

real hope in decades that the country could be on the road to dismantling *apartheid*. In October 1989, the ANC held its first public rally in South Africa in three decades, and in February 1990, the new Government committed itself to an approach fundamentally different from that of de Klerk's adamant predecessor, P.W. Botha. The Government unbanned the ANC, the PAC and other political organizations and weeks later released the leader of the African National Congress, Nelson Mandela.

In a landmark speech to Parliament, de Klerk implicitly acknowledged that international pressure plays a critical role in strategic thinking within the Nationalist Party. "Without contact and cooperation with the rest of the world," he stated, "we cannot promote the well-being and security of our citizens." Without divulging particulars, he stated the intention of the Government to commence negotiations for a new constitution acceptable to the majority. In June, the Government lifted the State of Emergency in all areas except Natal, and in August 1990 the way was cleared for full-scale negotiations with agreement on the release of political prisoners, and an ANC announcement that it would suspend the armed struggle.

Despite considerable optimism, the good faith of the Government is still not proven in the eyes of the black community. There remain deep suspicions because of the failed "reformist" rhetoric of previous governments, and a concern that the proposed changes are intended to favour black political participation, but only on terms which do not threaten white control. It is feared that the Government will seek to repeal discriminatory legislation, but entrench economic and social inequalities through special protection of white rights. The living standards of professional and skilled blacks in urban areas would improve, but the conditions of the urban and rural masses be left unchanged.

## NEGOTIATIONS AND SANCTIONS

Faced with the radical change in the political environment within South Africa, and the expectation of full-scale negotiations between the ANC and Government commencing later this year, the sanctions debate has been transformed. Sanctions have played an indispensable role in bringing Pretoria to the negotiation table, but do they have a continuing relevance to change in South Africa?

The formula for the lifting of sanctions which has broadest support internationally is that devised by Commonwealth leaders — Britain excepted — to maintain sanctions until it is clear that progress to dismantle *apartheid* is "irreversible". The strength of this definition is the flexibility it permits in deciding the moment at which the rolling back of pressure should commence. In practice, it leaves the initiative with the ANC which commands the support of the majority of black South Africans, and particularly with Mandela, who still has the greatest moral authority to "certify" this point of no return. Nevertheless, there is still debate within

the ANC on timing; some have stated that sanctions should only be lifted on the formal adoption of a new constitution, others the convening a constituent assembly which would agree a new constitution.

In addressing this issue the ANC will need to balance three crucially interrelated problems.

Firstly, timing will partly condition the prospects of a free South Africa. A new government will have to address the accumulated problems of decades of deprivation and exploitation and an economy in crisis. Prolonging the economic costs of sanctions longer than necessary will further constrain economic and social reconstruction. A turnaround in business confidence will not be rapid. The *Financial Times of London* confirmed after Mandela's release that international business was looking for more changes before being convinced that South Africa was a stable market for new investment.

Secondly, there is already pressure in the West to signal a change in policy towards South Africa. The South African Government has pointed to the fact that it has already met conditions set in the Commonwealth Nassua declaration in 1987, and the CAA Act in the US, without any remission in pressure. For some time, the British Government had been seeking to make the release of Mandela the litmus test of change, and the key condition for the lifting of sanctions. Thus in February, following Mandela's release, Britain unilaterally lifted two EC "voluntary" bans on new investment and scientific contacts. Several other European countries, including Portugal and France, were reported to be contemplating similar responses. Most Western countries, and several African and former East Bloc countries, have effectively resumed high level political and diplomatic contacts with the South African Government.

In his triumphant tour to Western Europe and North America in June, Mr. Mandela succeeded in stopping any rapid decompression of sanctions. He pointed out that while the actions of the new South African Government have been impressive, the object of sanctions is the abolition of *apartheid*, not the establishment of political dialogue, and that *apartheid* remains in place.

Nevertheless, the formal ANC position that all sanctions should be maintained will come under increasing pressure as negotiations proceed. The prospect is that if this line is held unconditionally, there could be a disorderly scramble to remove sanctions over which the ANC has little control.

Thirdly, the ANC will have to decide how to use sanctions as a bargaining tool. Its international influence outweighs that of Pretoria. The promise of the lifting of sanctions — or the possibility of intensification — remains a significant bargaining counter.

The relevance of sanctions as a constructive force for change diminishes at the extremes of progress or regression. Thus, should talks go well and quickly, the parties can be expected to include the removal of sanctions within their own timetable. On the other hand,

