

For security reasons, the ANC delegation cannot live in the dilapidated townships or even visit the winding lanes that they pass with expressions of horror. But the greying gerontocracy of the ANC in impeccable business suits and Gucci watches, with two token women included, must find themselves as alien in the cesspool of Khayelitsha as the white designers of this alternative to influx control. The ANC image is modelled on white expectations, not on the aspirations of the Lumpenproletariat. "Statesman-like," they must impress the oppressors that they are no longer the "terrorists" they were made out to be. As one commentator wryly noted: "The oppressors and terrorists have overnight begun to represent the centre of South African politics."

THE FAST PACE OF THIS POLITICAL METAMORPHOSIS HAS NOT YET ALLOWED its implications to be realized by those likely to be left out of the new alliance. Even the downtrodden borrow from the glory of their leaders being accepted in the halls of power. But the sensible trend of reconciliation means disaster looming under the surface: the closer the ex-prisoners get to their jailers, the further they move from their own powerbase. Gaining political power under South African circumstances means losing support at the same time. By restricting political education and suppressing organization for liberation for decades, the *apartheid* regime has laid the seeds for destroying even its liberators. "The Nats and the ANC are rapidly deligitimating each other by rubbing elbows," exaggerates American sociologist Pierre van den Berghe, who nonetheless senses the potential danger of the enlarged middle ground shrinking again under the *toenadering* – the Afrikaans word for rapprochement.

The random violence in Natal and elsewhere gives a foretaste of the potential anarchy ready to emerge if the rational chartist project of non-racialism fails. How often can Mandela afford to be ignored when he calls for arms to be thrown into the sea? This is the inevitable revenge of the bitter South African history, regardless of the noble intents to repress it. Are the actors for the oppressed aware of this dialectic? Or have they also become blinded by the taste of power in the shadow of the magic Table Mountain?

IF A PROFESSIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS AGENCY HAD BEEN ASKED BY THE South African government to design a campaign to discredit the ANC, it could not have conceived a better script. Yet the government and the ANC now need each other. Neither can afford to weaken a moderate partner for fear of extremist rivals taking over and South Africa falling apart in a murderous civil war. The indefatigable Pik Botha is reported to have pressed the emerging partnership ideology on his ANC dinner partner with the analogy: "We are all in one boat, and the sharks to the left and sharks to the right are not going to distinguish between us when we fall over." Mandela ominously speaks of the NP and the ANC as the "major actors" and "senior partners," relegating the junior rivals to the other side of the table – opposed to ANC hegemony.

The leader of a past Stalinist party, as Mandela's right-hand man, obsesses white South Africa. In fact, dedicated, bright SACP members occupy most of the influential positions in the ANC and the unions as a separate vanguard underground. To reveal its secret membership, as would be normal under democratic conditions, could embarrass the SACP. It would show its dominance in the ANC and vindicate government propaganda.

What white South Africa has not yet understood, is the recent development that turned rhetorical Stalinist ideologues into the more prag-

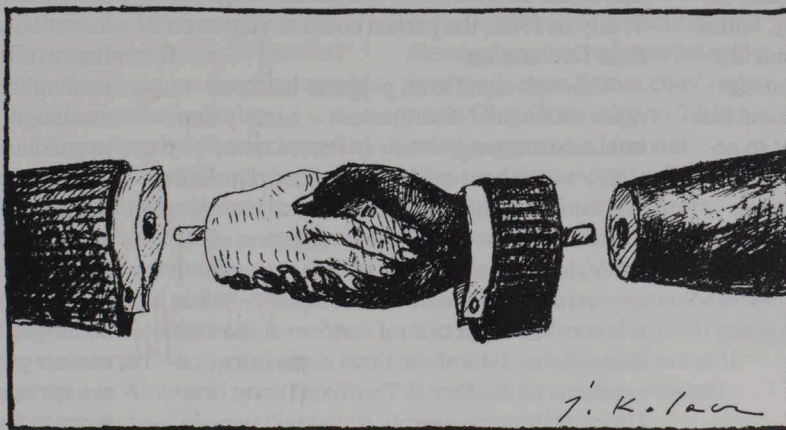
matic and moderate force in the ANC. With a disintegrating Soviet bloc seeking peace and investments instead of world revolution, South African communists have nowhere else to go than home. This makes them unexpected allies of Pretoria's negotiation project. The SACP's professed socialism in the second stage, after democracy has been achieved, depends, in SACP leader Joe Slovo's words, on the "class forces in play" at that time. In practical terms, this puts socialism on ice: once non-racial capitalism delivers the goods, relatively colour-blind, Marxist socialist parties shrink or turn into social democrats, as has been demonstrated the world over.

Because of its past radical image, the SACP leadership can entice a sceptical youth into the negotiation process. From this perspective the government should welcome the red flags rather than fear them. If anyone can prevent a latent counter-racism and make a rational colour-blind attitude prevail, it is the internationalist universalism of traditional Marxists. That is the historical merit of South African communists, their undemocratic Stalinism notwithstanding.

Meanwhile, new stories about past clandestine police atrocities daily strain the imagination of thriller readers. They have difficulties in distinguishing between reality in the *Cape Times* and fiction in the library. It would seem important that an amnesty not preempt the period of revelations. Determining the truth is essential for the nature of the new society whose moral foundations rest on an appropriate historical consciousness. The phase of revelations does not aim at establishing criminal liability of individual perpetrators, but political and administrative liability that allowed and encouraged the crimes in the first place. If the new order is to be qualitatively different from the old one, it would have to alter those institutional frameworks rather than appropriate them under new management. That was the error Zimbabwe made – simply continuing with the emergency legislation of its predecessor.

WE STILL LACK AN ADEQUATE EXPLANATION OF WHY THE LEADERS OF THE victims of apartheid humiliation can so easily forget that the future is always a prisoner of the past. Perhaps the key to the puzzle why they do not show bitterness and preach revenge lies in their secure identity. The ANC's Barbara Masekala, who has spent most of her exile in the US, has highlighted a crucial difference: "The apartheid regime has not been able to deprive us of our culture, our language and our heritage, which is quite different from the position of black Americans, who have actually been deprived of their African culture." For this reason, she concludes, "the average black South African is not alienated" and South Africa lacks the US racial polarization.

In other words, South African blacks have been subjugated but not conquered spiritually. They can relate to their oppressors as equals. With his demeanour and discourse, Mandela displays a pride and self confidence that equals his oppressors. He even learned their despised language – but not to gain entry as a colonized subject. Black Consciousness, as a sense of identity that has rid itself of the inferiority complex of an internalized slave mentality, has only reaffirmed a genuine non-racialism among black activists of all political strategies. There is no counter-racism among blacks. It is this universalism which transcends narrow group thinking, that the South African government has experienced for the first time. It was a precondition for the remarkable moderation. □



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