

The forthcoming elections have stirred up, at least in the white community, some excitement and quite a few unrealistic expectations. The same emotions are not exactly visible in the black townships. For the majority of South Africans these blankes alleen elections are, in many ways, profoundly besides the point.

In the UDF we see the shifts and shuffles that are happening on the white electoral front as symptomatic twinges of a deepening crisis. As symptoms they are interesting, but the real engine for democratic change is not the racist, tricameral parliament. That real engine is the mass based, extra-parliamentary struggle of millions of South Africans, black and white, organised into hundreds of democratic trade unions, civics, student, youth, women's and other progressive structures. A few more seats this way or that in the white parliament are not of central importance.

Of course, we welcome some of the shifts and shuffles as signs, at least, that more whites are coming to realise that the National Party and PW Botha are the crisis, not the solution to it. But this realisation is only a small step in what needs to be a much longer journey. It is very ~~im~~portant that we do not allow these cracks to prompt us into illusions.

All South Africans need to realise very clearly that, without certain basic requirements being met, there can be no peace in our country. In the first place, the ANC must be unbanned. Until that happens we shall not be able to even begin to make meaningful progress. Political prisoners and detainees must be released, the emergency must be lifted, and the destabilisation of our neighbouring countries ended.

The crisis in our country is, of course, not just of a security and political kind. Mass unemployment, inflation, low wages, gutter education - all of these too must be addressed urgently and democratically by the people themselves. The May 6 elections are merely a side-show in the face of the real issues of the day.

Most of the more unrealistic illusions currently floating about centre around two, often related, scenarios. The one scenario sees the shifts that are happening, particularly the arrival of the 'new' Nats, as the groundswell of a process that will produce a bloc of moderates who will take power through the tricameral

parliament, if not this May, then at least before the end of the decade. This leaves out of account a number of central questions. Among them is the fundamental issue of where the apartheid security apparatuses, that more and more control our country, fit into this happy scenario. Do they meekly abandon the commanding heights because of a moderate induced constitutional crisis in the tricameral parliament ?

The second scenario sees in the KwaNatal Indaba a formula for peace and democracy in our country. Now, we should not allow our yearning for solutions to cloud our vision. It is not just Stoffel Botha who has (temporarily and tactically) distanced himself from the Indaba. The Indaba has been fundamentally flawed from the beginning. It has been rejected by all the majority based organisations, legal and banned, political and trade union. The rejection is not based on a mechanical intransigence, but on realism. There can be no localised, piecemeal solutions as long as the minimum demands of the majority are not met.

When the UDF warned all South Africans of the dangers of proceeding with the tricameral parliament proposals, our message was dismissed in certain quarters as 'ultra-left' rhetoric. Now that the disastrous consequences of that foolhardy package are apparent, many of our former critics have come belatedly to agree with us, at least on this score.

But the KwaNatal Indaba suffers from almost identical flaws - it is still prisoner of ethnic politics, and it is piecemeal tinkering that hopes to bypass the basic, national issues, and the majority based organisations.

We need also to consider soberly the principal agent of the whole Indaba proposal - and it is here that the two scenarios I have been referring to come together.

There is, I believe, a widespread assumption in the white community, that Gatsha Buthelezi and his tribalist impis are part of the moderate camp. Only cynicism, or a colonial myopia that is complacently ignorant about what is happening on the other side of the tracks, here in the black townships, could classify Buthelezi and ^{his} vigilante forces, trained, armed and directed by

Pretoria, as moderates.

If we are trying to place the Buthelezi phenomenon on the political spectrum, then the right-wing death squads of El Salvador and Argentina, a few years back, are the appropriate analogy. ~~Any~~ Real moderates, committed to a democratic, peaceful South Africa must have no illusions on this score. Otherwise they are playing with a Frankenstein.

There is another election related issue about which we in the UDF feel it is urgent to speak. Whether by design, or by chance, the white election will be happening just a few days after one of the major dates on the popular calendar - May 1.

By general consensus the NP is fighting these elections on a politically bankrupt platform. The one issue they will endlessly emphasise (PW Botha has recently confirmed it) is the supposed 'total onslaught'. In other words, all that the NP has left is its old tactic, terrify the whites into submissive acceptance.

We have already seen the hysteria the regime hoped to provoke on the occasion of major popular dates last year - in particular, June 16 and December 16. In the circumstances, we fully expect a large campaign of disinformation this year, as May approaches. We do not rule out security gimmicks of all kinds, bogus pamphlets, the 'uncovering' of arms caches, the 'revelation' of blood-curdling revolutionary plots, and, of course, wide-scale detentions.

We call on South Africans, particularly our white compatriots who will be the the main targets for this disinformation, not to be gulled by such cynical manipulation.

For our part, we in the UDF will be campaigning actively in this period. Amongst other things, we will be calling on all whites to stand by the majority. We are encouraged by the growing number of whites who are actively involving themselves in a range of democratic organisations, among them UDF area committees, anti-detention groups, the Black Sash and a range of professional organisations. It is in this direction that we will lay down the foundations for a future, non-racial, united South Africa - irrespective of what the arithmetic says on May 6.