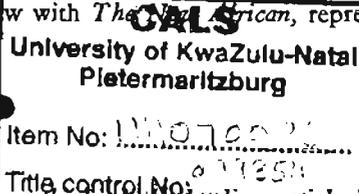


## "Reassessing the Boycott"

The New African's  
plea is discussed by  
BARNEY DESAI



THE AUGUST *New African* questioned the continued use of the boycott weapon against the South African regime. The whole question of techniques of struggle against racial domination in South Africa is being urgently canvassed among representatives and members of liberatory organisations, at home and in exile. In the course of this discussion, much controversy has been stirred up by reports of press conferences held in Scandinavia by Mr. Barney Desai, President of the South African Coloured People's Congress. Mr. Desai discussed his views in an interview with *The New African*, represented by Mr. Bennie Bunsee.



BUNSEE: Mr. Desai, what did you think of the leading article in the August issue of *The New African*?

DESAI: I am happy that *The New African* has taken the lead in raising the question of new forms of international action against South Africa, particularly in view of the massive obstruction of vested interests to any form of sanctions through the United Nations. We also have to accept the inability of solidarity movements outside South Africa to mount an effective consumer boycott. And it is not so much really a question of a new approach as it is of a re-statement emphasising what liberation movements in South Africa have committed themselves to, namely an armed revolution. To the most casual observer of the South African political scene it is apparent that it is only a matter of time before the climax of civil war is reached. The duty of anti-racialists, it would seem to me, would be to make the people, especially in the European countries and America, realise that the oppressed people in South Africa have a historical right to wage struggle by whatever means are available. Western, indeed, World, history records armed clashes between feudal lords, tyrannical kings, fascist dictators and the people. South Africa is no exception.

BUNSEE: You have been accused of overstating your case in your Scandinavian press conferences. Do you think this is a fair accusation?

DESAI: No. Most certainly not. I tried—I believe successfully—to prepare public opinion in Scandinavia to face the objective realities confronting my people. We have seen the reactions of informed Western opinion to the Congo crisis. We have seen how the leaders of the Congo and the Congolese people were portrayed as barbarians, totally incapable of running an ordered State. Who can forget how Western news agencies were pouring out stories of the rape of nuns, massacres of white children, shooting of priests, etc., etc. I firmly believe that the South African propaganda apparatus will not refrain from portraying the oppressed in our country in the same way. The people of Scandinavia—whom I must commend for their sincerity—wholly appreciated this point. Only last week I received news that the Stockholm Committee on South Africa, led by the Rev. Gunnar Helander, had declared that they would support a revolution in South Africa irrespective of the

means adopted. The Danish Anti-Apartheid Committee have already issued a statement calling for money for the purchase of arms for South Africa's liberatory struggle.

BUNSEE: Under the circumstances prevailing in the West what do you think can be done?

DESAI: Firstly the anti-racialist and democrat must squash the idea, once and for all, that the liberatory organisations of the Black people of South Africa are out to destroy the entire white population, or drive them into the sea, in the course of an armed struggle. Some people in trying to blackmail the West into applying economic sanctions present our struggle as an alternative between equal rights for the oppressed and doom for the white man. This is just not so. To perpetuate this line, however well meaning, is to agree with Verwoerd that he is fighting for the very survival of the white nation.

There is another very important point. Observers in the West agree that across a broad strata of the white people in the West, there is to be found a residue of racialism, a hangover from colonial days. Because of the danger that this can lead to sympathy with the white man against the black man's democratic struggle, a sensible analysis of the South African situation must be constantly presented to forestall this. By sensible I mean that the struggle in South Africa must be presented as a struggle of the rich against the poor, the dispossessed against the usurpers, and not at any time as a racial war. During the time of the Congo crisis the Western imperialists saw fit at one stage to manufacture scare stories of white people being held as hostages. Here vested interests were deliberately stirring up racialism. This could happen with the South African situation, and we must prepare against this now.

BUNSEE: We have discussed external requirements. What do you think can be done to prepare the people of South Africa—both black and white—for this next phase of the struggle?

DESAI: This is a matter that primarily concerns those organisations that have made a commitment to armed struggle. My organisation has not and therefore I cannot answer this question. I would, however, as regards the outside world, caution those who believe that whites in South Africa can be converted by anti-apartheid literature being sent to them. People do not give up their privileges because somebody reads them a sermon.

BUNSEE: What do you think that intellectuals can do, through media like *The New African* to further the cause facing the world with this new certainty of violence in South Africa?

DESAI: The intellectuals must open their minds to the world now. For far too long the question of violence has been discussed behind closed doors in hushed voices. They must come out now in defence of a people's right to win its freedom by whatever means it thinks best. There is no need to be apologetic about such a situation either, it must be stated forthrightly. The world must also get a clear statement from the organisations that have committed themselves to armed revolution on the implications of this decision. Is it to be total war with radical change in mind, or will we have an ambivalent situation where the freedom fighter has a rifle in one hand and an olive twig in the other?

BUNSEE: Do you favour the formation of a new United Front of the various South African liberatory organisations?

DESAI: This is crucial. Unity is essential. But if it is to be effective in struggle it must not be a loose ad-hoc committee type of unity. Unity must be based upon principles. Basic objectives must be clearly outlined—and if agreements are reached a Supreme Council should be invested with authority to conduct the fight for freedom. A beginning can be made by clamping down on public outbursts against leading personnel and leaders, and respecting the integrity, sincerity and independence of liberatory organisations operating in the South African milieu.