



## **Report on the Strategy and Tactics of the African National Congress**

### **First National Consultative Conference**

**26 April 1969**

The struggle of the oppressed people of South Africa is taking place within an international context of transition to the socialist system, of the breakdown of the colonial system as a result of national liberation and socialist revolutions, and the fight for social and economic progress by the people of the whole world.

We in South Africa are part of the zone in which national liberation is the chief content of the struggle. On our continent, sweeping advances have been registered that have resulted in the emergence to independent statehood of 41 states. Thus, the first formal step of independence has been largely won in Africa and this fact exercises a big influence on the developments in our country.

The countries of southern Africa have not as yet broken the chains of colonialism and racism which hold them in oppression. In Mozambique, Angola, South West Africa, Zimbabwe and South Africa, white racist and fascist regimes maintain systems that go against the current trend of the African revolution and world development.

This has been made possible by the tremendous economic and military power at the disposal of these regimes, built with the help of imperialism.

The main pillar of the Unholy Alliance of Portugal, Rhodesia and South Africa is the Republic of South Africa. The strategy and tactics of our revolution require for their formulation and understanding a full appreciation of the interlocking and interweaving of international, African and southern African developments that play on our situation.

#### **Rule by Force**

South Africa was conquered by force and is today ruled by force. At moments when white autocracy feels itself threatened, it does not hesitate to use the gun.

When the gun is not in use, legal and administrative terror, fear, social and economic pressures, complacency and confusion generated by propaganda and "education", are the devices brought into play in an attempt to harness the people's opposition. Behind these devices hovers force.

Whether in reserve or in actual employment, force is ever-present, and this has been so since the white man came to Africa.

*"South Africa was conquered by force and is today ruled by force."*

### **Unending Resistance to White Domination**

From the time alien rule was imposed, there has been, historically speaking, unbroken resistance to this domination. It has taken different forms at different times, but it has never been abandoned.

For the first 250 years, there were regular armed clashes, battles and wars. The superior material resources of the enemy, the divided and often fragmented nature of the resistance, the unchallenged ascendancy of imperialism as a world system up to the beginning of the twentieth century, the historically understandable absence of political cohesion and leadership in the people's camp – these and other factors combined to end the first phase of resistance against alien domination.

However, the protracted character of this resistance, unequalled anywhere else in Africa, is underlined by the fact that the armed subjugation of the indigenous people was only really accomplished by the beginning of this century. The defeat of the Bambata Rebellion in 1906 marked the end of this first phase and set the stage for the handing over of the administration of the country to local whites in 1910.

The 50 years that followed were not a period of resignation or of acceptance. It was a period of development and of regrouping under new conditions; a period in which newly created political formations of the people continued to struggle with the enemy and grew into maturity; a period in which, above all, national consciousness began to assert itself against tribal sectionalism.

This period witnessed the emergence and development of the primary organisation of the liberation movement – the African National Congress. It also saw the evolution of national organisations reflecting the aspirations of other oppressed non-white groups (the Coloureds and the Indians) and the creation of economic and political organisations – the South African Communist Party and trade unions that reflected the special aims and aspirations of the newly developed and doubly exploited working class.

This was a period of organisational growth. It was punctuated by struggles involving techniques ranging from orthodox mass campaigning to general strikes, to mass acts of defiance. It

culminated in the decision taken in 1961 to prepare for armed confrontation. December 1961 saw the opening stages of this campaign in the simultaneous acts of sabotage that occurred in most of the main urban centres on the 16th.

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### **The Move to Armed Struggle**

Why was the decision for armed struggle taken in 1961? Why not 1951 or 1941 or 1931? Is it that the character of the state had altered so fundamentally that only in 1961 did armed struggle become the only alternative?

Not at all. There has never been a moment in the history of South Africa since 1652 in which the white ruling class would have given privileges without a physical battle. Why then did organisations like the African National Congress not call for armed struggle? Was it perhaps that they were not really revolutionary or that it was only in the early 1960s that they began to appreciate the correct strategy? Is there perhaps substance in the accusations by some of our detractors that until the early 60s the liberation movement was lacking in military fervour and the desire for radical change? In other words, was its policy not a revolutionary one? What is our measuring rod for revolutionary policy?

A look at this concept will help towards a more profound understanding not only of the past but of the future. It is therefore not out of place to devote a word to it.

In essence, a revolutionary policy is one that holds out the quickest and most fundamental transformation and transfer of power from one class to another. In real life, such radical changes are brought about not by imaginary forces but by those whose outlook and readiness to act is very much influenced by historically determined factors.

To ignore the real situation and to play about with imaginary forces, concepts and ideals is to invite failure. The art of revolutionary leadership consists in providing leadership to the masses and not just to its most advanced elements; it consists of setting a pace that accords with objective conditions and the real possibilities at hand.

The revolutionary-sounding phrase does not always reflect revolutionary policy, and revolutionary-sounding policy is not always the springboard for revolutionary advance. Indeed, what appears to be "militant" and "revolutionary" can often be counter-revolutionary. It is surely a question of whether, in the given concrete situation, the course or policy advocated will aid or impede the prospects of the conquest of power. In this, the only test, the advocacy of armed struggle can, in some situations, be as counter-revolutionary as the advocacy of its opposite in other situations.

Untimely, ill-planned or premature manifestations of violence impede and do not advance the prospect for revolutionary change and are clearly counter-revolutionary. It is obvious therefore that policy and organisational structures must grow out of the real situation if they are not to become meaningless clichés.

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### **Conditions for Armed Struggle**

Future historians may well be able to pause at some moments during the evolution of our struggle and examine critically both its pace and emphasis. But, in general, without the so-called reformist activities of the previous half-century, the prospect of advancing into the new phase would have been extremely small.

This is so because even in the typical colonial-type situation, armed struggle becomes feasible only if:

- there is disillusionment with the prospect of achieving liberation by traditional peaceful processes because the objective conditions blatantly bar the way to change;
- there is readiness to respond to the strategy of armed struggle with all the enormous sacrifices which this involves;
- there is in existence a political leadership capable of gaining the organised allegiance of the people for armed struggle and which has both the experience and the ability to carry out the painstaking process of planning, preparation and overall conduct of the operations;
- and there exist favourable objective conditions in the international and local planes.

In one sense, conditions are connected and interdependent. They are not created by subjective and ideological activity only and many are the mistakes committed by heroic revolutionaries who give a monopoly to the subjective factor and who confuse their own readiness with the readiness of others.

These conditions are brought about not only by developing political, economic and social conditions, but also by the long hard grind of revolutionary work. They depend on such factors as the response of the enemy, the extent to which he unmask himself and the experience gained by the people themselves, not in academic seminars but in actual political struggle.

We reject the approach which sees as the catalyst for revolutionary transformation only the short-cut of isolated confrontations and the creation of armed resistance centres. Does this mean that before an actual beginning can be made to the armed challenge, we have to wait for the evolution of some sort of deep crisis in the enemy camp which is serious enough to hold out the possibility of an immediate all-round insurrection? Certainly not!

We believe that given certain basic factors, both international and local, the actual beginning of armed struggle or guerrilla warfare can be made, and having begun, can steadily develop conditions for the future all-out war that would eventually lead to the conquest of power.

Under the modern highly sophisticated police state (which South Africa is), it is questionable whether a movement can succeed in a programme of mass political organisation beyond a certain point without starting a new type of action. Also, it is not easy to determine the point at which sufficient concrete political and organisational preparations have been carried out to give our armed detachments the maximum chances of survival and growth within any given area. There is no instrument for measuring this. But we must not overdo the importance of the subjective factor, and before embarking upon a path which is in one sense tragic, although historically inevitable and necessary, certain of the basic minimum conditions already mentioned must be present and certain minimum preparations must have been made.

### **Tempered in struggle**

In light of those considerations, it is clear that it was only after the victory of the anti-imperialist forces in World War II, and the tide of independence in Africa, Asia and Latin America, combined with the zigzags of struggle inside South Africa in the last 50 years, which by the beginning of the 1960s demanded a move in the direction of armed struggle.

The 1950s were among the most stirring and struggle-filled decades in the history of the liberation movement. Thousands upon thousands of militant cadres were tempered during this period and masses of our people both in town and countryside participated in a variety of forms of struggle. The moulding of mass political consciousness reached a new intensity.

The response of the authorities was such that the overwhelming majority of the people learnt, through their own participation in the struggle and confrontation with the state, that in the long run the privileges of the minority will only be wrenched from it by a reversion to armed combat. Indeed, during this "peaceful" stage in our struggle hardly a year passed without massacres of our people by the army and police.

Each phase in the unfolding of the struggle of the 1950s played a part in setting the stage of our new approach. A rebirth of the spirit of deliberate defiance of the white man's law was stimulated by the great Defiance Campaign of 1952. The response of the State towards the Congress of the

People campaign and the adoption of the Freedom Charter demonstrated its intention to crush what had previously been accepted as legitimate expressions for equality.

The numbers of highly successful national general strikes, motivated in the main by political and not economic demands, proved the growing maturity of the urban non-white working class. The magnificent resistance by the peasants in Pondoland, Sekhukhuniland and Natal in the late 1950s pointed also to the new spirit of militancy and struggle in the countryside.

The general strike as a method of political mobilisation was suppressed with the utmost vigour, and by the end of the 1950s could no longer be effectively employed as an instrument of mass struggle. Other protests were increasingly broken by police brutality and the use of orthodox mass demonstration as an effective weapon was demonstrably no longer feasible.

Legal opposition was rendered ineffective by bannings, exiles and the imprisonment of activists and leaders to long terms for the most trivial infringements. Finally, by such laws as the Terrorism and Sabotage Acts, all opposition by legal or peaceful means was rendered impossible.

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### **Heightened Political Ferment**

In the field of representation, any reformist illusion that may still have existed of a slow advance towards democracy was shattered by the removal of the historic remains of non-white representation, including even undemocratic and powerless bodies such as the Native Representative Council.

Thus, the enemy unmasked himself completely not only to a group of advanced thinkers, but to the mass of the people as a whole. The liberation surge towards independence of the African continent which marked the late 1950s and early 1960s had an important bearing on our own situation.

Not only were friendly borders creeping closer, but in a very real way, these events stimulated and excited people in the unliberated territories in the direction of self-rule. The basic drive for this in our country had never been suppressed. But the events in South Africa in the previous decade, and what was happening on the continent, confirmed that conquest of power by the people was a realisable goal in our lifetime.

The enormous material power of the enemy, and by contrast the material weakness of the people, was to them no more than a temporary impediment. Memory was fresh of Cuba and – on

our own continent – Algeria, both of which had proved that in the long run material resources alone are not a determining factor.

The heightened political ferment both here and on our continent reflected itself in the growth and further maturing of all sections of the liberation front. Those leaders who were unable to adjust to the new revolutionary mood (even before the policy of the preparations for organised armed resistance) fell by the wayside.

The cohesion and unity of action between the various national and social groupings comprising the liberation front reached new heights. All this constituted not only moral justification for a move towards armed struggle, but what is more important, conditions had been created – they were not always there – making a departure in this direction correct, necessary and, in the true sense, revolutionary.

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### **Our Approach to Revolutionary Armed Struggle**

In a way, the decision taken in 1961 was, historically speaking, in the tradition of the earlier armed resistance to the entrenchment of the foreigner. But it is now occurring in a new situation.

Not only had this situation to be understood but the art and science – both political and military – of armed liberation struggles in the modern epoch had to be grasped and applied. The head-on mobile warfare of the traditional African armies of the past could not meet the challenge. The riot, the street fight, the outbursts of unorganised violence, individual terrorism – these were symptoms of the militant spirit, but not pointers to revolutionary technique.

The winning of our freedom by armed struggle – the only method left open to us – demands more than passion. It demands an understanding and an implementation of revolutionary theory and techniques in the actual conditions facing us. It demands a sober assessment of the obstacles in our way and an appreciation that such a struggle is bitter and protracted. It demands, too, the dominance in our thinking of achievement over drama. We believe our movement acted in accordance with these guidelines when it embarked upon the detailed preparation for the launching of guerrilla struggle.

We understood that the main physical environment of such a struggle in the initial period is outside the enemy strongholds in the cities, in the vast stretches of our countryside. The opening steps in 1961 – organised sabotage mainly in the urban areas – served a special purpose and this was never advanced as a technique that would, on its own, either lead to the destruction of the state or even do it great material damage (although guerrilla activity in the urban areas of a special type is always important as an auxiliary). At the same time, there was a threefold need to

be met in order to lay the foundations for more developed and meaningful armed activity of the guerrilla type.

The first was the need to create a military apparatus and, more particularly, to recruit large numbers of professional cadres who were to be trained and who would form the core of future guerrilla bands.

The second was the need to demonstrate effectively to all that we were making a sharp and open break with the processes of the previous period, which had correctly given emphasis to militant struggle short of armed confrontation.

The third was the need to present an effective method for the overthrow of white supremacy through planned rather than spontaneous activity. The sabotage campaign was an earnest indication of our seriousness in the pursuit of this new strategy.

All three needs were served by this convincing evidence that our liberation movement had correctly adjusted itself to the new situation and was creating an apparatus actually capable of clandestinely hitting the enemy and making preparation for a more advanced phase.

The situation was such that without activity of this nature our whole political leadership may have been at stake, both inside and outside the country, and the steps which were simultaneously taken for the recruitment and preparation of military cadres would have met with less response.

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### **The Relationship Between the Political and Military**

When we talk of revolutionary armed struggle, we are talking of political struggle by means that include the use of military force, even though once force as a tactic is introduced it has the most far-reaching consequences on every aspect of our activities. It is important to emphasise this because our movement must reject all manifestations of militarism that separate armed people's struggle from its political context.

Reference has already been made to the danger of the thesis that regards the creation of military areas as the generator of mass resistance. But even more is involved in this concept. One of the vital problems connected with this bears on the important question of the relationship between the political and military. From the very beginning, our movement has brooked no ambiguity concerning this. The primacy of the political leadership is unchallenged and supreme, and all revolutionary formations and levels (whether armed or not) are subordinate to this leadership.

To say this is not just to invoke tradition. This approach is rooted in the very nature of this type of revolutionary struggle and is borne out by the experience of the overwhelming majority of revolutionary movements that have engaged in such struggles.

Except in very rare instances, the people's armed challenge against a foe with formidable material strength does not achieve dramatic and swift success. The path is filled with obstacles and we harbour no illusions on this score in the case of South Africa. In the long run, it can only succeed if it attracts the active support of the mass of the people. Without this lifeblood, it is doomed.

Even in our country, with the historical background and traditions of armed resistance still within the memory of many people, and the special developments of the immediate past, the involvement of the masses is unlikely to be the result of a sudden, natural and automatic consequence of military clashes. It has to be won in all-round political mobilisation, which must accompany the military activities. This includes educational and agitational work throughout the country to cope with the sophisticated torrent of misleading propaganda and "information" of the enemy, which will become more intense as the struggle sharpens.

When armed clashes begin, they seldom involve more than a comparative handful of combatants whose very conditions of fighting-existence make them incapable of exercising the functions of all-round political leadership. The masses of the peasants, workers and youth, beleaguered for a long time by the enemy's military occupation, have to be activated in a multitude of ways not only to ensure a growing stream of recruits for the fighting units, but also to harass the enemy politically so that his forces are dispersed and therefore weakened. This calls for the exercise of all-round political leadership.

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### **All-Round Political Leadership**

Guerrilla warfare, the special, and in our case the only, form in which the armed liberation struggle can be launched, is neither static nor does it take place in a vacuum.

The tempo, the overall strategy, to be employed, the opening of new fronts, the progression from lower to higher forms and then to mobile warfare – these and other vital questions cannot be solved by the military leadership alone. They require overall political judgments intimately involved with the people, both inside and outside the actual areas of armed combat.

If mere awareness of oppression, combined with heroic examples by armed bands, were enough, the struggle would indeed be simple. There would be no collaborators and it would be

hard to find neutrals. But to believe this is to believe that the course of struggle is determined solely by what we do in the fighting units and further involves the fallacious assumption that the masses are rock-like and incorruptible.

The enemy is as aware as we are that the side that wins the allegiance of the people wins the struggle. It is naive to believe that oppressed and beleaguered people cannot temporarily, even in large numbers, be won over by fear, terror, lies, indoctrination and provocation to treat liberators as enemies. In fact, history proves that without the most intensive all-round political activity, this is the more likely result.

It is therefore all the more vital that the revolutionary leadership is nationwide and has its roots both inside and outside the actual areas of combat. Above all, when victory comes, it must not be a hollow one. To ensure this, we must also ensure that what is brought to power is not an army but the masses as a whole, at the head of which stands its organised political leadership. This is the perspective which is rooted at all levels of our liberation movements, whether within or outside the army.

Our confidence in final victory rests not on the wish or the dream but on our understanding of our own conditions and the historical processes. This understanding must be deepened and must spread to every level of our movement. We must have a clear grasp not only of ourselves and of our own forces, but also of the enemy – of his power and vulnerability.

Guerrilla struggle is certainly no exception to the rule that depth of understanding, and knowledge of realities, both favourable and unfavourable, make for more lasting commitment and more illuminating leadership. How then do we view the enemy we face – his strength and his weakness? What sort of structure do we face and how dogged will the enemy resistance be?

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### **The Enemy – His Strength and Weakness**

On the face of it, the enemy is in stable command of a rich and varied economy which, even at this stage when it is not required to extend itself, can afford an enormous military budget. He has a relatively well-trained and efficient army and police force. He can draw on fairly large manpower resources. In addition, the major imperialist powers, such as Britain, West Germany, France, the United States and Japan, who have an enormous stake in the economy of our country, constitute a formidable support for the apartheid regime.

Already now, before the crisis deepens, the imperialist partners of South Africa have done much to develop the economy and armament programme of South Africa. In a situation of crisis, they may pass over from support to active intervention to save the racist regime.

If there is one lesson that the history of guerrilla struggle has taught, it is that the material strength and resources of the enemy are by no means a decisive factor. Guerrilla warfare almost by definition presents a situation in which there is a vast imbalance of material and military resource between the opposing sides. It is designed to cope with the situation in which the enemy is infinitely superior in relation to every conventional factor of warfare. It is par excellence the weapon of the materially weak against the materially strong.

Given its popular character and given a population which increasingly sides with and shields the guerrilla, whilst at the same time opposing and exposing the enemy, the survival and growth of a people's army is assured by the skilful exercise of tactics. Surprise, mobility and tactical retreat should make it difficult for the enemy to bring into play its superior firepower in any decisive battles.

No individual battle is fought in circumstances favourable to the enemy. Superior forces can thus be harassed, weakened and, in the end, destroyed. The absence of an orthodox front, of fighting lines; the need of the enemy to attenuate his resources and lines of communication over vast areas; and the need to protect the widely scattered installations on which his economy is dependent – these are among the factors that serve in the long run to compensate in favour of the guerrilla for the disparity in the starting strength of the adversaries.

The words "in the long run" must be stressed because it would be idle to dispute the considerable military advantages to the enemy of his high-level industrialisation, his ready-to-hand reserves of white manpower and his excellent roads, railways and air transport, which facilitate swift manoeuvres and speedy concentration of personnel. But we must not overlook the fact that, over a period of time, many of these unfavourable factors will begin to operate in favour of the liberation forces:

- The ready-to-hand resources, including food production, depend overwhelmingly on non-white labour which, with the growing intensity of the struggle, will not remain docile and cooperative.
- The white manpower resources may seem adequate initially but must become dangerously stretched as guerrilla warfare develops. Already, extremely short of skilled labour – the monopoly of the whites – the mobilisation of a large force for a protracted struggle will place a further burden on the workings of the economy.
- In contrast to many other major guerrilla struggles, the enemy's economic and manpower resources are all situated within the theatre of war and there is no secure external pool (other than direct intervention by a foreign state) safe from sabotage, mass action and guerrilla action, on which the enemy can draw.

- The very sophistication of the economy with its well-developed system of communications makes it a much more vulnerable target. In an undeveloped country, the interruption of supplies to any given region may be no more than a local setback. In a highly sensitive modern structure of the South African type, the successful harassment of transport to any major industrial complex inevitably inflicts immense damage to the economy as a whole and to the morale of the enemy.

One of the more popular misconceptions concerning guerrilla warfare is that a physical environment which conforms to a special pattern is indispensable – thick jungle, inaccessible mountain areas, swamps, a friendly border and so on. The availability of this sort of terrain is, of course, of tremendous advantage to the guerrillas, especially in the early non-operational phase when training and other preparatory steps are undertaken, and no external bases are available for this purpose.

When operations commence, the guerrilla cannot survive, let alone flourish, unless he moves to areas where people live and work and where the enemy can be engaged in combat. If he is fortunate enough to have behind him a friendly border or areas of difficult access that can provide temporary refuge, it is, of course, advantageous. But guerrilla warfare can be, and has been, waged in every conceivable type of terrain, in deserts, in swamps, in farm fields, in built-up areas, in plains, in the bush and in countries without friendly borders or islands surrounded by the sea. This whole question is one of adjusting survival tactics to the sort of terrain in which operations have to be carried out.

In any case, in the vast expanse that is South Africa, a people's force will find a multitude of variations in topography, deserts, mountains, forests, veld and swamps. There might not appear to be a single impregnable mountain or impenetrable jungle, but the country abounds in terrain that in general is certainly no less favourable for guerrilla operations than some of the terrain in which other guerrilla movements operated successfully. Also, the issue must be looked at in the context of guerrillas who are armed and operate in the terrain. The combination makes an area impregnable for the guerrilla.

South Africa's tremendous size will make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the white regime to keep the whole of it under armed surveillance in strength and in depth. Hence, an early development of a relatively safe (though shifting) rear is not beyond the realm of practicality.

### **The White Group**

The above are only some of the important factors that have not always been studied and understood. It is necessary to stress these factors not only because they give balance to our efforts but because – properly assessed – they help destroy the myth of the enemy's invincibility.

But above all, a scientific revolutionary strategy demands a correct appreciation of the political character of the forces that are ranged against one another in the South African struggle for liberation.

Is the enemy a monolith and will he remain so until his final defeat? What is the main content of the struggle for liberation and, flowing from this, which is the main revolutionary force and who are its potential allies and supporters? These are questions of capital importance. They play a vital part in determining the tactics of the revolutionary struggle, the broad alliances for which we must strive, the organisational structures we create and many other fundamental approaches. They must be considered within the framework of the special feature of the objective situation which faces us.

South Africa's social and economic structure and the relationships which it generates are perhaps unique. It is not a colony, yet it has, in regard to the overwhelming majority of its people, most of the features of the classical colonial structures. Conquest and domination by an alien people, a system of discrimination and exploitation based on race, technique of indirect rule – these and more are the traditional trappings of the classical colonial framework.

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Whilst at the one level it is an "independent" national state, at another level it is a country subjugated by a minority race. What makes the structure unique and adds to its complexity is that the exploiting nation is not, as in the classical imperialist relationships, situated in a geographically distinct mother country, but is settled within the borders. What is more, the roots of the dominant nation have been embedded in our country by more than three centuries of presence. It is thus an alien body only in the historical sense.

The material wellbeing of the white group and its political, social and economic privileges are, we know, rooted in its racial domination of the indigenous majority. It has resisted and will resist doggedly and passionately any attempt to shift it from this position. Its theorists and leaders ceaselessly play upon the theme of "We have nowhere else to go". They dishonestly ignore and even twist the fact that the uncertainty about the future of the oppressor in our land is an uncertainty born not of our racialism but of his.

The spectre is falsely raised of a threat to the white men's language and culture to "justify" a policy of cultural discrimination and domination. By economic bribes and legal artifices that preserve for him the top layers of skills and wage income, the white worker is successfully mobilised as one of racialism's most reliable contingents. In every walk of life, white autocracy creates privilege by operation of the law and, where necessary, the gun, and with a primitive and twisted "proof" of its own superiority.

Nevertheless, the defence of all-round economic, social and cultural privileges, combined with centuries of indoctrination and deeply felt theoretical rationalisation that centre on survival, will make the enemy we face a ferocious and formidable foe. So long as the threat from the liberation movement was not powerful enough to endanger the very existence of white baaskap, there was room for division – sometimes quite sharp in the white political camp.

Its motivation amongst the ruling class was competition for the lion's share of the spoils from the exploitation of the non-white people. It always centred around the problem of the most effective way of "keeping the native in his place". In such an atmosphere, there were even moments when white workers adopted militant class postures against the small group which owns South Africa's wealth. But the changed world mood and internal situation inhibited these confrontations. The laager-minded white group, as a whole, moves more and more in the direction of a common defence of what is considered a common fate.

These monolithic tendencies are reinforced by a Hitler-like feeling of confidence that the fortress is impregnable and unassailable for all time. This process of all-white solidarity will only be arrested by the achievements of the liberation movement. For the moment, the reality is that apart from a small group of revolutionary whites who have an honoured place as comrades in the struggle, we face what is by and large a united and confident enemy that acts in alliance with, and is strengthened by, world imperialism. All significant sections of the white political movement are in broad agreement on the question of defeating our liberation struggle.

This confrontation on the lines of colour – at least in the early stages of the conflict – is not of our choosing; it is of the enemy's making. It will not be easy to eliminate some of its more tragic consequences. But it does not follow that this will be so for all time.

It is not altogether impossible that in a different situation, the white working class, or a substantial section of it, may come to see that their true long-term interest coincides with that of the non-white workers. We must miss no opportunity either now or in the future to try and make them aware of this truth and to win over those who are ready to break with the policy of racial domination. Nor must we ever be slow to take advantage of differences and divisions which our successes will inevitably spark off to isolate the most vociferous, the most uncompromising and the most reactionary elements amongst the whites.

Our policy must continually stress in the future (as it has in the past) that there is room in South Africa for all who live in it – but only on the basis of absolute democracy.

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## **The African Masses – The Main Force for Liberation**

So much for the enemy. What of the liberation forces?

Here too we are called upon to examine the most fundamental features of our situation, which serve to mould our revolutionary strategy and tactics. The main content of the present stage of the South African revolution is the national liberation of the largest and most oppressed group – the African people. This strategic aim must govern every aspect of the conduct of our struggle, whether it be the formulation of policy or the creation of structures.

Amongst other things, it demands in the first place the maximum mobilisation of the African people as a dispossessed and racially oppressed nation. This is the mainspring and it must not be weakened. It involves a stimulation and a deepening of national confidence, national pride and national assertiveness. Properly channelled and properly led, these qualities do not stand in conflict with the principles of internationalism. Indeed, they become the basis for more lasting and more meaningful cooperation – a cooperation that is self-imposed, equal and one which is neither based on dependence nor gives the appearance of being so.

The national character of the struggle must therefore dominate our approach. But it is a national struggle that is taking place in a different era and in a different context from those which characterised the early struggles against colonialism. It is happening in a new kind of world – a world no longer monopolised by the imperialist world system; a world in which the existence of the powerful socialist system and a significant sector of newly liberated areas has altered the balance of forces; a world in which the horizons liberated from foreign oppression extend beyond mere formal political control and encompass the element which makes such control meaningful: economic emancipation.

It is also happening in a new kind of South Africa; a South Africa in which there is a large and well-developed working class and in which the independent expressions of the working people – their political organs and trade unions – are very much part of the liberation front.

Thus, our nationalism must not be confused with chauvinism or narrow nationalism of a previous epoch. It must not be confused with the classical drive by an elitist group among the oppressed people to gain ascendancy so that they can replace the oppressor in the exploitation of the mass.

But none of this detracts from the basically national context of our liberation drive. In the last resort, it is only the success of the national democratic revolution which – by destroying the existing social and economic relationships – will bring with it a correction of the historical injustices perpetrated against the indigenous majority and thus lay the basis for a new, and deeper internationalist, approach.

Until then, the national sense of grievance is the most potent revolutionary force, which must be harnessed. To blunt it in the interests of abstract concepts of internationalism is, in the long run, doing neither a service to revolution nor to internationalism.

*“Our nationalism...must not be confused with the classical drive by an elitist group among the oppressed people to gain ascendancy so that they can replace the oppressor in the exploitation of the mass.”*

## **The Role of the Coloured and Indian People**

Although subjected to the most intense racial oppression and exploitation, the African is not the only oppressed national group in South Africa.

The two million-strong coloured community, and three-quarter million Indians, suffer varying forms of national humiliation, discrimination and oppression. They are part of the non-white base upon which rests white privilege. As such, they constitute an integral part of the social forces ranged against white supremacy. Despite deceptive and often meaningless concessions, they share a common fate with their African brothers and their own liberation is inextricably bound up with the liberation of the African people.

A unity in action between all the oppressed groups is fundamental to the advance of our liberation struggle. Without such a unity, the enemy strength multiplies, and the attainment of a people's victory is delayed. Historically, both communities have played a most important part in the stimulation and intensification of the struggle for freedom.

It is a matter of proud record that amongst the first and most gallant martyrs in the armed combat against the enemy was a coloured comrade, Basil February. The jails in South Africa are a witness to the large-scale participation by Indian and coloured comrades of every level of our revolutionary struggle. From the very inception of Umkhonto, they were more than well represented in the first contingents who took life in hand to help lay the basis for this new phase in our struggle.

This mood was reflected not only in the deeds of its more advanced representatives. As communities, too, the coloured and Indian people have often in the past, by their actions, shown that they form part of the broad sweep towards liberation.

The first series of mass acts of deliberate defiance of the conqueror's law after the crushing of the Bambata rebellion was the campaign led by that outstanding son of the Indian people – Mahatma Gandhi. Thereafter, the Indian community and its leaders – particularly those who came to the fore in the 1940s – played no small part in the injection of a more radical and more militant mood into the liberation movement as a whole.

The stirring demonstrations of the 1950s – from the Defiance Campaign to the Congress of the People, to the general strike, and the peasant revolts and mass demonstrations – saw many examples of united action by all the oppressed people. Indian workers responded in large numbers to almost every call for a general strike. Indian shopkeepers could always be relied upon to declare a day of hartal in solidarity with any protest being organised. Memory is still fresh of the outstanding response by the coloured workers of the Western Cape to the 1961 call by the ANC for a national general political strike.

The Alliance among the Congress organisations was a spur to the solidarity and reflected it. But events both before and after Rivonia put paid to the structures that had been created to express the Alliance.

How can we strengthen and make effective the cooperation between the communities and how can we integrate committed revolutionaries irrespective of their racial background?

*A unity in action between all the oppressed groups is fundamental to the advance of our liberation struggle.*

### **Our Fighting Alliance**

Whatever instruments are created to give expression to the unity of the liberation drive, they must accommodate two fundamental propositions:

- Firstly, they must not be ambiguous on the question of the primary role of the most oppressed African mass.
- Secondly, those belonging to the other oppressed groups and those few white revolutionaries who show themselves ready to make common cause with our aspirations, must be fully integrated on the basis of individual equality.

Approached in the right spirit, these two propositions do not stand in conflict but reinforce one another.

Equality of participation in our national front does not mean a mechanical parity between the various national groups. Not only would this in practice amount to inequality (again at the expense of the majority), but it would lend flavour to the slander that our enemies are ever ready to spread of a multiracial alliance dominated by minority groups. This has never been so and will never be so. But the sluggish way in which the Movement inside the country responded to the new situation after 1960, in which cooperation continued between some organisations that were legal (e.g. SAIC, CPO, COD) and those that were illegal (e.g. ANC), sometimes led to the superficial impression that the legal organisations – because they could speak and operate more

publicly and thus more noticeably – may have had more than their deserved place in the leadership of the Alliance.

Therefore, not only the substance but also the form of our structural creations must, in a way which the people can see, give expression to the main emphasis of the present stage of our struggle. This approach is not a pandering to chauvinism, to racialism or other such backward attitudes. We are revolutionaries, not narrow nationalists. Committed revolutionaries are our brothers, to whatever group they belong. There can be no second-class participants in our Movement. It is for the enemy we reserve our assertiveness and our justified sense of grievance.

*“There can be no second-class participants in our Movement. It is for the enemy we reserve our assertiveness and our justified sense of grievance.”*

The important task of mobilising and gaining the support of other oppressed non-white groups has already been referred to. Like every other oppressed group (including the Africans), we must not naively assume that mere awareness of oppression will, by itself, push the Indian and coloured people in the direction of opposing the enemy and aligning themselves with the liberation movement.

The potential is there, of course, because in a very real sense the future of the Indian and coloured people and their liberation as oppressed groups is intimately bound up with the liberation of the Africans. But active support and participation has to be fought for and won. Otherwise the enemy will succeed in its never-ending attempt to create a gap between these groups and the Africans, and even recruit substantial numbers of them to actively collaborate with it.

The bottom of the barrel will be scrapped in the attempt to create confusion about the objectives of the liberation movement. More particularly, the enemy will feed on the insecurity and dependency that is often part of the thinking of minority oppressed groups. They will try to raise a doubt in their minds about whether there is a place for them in a future liberated South Africa. They have already spread the slander that, at best, for the coloureds and Indians white domination will be replaced by black domination.

It is therefore all the more important, consistent with our first principle, that the coloured and Indian people should see themselves as an integral part of the liberation movement and not as mere auxiliaries.

## The Working Class

Is there a special role for the working class in our national struggle?

We have already referred to the special character of the South African social and economic structure. In our country – more than in any other part of the oppressed world – it is inconceivable for liberation to have meaning without a return of the wealth of the land to the people as a whole.

*“In our country – more than in any other part of the oppressed world – it is inconceivable for liberation to have meaning without a return of the wealth of the land to the people as a whole.”*

It is therefore a fundamental feature of our strategy that victory must embrace more than formal political democracy. To allow the existing economic forces to retain their interests intact is to feed the root of racial supremacy and does not represent even the shadow of liberation.

Our drive towards national emancipation is therefore in a very real way bound up with economic emancipation. We have suffered more than just national humiliation. Our people are deprived of their due in the country's wealth; their skills have been suppressed and poverty and starvation has been their life experience. The correction of these centuries-old economic injustices lies at the very core of our national aspirations.

We do not underestimate the complexities that will face a people's government during the transformation period, nor the enormity of the problems of meeting economic needs of the mass of the oppressed people. But one thing is certain – in our land, this cannot be effectively tackled unless the basic wealth and the basic resources are at the disposal of the people as a whole and are not manipulated by sections or individuals, be they white or black.

*“Our drive towards national emancipation is bound up with economic emancipation.”*

This perspective of a speedy progression from formal liberation to genuine and lasting emancipation is made more real by the existence in our country of a large and growing working class whose class consciousness complements national consciousness. Its political organisations and the trade unions have played a fundamental role in shaping and advancing our revolutionary cause.

It is historically understandable that the doubly oppressed and doubly exploited working class constitutes a distinct and reinforcing layer of our liberation and socialism – and does not stand in

conflict with the national interest. Its militancy and political consciousness as a revolutionary class will play no small part in our victory and in the construction of a real people's South Africa.

Beyond our borders in Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique and Namibia are our brothers and sisters, who similarly are engaged in a fierce struggle against colonialist and racist regimes. We fight an Unholy Alliance of Portugal, Rhodesia and South Africa, with the latter as the main economic and military support. The historic ZAPU-ANC alliance is a unique form of cooperation between two liberation movements, which unites the huge potential of the oppressed people in both South Africa and Zimbabwe. The extension of cooperation and coordination of all the people of southern Africa as led by FRELIMO, ZAPU, SWAPO, MPLA and the ANC is a vital part of our strategy.

What then is the broad purpose of our military struggle? Simply put, in the first phase, it is the complete political and economic emancipation of all our people and the constitution of a society that accords with the basic provisions of our programme – the Freedom Charter.

This, together with our general understanding of our revolutionary theory, provides us with the strategic framework for the concrete elaboration and implementation of policy in a continuously changing situation. It must be combined with a more intensive programme of research, examination and analysis of the conditions of the different strata of our people (in particular those on the land), their local grievances, hopes and aspirations, so that the flow from theory to application – when the situation makes application possible – will be unhampered.