



AFRICAN PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC UNION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA (APDUSA)

Affiliated to the Unity Movement of South Africa (UMSA)

NEGOTIATIONS AGAINST THE OPPRESSED

The LAND QUESTION and the question of NATIONAL OPPRESSION are the two problems that most urgently need to be solved in our country. But who is to do it? Twenty-six organisations are currently meeting at the World Trade Centre in Johannesburg, all purporting to have the solution to this problem. However, before we take a look at what they are doing, let us have a look at the South Africa in which we live.

For so many years our country has been plagued by violence. In fact, it is true to say that since its founding violence has triumphed - the violence of the oppressor who, with gun in hand, dispossessed its original inhabitants. They have continued that practice right up till today. The ruling class, with international backing, consolidated their rule via parliament, enacting laws which would ensure their control of the resources of our country i.e. the land, the mineral wealth, the farms, the factories and the population. Parliament has always been recognised as the supreme decision-making body. Whichever party has the majority of seats in parliament effectively rules the country. So they passed laws which ensured that the majority would never be able to elect or be elected to parliament. That is what the struggle in our country has always been about. It is an attempt by the many to have a democratic right to decide how our country should be ruled for the benefit of all rather than in the interest of a few.

Our country has a tradition of resistance and struggle. Just witness the heroic battles and wars that our forerunners fought in the last few centuries. These struggles were doomed to failure, for the weapons in their arsenals comprised mere spears and other primitive weapons against a formidable array of weapons of the modern era. The 20th century has introduced new forms of struggle, and organisation has been seen as paramount in order to launch an assault against oppression and exploitation. Trade unions, peasant bodies, civic and youth organisations, professional bodies, churches, political organisations have all entered the fray.

Recently a new element came into the struggle. Realising that their old methods of rule were no longer good enough to withstand the demands of the people, the ruling class produced a new strategy. Urged on by imperialism who feared for their investments and awesome profits, they unbanned organisations of the oppressed, freed political prisoners and started engaging in talks. These talks are supposedly aimed at giving everybody a stake in the country's wellbeing and allowing democracy to reign. BUT we must firstly realise that imperialism will NEVER allow their profits to be touched. Any decisions taken in these talks must steer well clear of that eventuality. The ruling class insists on the constitutional entrenchment of POWER SHARING and the protection of THEIR minority rights. Even this is not enough for them. They also demand a system of FEDERALISM or REGIONALISM which will enable them to maintain their strategy of divide and rule. It is therefore clear that their only aim is to protect the status quo. Negotiations is a strategy which seeks to include as many parties as possible for the purpose of disarming the population - you can only rule if you have the consent of the ruled! The impression is being given that the struggle is now taking place in the conference rooms and that victory can be achieved through hard bargaining.

But the people are growing tired of negotiations. The "New South Africa" has brought no improvement in their living conditions. Hopes of finding employment are lower than ever. Education and health care has sunk deeper and deeper into crisis. Decent housing has become a dream of the past and squatter camps have become the norm. Mismanagement and corruption in government circles is rife. Instead of the promised change for the better the oppressed suffered an intensified onslaught on all facets of their existence. Conditions became so bad that something had to give.

The spark was provided by the assassination of Chris Hani - gunned down by a fascist's bullet. Who was Chris Hani? His official positions were those of Secretary-General of the South African Communist Party and executive member of the African National Congress. He has been described as follows: "In stark contrast to Mr Hani's public image there is a commitment to the peace process, pragmatism and democratic accountability ... In the current situation therefore Mr Hani is clearly on board the negotiations bus being driven by Mr Mandela." (Weekend Argus 17 April 1993). And again: "Mr Hani was the undisputed leader of the township youth, of the unemployed and angry youth. No other leader of the ANC could present compromise as victories with such ease; no other leader could argue for peace by presenting it as a kind of struggle - in short, rallying the radicalised youth behind the project of a negotiated solution." (British Financial Times 13 April 1993.)

Hani's assassination sparked a wave of extreme anger and a serious questioning of the validity of the negotiation process. This has found expression in mass protests, stonings, attacks on white farmers, etc. But the ruling class remains unmoved and has once more resorted to its own means of violence to keep any resistance of the oppressed in check. The ANC used Hani's death to pressurise the government to set an election date or else they would embark on "rolling mass action" but F.W. De Klerk characteristically replied, "The government remains committed to negotiation but it will not be blackmailed" (Argus 17 April 1993). The ANC has no alternative but to submit. It has systematically backed down on the demands that it originally made when it entered negotiations. It holds the same position as De Klerk, irrespective of its protestations to the contrary. Only recently, while addressing an international media conference in the U.K. Nelson Mandela said that he "would urge British business to invest in South Africa and that the ANC would encourage investors by guaranteeing not to expropriate their property and to allow full repatriation of dividends and profits ... Another crucial move would be to lower expectations of blacks because it could take as long as five years before a new government could address serious socio-economic problems" (Cape Times 5 May 1993).

Whose interests do the leadership of the ANC and their ilk serve? It is said that he who pays the piper calls the tune. To this end an international aid package has been promised to South Africa if certain conditions are met. The price tag - R6 to R9 billion. The conditions call for the implementation of a transitional executive council, an end to demands for international sanctions by the ANC and an end to violence (Weekly Mail 14-20 May 1993.)

How do we, the oppressed and exploited, get out of this impasse? The present government will definitely not do anything about it. The leadership of the ANC and their allies and friends have clearly thrown in their lot with big business and the international agencies of imperialism. These bodies, governments and Multi-nationals have always acted only in their own interests. From time to time they shed crocodile tears on our behalf but that is the most that we can expect from them.

The ball is firmly in our court. Only the independent organisations of the people, working together in a permanent and principled unity can achieve our demands. This must find expression in a democratically elected Constituent Assembly. The Constituent Assembly must be guided by the demands of the oppressed and exploited for the full franchise and majority rule in a unitary South African state, and a resolution of the land question in the interests of those who live on and work the land. Until this happens the violence which our nation suffers every day will continue to batter down on us.

THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKERS AND PEASANTS MUST BE PARAMOUNT!
BUILD OUR INDEPENDENT ORGANISATIONS, FREE FROM RULING CLASS INFLUENCES.
NON-COLLABORATION WITH THE OPPRESSOR! LAND AND LIBERTY!

WE BUILD A NATION