

NEGOTIATIONS --WHAT ROOM FOR COMPROMISE?

A response by Cde Sam Shilowa:

Joe Slovo's paper - NEGOTIATIONS : WHAT ROOM FOR COMPROMISE should be welcomed by all and sundry as an attempt to force discussion around issues which we have been avoiding to confront ever since the negotiations process began. Never before since the release of the ANC's constitutional guidelines have an issue arose which demands of all South Africans to help find a solution.

In setting out his perspectives on developing a theoretical frame work on this thought provoking issue , J .S has gone about it the wrong way. The central theme of his paper seems to be about compromises and in that way tries to justify the unmandated move from 66 % to 70% at CODESA 2. He seem to be actually saying : We have already made concessions to the regime on certain issues, why not go all - the hog ? Or put simply , since the table may produce a weak infant , we might as well accept the possibility of a deformed child. Lastly he seems to be arguing for carte blanche powers to the negotiators at the expense of setting up strong and viable forums for consultations. Maybe this is because he wanted to justify by stealth the so called brinkmanship by negotiators at CODESA 2 without a proper mandate from the NWC let alone the ALLIANCE and their constituencies. I think he also fails to spell out what package was available at CODESA . I actually doubt if there was a package since we are trying by all means to undo some of the agreements at working group 2 - (Interim Constitution etc.). What is needed now is not a paper on compromises, but one which focused our minds on the debate as a way of developing a strategic frame work within which to engage the regime.

The movement as a whole need to do strategic thinking around some of the following issues:

- Why are we negotiating ?
- What is the likely outcome?
- What are our negotiating positions?
- How do we increase mass participation in this process?

In the limited space that I have , I wish to attempt to deal with all the above issues taking on board in certain instances Joe Slovo's ideas.

1. Why are we negotiating?

Joe Slovo is correct to say that we are negotiating because neither side has the capacity to deliver a knock out blow through other means at this point and time. But we need to move beyond and say that we have always stated publicly that should conditions exist for a solution through a negotiated settlement we are ready to explore it. Indeed the Harare Declaration was an attempt on our side to pre - empt those who would have argued for less on our behalf. In an address on negotiations in Arusha in 1987 comrade Oliver Tambo says: " We must however make it clear that we are not interested in talking for the sake of dialogue. Any discussions must be seriously meant to end the tyrannical and murderous system of apartheid immediately."

Taking the above into consideration it is clear that:

Negotiations are not an end in themselves , but the beginning of a process towards the democratisation of our Country and to ensure that our people are geared to defend same. We are negotiating in order to set in motion the process leading towards the total transference of power from a minority regime to the people as a whole.

It is therefore inconceivable to talk about power sharing arrangements. Our demand for an Interim Government of National Unity has got nothing to do with power sharing, but is premised on the following:

- * Phase 1: This is an attempt by the broad liberation movement to ensure leveling of the playing field and to ensure free and fair elections
- * Phase 2: This again is to ensure a smooth transition while a new constitution is being negotiated /drawn in the Constituent Assembly

It therefore goes without saying that once a new constitution is agreed upon, the party that wins a majority (whatever that may be - slim or landslide) will rule the country according to the constitution. This does not exclude offering positions to other people other than ANC members based on their expertise or any other criterion as the case may be ,and such position may not even be on the cabinet. It should be premised on whether the inclusion of such a person may make a contribution that will help us shape the country in a particular direction within our own policies.