

Congress Militant

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Paper of the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC

STAND FIRM BY ULTIMATUM!

The Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC firmly supports the ultimatum issued by the National Executive Committee to the government.

There is nothing unreasonable in the demands made. In fact they fall short of what the majority of black people regard as reasonable.

The screams of horror from the government, the capitalists and their press only reveal their cynicism towards the people. They fully expect the ANC to negotiate while from their side a counter-revolutionary offensive has been going on.

The state and Inkatha have taken advantage of compromises made by the ANC leaders to step up their attacks on the black working class, designed to divide and weaken the oppressed majority. A bold reply was long overdue.

Since the ANC leadership called a halt to the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the regime, the self-confidence of the exploiters and oppressors has returned. With smug self-satisfaction they once again regard their power as legitimate, and any challenge to their authority as a crime.

They say the ANC

ultimatum threatens "peace". What peace has there been for the people of the townships? Since 2 February 1990, nearly 3000 have been killed in planned attacks on the Congress-supporting working class in Natal and the Transvaal.

In exchange for every concession made by the ANC leadership, our enemies have replied with a new attack. Inkatha's terror campaign in the Transvaal began soon after the signing of the Pretoria Minute, in which the ANC agreed to suspend 'armed struggle'.

Since then Inkatha, supported by the SAP, ZP and SADF, has launched hundreds of attacks on our communities. The AWB and ultra-right organisations are allowed to carry arms. Inkatha vigilantes are authorised to carry weapons. But when workers and youth arm themselves for defence they are first disarmed by the SAP and SADF -- and then attacked mercilessly.

Police massacres of demonstrators also continue.

Taking advantage of the calling off of the Soweto rent and service-charge boycott, the authorities have cut electricity and water supplies to many townships in an attempt to break the resistance struggle against the puppet councils.

Meanwhile, in the recession, tens of thousands of workers are being retrenched -- and bosses arrogantly tell workers to "go and see Mandela" if they want a better job.

No wonder callers to the Sowetan/ Radio Metro talk show said the negotiations were "not worth saving".

A most welcome aspect of the NEC's open letter is its clear identification of Inkatha as the main organising agent of the violence, and as a tool of the state.

It highlights the vicious role of the KwaZulu police, commanded by Gatsha Buthelezi, in supporting attacks by armed groups. There can be no compromise on the people's demand for the disbanding of the ZP, along with the KwaZulu and all other bantustan authorities.

It should now be recognised that the attempts to dignify

Inkatha as an "organisation of the oppressed" were a mistake, and that the Congress movement should be mobilised to defeat Inkatha completely.

The capitalist press ridicules as "impossible" the ANC's demand for the dismissal of Malan and Vlok, the ministers directly responsible for the crimes of the SADF and SAP.

If even this demand is impossible, then it means that the government cannot begin to concede peacefully the real democratic changes demanded by the black majority.

De Klerk and the ruling class are prepared to draw the ANC leadership into joint responsibility with them for the government of South Africa. But they are not prepared to concede real power, which would allow the masses to enforce their demands.

We must hold firm to the demand for the dismissal of Malan and Vlok. If it is conceded it will embolden the oppressed people to fight harder for bigger changes. If it is refused, it will highlight for the masses the refusal of the government to concede power. Either way, it will

lead towards revolutionary consequences.

Of course a mere change of the commanders of the state is not enough. Dismantling of the repressive apparatus of the state and its replacement by a state of the armed people is what is necessary for real freedom and democracy.

We call on comrade Mandela and the ANC leadership to resist calls to retreat from the demands in the ultimatum.

If the demands are not met by the May 9 deadline, and if the regime continues to reject our demand for a democratically elected Constituent Assembly, then the negotiations should be called off.

On 2 July last year, three million workers country-wide supported the stayaway against Inkatha, in solidarity with workers and youth in Natal. The working class is ready to respond now, if a clear lead is given for serious action.

We call on the leadership to immediately back up the ultimatum with a programme of mass action, which mobilises to the full the industrial working class, and includes the arming of defence committees.

Back it with mass action!

1.0 Since the outbreak of violence that began in Natal, the country has witnessed a scale of bloodletting hitherto unknown. Estimates provided by agencies who have been monitoring the situation place the numbers of those who have lost their lives in excess of 5 000.

Since the signing of the accord between the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party on January 29 1991, the scale of violence has not diminished. On the contrary, it has assumed a more organised and systematic character. In many parts of Natal the violence has taken on a random character, to an extent that it can be regarded as directed against the community itself.

Death and the destruction of homes and property on such a scale would be considered a national disaster in any sane society. The scale of the human tragedy alone provides sufficient motivation for us to address you with our grave concerns.

1.1 Throughout the period in question there have been clearly discernible patterns in this unfolding violence that indicates disturbing features which by now should have been noted and be preoccupying the attentions of the authorities. We are, like many others, alarmed at the degree of inaction on the part of the authorities.

1.2 In almost every instance of violence that has erupted on the Reef, for example, the following patterns have emerged. A group of individuals, drawn from a specific area of the country, sharing a common language and publicly identifying themselves with a specific political party, have established control over a migrant labourers' hostel through acts of intimidation.

Those who would not submit to such pressure are subsequently driven out of the hostel. These individuals constitute themselves into a group, with insignia for common identification (usually a red head band). Supported by others of like purpose, bussed in from other areas, they then stage a provocative armed demonstration through the township, escorted by the police.

1.3 Without exception, the townships that have suffered armed demonstration did not previously have any visible presence of the Inkatha Freedom Party. In all the cases in question the majority of participants in such demonstrations have been bussed in from other localities. Instances when the police have averted attacks or deterred the perpetrators of such attacks are extremely rare. Even among cases where the assailants have been identified, the number of

Open letter to State President de Klerk and his Cabinet from the National Executive Committee of the ANC

them who have been arrested or charged is derisory.

1.4 In at least five separate incidents, all of which occurred on the Reef during the past nine months, armed gangs of men have launched well organised and co-ordinated attacks against commuters on the trains between the townships and Johannesburg city centre; on the homes of bereaved families during funeral vigils; and on selected hostels. Those responsible for these actions are distinguished by their remarkable capacity to evade detection by the police and other security services. In each of these instances the authorities were advised well in advance to take precautionary measures but they failed to do so.

1.5 Since July 22 1990, on at least three separate occasions when the authorities were summoned to assist or to avert violence, they have themselves committed acts of violence that have re-

sulted in death. A case in point is that of Sebokeng on September 3 1990.

Thirty-eight people had been killed in a pre-dawn attack on a hostel in Sebokeng. A judicial inquiry subsequently found that members of the South African Defence Force, who had been called to the scene to contain a potentially explosive situation, opened fire on a crowd, killing four persons and inflicting grave injuries on several others.

An equally disturbing case is that which occurred in Daveyton, Benoni, on March 24 1991. The known facts indicate that after a large number of persons were bussed into Daveyton, a provocative armed demonstration was staged from the hostels to a nearby stadium to hold a rally. The police had been advised of the probability of violence by township residents and were patrolling the streets. A group of residents, concerned because of the armed demonstration, assembled on an open space to discuss their response. The police opened fire on this

group in an unprovoked attack, causing the deaths of at least 12 persons.

1.6 Every effort had been made by the local civic association to gain the co-operation of the police. An agreement had even been reached that no armed demonstration will be permitted and that those bearing any weapons would be disarmed. The police did not honour this agreement and permitted an armed demonstration. And rather than building on the spirit of trust, established through previous negotiations, fired on an unoffending crowd. A number of those injured in this incident have subsequently been arrested, some taken from their hospital beds, and are in detention.

The police have made counter-claims to the effect that they were under attack. Based on previous experience, we have no reason to place confidence in these

claims.

An alarming feature of the violence is the role being played by the KwaZulu police in support of armed groups in launching attacks on specific areas. In January 1991, a large contingent of armed men, reinforced by the KwaZulu police, invaded the Ndwendwe area of Osindweni and made off with 30 head of cattle.

1.7 There has been a startling increase in the use of automatic weapons, assault rifles and other firearms on the Reef since September 1990. Despite repeated efforts on the part of ANC, civics and other democratic bodies to assist the police and other Government intelligence services with information pertaining to these arms and the trade in arms, not a single arrest has been made and not a single arms cache uncovered, nor has the supply line been interrupted. The apparent incapacity of the South African authorities in this regard beggars description.

2.0 It is evident from our observation and that of others that the peaks in these waves of violence coincide uncannily with ANC-launched campaigns and with mass campaigns launched by other elements of the democratic movement.

Recent pronouncements by a political figure serving in the anti-democratic and unpopular structures foisted on the African urban population by Government indicate that it is their intention to resist expressions of opposition to these bodies by a resort to armed intimidation and violence. Direct links between such expressed intentions and the acts of violence that have occurred have been drawn by this same individual. The concerted effort to draw councillors into the ranks of the Inkatha Freedom Party with the promise that it will protect them against mass pressure also suggests the intention of using violence to ward off demands that councillors resign.

It is the considered opinion of the ANC that it is inconceivable that the authorities lack the capacity or the skill to prevent the violent deeds we have enumerated. We suspect that, at best, the feeble response on the part of the State betrays an absence of will to take measures to avert violence, detect and bring the guilty parties to justice, because the perpetrators of this violence are providing a line of defence for Government institutions that would otherwise have been rendered dysfunctional.

2.1 Since the outbreak of this current cycle of violence there has been an avalanche of charges of police partiality, connivance and complicity in acts of violence. Apart from shrill denials from the relevant ministry, no adequate explanation has been forthcoming regarding the acts or omissions of the authorities.

It is evident that the killings, maimings and beating that have occurred have greatly inflamed feelings of ethnic antagonism among various sections of the African people; have distracted public attention

from the root causes of poverty, hunger, deprivation and want in our country; and have rendered it more difficult to achieve united action among the African people for generally accepted and commendable goals.

Those responsible for fomenting this violence have the clear intention of sowing divisions and stoking up a psychosis of fear, insecurity and mutual distrust among the African people. At the same time, they hope to prey on the worst fears and prejudices of our white compatriots and thus make them more apprehensive about a democratic transformation.

We are persuaded that the Government's evident reluctance to act with expedition and vigour against the instigators of this violence betrays a hope that their actions will rebound to the Government's favour in the short and interme-

diate term.

2.2 The impact of this cycle of violence is that it has raised the costs/risks entailed in being a member of or of being identified with the ANC and its allies. In certain cities and rural areas it has resulted in "no go areas" from which ANC members, activities and symbols are excluded, not by the law, but by gangs of hoodlums and vigilantes. This is designed to weaken the credibility of the ANC, limit its scope for growth and disintegrate its new legal structures.

This has proved a far more effective means of political repression than the legal measures previously employed by the State to crush the democratic opposition. Its aim is to inflate the image of the Inkatha Freedom Party from that of a minor to the rank of the third major player on the political arena.

2.3 The ANC is of the view that the Government's equivocal attitude to the cycle of violence reflects either an attitude of cynical irresponsibility or is evidence of connivance at acts of or-

ganised terror in the hope that they will succeed in destroying or seriously crippling the ANC.

The Government's inaction calls into serious question its true intentions and sincerity regarding the entire peace process and the democratisation of South Africa. In view of this the ANC demands:

- That the Government take legislative measures during the current session of Parliament to outlaw the carrying of weapons, traditional or otherwise, at public assemblies.
- The dismissal of Ministers Adriaan Vlok and General Magnus Malan from public office and the rustication of all the officers of the SADF and SAP who bear direct responsibility for the setting up, management, the crimes and misdemeanours of the CCB and other hit squads.
- The visible, public dismantling and disarming of all special counter-insurgency units such as the Askaris, Battalion 32, the CCB, Koevoet, the Z Squad etc and the establishment of a multiparty commission to oversee this process.
- The immediate suspension from duty of all police officers and constables who were implicated in the massacres at Sebokeng on March 22 1990 and the commencement of legal proceedings against them; the immediate suspension from duty of all the police officers and constables responsible for the shootings in Daveyton, Benoni, on March 24 1991, pending a commission of inquiry into that incident.
- Satisfactory assurance that in future the SAP, SADF and other security organs will employ acceptable and civilised methods of crowd control; and that the issuance of live ammunition to the police on such occasions be disallowed.

- Effective steps are taken to begin the process of phasing out the hostels and other labour compounds and transforming them into family units and single-occupancy flats.
- The establishment of an independent commission of inquiry to receive, investigate and report on all complaints of misconduct by the police and other security services.

2.4 If by May 4 1991 these demands have not been made the ANC shall:

- (a) Suspend any further discussions with the Government on the All Party Congress; and
- (b) Suspend all exchanges with the Government on the future constitution of our country.

April 5 1991
Annexure: Roster of Significant Incidents of Police Inaction. □

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