

Pick Up the Weapon of MLM

The Future of



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Azania is not Negotiable!



The struggle of the Azanian masses has again blasted a hole in the big lie of the world's bourgeois media that "peace fever" is breaking out all over South Africa in response to the white minority regime's current acrobatics of negotiations and reforms. Ever since the announcement by South African President F.W. DeKlerk in early February that Nelson Mandela would be released after 27 years in their jails and some thirty political organisations would be unbanned, the black masses have turned up the heat on the apartheid rulers. From Sebokeng township southeast of Johannesburg to Sharpeville, to the Maritzburg townships and all through the Natal

region, as well as the "independent" bantustans of Bophuthatswana, the Transkei and Ciskei, rebellions have reached a height comparable to the last major upsurge of 1984-86, in some places pushing even beyond. In the rural areas (where 50% of Azanians live in impoverished, overpopulated reserves), the people demanded their puppet leaders resign and that this bantustan system built to keep blacks out of white areas be done away with. Coupled with widespread protests against increases in rent and basic necessities was renewed fury against vicious police violence and the collaboration of black authorities with the white state.

After police opened fire on 30,000 Azanians in Sebokeng in March, for example, killing 14 and wounding nearly 500 others, the youth righteously threw up barricades in the streets and fought running battles with police, attacking government cars and offices and stoning the homes of town councilors. White people were pulled from their cars and beaten after white vigilantes had cruised the streets randomly shooting at blacks.

In fact the resurgence of struggle began long before — particularly gaining momentum in the latter part of 1989 as the white government appointed itself a new president and declared that a new era was dawning in their racist slumyard of apartheid: “justice and equality are on the horizon, if you just believe in us”. The people launched mass boycotts, rent strikes, stay-aways, demonstrations and mass funerals of police victims, as a widespread atmosphere of defiance spread once again throughout the country, as it had five years earlier. This is the context in which the apartheid rulers are trying to assume their new posture of political concessions to “the black community” in the form of proposing reforms and negotiations, and a truly difficult position it is.

No, the fascists running the 20th-century plantation in South Africa for Western imperialism have not laid down their swastikas for peace symbols. Quite the contrary. They are drowning the struggle in blood — more than nine hundred people have been gunned down by state bullets since the beginning of the year. Over the past three years they have detained more than 30,000 people, more than a third of whom were children. And if Mandela got the world spotlight and royal treatment when he was set free, several Pan African Congress leaders mysteriously ended up dead in a car crash several months later, at least one of whom was released from prison with ANC (African National Congress) leaders last fall. The four-year-old state of emergency was partially lifted only in June 1990, two months after the first talks between DeKlerk and the ANC. Their law is still the law of repression and armed might. But they have a big problem, because this hasn’t worked either. Their order is continually thrown

into the most combative disorder and the rebellious youth especially hold nothing but contempt for the future of oppression, discrimination and life at gunpoint being “negotiated” for them in high places.

To the extent they have leaked these incidents, the government and Western press have tried to reduce them to fighting between organisations and “black on black” violence. One Azanian revolutionary described the contradictory situation: “Much of the violence is between the masses themselves, some between old people opposing the youth, and there are some interethnic clashes, too, because the situation is so bad in there, the people react. They were also disappointed by the reforms — they heard people were getting some things in some places, but haven’t themselves seen any changes. Especially in Natal [where Zulu puppetstan Chief Buthe’s armed Inkatha vigilantes have been attacking political opponents and rebellious youth — AWTW], the state comes into the UDF-Inkatha violence and takes one side or the other, fanning the flames. But mostly it is the youth against the establishment, trying to destroy every symbol of the establishment.”

A Strategy for a Weak Ruling Class

The white ruling class is in serious crisis — economically and politically — and is cornered by the struggle of the masses that continually resurges to pound away at the regime’s untenable position; it seems to face literally no other alternative than to scrap some of the ugliest features of its apartheid laws and try to find a way to soothe the political situation. It is true they have gone through this routine before (combining small carrots with heavy repression after every major round of mass upsurge since 1976), but this time the reforms must have some substance. Desegregation of public amenities such as buses, beaches and hospitals, talk of narrowing the gap in education, even of abandoning the homelands policy and township councils so hated by the masses: all these along with the promise of some political and civil rights being accorded to blacks are aimed at showing their “good intentions” to evolve towards “a new

South Africa”.

There are several different components to the present apartheid government strategy. First, a tiny political opening that allows some black bourgeois political leaders to participate in schemes for constitutional reform and establishes some political channels that have not previously existed. While a few minimal rights may be granted formally to the black majority as a whole (which includes Africans, Indians and so-called Coloureds that make up nearly 31 million people, or 85% of the population), these channels seek mainly to appease the black middle classes through some freedom of expression and sampling a few of the wisps of bourgeois democracy they have been denied. The whole strategy depends, in a sense, on the regime’s success at building up these black bourgeois strata that will be more closely linked to the ruling class itself.

This buffer class of blacks will be key for many reasons: not only will they be called upon to debate the terms of “integration” and constitutional procedures such as voting and national representation for years to come, but they will fill some important posts in government, management, education and international diplomacy. Most of all, however, they will be expected to help rein in the struggle of the masses where the regime’s bullets have failed. They must develop the needed literature and organisations to derail or snuff out the masses’ struggle and persuade them that a long process of “democratisation” is unfolding and that “patience” and “education” are the “modern” way to express grievances. They will speak and write volumes trying to soften the racial lines and combat nationalism. And significantly, as the regime’s spokesmen have put it in some more candid moments, they will be expected to help to single out, expose and crush the revolutionary elements that refuse to go along with the “post-apartheid” program and insist on opposing the oppressor state.

Many forces refer to this process as “power-sharing”, in the anticipation that soon black candidates will be on the ballot. While the capitalist state may “darken” itself a little with a small number of privileged blacks, its goal is precisely to reinforce its own bourgeois political rule by con-

solidating power *against* the masses of black people, who fundamentally have no political voice and never will until they seize the reins of society in their own interests by force of arms. As is generally the case in the dominated countries, imperialism cannot bring about even bourgeois democracy for the oppressed in South Africa.

Armed terror will remain the foundation of white-centred reactionary rule, despite the necessary raising of a neo-apartheid black "peace" corps, just described. The regime has already reorganised its central repressive apparatus under government rather than military command, which includes shifting security forces from other areas to the police, an immediate doubling of the police force, followed by an increase of more than *tenfold* over the next several years, with special emphasis on riot units, "terrorist" investigative units and security at key communications and transport points. Since the withdrawal of South African troops from Angola, there has been a 20 percent increase in defence spending that is earmarked for weapons modernisation and strategic arms development.

Their attempt to appease the internal political climate through some formal "legal" changes forms part of a broader effort to upgrade the regime's all-round image, particularly by creating new legitimacy internationally and breaking through the political and diplomatic isolation that has somewhat hindered the apartheid rulers. The goal here is to encourage friends and trading partners to operate more freely to help bolster the sagging economy and the position of distress of the regime in general. It is also linked to some bigger strategic plans of the imperialists to fortify South Africa as the economic powerhouse and regional gendarme of the subcontinent. (For example, yet another "secret" nuclear project to build a middle-range missile with Israel has been recently revealed.)

In alliance with their imperialist partners, the apartheid rulers hope to even more rapaciously dominate the continent of Africa and try to stem their own economic crisis through new openings to low-quality manufactured goods markets in the Third World in general and in Eastern

Europe. Their principal export, however, remains armaments, and this is double-barreled "development aid" to its neighbours of the most obvious kind.

The white settler state has long followed a policy of virtually *no* investment in social services for the black majority. Now they will most likely set up some vehicles to ease some aspects of the double standard they have built their prison camp on, although how exactly is not yet clear, perhaps through integrating some schools and housing for a minority.

The regime's strategy is a strategy for a weak and desperate ruling class looking to keep its system afloat by any means it can. The trouble is, their crisis is deep. They are not able to and do not intend to improve the lives of the masses to any real extent, or to alter the basic nature of their system which has always depended on the most vicious national oppression and superexploitation of the black population. If a few blacks are able to benefit from the minor concessions tossed their way, conditions for the broad masses may well worsen.

Still they must continue to squeeze the Azanian people at a rate that attracts and manages to stabilise foreign investment, while in their own words, they must change the climate at home to one of "reform" instead of "revolution", while establishing control, somehow, over a hostile, subjugated people. Otherwise, their rule over the plantation as a whole may unravel and blow up in their faces, as it already is beginning to do.

Azania's Future is Not Negotiable

People the world over were elated at Nelson Mandela's release from prison. But it would be naive not to see this as a coldly calculated move to begin to win over and mould the black social base the white regime needs for its strategy as well as to widely influence public opinion in general. Unfortunately, Mandela, along with the liberal businessmen, church officials, professionals and other bourgeois and petit bourgeois strata that form the social base of his ANC, has played his capitulationist role with the skill of a true bourgeois politician. He has repeatedly extolled the ruling class leaders'

integrity, their honest aims, with reassurances that whites have "nothing to fear from us". And he immediately agreed in principle to give up the "armed struggle" (which the ANC has always seen as a pressure tactic to spur negotiations and never as a revolutionary means of destroying the enemy state and seizing power). Of course, challenging the state's armed right to rule the masses is not on the white government's negotiations agenda.

Mandela's "peace" talk has also begun to backfire, dispelling the myth that he possesses some magical power to heal the deep divisions of brutal colonial society. At a public speech in Durban shortly after his release, he was loudly booed when he called on people to "bury the past and extend your hand", and to "throw your arms into the sea". Hearing this programme, some of the rebellious youth in the townships have said they will take up arms against the ANC "and all shortcuts and sellouts" if necessary. Others oppose the "one man, one vote" slogan with the old PAC saying, "one settler, one bullet". How useful Mandela will remain for the rulers is not yet clear, although ANC leaders, along with other black collaborationist forces, will certainly be in the thick of the coming debate over what "share" privileged blacks are to be awarded in the reforms. In many ways the government has already outstripped the ANC's pitiful "pre-negotiations" demands and has shown it will go further in dismantling some apartheid structures. Also, with the collapse of imitation communism in the East bloc — which formerly propped up revisionist movements like the ANC and a certain pro-Soviet model of phoney African socialism as part of their contention with the Western imperialists — these forces are more than ever driven straight into the arms and jaws of the West. They have lost some of their clout for negotiated settlements with the disappearance of their former social-imperialist muscle. Will these reformists also hail the arrival of their East European "brothers" now being recruited by the South African regime to beef up its white reactionary social base?

Political compromise was no surprise coming from the ANC and the

political organisations it influences — this has always been the cornerstone of their political line. How fast this allies with outright reaction, however, became apparent with the lightning capitulation of the Umkhonto we Sizwe (ANC armed wing) chief of staff who went from vowing to “never lay down our arms” to arguing that the regime “needs a chance”. His approval of the continuation of “normal policing”, while they must “refrain from unnecessary brutality” was as outrageous as his call for an end to “political” executions, tacitly approving the fate of those the terrorist apartheid ruling class wants to hang as “common criminals”! Just how far will these capitulationist forces wearing national liberation movement costumes dance to the tune of their own oppressors, sharpening their knives in the masses’ backs?!

Negotiations are a strategic part of the terms the white ruling class wishes to impose for stabilising its rule, and the very process aims at dividing the opposition into “loyal” and hostile camps, while shifting struggle away from the real issue of national liberation. This has created some confusion among people who hate the system, including some revolutionary nationalist forces, as it is meant to. Just as these forces have correctly always attacked the ANC’s reformist strategy of “opposing apartheid” instead of doing away with the whole rotten colonial system backed by imperialism, the negotiations trap must be exposed as an extension of the same. The oppressed share *no* common ground with the oppressor and must not be lured into his multiple schemes for prolonging his domination over them. The highly polarised atmosphere in South Africa today, the high tide of rebellion and the rapidity with which the masses are further awakening to political life are all favourable factors for a revolutionary line to take root. While these negotiations and the phoney reform process must be exposed so that people better understand the strategy of the enemy, along with his allies, the real task is the *liberation* of Azania, now more than ever, when the enemy is weak and clutching at compromise solutions. A whole different solution is required.

Some black nationalist forces

have been tempted by the idea, for example, that the enemy is now in a position of “giving up some territory”, so better try to make it on “our” terms than his, and better “our” terms than the revisionist capitulationist ones of the ANC. Others perhaps are clear that nothing will come of these negotiations, but think they help establish the diversity of the national liberation movement opposition, give recognition to forces up until now overshadowed by the worldwide promotion of the ANC (well-financed from abroad and armed with a host of publications) and build a broad legal opposition movement to apartheid. Unfortunately, this logic leads to getting sucked in by the enemy’s many tentacles. A veritable maze of potential speculation and refinement of these terms becomes possible: who has the right to represent and speak for black people, what demands are winnable from the enemy, what can be yielded, what “united front” of the leftist forces is possible (which is in reality a coalition of various middle-class forces) and so on.

The basic problem is that no amount of “left-wing” politicking with the enemy is going to weaken him further. All this playing in his court only strengthens his hand; it in no way advances the revolutionary struggle and in fact betrays the revolutionary masses who are rising up and eagerly looking around for leadership that will take their combat against the enemy higher and *not* lead them back into his treacherous arms.

From the point of view of the international proletariat, which seeks a radical rupture with all the existing social relations shackling the oppressed masses not only in Azania, but throughout the world, only a thoroughgoing revolution, a new democratic revolution, can smash the white minority colonial state and truly bring forward a revolutionary society under the rule of the Azanian labouring masses and its proletarian vanguard, clearing the way for socialist revolution. This must be done by waging a genuine war of the masses, a people’s war, led by a party based on Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought (MLM), the only type of party that will share no ground with the oppressor. As was pointed out in the Call to Azanian revolutionaries to

Link up with the RIM, “Only a party guided by MLM can lead the uncompromising, protracted struggle necessary to smash white rule and carry out a national and democratic revolution to free Azania of imperialism and its local props as part of the international proletariat’s advance on a world scale.”

There is no shortcut from Mao’s difficult but uplifting path of relying on the masses of oppressed peasants and workers to fight, arms in hand, for their own liberation. Naturally there will be particularities to how this is applied in South Africa, there will be specific problems to resolve in building the people’s army there, in handling the contradictions between the countryside and urban areas, in approaching the class differences among the oppressed themselves, and in figuring out how to begin to wage war against a modern, well-armed state backed by imperialism. People’s war is a harder path, but it is the only path that can win total liberation.

The revolutionary situation today sharply poses the challenge to revolutionaries to rise to the heights that Mao’s path demands in order to lead the masses. The oppressed are learning very quickly about who is selling out whom, about whom “negotiated settlements” really aim to please, and especially that the “new South Africa” looks and smells just like the old one, even if the chains have been loosened a little for a few blacks. It is up to those in occupied Azania who refuse to share one centimetre of turf with the enemy and who will fight to lead the masses towards a different future to change the terms of the whole battle. A revolutionary pole must be planted in the soil of great upsurge that is rocking the white regime to its foundations; it must however be done by taking up the science of Mao Tsetung Thought in a thoroughgoing way to study the enemy and his methods and allies, to analyse who are the friends and allies of the people, and to forge the necessary political and ideological leadership to prepare for and carry through to the end a genuine war of liberation, without being thwarted or dislodged by the enemy. Political power must be seized from below and the oppressed of Azania deserve no less than the chance to go for *that*. □