

**O**N the eve of yet another session of tri-cameral politics, a glance at the political balance sheet is not out of place. A curious phenomenon immediately strikes one: the more repression has deepened, or as some would have it, the more "stability has been restored", the more "democratic talk" as opposed to democratic process, has increased. The volume of democratic rhetoric that has poured forth from government spokesmen is only matched by the extent of coercive action taken by the security establishment against those who have to participate in bringing about a democratic order. As Heunis repeatedly assures us: never before in the history of this country has there been a government more willing to talk and negotiate than the present one. This may or may not be so. What is indisputable is that never before in the history of this country have more people been detained or jailed, by the same government, and without whom no successful talks or negotiation can take place.

Within this general climate of repressive stability an extraordinary illusion of normality is being cultivated. Business goes on as usual, (some say thanks to the State of Emergency); the newspapers are delivered more or less on time (but with less news); the war in Angola has become "our war" in a quietly natural and far-away sense, but not too far away to be a fertile source of honoris cruxes and pro-patria extravaganzas.

In politics a mood of cynical resignation seems to prevail: "Things may not be good, but they are better than they would be if things were different". And, of course, the tri-cameral Parliament begins another session, infusing its

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ible", "good" blacks to come and sit on the National Statutory Council, the picture would be complete and "real negotiation" could begin.

Nothing is further from the truth. As far as the politics of negotiation is concerned, we live in highly abnormal circumstances and we are not even in the proper pre-negotiation phase of politics. What does the pre-negotiation phase entail? It involves both a mood and the practical conditions necessary for negotiation and both are closely related to one another. The mood must reflect a disposition or attitude

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