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African National Congress

NEGOTIATIONS A STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE

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1. Balance of forces

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By the end of the eighties, the strategic balance of forces was characterised by:

- 1.1 The liberation movement enjoyed many advantages over the regime, both internally and internationally. All the pillars of the struggle had grown from strength to strength:
 - a very high level of mass mobilisation and mass defiance had rendered apartheid unworkable;
 - the building of the underground had laid a basis for exercising political leadership and was laying a basis for an intensification of the armed struggle;
 - the world was united against apartheid.
- 1.2 At the same time the liberation movement faced certain objective weaknesses:
 - changes in Southern Africa were making it increasingly difficult for the ANC in the conduct of struggle;
 - there was no longer a visible intensification of the armed struggle;
 - the international community was making renewed attempts to impose a settlement plan.
- 1.3 The crisis in Eastern Europe, and the resultant change in the relations between world powers brought the issue of a negotiated resolution of regional conflicts to the fore - in this context, South Africa was not going to be treated as an exception. Importantly, these changes also exerted new pressures on the regime to fall in line with the emerging international "culture" of multi-party democracy.

- 1.4 The apartheid power bloc was no longer able to rule in the old way. Its policies of repression and reform had failed dismally; and it faced an ever-deepening socio-economic crisis. At the same time the liberation movement did not have the immediate capacity to overthrow the regime.
- 1.5 All these factors set the stage for a negotiated resolution of the South African conflict. The regime was forced to unban the ANC and other organisations, release Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, acknowledge the defeat of the apartheid ideology, and seek negotiations with the liberation movement. This constituted a major strategic retreat for the regime and a victory for the democratic forces.

2. Shifts in the balance of forces :

- 2.1 The balance of forces is not completely static. In this phase of the negotiations:
 - The regime strives to undermine and weaken the liberation movement through its strategy of Low Intensity War;
 - The liberation movement seeks to weaken the capacity of the regime to act against the people and broaden the space for free political activity through a combination of mass mobilisation, international pressure and self-defence.
- 2.2 In the recent period:
 - The de Klerk regime has suffered a renewed crisis of legitimacy. It continues to fail to win the allegiance of the majority;
 - The regime's camp stands more divided than it ever was since the unbanning of the ANC; its unpatriotic front with some bantustans has collapsed; it is increasingly losing the loyalty of the civil service and important elements in the security forces; in the October special session of the tri-cameral parliament, it failed to secure the support of a single other party outside itself; leading members of the party and government continue to jump ship for reasons of "fatigue", "depression" and "disillusionment";
 - the regime has lost all ability to arrest the unprecedented socio-economic decline, growing unemployment among both black and white, the general social disintegration and spiralling crime.

However:

- the regime still commands vast state and other military resources;
- it continues to enjoy the support of powerful economic forces;
- objectively, the counter-revolutionary violence and the growing potential of long-term counter-revolutionary instability acts as a resource for the regime.

2.3 Also in the recent period:

- the ANC has established itself as a legal national political organisation;
- it commands the support of the majority of South Africa;
- the liberation movement enjoys the capacity to mobilise large-scale mass action;
- it is able to influence and mobilise the international community.

However:

- the liberation movement suffers many organisational weaknesses;
- it does not command significant military and financial resources;
- it is unable to militarily defeat the counter-revolutionary movement or adequately defend the people.

2.4 As a result of mass action and negotiations, some progress has been made in the recent period. Some examples of these are: the CODESA Declaration of Intent (which establishes national consensus on the broad direction in which the political process should unfold); the Record of Understanding; and broad consensus on the need for an Interim Government and Constituent Assembly. Though the regime has succeeded in delaying the transition there remains a groundswell of support within society as a whole for a speedy resolution of the political and socio-economic problems.

2.5 In this context, the liberation movement is faced with various options:

- a) resumption of the armed struggle and the perspective of revolutionary seizure of power. (given the objective situation outlined above, and the possibility of a negotiated resolution, the ANC has decided that this option is neither preferable, nor viable at this juncture);
- b) a protracted negotiations process, combined with mass action and international pressure until the balance of forces is shifted to such an extent that we secure a negotiated surrender from the regime;
- c) a swift negotiations process combined with mass action and international pressure which takes into account the need for national unity against counter-revolutionary forces, and at the same time, uses phases in the transition to qualitatively change the balance of forces in order to secure thoroughgoing democratic transformation.

2.6 Taking into account:

- the capacity of the liberation movement;
- the capacity of the regime to endlessly delay while consolidating its hold onto power and restructuring in order to undermine future democratic transformation;
- the cost to the people and the country of a protracted negotiations process;
- the need to as urgently as possible address the dire socio-economic needs of the people;
- and the need to prevent a further consolidation of the counter-revolutionary forces;

the third option, (c), is the most viable and preferable.

2.7 The liberation movement, however, should guard against being captive to a given approach. A combination of factors, including the conduct of the regime may dictate a need to revisit our approach.

3. Negotiations : the preferred option of the liberation movement.

- 3.1 A peaceful political settlement has always been the first option of the liberation movement. It was only when the prospect of any peaceful settlement vanished that we adopted the perspective of an armed revolutionary seizure of power. On the other hand, for the regime, it was a failure of arms that imposed the obligation to concede the need for a political settlement.
- 3.2 Negotiations therefore represents a victory for the democratic movement and a defeat for the forces of apartheid.
- 3.3 Consequently, it must remain one of our strategic tasks to continue to draw the regime onto the terrain of free political activity, peaceful democratic action and genuine negotiations.
- 3.4 Delays in the process of peaceful transformation are not in the interests of the masses, who seek liberation now, and do not enhance our possibilities to effect the transformation to genuine democracy as effectively and as speedily as we should.

4. Phases of the Democratic Revolution:

- 4.1 Our strategic perspective should take into account that the Democratic Revolution will proceed in various phases. Our possibilities relevant to each phase should not be pursued in a manner that produces defeats later because of a failure to recognise the dialectical interconnection between various phases.
- 4.2 This strategic perspective should recognise the following phases, each one of which has its regularities and objective and subjective demands:

PHASE 1: The period prior to the establishment of the Transitional Executive Council. (In this phase we should aim to: secure an agreement on free and fair election, Interim Government and Constituent Assembly; stop unilateral restructuring; broaden the space for free political activity; and, address the issue of violence).

PHASE 2: The period from the establishment of the Transitional Executive Council leading up to the election of the Constituent Assembly and the establishment of an Interim Government of National Unity. (In this phase we should aim to: consolidate peace through joint control over all armed forces; ensure free and fair elections; and mobilise for a decisive victory in the elections.)

PHASE 3: The period of the drafting and adoption of the new constitution by the Constituent Assembly. (In this phase we should aim to: establish an Interim Government in which the ANC would be a major player; adopt a new democratic constitution; and, start addressing the socio-economic problems facing the country).

PHASE 4: The period of the phasing in of the new constitution, which will include the restructuring of the state machinery and the general dismantling of the system of apartheid.

PHASE 5: The period of the consolidation of the process of democratic transformation and reconstruction.

- 4.3 At all stages, we should consider carefully the balance of forces, how to change the balance, and therefore place ourselves in a position in which we can determine the correct path to follow to further the process of democratic change. In this context, the broad masses should play a decisive role. The process must be mass-driven.
- 4.4 The balance of forces, our specific objectives and our long-term goals would at each stage dictate the need to: enter into specific, and perhaps changing, alliances; and, make certain compromises in order to protect and advance this process.

5. Goals of the National Liberation Struggle and our immediate objectives.

- 5.1 The fundamental goals of the National Liberation Struggle should not be confused with the immediate objectives we set for ourselves in each phase of the transition. At the same time we should ensure that the immediate objectives we pursue do not have the effect of blocking our longer-term goals.
- 5.2 The objectives we set, and can attain in each phase will depend on the balance of forces.
- 5.3 We must ensure that in entering a new phase (e.g. the establishment of an Interim Government) the balance of forces is transformed qualitatively in favour of the Democratic Movement. Negotiations can therefore result in the possibility of bringing about a radically transformed political framework (i.e. changing the conjuncture) in which the struggle for the achievement of the strategic perspectives of the National Democratic Revolution will be advanced in more favourable conditions.

- 5.4 In setting objectives for the present round of negotiations we must bear in mind that in the main one would not achieve at the table that which one cannot achieve on the ground. Depending on the balance of forces, we might not gain everything we set out to achieve. However, positions we adopt should be informed by our longer term objectives. Our correct assessment of the balance of forces, the support of the masses and good negotiating tactics should ensure that our gains constitute a decisive leap forward.
- 5.5 In setting objectives today, our strategy should not focus narrowly on only the initial establishment of democracy, but also (and perhaps more importantly), on how to nurture, develop and consolidate that democracy. Our strategy must at once also focus on ensuring that the new democracy is not undermined.
- 5.6 Our broad objectives for the first two phases (as distinct from longer-term goals) should therefore be:
 - 5.6.1 The establishment of a democratic constitution-making process.
 - 5.6.2 Ending the National Party's monopoly of political power.
 - 5.6.3 Ensuring a continuing link between democracy and socio-economic empowerment.
 - 5.6.4 Minimising the threat to stability and the democratic process.

6. The need for Government of National Unity:

- 6.1 The objective reality imposes a central role for the ANC and the NP in the transition. The ANC is the custodian of the peace process - while, the NP is the party in power. Using various forms of struggle we must ensure that the regime accepts movement forward in the process.
- 6.2 This means that the balance of forces has forced onto the South African political situation a relationship between the ANC and the NP characterised by:
 - in the first place conflict, in so far as the regime attempts to block the transition; and,
 - secondly, constructive interaction in pursuit of agreements the regime has been forced to enter into.

- 6.3 How to manage this contradiction is one of our challenges of leadership.
- 6.4 We have already won the demand for an Interim Government of National Unity.
- 6.5 However, we also need to accept the fact that even after the adoption of a new constitution, the balance of forces, and the interests of the country as a whole may still require of us to consider the establishment of a government of National Unity - provided that the parties that have lost the elections will not be able to paralyse the functioning of government.

7. Laying the basis to minimise the threat to stability and democracy.

- 7.1 The new democratic government would need to adopt a wide range of measures in order to minimise the potential threat to the new democracy. However, some of these measures may have to be part and parcel of a negotiated settlement.
- 7.2 Strategic forces we need to consider right now are the SADF, SAP, all other armed formations and the civil service in general. If the transition to democracy affects the interests of individuals in these institutions wholly and purely negatively, then they would serve as fertile ground from which the destabilisers would recruit.
- 7.3 Not only do these forces have vast potential to destabilise a fledgling democracy in the future, but as importantly, they have the potential to delay the transition for a lengthy period of time or even make serious attempts to subvert the transition.
- 7.4 A democratic government will need to restructure the civil service and the security forces in order to ensure that:
 - they are professional, competent and accountable;
 - they are representative of society as a whole (including through the application of the principle of affirmative action);
 - they serve the interests of democracy; and
 - the size of these institutions is determined by the objective needs of the country.

In this process it may be necessary to address the question of job security, retrenchment packages and a general amnesty at some stage as part of a negotiated settlement. These measures will need

to apply to all armed formations and sections of civil service. In this respect, the availability of resources and experiences of other countries need to be taken into account.

8. Reaching the negotiated settlement:

- 8.1 Some elements of the final negotiated settlement would take the form of multi-lateral (CODESA type) agreements. Other element of the settlement package would take the form of bilateral agreement between the ANC and the NP - such agreements would bind the two parties.
- 8.2 The thorny question of the powers, functions and boundaries of regions in a new South Africa may be an issue on which we would enter into bilateral discussion with the NP and other parties and seek to reach an understanding which the parties would pursue in the Constituent Assembly.
- 8.3 The question of a Government of National Unity after the adoption of a new constitution, and the future of members of the security forces and the civil service could be dealt with through direct engagement with these forces, as part of a bilateral agreement or in multi-lateral agreements.

END.

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