

CHAPTER 6
**RETURNING 'HOME': THE STRATEGY AND PRACTICE OF
ACCOMODATION
(1990-1993)**

In general, social reforms can never be brought about by the weakness of the strong; they must and will be called to life by the strength of the weak (Marx & Engels, 1984, p.281).¹

Karl Marx

Chapter Brief

F.W. de Klerk's parliamentary address on 2 February 1990 - in which he announced the unbanning of the ANC and SACP and invited them to negotiate South Africa's future - expressed both the apartheid state's and capital's desire to seize the strategic initiative of a negotiations process which would lead to a deracialised capitalism. When the ANC leadership responded positively, it placed itself on a political terrain for which it was unprepared; without any effective control or influence over the state's coercive apparatus, the leadership painted itself into a narrow negotiation-centric corner.

Notwithstanding it's various tactical maneuvers, the ANC could only resort to the threat and occasional use of mass struggle in order to push the negotiations along. : the parameters of the struggle were set. The liberation movement was being brought

'home' - laying the groundwork for the institutionalisation of the ANC's historic strategy of incorporation and accommodation (now framed within the search for consensus). The role of the people was secondary.

Calling the ANC's Bluff

When the all-white Parliament opened on 2 February 1990 crowds of demonstrators gathered outside - as they had always done - carrying the banners of opposition organisations and chanting slogans about the illegitimacy of yet another apartheid government. In spite of the belief that de Klerk was being forced to retreat from the bad old days of the 1980s, almost everyone anticipated another presidential speech which would rationalise the political *status quo*. While the ANC and its internal allies had for some time vigorously been pushing for the beginning of negotiations, their historical experience of struggle seemed to rule out any strategically astute action by the apartheid state.

What the demonstrators outside Parliament and the externalised ANC had not fully considered was de Klerk's political wile and the fact that he was in a much stronger position than many realised. The ANC (and its followers) had allowed itself to be lulled by its own sense of moral authority. While rightfully claiming that the bitter and heroic struggles waged had made it impossible for the apartheid state to rule in the old way, the corresponding reality was that the ANC had itself arrived at a strategic cul-de-sac, and De Klerk knew it. The ANC might have been at the apex of its international and domestic moral authority, but in the harsh world of *realpolitik* it was in a weak position, having put most of its

cards on the table. F.W. de Klerk, on the other hand, still had a strong hand and his first play was to call the ANC's bluff.

De Klerk's parliamentary speech was a master stroke. Citing the changes in the USSR and Eastern Europe - as well as the reduced threat of the liberation movements to 'internal security' and their 'new approach' - de Klerk declared that 'the season of violence is over' and the time had come for 'reconstruction and reconciliation'. From now on, the ANC, SACP, PAC and a host of other allied organisations were free to operate inside the country (Mandela would also be released). De Klerk then went on to outline the government's agenda for a post-apartheid South Africa, stressing the need to protect minority rights, release the dynamism of market forces, encourage foreign investment and create a peaceful and stable environment for economic and political development. Describing the aims of the government as 'acceptable to all reasonable South Africans', de Klerk carefully laid out his agenda:

Among other things, those aims include a new, democratic constitution; universal franchise; no domination; equality before an independent judiciary; the protection of minority as well as individual rights; freedom of religion; a sound economy based on proven economic principles and private enterprise; dynamic programmes directed at better education, health services, housing and social conditions for all (de Klerk, 1990).

By unbanning the liberation movements, releasing Mandela and conceding rhetorically to the ANC's more important demands (for example, universal franchise), de Klerk put himself (and the apartheid state) in the best possible position to control the negotiated transition to a post-apartheid dispensation. With effective control of the transition the interests and long-term domination of

the existing white capitalist ruling class would best be assured. Likewise, the continued existence of a still powerful coercive security apparatus in the hands of the apartheid state would act as the ultimate guarantor of an outcome favourable to that same ruling class.

It was clear that de Klerk, unlike his predecessors, understood the need to link the interests of the two main components of the ruling class (that is, the white, bureaucratic-apartheid and private capitalist components). With this understanding, de Klerk showed his willingness to ditch the National Party's historic patronage of the Afrikaner working class and to concentrate on appealing to capitalist and petite bourgeois class interests across racial lines. The practical application of this perspective was to develop over the next three years, gradually becoming a sophisticated programme of coercion, cooptation and compromise (more or less in that order).

For the ANC, 2 February, although unexpected, was a godsend. De Klerk however, could not have anticipated the full effect that the events in Eastern Europe and the USSR had on the ANC and SACP. Besides the obvious loss of military and financial assistance, the collapse of a Stalinist-inspired 'socialism' was a severe ideological blow to those in the liberation movement who had looked to the USSR as the model for transforming South Africa. Whole generations of ANC and SACP cadres had been reared on a steady diet of Stalinist, commandist 'socialism', and when it all disintegrated they were left in an ideological vacuum. The accompanying disillusionment, combined with the new conditions of negotiation, made the movement more susceptible than ever to a strategic and ideological accordant.

The Fetishisation of Talks

Immediately after the release of Mandela on 11 February the ANC and its allies moved to take de Klerk up on his offer. An internal headquarters was set up in Johannesburg and an 'Interim Leadership Group' consisting of Mandela (appointed Deputy-President of the ANC) and other internal leaders (mainly UDF)² was constituted. Although the ANC stressed that all forms of struggle would remain in place, the initial actions of the organisation seemed to confirm that talking was going to be given priority. The first talks took the form of a series of personal meetings between de Klerk and Mandela - a trend that was to continue throughout the negotiation process. At the same time, the external leadership of the ANC was consumed with the task of preparing for its own return for impending negotiation with the de Klerk government.

While the ANC was preoccupied with talks and internal organisational matters, its supporters were subjected to a torrent of violence from several quarters:

- in the apartheid-created 'homeland' of Bophutatswana ANC supporters were detained and harassed;
- in Gatsha Buthelezi's Kwa-Zulu 'homeland' violent clashes between supporters of Buthelezi's Inkhata movement and the ANC/SACP/UDF (raging since 1986) increased in their intensity and brutality;
- in the townships around Johannesburg violent attacks on actual or potential ANC supporters took place, often perpetrated by Inkhata-aligned hostel dwellers abetted by the state security forces.

Indeed, the 'new' situation provided maximum opportunities for the apartheid state and its proxy forces to conduct a two-tier strategy consisting of the parallel use of violence and negotiation that would weaken the ANC-led Alliance on the ground and hopefully at the negotiations table as well.

ANC members and supporters began to appeal to the organisation and its leadership for support against what they clearly saw as a conscious attempt by the apartheid state to weaken and intimidate the organisation's grassroots support base. However, seemingly undeterred by the scale and character of the violence, the ANC leadership continued with its plans for bilateral discussions with the government as Mandela assured the faithful that de Klerk was a man of integrity who could be trusted.

The violence and the ANC leadership's response was an important barometer for several reasons:

- it highlighted the historical failure of the ANC's struggle to weaken substantively the apartheid security forces and thus have the capacity to demand unconditionally, from the very beginning of the negotiation process, the force's effective restructuring and political neutralisation. MK's ability to check abuses by the apartheid security forces was minimal and, in any case, the ANC's strategic approach had greatly undermined the potential capacity for an armed support base able to defend the broad mass. This resulted in the ANC's mass base being vulnerable to violent repression and coercive manipulation and having to depend on these same enemy forces to 'control' the violence;

- it revealed that the ANC leadership felt it necessary to ultimately rely on talks as the strategic locus for solving problems and achieving power;
- it showed the gap between mass expectations created by the character of the ANC's liberation struggle and the organisation's ability and willingness to meet those expectations. Indeed, one of the main effects of the ANC's armed propaganda campaign and the accompanying symbolic appeal of MK heroism was the development of a mythological perspective of the armed struggle. There was the widespread expectation that MK would be able not only to protect the people, but also to act as insurance for the fundamental transformation of South Africa.

Without an effective response from the ANC the violence once again served to encourage the youth to take matters into their own hands and, in the process, to foment opposition to the nascent negotiation process. Even though this early violence and the subsequent action taken by the ANC leadership have not received much analysis, at the time it was clear that the only way in which certain of the ANC and allied MDM leadership could hope to control their own constituencies, marginalise troublesome radicals and realise their vision of a national democracy was through pushing ahead with a negotiated settlement.

It is instructive to revisit the question of class in respect to most of the ANC leadership and what this meant in terms of the negotiated transition strategies being pursued. Whether or not the majority of the leadership was materially located within the petite bourgeoisie in 1990, the politics practiced by those at the top certainly reflected a petite bourgeois mentality. As has been made clear in this book, this meant a politics in which strategic access to existing

institutionalised political and economic power was pursued regardless of the tactics utilised to gain access. As previous ANC President Dr. Xuma had made clear, the political agenda of petite bourgeois leadership was not to conduct struggle in order to fundamentally transform capitalism, but rather, as the political representatives of popular mass formations, to 'fight and struggle to get our full share and benefit from the system' (Fine & Davis, 1990, p.52).

While the violence continued unabated, the ANC and apartheid state delegations met for the first time in Cape Town on 4 May 1990. Billed as 'talks about talks', the meeting produced the Groote Schuur Minute which somewhat nebulously addressed the demands raised by the Harare Declaration. Sounding very similar to what the ANC had years earlier denounced as the cooptive agenda of capital, the Minute stated that 'the government and the ANC agree on a common commitment towards the resolution of the existing climate of violence and intimidation from whatever quarter', and to create a stable and 'peaceful process of negotiations'. The rest of the document briefly dealt with: the issue of political prisoners; immunity for opposition leaders and activists; the lifting of the State of Emergency; and the establishment of a working group to make further recommendations. It was agreed that the two sides would meet again soon and 'the objectives contained in this minute' would be 'achieved as early as possible' (ANC, 1990b, pp.52-53).

As the first formal meeting between the government and the ANC the Groote Schuur talks were notable for the context in which they took place and the limited content of the subsequent Minute. Although the Harare Declaration had set out demands for a 'climate conducive to negotiations', it had been clear that, given the opportunity, the ANC leadership was more than willing to abandon

its decades-long external base and enter into institutionalised negotiation. When the delegations met in Cape Town the ANC, despite threats to the contrary, had little alternative to a negotiated strategy. The Groote Schuur Minute reflected the weakness of the ANC because it was now having to play on a completely different field with an entirely different set of rules than that it had experienced for the previous 30 years. In effect, the ANC's demands were more like pleas to the apartheid state to play fairly and de Klerk had the ability to set the broad rules of the game. To the ANC supporter on the ground the Groote Schuur Minute gave little indication that his/her organisation was dealing with the apartheid state from a position of strength and would deliver a liberation which reflected the demands of the people's struggles.

Inbetween the Groote Schuur talks and the next scheduled meeting with the government in Pretoria, set for 6 August, Mandela set off on the first of many foreign trips. As the international symbol of the South African liberation struggle, Mandela was feted as a hero wherever he went and was able to secure considerable pledges of financial assistance from foreign governments and international corporations. In the United States Mandela wooed business leaders with his pledge to respect free enterprise, and reacted positively to a plan put forward by the President of the Rockefeller Foundation, Peter Goldmark, for the establishment of a development bank for South Africa, funded by foreign investment (*Wall Street Journal*, US, 25 June 1990). What was particularly interesting about Mandela's positive response to the idea of such a development bank - to be 'modeled on the Marshall Plan' (*New York Daily News*, US, 23 June 1990) - was that he had derided the initial Marshall Plan in a 1958 article as allowing the United States to gain 'control of the economies of European

countries' and reduce them to 'a position analogous to that of dependencies' (Mandela, 1990, pp.74-75); times had changed.

Mandela also began to signal that the ANC was not wedded to its long-standing policy of nationalisation - again in direct contradiction to his statement only two months previously that 'the nationalisation of the mines, the financial institutions and monopoly industries is the fundamental policy of the ANC and it is inconceivable that we will ever change this policy' (*Sunday Telegraph*, UK, 1 April 1990). As if to confirm the Alliance's change of heart Mandela (along with leading COSATU official and SACP member Chris Dlamini) had a cordial meeting with US trade union officials at the African-American Labor Center, a body previously denounced by the SACP as a front for the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). At the meeting, Mandela went out of his way to assure his hosts that 'state participation will not be an option if there are better options' (Trehwela, 1991, p.79).

There were certainly many cadres in the movement who were angered by the apparent abandonment of long-held principles and policies (nowhere more so than amongst much of the youth and organised working class). And yet the sheer pace with which the ANC leadership was travelling down the road of accommodation and negotiation infused its constituency with the feeling that there was little real alternative to a negotiated settlement which would entail compromise. This was further catalysed by the delegitimisation of socialist policies (associated with the collapsed economies of the USSR and Eastern Europe), and the accompanying confusion and demoralisation experienced by movement socialists.³

On his return to South Africa Mandela led an ANC delegation to the next round of talks with the apartheid state in Pretoria. The resulting Pretoria Minute reiterated the respective parties' commitment 'to promote and expedite the normalisation and stabilisation of the situation in line with the spirit of mutual trust obtaining among the leaders involved'. It was agreed that the release of all political prisoners would be expedited no later than 30 April 1991, that security legislation would undergo continuous 'review' and that 'additional mechanisms of communication ... should be developed at local, regional, and national levels'. While these agreements represented a continuation of the efforts begun at the Groote Schuur talks, the Pretoria talks produced a completely unexpected bombshell: the ANC was to unilaterally suspend the armed struggle 'in the interest of moving as speedily as possible towards a negotiated peaceful political settlement'. With this added provision the Minute concluded that 'the way is now open to proceed towards negotiation on a new constitution' (Institute for Black Research, 1993, pp.281-283).

This decision caused understandable confusion among MK cadres and many Alliance supporters. For instance, the following questions were asked:

- had the conditions, set down in the Harare Declaration for suspension of armed activities, been met by the government?
- was not MK supposed to be the protector of the people who were under constant violent attack by the state security forces and their surrogates?
- had not the ANC leadership continually reiterated that the armed struggle would continue until 'a democratically elected government was in power' (*Saturday Star*, 26 May 1990)?

- above all, had not the leadership consistently promised to involve its mass base in any important decisions so that the negotiations process would not take place over the heads of the people?

For the leadership, the decision reflected a 'justified tactical compromise to maintain the momentum towards a negotiated settlement', that gave the ANC 'the moral high ground' (Barrell, 1990, pp.69-70). Even though the leadership stressed that armed struggle would not be totally abandoned, the possibility of any return to substantive armed activity, under the conditions of a complete commitment to a 'peaceful negotiated settlement', was extremely limited. The desire to claim 'the moral high ground' gave further indication that the ANC desired to impress upon the international community the seriousness of its 'new' approach. Unfortunately for the ANC's grassroots, questions of moral rightness were not exactly paramount given the ongoing violence.

Although it had long been clear that the armed struggle would not deliver the armed overthrow of the apartheid state, its historic importance lay in its psychological and symbolic impact on both the apartheid state and the masses. With the suspension of the armed struggle, Alliance supporters on the ground were, more than ever, vulnerable to state-sponsored violence and dependent on an uneven negotiations process to deliver their expectations. The abandonment of organised armed activity only further contributed to the lack of direction and organisation among the mass base of the ANC. MK activity, despite its limited threat, had at least served to provide some sort of pole for the activities of the disparate groupings in the townships. Without the active presence and experience of MK cadres the people (particularly the youth) were left to their own

devices, further contributing to rank indiscipline and anarchic behaviour (for example, youthful comrades using their ANC credentials to cover for criminal activity).

The Pretoria Minute confirmed de Klerk's control of the negotiation terrain. By giving up its armed activity and continuing to rely on exhortations to de Klerk to accede to its long-standing demands, the ANC was played to the government's ability to dictate the pace and character of a negotiated settlement.

Not unexpectedly, the Pretoria talks were followed by an unprecedented wave of violence - centered around Johannesburg's townships - in which over 500 people died within a 10-day period (Institute for Black Research, 1993, p.28). Attacks were directed at township residents in general, many of whom claimed no particular political allegiance and, as before, all indications pointed to the involvement of Inkhata-aligned hostel dwellers and the state security forces. In the face of such ongoing violence, many township dwellers appealed to the ANC for weapons. In the Phola Park squatter camp on the outskirts of Johannesburg one resident offered this plea:

It will take a long time before we get the money and maybe by that time we [will] be dead and unable to enjoy the luxuries money can buy. Give us arms please (*The Star*, 16 September 1990).

In what was to become a familiar pattern of response to the violence the Alliance leadership pointed to a covert state-aided 'third force'⁴ as being responsible, and promised to investigate the violence and take the matter up with the government. But as the violence continued MK leaders made calls for the formation of self-defense units in the townships (although MK was officially 'confined to barracks'), and the Alliance leadership adopted a more hard-line attitude against the

government and Inkhata. De Klerk responded by launching his own security crackdown, and although it was ostensibly directed at restoring 'peace and stability', the practical effect was to further harass, intimidate and eliminate grassroots Alliance leaders and activists. Having no other recourse, the ANC leadership announced the suspension of talks with the government.

With no real alternative strategy to continued negotiation the ANC's decision represented both an attempt to placate its grassroots base and to put pressure on the de Klerk government to create a climate conducive to further negotiation. The ANC leadership had not only placed far too much trust in a strategy of talks which relied heavily on 'trust' and 'integrity', but had also failed to follow its own call that the negotiations process would be led by the people. Without rooting its chosen negotiations strategy in mass mobilisation and struggle - the only other pillar of struggle which the organisation was now capable of utilising - the ANC (even if unwittingly) further contributed to de Klerk's control of the new terrain and to the organisation's strategic sterility.

The Revolutionary Zig-zag

If you want to safeguard your revolution you deal with the devil if necessary but you deal with the devil with a long spoon. You do it in a zigzag way. If it's necessary to get you to your target you do it.

ANC NEC member Raymond Suttner (personal interview, November 1992)

By the time of the ANC's National Consultative Conference (14-16 December 1990) - the first 'open' conference of the ANC in almost 35 years - there was growing discontent amongst its supporters over the way in which the leadership

had performed (*Financial Mail*, 14 December 1990). Besides the general perception that the ANC had been comprehensively outmanouvered in the negotiation process, Mandela's conduct on his foreign trips had dismayed many international supporters of the South African liberation movement.

Hard on the heels of his United States/Europe trip, Mandela also visited Australia and Indonesia. On his visit to Australia Mandela declared that he would not become involved with, or comment on, the Aboriginal question, upsetting Aboriginal leaders, who accused him of 'hypocrisy'. Aboriginal activist Gary Foley posed a searching question: 'Why do you think he's coming out to Australia? It's not to get a better tan ... I think it's a political obscenity for him to be coming here and sucking up to all the people who wouldn't lift a finger for him while he was in jail' (*The Star*, 22 October 1990). In Indonesia, one of the world's worst human rights violators, Mandela accepted a humanitarian award and \$10 million donation from the Suharto military dictatorship - and refused to speak out against the Indonesian campaign of genocide against East Timor. As in Australia he was accused of 'hypocrisy and opportunism'. A spokesperson for the East Timorese resistance movement - Front for the Liberation of East Timor (FRETILIN) - summed up the feelings of those who had long supported the ANC's struggle:

For years Mandela has asked the world to interfere in the internal affairs of South Africa. The fight for self-determination and freedom from repression in other countries is no more an 'internal matter' than apartheid in South Africa. (*Weekly Mail*, 17 May, 1991).

Against such an international backdrop, the December Conference revealed that internal discontent was also gathering force. Rank and file delegates chastised the leadership for what they saw as the soft line taken at talks with the

government. Particularly harsh criticism was directed at the organisation's failure to defend adequately its supporters amidst the ongoing violence and at the leadership's confidential and unilateral decision-making (*Weekly Mail*, 20 December 1990).

Conference delegates were clearly ambivalent about the ANC's decision to spearhead the struggle with a negotiation strategy. One resolution passed by delegates (as if in defiance of this 'new' strategic reality), declared that 'we unanimously rededicate ourselves to the four pillars of our revolutionary strategy, believing that there have been no fundamental changes in the political situation which would require a departure from our strategy'. And yet, in another resolution on negotiation, it was stated that 'conference supports and endorses the negotiations strategy outlined in the Harare Declaration' (ANC, 1990a, pp.16-18). The delegates were thus caught in a strategic quandary. On the one hand they were dissatisfied with a negotiations strategy which had delivered few gains, a leadership which seemed far too accommodative and an unanswered campaign of violence that had severely weakened the ANC. On the other, they yearned for a rejuvenated 'four pillars' strategy which would mobilise the masses and force the regime to capitulate to the majority's demands for total liberation.

Whatever the genuine desires of the delegates to put the masses at the forefront of struggle, the ANC's historic macro-strategy of accommodation had long ago made this option extremely difficult (including a mass-based underground and armed struggle). The leadership knew that the ANC's commitment to a negotiated settlement with an apartheid capitalist state still in possession of its coercive capacity meant that the liberation movement had accepted the need for a historic compromise that did not entail a fundamental

and radical transformation of 'power to the people'. However, conference delegates still had yet to fully accept that reality - a contradiction that highlighted the historically tenuous connection between the ANC leadership's strategies and the liberatory vision of its mass base. The main battle for the ANC and its allies was now clear to everyone - seizing the negotiation initiative and gaining the moral high ground.

In an attempt to regain the initiative, the delegates passed a final resolution which instructed the leadership to 'serve notice on the regime that unless all the obstacles are removed on or before 30th April 1991, the ANC shall consider the suspension of the whole negotiations process'. It went on to declare that the ANC would 'engage in a programme of mass action ... create people's defense units ... remain committed to the strengthening and growth of the people's army MK and the underground (and that) the existing sanctions campaign should be maintained' (ANC, 1990a, pp.18-20). The conference delegates also vigorously rejected proposals by Thabo Mbeki for the ANC to review its stance on sanctions. While the leadership had recognised that the ANC had lost control over the campaign (exemplified by the unilateral decisions by capital and several governments to drop sanctions against the de Klerk government), the uncritical way in which the entire sanctions campaign had been propagandised by the ANC wrought its own bitter fruit in the form of delegates' refusal to countenance any rethink.

While all of these directives reflected the desire of delegates to reclaim the strategic initiative and strengthen the organisation, the reality of the negotiated terrain which the ANC had accepted pushed the resolutions in one direction. That direction, as yet another conference resolution stated, was that,

'the ANC's political task is to mobilise the public in mass campaigns to pressure the authorities to fulfill their tasks' (ANC, 1990a, p.20). In other words, the ANC's negotiation-centric strategy ensured that mass struggle would serve the purpose of acting as a pressure valve on the de Klerk government to hold up its end of the compromise bargain. The implications were clear:

- the ANC would accept the government as an equal partner in the search for a post-apartheid order;
- an expectant ANC would rely on more enlightened and chastened government security forces to deal with the violence;
- mass struggle, despite any alternative potential, would serve to enhance the Alliance's negotiating position (although there might be differences over degrees of emphasis).

Reflecting the tenor of the conference resolutions, the ANC NEC statement of 8 January 1991 stressed the importance of the 'mass involvement of the people in the process of negotiations'. It gave the apartheid government a 30 April deadline to remove 'identified obstacles to the process of negotiating a new constitution', failing which, the ANC would 'review the situation'. The NEC also called for the convening of an 'all-party congress' to discuss the election of a Constituent Assembly (which in turn would draw up the constitution), and establish an 'interim government to oversee the process of transition' until a 'democratic government' was formed (ANC, 1991f).

Although the apartheid state responded positively to the NEC's call for an all-party congress, there was no indication that it was in any hurry to meet the

other ANC demands. The most noticeable response to the ANC's moves was the massacre (by 'unidentified men') on 12 January 1991 of 35 ANC members and supporters attending a funeral vigil in the township of Sebokeng on the outskirts of Johannesburg (Institute for Black Research, 1993, p.34). The ANC leadership reacted by repeating its earlier charge of the existence of a third force, and once again accused the regime of not creating a climate conducive to negotiation. Even though Mandela met Inkhata leader Gatsha Buthelezi soon after the massacre and signed an agreement intended to end violence between their respective organisations, it was more an act of individual diplomacy and had little effect on the ground.

As the seemingly endless violence continued, the ANC embarked on its conference promise of mass action campaigns. Rallies, marches and work stayaways (mainly in the Witwatersrand and Eastern Cape regions) were held, and a signature campaign for the ANC's constituent assembly demands was undertaken. While the campaign attracted sizeable numbers of people, most observers, including those within the ANC, agreed that the mass action was constrained by lack of grassroots organisation, effective communication and a general lack of direction (*Mayibuye*, March 1991). In addition, it was difficult for the masses to get excited about action aimed at affecting a negotiation process that was far removed from the more immediate local issues that had most often provided the initial impetus for their own struggles. Indeed, it was clear that the kind of mass action that did take place failed adequately to link concrete economic demands with larger political demands aimed at providing empowerment to the mass base.

Criticism also began to emanate from within ANC leadership ranks, predominantly focused on three issues: the organisation's failure to fully utilise mass struggle - thus contributing to ANC weakness in dealing with the government; the growing gap between the actions of the leadership and rank and file expectations - producing confusion over the direction of the 'struggle'; and the inability of the ANC to protect its members and supporters from ongoing violence (Kasrils & Khuzwayo, 1991; Suttner, 1991). Reflecting much the same sentiment as that expressed by delegates at the December conference, these internal critics argued that there was the need for 'a combination of mass action and negotiations' in order to regain the 'strategic initiative' (Kasrils & Khuzwayo, 1991, pp.10-11).

Despite such perspectives, the strategic effect of the criticisms was not to fundamentally challenge the negotiation path of the ANC but rather to further solidify it. Reflecting the ANC's tradition of coopting internal debate into pre-set strategy, negotiation would now succeed - with an added emphasis on 'mass action' - where the armed struggle had failed. As an internal ANC discussion paper stated:

Just as in the past we saw the objective of armed seizure of power as the means to effect the transition, negotiations now become a viable method for the transfer of power in the new conditions (ANC, 1991e).

While a rejuvenated campaign of mass action would no doubt give the ANC added clout at the negotiating table and potentially provide some direction and involvement for grassroots structures, it could really only possess an inherently narrow strategic utility within the ANC's overall negotiation framework: just as de

Klerk would eventually have to tighten the rein on his security forces in order to secure legitimacy and deliver his side of the bargain, the ANC would ultimately have to ensure that mass struggle conformed to the unspoken rules of the politics of the 'new' transition.

As the ANC's mass action campaign lurched along and violence showed no signs of dissipating, the 30 April 1991 deadline for the government to meet the movement's demands loomed large. However, it was clear that the government was in no hurry either to stem the violence or convene an all-party congress - de Klerk was gaining much mileage from the perception that it was the ANC which was being obstinate over further negotiations, and the characterisation of the violence as 'black-on-black' feuding between the ANC and Inkhata. At the same time it was equally clear that despite its increasingly strident threats to stop all negotiations with the government - contained in a further ultimatum issued in the ANC's 'Open Letter' to the government on 5 April, and extending the deadline to 9 May (Institute for Black Research, 1991, pp.318-325) - the ANC had no other option but to hold out for a better deal. ANC leaders had already confirmed that negotiations were the only option (*The Star*, 11 March 1991), and soon after the radical rhetoric of the 'Open Letter' Mandela told foreign diplomats that the ANC would be 'flexible' in its ultimatum if there was 'a positive reaction' to the demands (*The Star*, 10 April 1991). The harsh reality was that the Alliance leadership had neither the political will nor the organisational capacity - weakened considerably by its strategic approach to negotiations - to force the hand of de Klerk.

On the ground the people were preoccupied with defending their communities from ongoing violent attacks. In the words of one township dweller,

the Alliance's grassroots base was 'just afraid', resulting in most 'discussion centering around violence when what we need to be talking about and concentrating on is the organisation and principles of the ongoing struggle' ("Simon", personal interview, October 1991).⁵ Workers belonging to the most organised Alliance partner, COSATU, were also taken up with defending their communities which severely affected their ability to direct energies and efforts to organise around workplace demands and larger political issues. It did not help that COSATU had largely ignored the organisation and needs of migrant hostel-dwellers, which indirectly contributed to Inkhata's success in organising these alienated hostel-dwellers to participate in violent campaigns against Alliance supporters (Ruiters & Taylor, 1990).

The ability of the liberation movement adequately to respond to the continuing violence was further hampered by the fact that the main task of the ANC's troubled armed wing, MK, had become one of preparing selected cadres for a future post-apartheid army (*Mayibuye*, April 1991, pp.10-12). MK had attempted to involve itself in the defence of the ANC's constituency by issuing a booklet entitled 'For the Sake of our Lives', that began circulating amongst township activists in mid-1991. It called for the formation of Township Defence Committees and Township Defence Forces operating along military lines, adapting to the tactical needs of an urban landscape and constituting an embryonic people's army and police. While these directives were followed by MK's first full conference inside South Africa in September 1991, the conference was more notable for the intense criticism directed at ANC (and MK) leaders for unilateral decision-making and the confused state of the organisation.

As events over the next year were to confirm, MK's plans for the defense of the ANC's mass base never really gelled. While many communities did form self-defense units, they were often ill-equipped and lacked formal command and control structures. However much the rank and file of MK might have been capable of, and willing to, direct the defense of the movement, the political decisions that the ANC leadership had already made left MK with little more than a spectator role.

As the grassroots fought for survival, the tug-of-war conducted on the terrain of 'on-again, off-again', negotiations process took on the quality of political theatre. For instance, throughout the first few months of 1991 the ANC had performed so many tortuous flip-flops over the Winnie Mandela trial saga⁶ that even disinterested observers must have been wondering if the organisation had completely lost its bearings. Meanwhile, de Klerk had left on a trip to Europe (quickly followed by Mandela) in early 1991, and in an ironic role reversal it was de Klerk who was feted as the anti-apartheid hero as European governments and international capital welcomed de Klerk's calls for lifting an already ailing sanctions campaign. The ANC leadership countered de Klerk's successes by claiming that '... the notion that the weakening on the sanctions front represents a defeat is a lot of nonsense - it is a reflection of the victories we are scoring' (*New Nation*, 3-9 May 1990). And yet the ANC had certainly not helped its international sanctions cause by purchasing the Shell Oil Company's flagship building in Johannesburg as home for its new administrative headquarters - Shell continued to be a main target of the international anti-apartheid movement (*New African*, 21 February 1991).

During this period, Alliance leaders were desperately trying to project their organisation as being in control of the negotiations process. While telling grassroots supporters to prepare for mass protest and general strikes (*The Star*, 30 April 1991), they were also telling international capital that a negotiated deal was imminent. Thabo Mbeki went so far as virtually to dismiss the existence of any substantive obstacles to concluding a deal when he told leading businessmen at a conference held in Zimbabwe that the ANC saw 'no particular reason why there should not be a new constitution in South Africa by the end of this year' (*The Star*, 24 April 1991). Indeed, the conflicting statements even extended to the issue of violence. In 1990, not a month after his organisation had heaped all sorts of vitriol on de Klerk for being responsible for the violence, Mbeki projected the State President as a man committed to a 'non-racial ... democratic' South Africa, under siege from a hostile white right (*New Nation*, 3-9 May 1990). It was no wonder that the ANC was losing the battle for the strategic initiative to de Klerk.

Damn the Torpedoes, Full Speed Ahead

At the beginning of July 1991 (2-7th) the ANC held its 48th National Congress in Durban. Over 2000 delegates listened as Mandela opened the conference with an exhortation to prepare for negotiations 'sooner rather than later'. Accusing the de Klerk government of pursuing a 'double agenda', Mandela urged the conference to ensure that ANC strategy and policy would 'push the process forward leading to the transfer of power [for] our people' (ANC, 1991b). Over the next several days delegates engaged in open and often intense debate. Outgoing ANC Secretary-General, Alfred Nzo, produced a scathing report on the

state of the organisation, painting a picture of a 're-active' ANC riddled with complacency, confusion, lack of initiative and confined by 'populist rhetoric and clichés' (*The Star*, 7 July 1991).

While it may have sounded as though the ANC was being chastised for being out of touch with its mass constituency, Nzo (himself not very popular with the rank and file) was a conduit for a different kind of message from the leadership. That message was simply that the ANC leadership wanted the membership to accept the strategic reality of the new negotiated transition: in other words, the leadership expected the rank and file to jettison any revolutionary expectations and activities.

Elections at the Congress produced only one real surprise, that of former National Union of Mineworkers head, Cyril Ramaphosa, as Secretary-General. His election had not been expected since he was relatively young and had not been in exile. Filling the other major positions were Mandela (President-General) and Walter Sisulu (Deputy-President). However, the new look 50-member NEC contained many former UDF leaders; so did the more streamlined 27-member National Working Committee (NWC), which was given the task of overseeing the running of the organisation on a full-time basis.

While the SACP had begun to assert itself as an independent organisation outside the ANC (for example, opening new SACP branches and recruiting heavily among trade unions), the role its members played at the Congress was consistent with past practice: putting forward a left version of the national democratic revolution yet remaining solidly within the strategic parameters of the ANC's united front approach. Indeed, it was the reaffirmation of a united front perspective, reflected in the strategic synthesis of the final

resolutions, that signified the most important result of the Congress. Although the resolutions covered a complex array of issues that had previously been given little attention (for example, countering state propaganda and increasing the role of women within the organisation), the main thrust was to commit unreservedly the ANC to a negotiated settlement. Reiterating much of what had come out of the December conference, the resolutions directed the NEC to implement a programme of action to remove all obstacles to negotiations (with special emphasis on violence), and to 'draw in as many categories of people and organisations behind the broad goals of non-racialism, non-sexism and democracy' (ANC, 1991b).

The proceedings also highlighted the extent to which the ANC was dependent on foreign funding, particularly from Sweden. Although the official figures were not released one source put the amount pledged by foreign sources by the end of 1991 at R684 million. While it remained to be seen whether these pledges became actual grants, the ANC could count on receiving a reported R54 million from the Swedish International Development Agency - a figure that represented a substantial percentage of the ANC's budget (Institute for Black Research, 1991, p.38).

While the Congress succeeded in pulling together the varied strands of the ANC behind the chosen negotiation strategy, there was nothing particularly new about what came out of Durban. What the first Congress on home territory in three decades represented was the formal return of the ANC to its historical strategic mission which entailed gathering the broadest social coalition to pressure the apartheid state into negotiating the terms of apartheid's demise. Despite the ANC's consistent claims that such a strategy would deliver a genuine

'transfer of power to the people', the ANC's battle plan after almost 80 years of existence looked more like the terms for a 'gentleman's' agreement.

One of more immediate results of the Congress was the ANC's attempt to project itself as an all-inclusive organisation by propagandising a non-ideological image. Mandela, echoing Thabo Mbeki's earlier statements, argued that:

[the ANC is] united solely by our determination to oppose racial oppression ... [it] is the only thing that unites us ... there is no question of ideology as far as the odyssey of the ANC is concerned, because any question approaching ideology would split the organisation from top to bottom (Sparks, 1991, p.8).

Just like the UDF in the 1980s the ANC attempted to present its broad alliance programme as possessing no specific ideological content, and just as the UDF's attempt had been disingenuous, so too was the latest.

The ANC was attempting to separate cause from effect. The fact that a general anti-apartheidism was seen as the glue for organisational viability did not mean that the way in which apartheid was to be removed was devoid of specific ideological considerations. As an example, the ANC's decision to pursue a broad alliance, inclusive of domestic and international monopoly capitalism under the historic conditions pertaining in South Africa, was not merely a short-term tactical move but a strategic choice rooted in a specific conception of class power. Similarly the ANC's preference for a mixed-economy solution (part state-led, part private sector-led) to the ravages of apartheid capitalism entailed specific ideological choices relating to respective class benefits and empowerment.

The conception of class power that the majority petite bourgeois leadership of the ANC possessed was one of aspiration; that is, it was defined by that class they aspired to join - the bourgeoisie. Instead of seeing the radical

possibilities of the struggles of the broad mass, they saw the political and economic power of the ruling class (state and capital). Thus the defining logic of the leadership's struggle for national liberation was cast as one of accession and aspiration, all within the boundaries of a racialised conception of change.

The logic of the supposedly non-ideological approach of the ANC was clearly revealed in this contribution by Zola Skweyiya of the ANC's Legal Department (now Minister of Public Services). He argued that:

Entrenching the mixed economy in the constitution will provide opportunities for **maintaining and consolidating** the unity of the anti-apartheid forces which has been forged in the anti-apartheid struggle and channel it to the task of national and economic development [author's emphasis] (*Sechaba*, June 1989, p.9).

Thus the broad alliance against apartheid was not to be a temporary one, but one that would be maintained and consolidated after liberation. Indeed, the entire strategic trajectory of a negotiated settlement was wrapped in layers of ideological and class considerations.

Not long after the Durban Congress, the ANC was given a short-lived boost in its tug-of-war with the de Klerk government by revelations that government security forces had channeled state funds to the Inkhata movement (*Weekly Mail*, 19 July 1991). 'Inkhatagate', as it came to be known, forced de Klerk to admit the funding and demote - to lesser government positions - long-time securocrats Magnus Malan and Adriaan Vlok (Ministers of Defense and Law & Order respectively). Yet for all the sensationalism surrounding the revelations and the undeniable link between the government and Inkhata against the ANC, neither de Klerk nor Buthelezi suffered much more than temporary damage. The

violence did not significantly diminish and the signing of a National Peace Accord between de Klerk, Mandela and Buthelezi in September 1991 did little to stem the slaughter. Ironically, de Klerk was able to consolidate further his control of the National Party now that the two troublesome securocrats had been substantially marginalised.

Indeed it was a mark of de Klerk's sense of confidence and continued ability to set the pace and character of the transition process - and conversely the ANC's inability to set the transitional agenda - that resulted in him giving the nod for the unilateral imposition of a new, anti-progressive across-the-board Value Added Tax (VAT) in late 1991. The effects of this would mostly be felt by a black populace already heavily burdened by the ongoing crisis of apartheid capitalism. Indeed, the South African economy had registered a negative growth rate in 1991 and unemployment was (unofficially) hovering at around 40%. In addition, there had been large scale retrenchments and increasing monopolisation of industry as capital continually sought to mediate the effects of its continuing organic crisis.

De Klerk's implementation of VAT proved a wake-up call for the ANC's Alliance partner COSATU. Since February 1990 COSATU's profile in the Alliance had been low, partly as a result of independent working class action being severely curtailed by the violence, but also because of COSATU's approach to mass struggle. Following the same general negotiation strategy as the ANC, COSATU had become involved in a parallel negotiating process with capital and the state. After signing accords with the apartheid state and domestic capital - providing for its participation in the state's National Manpower Commission -

COSATU devoted much of its energies to institutionalising bargaining agreements between unions, employers and the state.

One result of this was to curtail mass struggle by the organised working class. Although COSATU leaders continued to stress (just like ANC leaders) that their own negotiations process was in the interests of their constituency and needed to be mass-led, the reality was that workers often had little say in decisions made in the 'tri-partite' forums. The perceived necessity of seeking common ground with capital and the state for some kind of social contract in the drive to restructure (albeit on a more progressive bent) an ailing South African capitalism, meant that mass struggle by the working class would need to be contained within the parameters of that very negotiating process. Within the broader strategic framework of ongoing political negotiation involving their political representatives, the ANC and SACP, working-class demands and struggle would of necessity have to be muted in order for the 'deal' to be delivered.

A classic example of this involved the issue of nationalisation. While most workers continued to demand nationalisation (particularly of monopoly capital) as a means towards socialisation of the means of production (COSATU, 1992), ANC leaders were busy trying to convince their broad alliance that nationalisation was no longer 'an ideological attachment' of the organisation (*The Star*, 17 September 1991).⁷ In fact it had been clear since early 1990 that the ANC leadership saw the nationalisation issue as a stone around the organisation's neck in its bid to secure foreign investment and the support of liberal capital. Likewise, the ANC had decided that it would not nationalise private land for redistribution to the people, but rather use vacant and unused land (including

state owned properties like military installations) as well as a Land Claims Court to fulfill the Freedom Charter's promise that 'the land shall be shared among those who work it' (ANC, 1991a).

Once VAT had been unilaterally imposed by the state COSATU mobilised an anti-VAT coalition and called a two-day nationwide strike in protest. The strike, the largest in South African history, succeeded in virtually shutting down the economy. Despite this impressive display of power by organised workers, VAT was not rescinded and high-level talks resumed centre stage. The result indicated that as long as mass struggle continued to be strategically confined within a necessarily accommodationist negotiation process, the interests of workers and the broad mass of people would take a back seat to those of capital and a state intent on preserving as much of the economic status quo as possible.

Delivering the Deal

As the end of 1991 approached the ANC and the government were making preparations for the convening of an all-party congress. While the ANC could claim that the government had rhetorically acceded to some of its long-standing demands such as the need for an Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU), the (supposed) disbanding of covert operations and the repealing of race laws, the truth was that the government had done so on terms and in a time frame determined largely by itself. Despite conferences, endless policy positions, recognition of the agenda of the government and capital and undeniable popular support, the ANC leadership and that of its Alliance partners had been soundly

outplayed by the de Klerk government. As the South Africa correspondent of the British newspaper *The Independent*, John Carlin, pointed out:

Mr. Mandela, and the other "moderates" in the ANC leadership took Mr. de Klerk at face value. They believed that the government and the ANC would be equal partners in the voyage to the "New South Africa," that apartheid would go and they, as the natural majority party, would glide into power ... In one sense (that) trust was not misplaced. Mr. de Klerk will remove apartheid from the statute books. He will, when it suits him, release the political prisoners. But this was never the issue; he knew from the day he came to power that this was what had to be done. The real issue was to retain power, to perpetuate white privilege and the economic status quo after apartheid had gone (*The Independent*, 24 April 1991).

On the specific issue of the release of all political prisoners (a demand of the Harare Declaration), the ANC leadership had continuously referred such releases as necessary to creating a 'climate conducive to negotiations'. And yet there were still many political prisoners languishing in jail, particularly those who were aligned to the ANC. Despite numerous pleas and letters to the leadership from ANC-aligned political prisoners particularly from a group in Leuwkop Maximum Security Prison,⁸ there continued to be little movement on the issue throughout 1992 and 1993. Although the ANC and the apartheid state had signed a Record of Understanding in September 1992 designed to release all genuine political prisoners, the ultimate power to decide still rested with de Klerk. Meanwhile, the regime continued to release prisoners aligned to Inkhata and stalled on taking any action with regards to ANC-aligned prisoners. As for the ANC leadership, it consistently resorted to telling the prisoners to wait until a new government was in place.

The Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), constituted as the formal gathering of an all-party congress, got underway in late December 1991. As proceedings began, it was more obvious than ever that the ANC and the SACP were determined to wrap-up the negotiation process as soon as possible. Mandela now spoke of the need to 'develop consensus across the spectrum and of the desire to maximize common purpose amongst South Africans' (Institute for Black Research, 1991, p.56). The SACP, fresh from its 8th National Congress, declared that negotiations were the 'shortest and most peaceful route to the transfer of power to the people'. Following the adoption of its two-stage theory to the 'new' conditions, the SACP continued to insist that if the 'working class propels this process' (that is, negotiation) the process would not 'fail the working class' (SACP, 1992, p.11). It seemed as if the SACP leadership saw no contradiction between the negotiation strategy and its necessarily accommodative politics, and the ability of the working class to struggle for socialism.

Although there was a great deal of political posturing between the ANC leadership and the apartheid state at the new talks, the proceedings, which carried on until late May 1992, clearly indicated that the ANC was prepared to be increasingly flexible in its desire to implement a 'transfer of power to the people'. Everything became negotiable, including protection for minorities, highly decentralised federalism, immediate reincorporation of the 'homelands', as well as majority rule (at least for the short-term). Besides the myriad policy U-turns since February 1990, including those on nationalisation and land, the ANC was now ready to:

- welcome international capital and Western governmental involvement in creating a 'democratic' economy (*The Star*, 6 December 1991), including a tentative endorsement of IMF and World Bank prescriptions on macro-economic policy (*Business Day*, 24 March 1992);
- categorically rule out armed struggle as an alternative to a negotiated settlement (*The Star*, 20 May 1992);
- accept an interim constitution and interim government negotiated within the confines of CODESA (ANC, 1992b, p.9).

All of this took place against the background of continuing violence, limited mass action and an increasingly confident National Party, aided by its victory in the March 1992 all-white referendum on negotiations. Indeed, de Klerk had managed to:

- tie up the ANC in months of talks in which the government had conceded little;
- get the Alliance to back an all-white referendum which enhanced his party's position and helped create the impression that the real enemy of 'peace and democracy' was the white right;
- keep overall control of the state machinery;
- consistently side-step responsibility for a campaign of violence that weakened the ANC.

In an indication of de Klerk's stubborn 'success', the CODESA talks broke down at the end of May, ostensibly over percentages for the approval of decisions to

be taken by a future constitution-making body. For its part, the ANC negotiators, in their search for consensus, offered a 70 percent majority for approval while government negotiators stuck arrogantly to a figure of 80 percent. The real reason for the deadlock, however, lay with the Alliance leadership's belated realisation that its increasingly alienated mass base needed to be reassured that it was not being sold a half-baked liberation.

Soon after the deadlock at CODESA the ANC held a National Policy Conference at which delegates decided to issue the apartheid state yet another ultimatum. It encompassed most previous demands (for example, on violence and political prisoners) but was very specific on the installation of an Interim Government of National Unity (to be agreed upon by the end of June 1992), and on a freely-elected constituent-making body (by the end of the year). ANC Secretary-General Ramaphosa warned the government that there had to be 'firm timetables' and that if the demands were not met the Alliance would embark on 'unprecedented mass action' (*The Star*, 1 June 1992). As had been the case in the past, the apartheid state seemed intent on ignoring the immediate demands of the Alliance, preferring to sit tight and wait on more secret high-level meetings to get formal negotiation back on track.

However, on the night of 17 June 1992 hostel dwellers descended on the squatter settlement of Boipatong (on the outskirts of Johannesburg) and proceeded to slaughter 45 people, wounding many more. There was an immediate outpouring of domestic and international outrage and ANC supporters demanded that the organisation take action against a regime they had consistently held responsible for the violence. Mandela was told by angry Boipatong residents that the Alliance leadership was 'acting like lambs while the

enemy is killing our people' (*The Star*, 28 June 1992). It was a familiar refrain, and the Alliance leadership knew that it would have to give its mass base some indication of support. An announcement soon followed that the Alliance was suspending all talks with the government.

Activities and events over the next three months, despite opportunities for substantively shifting the balance of forces in favour of the ANC's mass base, served to confirm the strategic stranglehold of an accommodative negotiation path. The Alliance began a 'rolling mass action' campaign designed to 'politically defeat de Klerk', and to ensure that the 'people are part of the process of deciding their own futures' (*The Star*, 12 July 1992). Alliance leaders such as Ronnie Kasrils, who had shown some unease about the negotiations process, saw in the campaign the insurrectionary 'possibility of the Leipzig option'⁹ in which 'we reach the stage where de Klerk is propelled out of the exit gate' (*Weekly Mail*, 19 June 1992). Such sentiments, while understandable given the lack of mass mobilisation and involvement since 1990, were soon doused by the harsh reality that Alliance heavyweights continued to see mass struggle as a pressure tactic on a negotiation process to which they were completely committed.

The *Sowetan* newspaper (South Africa's largest 'black' daily paper) reported Cyril Ramaphosa as telling Alliance members that the ANC had 'precipitated the talks deadlock ... so our people could see we are dealing with an enemy that will not give in easily'. He was also quoted as saying that 'there is no alternative' to CODESA (*Sowetan*, 6 July 1992). Soon afterwards, the ANC leadership reiterated its commitment to negotiations and reassured the country

that its mass action campaign 'is not a programme of insurrection' aimed at 'a forceful overthrow' (*Weekly Mail*, 16 July 1992).

The subsequent campaign of 'rolling mass action', despite high expectations from Alliance supporters and dire warnings of 'crisis' and 'chaos' from the apartheid state and capital, bore the stamp of muted pressure. As one activist put it:

The weakness in the way the involvement of the masses in negotiations has been posed is that it has focused almost exclusively on the process of **consultation and symbolic or demonstrative actions** [original emphasis] (Tumahole, 1993).

A nationwide general strike in August (the planned culmination of the campaign) which had originally been set to last an entire week and which many militant workers had argued should be open-ended, ended up as a two-day work stayaway after leaders of the Alliance and representatives of monopoly capital reached a compromise in closed talks. While the strike and accompanying rallies and marches showed that the Alliance had the capacity to mobilise its militant mass base for specific activities, they clearly confirmed the primacy of a bounded strategic approach to mass struggle and a dominant politics of accommodation.

Nowhere was this more clearly revealed than in the aftermath of the 7 September 1992 Bisho massacre in the Ciskei homeland. Ciskei security forces (commanded by white officers from the South African Defense Force) opened fire on an Alliance march, killing 29 people (Institute for Black Research, 1993, p.107). Seething after yet another example of what they saw as the apartheid state's double agenda, Alliance supporters made calls for a complete abandonment of negotiation and de Klerk warned of a civil war. Mandela went on

national television to call for 'calm' and after talking with de Klerk - who offered to move forward on the ANC's demands surrounding hostels, political prisoners and the carrying of dangerous weapons - declared in a highly publicised newspaper interview that the ANC was 'ready to co-operate'. Mandela further warned of a country on the brink of 'disaster', where angry youth despised 'anything that relates to order' and where 'any attitudes of hostility or action which will further damage the economy' must be avoided. He apologised for 'errors committed' during the Bisho march and presented mass action as 'a peaceful form of channelling the anger of our people', reassuring doubters that 'we are not challenging here, not demanding' (*The Star*, 15 September 1992) .

Less than two weeks later, on 28 September 1992, Mandela and de Klerk signed an Accord of Understanding. The National Party government agreed on the need for an Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) to be installed within a specified time frame, to take actions to secure hostels, ban the carrying of dangerous weapons in public and free all political prisoners within ten days. In return, the ANC undertook to review its mass action campaign and re-enter multi-party talks. The government had yet again conceded little. The specifics of an IGNU would still have to be negotiated and the other undertakings had all been promised before (as it had always turned out, the promises were not kept). For its part, the Alliance leadership felt the need to offer further compromises in order to ensure the irreversibility of the negotiation process and to deliver the oft-stated need for 'peace and democracy'.

In a repetition of what had taken place in the 1960s and 1980s, the ANC NEC adopted a 'Strategic Perspectives' document that mirrored the suggestions made in a recent contribution by SACP negotiator Joe Slovo. In an article in the

African Communist (1992) entitled 'Negotiations: what room for compromise?', Slovo argued that the 'balance of forces' - in which the apartheid state was not 'a defeated enemy' and 'a revolutionary seizure of power' had not occurred - necessitated 'compromises' in order to 'create the possibility of a major positive breakthrough'. Terming the proposed scenario as one of a 'sunset clause', Slovo argued that the Alliance should agree to a time-specific power-sharing deal with de Klerk's regime (Slovo, 1992).

Although there ensued heated debate among Alliance intellectuals and activists over Slovo's proposals,¹⁰ the NEC's 'Strategic Perspectives' document (issued in late November) left no doubt that the ANC was prepared to share power with de Klerk and his Nationalist Party cronies. As an internal ANC paper stated, 'we need to be very honest with our members ... what the NEC is advocating for a transitional period is not the same as conventional majority rule' (Suttner, 1993). Nonetheless, the NEC continued to insist that even this ultimate of compromises did not fundamentally alter the historic strategic mission of the ANC. The 'Strategic Perspectives' document argued that:

The strategic perspective of the ANC is the transfer of power from the white minority regime to the people as a whole. This will usher in a new era characterised by the complete eradication of the system of apartheid, fundamental socio-economic transformation, peace and stability for all our people. The basic principle underpinning this new order is democratic majority rule (ANC, 1992c, p.348).

While much of the Alliance's mass base remained understandably confused over this latest of contradictory messages, one thing was crystal clear: the Alliance, in conjunction with capital and the apartheid state, would now be able to conclude

the oft-disrupted march to a deracialised capitalism in a 'new' South Africa offering something for everybody.

Whatever transpired in the resumed private meetings and negotiation after the ANC's offer of power sharing would now be concerned with working out specific technicalities, trying to bring on board recalcitrant parties and sidelining, if necessary, those expressing opposition. The deal had been delivered.

NOTES

¹Marx was not referring to reformism per se, but fundamental reform of existing economic and political systems.

²Other leaders of the Interim Group included UDF notables Popo Molefe, Patrick 'Terror' Lekota, and Raymond Suttner.

³See Joe Slovo, 'Has Socialism Failed', *African Communist* (2nd Quarter, 1990) pp. 25-51. In an attempt to critically assess past 'wrongs' and 'rescue' socialists and socialism, Slovo argued that Soviet-style 'socialism' lacked democracy. While Slovo's contribution rightly highlighted the lack of democracy practiced in the USSR and Eastern Europe (albeit after decades of SACP abuse for anyone daring to question the infallibility of Soviet-style 'socialism'), the practical direction it pointed to was one of further accommodation to the interests of the apartheid state and capital.

⁴Alliance allegations of a 'third force' were continually dismissed throughout the negotiation period. Although the apartheid state-appointed Harms Commission Report (late 1990) found that the apartheid state's Civil Cooperation Bureau (CCB) seemed to be behind a series of death-squad killings and other potential cases of apartheid-related violence, it was not until 1996 that conclusive 'proof' confirmed the Alliance position.

⁵"Simon" is a pseudonym. The interviewee had recently returned from exile and was, at the time, an active ANC member and resident of Soweto.

⁶Winnie Mandela had been charged (and eventually acquitted) by the state with being an accomplice to the murder of a black teenage activist named Stompie (allegedly carried out by a group of her 'bodyguards' calling themselves the 'Mandela Football Club'). The trial, which dragged on for several months, divided much of the ANC leadership and general membership and produced a highly publicised separation between Nelson and Winnie.

⁷Also see ANC Department of Economic Policy, 'Discussion Document: Nationalisation' (Cape Town: Center for Development Studies, n.d.).

⁸The author, who visited these prisoners, personally saw several of these letters.

⁹The 'Leipzig option' refers to the quasi-insurrectionary uprising that took place in Leipzig, Germany during the upheavals in the-then East Germany prior to the 'overthrow' of the 'Communist' government in the early 1990s.

¹⁰In the next issue of the *African Communist* (4th Quarter, 1992), several articles appeared that took issue with Slovo, including contributions from the late SACP stalwart Harry Gwala and ANC NEC member Pallo Jordan. There was also a great deal of expressed opposition from within the organised working class, which led to a COSATU-initiated 'Reconstruction Accord' which would bind a future government to the provision of 'basic needs' and hopefully ensure the interests of the working class. (See COSATU, 'Reconstruction Accord', 4th Draft - internal Alliance document, 1993).