

John Pale Matshabe

Box 32409 Lusaka
9 July 1986

Dear John

Your letter of 26 May reached me only ^ttoday, perhaps because Ray and I were out of the country for the whole of June, returning only on the 30th. The letter may have been included in the pile of accumulated mail which I have been sorting out and disposing of in the last few days

I hope you won't carry out the threat to make this the last letter you write to me. I like your contribution to our debate and would not want it to end merely because we disagree on some issues. I'd rather we continued to write to each other, even if only now & then

Actually I find little in your letter that is contrary to my own opinion. I agree that ~~the~~ ANC was formed to liberate Africans. The founding fathers never realised that the historical aim of ANC would be the liberation of all S.Africans, white as well as black. This reality has sunk into our consciousness only recently, and undoubtedly influenced the vote on the 'open door' resolution at the Conference in June 1985

Both the reality and the realisation stem from the nature of the social forces involved in the revolution, the conflict between the old order of the racists and the demand of the majority for political power. The cleavage is not confined to the major contestants but cuts across the colour line. I don't need to tell you that black mercenaries as well as tribal chiefs are enrolled on the side of the racists while whites, to a significant extent, ~~from~~ thrown in their lot with the revolution. As it spreads, the cleavage will become one between class and class, rather than a simple division along lines of race or colour

At the more advanced stage, the socialist objectives will become apparent and plausible. As you point out, neither the ANC nor the PC envisages a socialist revolution, whereas the Party's declared aim since its formation 65 years ago is precisely that. There are radicals who challenge the notion that the revolution should pass through "stages"; they argue that the working class is big and militant enough to embark on a struggle for socialism now, or at least launch an attack on capitalism.

You are familiar with the history of the big debate on the "Black Republic", conducted in the 1926-30 period, and the decision of the CP to put its weight behind the struggle for national liberation, while continuing to spread the message of socialism as part of its daily work. The two objectives were seen as inseparable - and they continue to be so. We reject the ultra-radical view because it seeks to beat the gun

The decision to back Black majority rule was therefore taken 60 years ago in 1928 and in course of time gave rise to the question: what is to be done with the "minorities"? These are the 'non African' national groups; some people however argue that the African traditional communities also fall in this category. You pose the question: who & what are the minorities? The proper question however is do they need protection & if so how should the black majority protect them?

I too agree with Slabbert if he actually said that whites should look for security in an alliance with the the revolution & its leadership the ANC. As the struggle intensified, increasing numbers of whites will join our ranks, as La Guma predicted 60 years ago. Signs of this shift among whites can be detected now - in the English universities, organisations like Black Sash, some Afrikaner intellectuals, among the clergy & even businessmen. You accuse the ANC of being "apologetic" with regard to attacks by MK on whites, the so-called "soft targets". The important thing to note however is that the attacks continue & will persist until victory has been won. Your own contribution to the debate did not pass unnoticed, but by circulating your views outside official structures you made some people suspicious of your ultimate aims. However, we have discussed this at some length previously & should let the matter rest until events unfold.

Our declared strategy is to combine political struggle with armed revolt, and make the political factor ~~ix~~ the main one. This approach has succeeded beyond expectations by exposing the hypocrisy of Botha's claim to abolish apartheid & arousing a great volume of protest at home and abroad. The movement would certainly step up the level of its military offensive but is meeting with physical obstacles, as you well know, such as the Nkomati Accord, the Lesotho coup, the Swaziland conspiracy with Pretoria, and Botswana's decision to expel us. We have no base from which to operate outside the country, & must create one within. I can't detect any difference between your approach on this score and the aims of the leadership.

You correctly accuse the racists of holding Africans in contempt, but I doubt whether this traditional view persists. It is a matter of great satisfaction to all revolutionaries that Africans in large numbers have died for our cause, & that many more are willing to risk lives & freedom. It is for this reason that the enemy proclaims a state of emergency for an indefinite period & rules under the protection of martial law. Without this demonstration the racists would have gone on ruling in the old way for ever.

You fail to note however the response among ultra-racists like Treurnich^t-Terblanche to the revolutionary upsurge. They are an important and perhaps decisive factor at the present stage. Botha is more concerned at the moment to appease them than come to terms with the revolution. The raids conducted on May 19 on FL states were probably meant to appease the ultras, for whose sake Botha put an end to the discussions with the Commonwealth group of intermediaries. It is on the cards that SA will experience a military take over engineered by the Treurnich-Terblanche gang as a way of putting an end to Botha's parliamentary concessions.

These are our immediate concerns. Our policy is to mobilise the widest strata of the population to resist the racist-fascist menace. It is not fanciful to compare our situation with that of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and February 1917. When we have defeated the fascists and established the gains of the national democratic revolution we shall be able to advance towards our October Revolution.

So much for now. I've dealt with most of the points you raised. If not to your satisfaction, sufficiently so I hope for further "dialogue".

Keep well, old fighter for freedom
& continue the struggle

Jack Simons