barracks. Similarly, all repressive legislation and all laws empowering the regime

to limit freedom of assembly, speech, the press and so on, would have to be repealed.

Among these would be the Riotous Assemblies, the Native Administration,

the General Laws Amendment, the Unlawful Organisations, the Internal Security

and similar Acts and regulations.

We take this opportunity once more to reaffirm that the African National Congress is opposed to any secret negotiations. We firmly believe that the people themselves must participate in shaping their destiny and should therefore have to be involved in any process of negotiations.

Being fully conscious of the way the Pretoria regime has, in the past, deliberately dragged out negotiations to buy time for itself, we maintain that any negotiations would have to take place within a definite time-frame to meet the urgent necessity to end the apartheid system and lift the yoke of tyranny from the masses of our people who have already suffered for too long.

There is, as yet, no prospect for genuine negotiations because the Botha regime continues to believe that it can maintain the apartheid system through force and terror. We therefore have no choice but to intensify the mass political and armed struggle for the overthrow of the illegal apartheid regime and the transfer of power to the people.

We also call on all our people to reject and spurn Botha's so-called National Statutory Council and make certain that this apartheid council never sees the light

of day.

We reiterate our appeal to the international community to join us in this noble struggle by imposing comprehensive and mandatory sanctions against racist South Africa to end the apartheid system and reduce the amount of blood that will otherwise have to be shed to achieve this goal.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to the Organisation of African Unity which, at its last Summit, adopted a Declaration on Southern Africa pledging Africa's support for the positions contained in the statement. We commend that Declaration to the rest of the world community as an important document laying the basis for concerted international action to banish apartheid racism, colonialism and war once and for all.

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