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# DEMOCRACY



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SELL-OUT, OR THE CULMINATING MOMENT?  
TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OF THE TRANSITION

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AFRICANA

# **SELL-OUT, OR THE CULMINATING MOMENT? TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OF THE TRANSITION**

by Jeremy Cronin

An old man from Kathlehong: "I thought we are to inherit the new South Africa - all of us, including we the illiterate blacks and these stupid boers at these factories in Alberton. But none of us understands the debates." (April 1992, referring to the CODESA negotiations).

A SASCO student: "At the national political level, the advent of the negotiations has seen a continuous marginalisation of the masses of our people. Instead of playing a central role in shaping the direction the struggle takes in the era of negotiations, the masses found themselves sidelined." (from an unpublished discussion document, May 1994).

Mac Maharaj, leading ANC negotiator and now Minister of Transport: "We are on the threshold of achieving our lifetime's objectives...We have put national unity and reconciliation on the forefront of the first government...Those achievements are what the people wanted and what the people gave their lives for." (The Star, 1 May 1994).

Since May 1990 the ANC-led liberation movement has been engaged in a protracted transition process in which April's elections were a decisive moment, but only a moment. In the first 25 months of the negotiation process, if one begins with the May 1990 ANC-De Klerk government meeting at Groote Schuur, the liberation movement drifted strategically, tactically and organisationally (see Cronin 1992). Some of this drift was due to a deliberate, double agenda strategy from the incumbent regime. It was negotiating with the ANC, but it was simultaneously destabilising it. But the drift was also due to internal difficulties, the complex process of forging some kind of unity out of an ANC emerging from jail, the underground, an often distant and lengthy exile, and from the mass struggles of the 1970s and 80s. There

were disjunctures in age and in political culture. Some had been soldiers or diplomats for decades, others had been the core cadreship of social movements. Although the fault-lines of this diversity are still visible within the ANC, from around mid-1992 the movement has, in fact, done relatively well - negotiation-wise, election-wise, and in terms of developing a fairly coherent Reconstruction and Development Programme - which, of course, remains to be implemented.

This relative success has been forged, sometimes with the aid of, but often in despite of the dominant and popular paradigm within which the movement's leadership, some tens of thousands of activist cadres and a wider popular support base have, traditionally, thought about change. The success has also been won by means judged impossible (or is it impermissible?) by the now globally ubiquitous paradigm, the neo-liberal "transition to democracy" model.

To some extent, practice has outpaced broader strategic thinking. There are plenty of lonely paradigmatic categories out there. Some activists still parade them ceremoniously, but without the ring of conviction. Others have dumped the old categories, but in an unresolved way as they plunge into ad hoc politics. I believe that this dual situation, relative success in the midst of a relative failure of the grand narratives, partially accounts for the current activist mood - both euphoric, and profoundly sceptical (the conflicting Mahara) and SASCO quotes in the epigraphs above are fairly representative).

The challenge is to find better ways of conceptualising the process in which we are involved, and thereby to sharpen our sense of strategic purpose.

### Transition to democracy

One way of conceptualising our situation is in terms of the neo-liberal "transition to democracy" paradigm (see, inter alia,

O'Donnel et al. 1986, Huntington 1993, Adam & Moodley 1993, Du Toit 1990, and Van Zyl Slabbert 1992). This approach locates the South African transition as part of a global phenomenon, the "third wave" of democratisation - the negotiated shift from authoritarian regimes to some kind of multi-party democracy. There are certainly some strengths in this approach:

- \* it introduces useful comparative material (and in the liberation movement we have often been slow to learn from a study of transitions in Brazil, the Philippines or El Salvador, for instance);

- \* it helps to explain why, on some issues at least, there is a very broad national and international consensus on a negotiated transition to democracy in South Africa at this time in our history. (It also, of course, simultaneously obscures the very different, including class, agendas and expectations at play within the partial consensus).

- \* more than other dominant paradigms, it draws attention to the need for practical, tactical and medium-term engagement with the transition process. It thinks change (sometimes it conjures up the appearance of change) in the context of a complex balance of forces.

But this model is not, of course, an innocent and merely descriptive set of generalisations based on comparative studies - as it likes to present itself. I will deal with some of its problematic prescriptions, particularly as they have been applied to South Africa, in a moment. First, it is useful to locate this general theoretical paradigm within shifting imperialist politico-military strategic thinking.

### Low intensity democracy

In many ways the "transition to democracy" literature reflects changing imperialist strategies towards third world (and, of

course, now also the former second world) countries. In saying this, I do not want to suggest that the literature (whose institutional bases are largely academic and para-academic) is narrowly part of some grand "imperialist conspiracy". But I am convinced that one cannot understand the theory unless it is located in terms of strategic shifts in the approach to the third world by imperialist governments over the last two and a half decades.

These shifts have gone through two major steps after the strategic defeat of the United States in Vietnam at the beginning of the 1970s. The first shift was to "Vietnamise" third world struggles. This meant massive political and military support for regional authoritarian regimes - Thieu in Vietnam; the Shah and the Zionist regime in the Middle East; Vorster and PW Botha in southern Africa; Somoza in central America; Marcos in the Philippines, etc. But, by the end of the 1970s, these regional powers were proving to be increasingly unstable. They were the targets and often the direct cause of growing mass and guerrilla movements. Some of these regimes (notably those of Thieu, the Shah, and Somoza) failed to see the decade out.

Without abandoning local military proxy forces (now increasingly deployed in terms of a "low intensity warfare" doctrine (see Klare and Kornbluh 1987), there was a further strategic shift. US administrations began encouraging transitions to "democracy" in third world countries. They progressively withdrew full support from their own dictators, or pressured them to "reform", while building pro-imperialist "centrist" political alliances. The strategy was to blunt the edge of national liberation movements and mass struggles (for a similar account see Gills, et al., 1993, p.7-16).

These changes in imperialist politico-military strategy were also closely connected to major changes in the world capitalist system. From the early 1970s the capitalist system has become increasingly global in character (Brecher, Childs and Cutler,

1993). Indeed, as a number of commentators have begun to note, its globalism was more widespread than was, perhaps, immediately apparent:

"In the 1970s, the same export-import-led growth strategies were adopted by Communist Party-led governments in the East (Poland, Romania, Hungary) and military dictatorships in the South (Argentina, Brazil, Chile). In the 1980s, the same debt service policies on the IMF model were adopted and implemented by Communist Party-led governments in the East (Poland, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia) and by military dictatorships, other authoritarian government, and their successor democratic government in the South (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Philippines)... The political irony is that 'actually existing socialism' failed not least because of the unsuccessful implementation of import/export-led growth models and IMF-style austerity policies in the East. 'Actually existing capitalism' pursued the same models and policies in the South and also failed." (Frank, p.41 and 44)

In the past two and a half decades, domination has been exerted more and more through financial mechanisms imposed by bodies like the IMF, World Bank and GATT. "Democratisation" in the third world has often been motivated by the belief in imperialist circles that elected centrist (or even left) governments would have more legitimacy in imposing the bitter pill of structural adjustment programmes on their own third world populations.

The economic stagnation in the Soviet Union in the 1980s and the eventual collapse in 1989-91 strengthened the case of those strategists advocating less reliance on Cold War regional dictatorships to shore up imperialism. Within South Africa, the timing of FW De Klerk's move to unban the ANC, SACP and PAC and engage in negotiations was not accidental. In fact, in the historic speech in February 1990 in which these measures were announced, De Klerk specifically referred to the collapse in eastern Europe as a reason "allowing" for "democratisation" in South Africa. He was tacitly admitting that he was not a democrat by conviction, but by circumstance.

A third, and certainly more positive factor behind the change in imperialist third world strategies is related to the social

developments within the advanced capitalist countries themselves. Globalisation has seen the partial deindustrialisation of the north, and the rapid growth of new middle strata (white collar workers, a massive tertiary student population, new professions). Globalisation has also produced mass unemployment in the north, and large immigrant populations, economic refugees from the South. These diverse strata have been an important base out of which a host of new social movements have emerged (anti-war, youth and student, feminist, greens, progressive religious movements, black power, etc.). These strata and movements have also been active in various international solidarity movements - not least the world-wide anti-apartheid movement. They have had an increasingly important and generally progressive impact on imperialist international policy.

It is out of the contradictory influence of these factors (AND ongoing mass struggles waged by third world peoples) that the widespread trend to negotiated transitions to democracy in the third world needs to be understood. Certainly, our strategic opponents are trying to locate the South African transition with these kinds of bearings. As a South African left we have to engage with this reality.

In doing so, we do not have some of the advantages of our strategic opponents. There is now an extensive neo-liberal tactical and strategic literature to guide the would-be third world liberal reformer. "Managing change" (which happens to be the title of a recent book by Jan Steyn) is a phrase that occurs fairly often in this tactical-strategic literature - and the subliminal flip-side of the phrase is: "without changing the management".

### Managing change...without changing the management

The great challenge for third world, neo-liberal reformers is, according to the literature, to retain the strategic initiative within the transition. The twin dangers are:

\* outrunning their own constituency, thus losing the initiative to right-wing anti-reform forces; and

\* opening up too quickly to the demands of the popular forces, and becoming engulfed in a tide of rising popular expectation and mobilisation.

How is the neo-liberal reformer to avoid these twin dangers? Essentially, the negotiated transition has to be managed as a process of elite pacting. Elites, capable of "delivering" major constituencies, jointly manage the transition to a new constitutional dispensation. In the process, a new centrist bloc is consolidated and right and left forces are marginalised.

This is, incidentally, a reading into which neo-liberal commentators are now trying to squeeze the recent South African elections:

"In seven exhilarating days, South Africa became hostile territory for the radicals and ideologues of the Left and Right. A new country, with a distinctive thrust to its politics was born...The radical Left, in the form of the PAC, was devastated...the Radical Right in the form of the Freedom Front was contained to a mere 2,9 percent..." (Hugh Robertson, "Radicals left out in the cold", The Star, 4 May, 1994). (See also a similar editorial analysis in Beeld, May 2, 1994, in which the PAC's electoral performance is said to show that "South Africans are tired of revolutionary parties.")

In many respects, the transition in this paradigm is designed to demobilise the populace. In the words of Huntington (an influential proponent of the model): "In democratization the sequence of dominant public attitudes might be described as first euphoria, then disillusionment, then resignation and acceptance." (1993, p.11). It is a sequence of which he clearly approves. Patently, the democracy towards which the transition is supposed to move is an extremely limited democracy ("low intensity democracy").



All of this is fairly transparent in the South African writers who have seized upon the "transition to democracy" literature, applying it with particular enthusiasm. The most coherent explication of the model is in Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert's The Quest for Democracy, South Africa in Transition (1992). Slabbert tells us, for instance, that :

"One of the most daunting challenges facing [a future government of national unity] is to protect the new political space created by negotiations from being used to contest the historical imbalances that precipitated negotiation in the first place..." (p.90).

What on earth is the use of "new political space" if it cannot be used to overcome the dreadful social, economic, cultural and moral "historical imbalances" with which we are being left? For Slabbert, democracy is a thin democracy, simply a basic set of formal rules, and we should not "burden democracy" (the title of Slabbert's Jan Smuts Memorial Lecture to the SA Institute of International Affairs, 22 May 1992) with popular aspirations. Popular aspirations are a threat to elite pacting on the "democratic" rules of the game. Jan Steyn tells us that the transition to democracy in Namibia is going smoothly because "SWAPO has not had to face highly mobilised internal civilian constituencies." (1990, p.98).

### Mass involvement - the unthinkable

No wonder our local neo-liberal transition theorists were thrown into a particular spin by the ANC-alliance's rolling mass action campaigns of June-August 1992. The impossible/impermissible was happening. Stanley Uys wrote at the time: "What mass action has done...has been to democratise ANC involvement in negotiations..." That sounds like a compliment, surely? But no, this democratising of the ANC's involvement in negotiations, Uys goes on, has merely "made agreements so much more difficult to reach...The longer the ANC engages in mass action, the more the country can kiss goodbye to fruitful negotiations." (The Star, July 30, 1992.) "Democratisation" and "fruitful negotiations"

are, from the vantage point of neo-liberal transition theory, mutually contradictory.

How on earth will South Africa reach a new dispensation, asked the same Stanley Uys in The Star in mid-August 1992, "unless elites on either side arrange it, as they usually do in history?" The longing for elite bargaining was all over the centre pages of the liberal newspapers at the time. Consider some of the headlines to political columns in mid-1992: "NEEDED: A COUNCIL OF THE WISE" (Lawrence Schlemmer, The Star, July 28); "WHERE ARE OUR STATESMEN?" (Van Zyl Slabbert, The Star, July 31); "WHAT WE NEED IS THREE WISE MEN" (Alex Boraine, The Star, Aug 7); "KING RULES, OR BARONS, OR THE UPSTARTS TAKE OVER" (Ken Owen, Sunday Times, July 26). Scratch the surface of our neo-liberals and you find feudal sentiments!

Contrary to their dire predictions, the rolling mass action of 1992 proved to be immensely positive, from the point of view of a more thorough-going negotiated democratisation after the breakdown of the CODESA round of negotiations. Indeed, through the last three years, the process has been considerably mass-driven. Besides the June-August 1992 mass actions (producing the September 1992 Record of Understanding and breaking De Klerk's strategic alliance with the IFP), there have been other major points in which mass mobilisation produced qualitative breaks:

- \* the COSATU-led November 1991 two-day stayaway against the government's unilateral introduction of VAT. The stayaway reasserted the relative independence of mass democratic formations like the unions, it challenged the government's increasing unilateralism and impacted upon the whole negotiated transition;

- \* the massive mobilisation in April 1993, after Chris Hani's assassination, which resulted, tragically but factually, in a broad national commitment to an April 1994 election date;

\* the mass uprising in Bophuthatswana which played a major role, not just in opening up a large part of our country to a freer and fairer election process, but in deepening the political disintegration of the anti-transition "Freedom Alliance". It deprived the white extreme right-wing of an intended military rear-base, adjacent to their zones of platteland strength.

### Negotiations and mass involvement

The "transition to democracy" paradigm tends to oppose mass involvement and fruitful negotiation. This polarity has also often been accepted, if inverted, by ANC activist ranks - "negotiations have broken down/ or negotiations are a waste of time, let's suspend them and get back to the streets". This simple opposition is wrong. In the first place, as Adam and Moodley point out, even in the midst of the suspended CODESA negotiations and the mass actions of mid-1992, "forty-three informal meetings took place between the ANC's general secretary, Cyril Ramaphosa, and the government's chief negotiator, Roelf Meyer." (p.63). Adam and Moodley refer to these meetings (which were not strictly informal, they were meetings of a mandated "channel" group), in order to recuperate their paradigm. The meetings are held up as evidence of the mere "posturing" to which they try to reduce the mass campaign. But it was the combination of mass mobilisation and "elite" (and popular) negotiations that paved the way for the September 1992 breakthrough.

Not noticed by Adam and Moodley is the fact that, despite the suspension of the formal multi-party negotiations, there were probably more negotiations in the June-August 1992 period than at any other time in our history. Apart from Ramaphosa/Meyer meetings, and the UN Security Council's Cyrus Vance mission, almost every localised mass campaign (and there were thousands countrywide) resulted in negotiations. Typically, in rural areas for instance, a march from the township into the "white" town, or the occupation of a town facility, would raise the main

national negotiating demands, but also local concerns, the right to use town venues for meetings, a demand for the transfer of a particularly notorious police officer, and so forth. These were often not one-off processes, they frequently gave birth to, or revitalised local negotiating forums (dispute resolution structures, development forums, etc.). National negotiations had become complex and remote, and the old man from Kathlehong quoted in the epigraph at the beginning of this paper was speaking for millions of others. In the midst of the rolling mass actions of mid-1992, in thousands of localities countrywide, communities were claiming the terrain of negotiated transition for themselves (see Cronin 1992a).

These dynamics were again in evidence in the mass actions of April-June 1993, following Chris Hani's assassination. This was particularly the case in the Eastern Transvaal where a 19-day (May 17-June 5) consumer boycott of white shops was launched. An Eastern Transvaal regional tripartite assessment of the struggle is worth quoting at some length:

"The boycott was called in the wake of the assassination of comrade Chris Hani. The main issues of the boycott were:

- \* to register the anger of hundreds of thousands of people in the region at cde Chris's slaying;
- \* an early announcement of an election date and a speedy transition to democracy;
- \* local and regional demands...

Originally, the alliance had planned to target the businesses of extreme right-wingers in the white community. The object was to isolate the most reactionary forces. However, we found we lacked information about the white community. We didn't know who was who. This, in itself, reflects the situation in the Eastern Transvaal, where baasskap has remained deeply entrenched. There has been virtually no engagement, no talking between the townships and the white communities. The boycott has begun to reverse this. Right from the start, the boycott organisers kept their door open. They were always prepared to engage business-people and local authorities in discussion. By the second week the white community was calling for meetings in dozens of localities.

The boycott organisers took the decision to engage organised business, the provincial authorities and the security forces on a regional basis. On June 5, the

ANC/SACP/COSATU alliance met with SACOB, the Sakekamer, the Afrikaans Handelsinstituut, Eskom, the Transvaal Provincial Administration, the Regional Services Council, and the SADF and SAP.

The meeting was a major breakthrough. A joint statement agreed on:

- \* joint action to ensure a speedy transition to democracy;
- \* security forces and government to take firm action against security force members and others interfering with free political activity;
- \* a joint tripartite alliance/SADF delegation to verify the de-electrification of the SA/Mozambique border fence...
- \* the phasing out of the inhumane bucket system, still prevalent in a number of townships in the region. This system is to be replaced with flushing toilets. Joint alliance and RSC subcommittees will be established to oversee this process;
- \* reactivating steps to establish a Regional Economic Forum.

It has also been agreed that review meetings will occur every 60 days to assess progress in all these areas."  
(ANC/SACP/COSATU 1993)

Of course, whether at local, regional or national level, not everything agreed upon necessarily gets implemented. Once the heat is off, there is deliberate obstruction from the other side, or the mass-based structures lack the capacity to follow through on negotiated victories. But even allowing for some slippage, the Eastern Transvaal report captures the best of the transitional process over the last four years. And it is precisely this kind of process that points the way forward to an effective strategy for deepening democratisation, for popular self-empowerment in a mass-driven process of structural reform in the coming months and years.

However, what is described in the Eastern Transvaal report is simply impossible/impermissible within the "transition to democracy" paradigm. Then again, how adequate to thinking this kind of strategy are our own traditional paradigms of change?

## National liberation

It is national liberation/decolonisation/nation building that remains, often in a rather vague way, the dominant paradigm within the broad ANC-led alliance. The national liberation paradigm contains many positive features, and these have generally been reinforced by the influence of marxist thought on the ANC. Anti-imperialist, nation-building based on socio-economic transformation, and popular mobilisational traditions are a strong antidote to negative features within the neo-liberal "democratisation" paradigm.

The liberation paradigm also helps to explain our relative advantage in assembling a majority project, including a majority electoral project, compared to countries which in many other respects resemble South Africa (for instance, Brazil, El Salvador, South Korea or Mexico - see Seidman 1993). Although the ANC fought the April elections quite considerably on a social and economic transformation programme and not just on populism, in many ways it won these elections as a national liberation movement, representing a racially oppressed majority. For millions of ANC voters, the commitment to casting a ballot in the face of great difficulties, had a great deal to do with the sense of a "liberation" moment. The very resonance of the liberation paradigm was, of course, one of the prime reasons De Klerk had been so anxious to dismiss the decolonisation model in the South African situation (who wants to be Ian Smith?).

However, there are certain ways of understanding national liberation which are not helpful to understanding the present transition process, or to promoting an effective struggle to deepen democratisation in the coming years. These unhelpful ways of understanding national democratic change have been reinforced by tendencies in the body of theory that came to be codified (in the Stalin years) as "marxism-leninism". In what follows I propose to consider some of these negative assumptions, pointing out also their interconnections.

### Liberation teleology

The "irreversibility", the "inevitability" of the liberation/decolonisation process has been profoundly anchored within popular thinking and organisational strategising in South Africa. Indeed, once upon a time events themselves made it hard to resist the notion of falling dominos, in which colonial regimes seemed to be collapsing in a southbound knock-on ripple. To be sure, there have been times in which the South African liberation movement has criticised this domino theory, underlining the interconnectedness, complexity and simultaneity of our different struggles. These polemics were particularly strong when domino thinking led to a stageist approach to the southern Africa struggle ("don't rock the boat in South Africa, let us first consolidate in Zimbabwe or Mozambique, etc.") - see, for instance, "What the Nkomati Accord Means for Africa", Editorial Notes, The African Communist, no.98, 3rd quarter 1984.

But we cannot deny falling into teleological domino thinking ourselves. Certainly at a popular, more or less spontaneous level this tendency has been pronounced and in many respects positive. The "winds of change" mood played a role in the mass mobilisations of the late 1950s and early 1960s. There was also a major impact on the popular mood made by events in Angola and particularly Mozambique in 1974-5, an impact which played its part in the 1976 uprisings (Brooks & Brickhill 1980). The idea, and partial reality, of a southbound ripple of falling colonial dominos has also impacted deeply, and generally to our own benefit, on the morale of our opponents.

This popular sense of a southbound wave has also been present in more theoretically elaborated discourse. The first two sections in the SACP's 1962 programme (The Road to South African Freedom) are a case in point. The second of these sections is entitled, significantly, "The African Revolution". The very notion of a singular "African Revolution" is itself part of the tendency towards teleology:

"The colonial system of imperialism is crumbling. The peoples of practically the whole continent of Asia have within an increasingly short space of time liberated themselves from direct colonial rule. The tide of national liberation has advanced with equally dramatic swiftness throughout the continent of Africa..." (SACP 1981, p.289).

Whatever the positive, mobilisational implications of this teleology, it has led to serious strategic miscalculations by the liberation movement, in particular in the way in which the armed struggle was conceptualised in the early 1960s. Strategic thinking from our side greatly underestimated the resolve and capacity of the ruling bloc within our country, and its external supporters, and greatly overestimated the impact of launching the armed struggle (Barrell 1990, and Fine & Davis 1990, ch.10). A too simplistic assumption of an "inevitable" and "irreversible" process of decolonisation can lead to political voluntarism, and above all to an inability to cope with a complex and uneven process that includes reverses.

More seriously:

#### Teleology leads to substitutionism

Teleology also has a habit of encouraging vanguardism, where the "vanguard" is an elite that "knows where history is going". And this easily prepares the ground for substitutionism, the movement/party substitutes for the people/class, on the grounds of greater insight into history's inevitable outcome; the upper echelons of the movement substitute for the rank-and-file; and, once in power, bureaucratic structures, or even the Leader, displace the movement/party, not to mention the people in whose name state power is exercised. These tendencies are crystallised in Tom Mboya's vainglorious, but not untypical, claim that the liberation movement is "the mouthpiece of an oppressed nation and its leader embodies the nation." (quoted in Ottaway 1991, p.65).

These tendencies have often also been fostered by material conditions. In many of the more progressive national liberation



movements on our continent, the main force in the struggle has been a peasant army. The upper echelons of the movement acquire a politico-military character, and reproduce a cadreship of administrators, diplomats, negotiators and army officers. Post-independence, the upper echelons of the movement shift into government (the "transfer of power"), while the largely peasant rank-and-file of the liberation army is either demobilised back into an often remote countryside, or transformed into a regular army to meet the threat of military destabilisation. These realities are, incidentally, exactly the reason why Jan Steyn, from his neo-liberal perspective, believes that the transition process in Namibia is assured of success: "the war [in Namibia] was, in an immediate sense, external to the major developed areas of that country. Hence the population had not become radicalised by widespread internal struggle." (1990, p.98)

Quite apart, then, from the subjective political inclinations of the new political ruling stratum (and they are characteristically diverse as they evolve over time), for social reasons they have often lost a mobilised base with which to counter the apparently dissolved colonial power. This colonial power quickly returns in a neo-colonial form - as a low intensity war, as a host of foreign NGOs and funding agencies, maybe as blue helmeted UN troops, and, above all, as a structural adjustment programme.

The post-colonial African state, regardless of its political orientation, has been marked by a relatively high level of independence from society. This is partly because, in the progressive cases, as I have argued, the peasant liberation army is demobilised. It is also partly because the institutions of civil society are very often not "national", but "ethnic", "regionalist", "tribal". The national state then assumes considerable autonomy, and national politics often has an unstable (coups and plots within the narrow bureaucratic elite) and voluntaristic character. There is, of course, a substantial literature on this topic (see, inter alia, First 1971, Saul 1979, and Alavi 1982).

Fortunately, the South African liberation struggle has been different in its social composition, in the major localities in which it has been waged (schools, factories, townships - both urban and rural), and in the character of the major mass formations (trade unions and other sectoral and community based mass organisations). The ANC-alliance's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) expressly recognises these realities, and sees the RDP as not just a state-delivery programme, but one requiring the active mobilisation, reorganisation and participation of mass and community based organisations.

In South Africa we have relative objective advantages, but we also need to understand them, because our own theoretical paradigm can easily seduce us into a post-independence substitutionism, a demobilisation of our mass formations. From the left within our movement, a confused and reluctant marginalisation might occur, because of an earlier tendency to see mass action as essentially insurrectionary in character and hence the often repeated query: "now that we have got an ANC government, how can the ANC march on the ANC?" From the right, within and without the ANC, the tendencies to encourage demobilisation of the social movements is even more pronounced ("they will frighten away foreign investment", "we had mass struggle, because we didn't have the vote").

**Substitutionism thinks change as a transfer, not a transformation of power**

Liberation teleology and substitutionism are closely linked to another potential weakness of the national liberation paradigm. It tends to think political transition as a "transfer", rather than as a "transformation of power". At its most venal this kind of transfer is virtually little more than a change of symbols and personalities, what Chris Hani used to describe as a "flag and anthem independence".

Obviously, no progressive national liberation movement on our continent has ever espoused that venal view. Indeed, the very act of waging a progressive liberation struggle has demanded, long before the critical moment of transition, that power relations be transformed. Revolutionary writers, as diverse as Fanon and Cabral, have written perceptively about this. Especially where colonial resistance has been most obdurate (Algeria, the former Portuguese colonies, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa itself), sustained popular mobilisation has been essential, and this mobilisation has been forced to address a transformative project in order to mobilise effectively. Traditional power relations, between colonised men and women, between chiefs and commoners, between different ethnic groups and classes among the oppressed, all have had to be consciously addressed. Cabral liked to say that the liberation struggle itself was a liberator for its participants.

But the transformative project, particularly post-independence, has tended to be a socio-economic project. The process of political democratisation has been less elaborated.

"The dominant tendencies in the popular and radical movements of national liberation were more marked by a progressive social content than by the democratic beliefs of their militants, despite the sometimes ritualistic use of the term 'democracy'...I do not believe it is a caricature to say that the peasant soldier of the liberation army entering Peking in 1949 was thinking of land reform, but as yet unaware of the meaning of democracy." (Amin 1993, p.70-1).

All of these tendencies (teleology, voluntarism, substitutionism) foster the belief that political struggle is about a decisive moment - the transfer of power (in the national liberation mode), the seizure of state power (in the not entirely dissimilar "marxist-leninist" mode), in which the vanguard takes control of the "commanding heights", abolishes all opposition, and then implements a socio-economic transformation, frog-marching history towards its foregone conclusion.

### The all-in moment

There are certainly decisive moments, qualitative break-throughs (and reverses), ruptures, and unevenness. History and the political process are not seamless or merely incremental evolutions. In critiquing the neo-liberal "transition to democracy" model in South Africa, I have already mentioned three or four decisive moments in the last four years, points of critical, if partial, rupture. These include mid-1992, the weeks after Hani's assassination on April 10 1993, the Bophuthatswana uprising in March 1994, and surely April's elections themselves. But these decisive moments of partial rupture, moments in which there are qualitative shifts in the balance of forces, are not the same as some all-consuming moment, some thaumaturgical event, in which your political opponent disappears from the face of the earth.

Yet, from within the national liberation (and "marxist-leninist") paradigms there are powerful tendencies to subordinate all political practice to the pursuit of just such an all-in moment. In the last four years the PAC (which sometimes sounds like the uncensored libido of the ANC) often marginalised itself, disengaging itself from reality by measuring all political activity against the one great moment. In the months after the issuing of the 1989 Harare Declaration, the PAC president, Zeph Mothopeng said:

"Our liberation, the liberation of the African worker, cannot be negotiated, it will be attained. You cannot go to a negotiation table for your liberation. When you go to the negotiating table you must already have won your liberation." (Sowetan, 20 November 1989; see also Rantete 1992)

The attitude persisted into 1990/1, with the PAC boycotting the negotiations, asserting that the only purpose for negotiations would be for the regime "to negotiate its surrender and the transfer of power." Benny Alexander, PAC secretary general explained: "there is no way negotiation can be regarded as a panacea for all our social malaise. Therefore it is bound to fail." (Indicator SA, vol.7, no.3, 1990). Politics is the pursuit

of the panacea, anything short of everything is a sell-out. You will find similar, although usually much more nuanced tendencies in the ANC.

Indeed, on both sides of the debate that erupted within the ANC around negotiations strategy and "sunset" clauses in the second half of 1992, the logic of an all-in moment persisted. Joe Slovo, in arguing for negotiations compromises writes:

"There was certainly never a prospect of forcing the regime's unconditional surrender across the table. It follows that the negotiating table is neither the sole terrain of the struggle for power nor the place where it will reach its culminating point." (Slovo 1992, p.36, my emphasis.)

While I do not disagree with the main tactical point Slovo was trying to make, I think there is still a hint of the old paradigm of a "culminating point". Slovo makes room for his proposed negotiation compromises by deferring "the decisive moment" (of "unconditional surrender"?). He does not, therefore, think through the fuller strategic implications of his practice, which is perhaps also why he did not, in this extremely influential paper, begin to develop a wider strategy for the transition, beyond a negotiations strategy.

Slovo's most articulate opponent in the 1992 debate, Pallo Jordan, summarises the standard national liberation South African paradigm with some precision. He does this in three propositions, which are worth scrutiny:

1. "Since the adoption of the document 'ANC Strategy and Tactics' by the Morogoro Conference of 1969 the ANC has held the view that the contradiction between the colonised Black majority and the White oppressor state is the most visible and dominant within South Africa."

2. "It has further argued that this contradiction cannot be solved by the colonial state 'reforming itself out of existence', and consequently, only struggle to overthrow the system of colonial domination could lead to the resolution of that contradiction."

3. "Moreover, it has been the ANC view that since the colonial state and the colonised people cannot be spatially

separated, there is no possibility of the two co-existing. In the South African context, this necessarily means that the struggle must result in the destruction of the colonial state." (Jordan 1992, p.7).

Proposition two contains an interesting, and symptomatic elision. I agree that it was/is unlikely that the colonial state should ever reform itself out of existence. You might, perhaps, argue that this is precisely the neo-liberal agenda of De Klerk. But Jordan is certainly right if we allow him to mean that a neo-liberal "democratisation" is not going to resolve the fundamental contradiction of a white minority and an oppressed black majority. But Jordan counterposes self-reform (which he declares to be impossible) to a struggle for overthrowal (which is said to be the only progressive possibility). If overthrowing happens to be an objective or conjunctural impossibility, where does that leave us? Do we disengage from the transition process, and accumulate our forces externally for a decisive moment? What is elided is another possibility: a mass-driven transition, in which we engage actively with the process in order to progressively transform, which is to say - abolish, in a process of structural reforms, the colonial state.

Jordan's elision of this possibility (the only progressive possibility in our situation, and what we are actually doing) is further deepened by his third proposition. I am not sure exactly what he means when he argues that the colonial state and the colonised people cannot co-exist - they define each other precisely by their contradictory co-existence. Probably what Jordan means is that, unlike "normal" colonialism, in which a national democratic state in the former colony might be consolidated without the disappearance of the metropolitan state, in South Africa this is impossible. One or the other has to be "destroyed".

Once again, this makes a protracted process of revolutionary reform unthinkable, a process in which there is ongoing struggle for networks of power, in which there is, precisely, an unstable

co-existence. Once again, Jordan's manner of posing the problem makes the actual reality (he is currently serving in the cabinet of national unity with former leading members of the old colonial state) and the optimal manner of engaging with it over the coming years, unthinkable.

Most seriously, this tendency, while arguing for mass organisation and mobilisation, has consistently miscast the role of such mobilisation. In the 1992 rolling mass actions there were distinctly insurrectionist expectations in the movement. These expectations were sometimes confusedly articulated, not least on the eve of the fateful September 7 march on Bisho. Insurrectionist rhetoric gave Brigadier Gqozo, his Ciskei security forces and their SADF advisers the impression that they could massacre marchers and get away with it. For a participant's account and evaluation of the Bisho September march see Raymond Suttner (1992):

"there was [no] clarity as to the strategy and tactics to be employed...Sometimes we spoke of the campaign [in the Ciskei] as being for free political activity...But a lot of our statements suggested that we would occupy Bisho and thereby remove Gqozo. That seemed to be the understanding of a lot of activists and leadership of the alliance - at every level. And this was expected to set in train a domino effect with Mangope next and Buthelezi following. This was stated by a number of leaders...

We had raised the temperature in the country, we had put De Klerk under pressure, we had suggested that he would have to choose between his puppet falling, followed by others, or drown our peaceful action in blood...We underestimated the bankruptcy of the regime, its limited political choices and in so doing we committed a very costly error." (p.23)

Suttner is certainly not excusing Gqozo and the security forces involved in the massacre. But our own confused conception of what we were doing tempted the other side into believing that it could "teach us a lesson" and still occupy the moral high ground. Following the Bisho events, our own 1992 rolling mass action campaign faltered. Fortunately, although a lot of "middle" ground opinion in South Africa (not least the Democratic Party) tried to blame the ANC-alliance for the massacre, this interpretation

did not quite stick. In any case, by the beginning of September, the mass campaigns had already altered the balance of forces at the negotiating table, as the September 26 1992 Record of Understanding, between the ANC and De Klerk's government was to confirm.

The Bisho massacre, I believe, led to a clearer assessment within the ANC leadership (amongst those who were most sympathetic to mass mobilisation in the first place) of the nature, strengths, limitations and objectives of mass action in the South African transition. But insurrectionary hopes lingered on powerfully at a more popular activist level. I am sure Theo Molaba was speaking for many when he wrote some months later:

"In the night vigil (at Hani's funeral) all the regions were calling for revolutionary mass action/war, with the exception of one or two regions. The leadership is out of touch with these sentiments...Chris Hani's funeral was an occasion to prepare for insurrection, but our leadership failed."  
(Molaba, p.18-9)

How realistic have these insurrectionary aspirations been in practice? It is instructive, in this regard, to remember the combination of forces at play in the mass uprising in March 1994 in Bophuthatswana. Was it an insurrection? Not really. Certainly a decisive role was played by the wave of strikes by bantustan civil servants (anxious that they would be peripheralised by the upcoming changes in South Africa), militant actions by students, and active collaboration with these forces by a growing number of BDF troops. This mass uprising rapidly unlocked the Bophuthatswana situation, which had been deadlocked for months in the negotiation process. There were insurrectionary features in these events. But we should not allow ourselves to forget that the situation was stabilised in favour of our main demands (reincorporation of the territory into South Africa and participation in elections) by the entry of the SADF at the request of the multi-party, power-sharing Transitional Executive Council, in co-operation with De Klerk's government. The mass uprising was precipitated by the negotiated transition process, and in turn, the process was advanced by the mass actions. Mass



action and negotiated arrangements worked together. A qualitative transformation was secured, but it was hardly, nor could it be, a seizure of power.

### Representative democracy = bourgeois democracy?

The general weaknesses in the liberation paradigm considered so far are also apparent in the attitude that both the African national liberation movement and "marxist-leninist" paradigms have tended to adopt towards parliamentary democracy. In his polemic against Kautsky, ("The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky") Lenin writes: "It is natural for a liberal to speak of 'democracy' in general; but a Marxist will never forget to ask: 'for what class?'".

Fair enough. Clearly, the bourgeoisie, when and where it is operating within a parliamentary system, seeks to use the system to its advantage. But Lenin goes much further in this polemic, mechanically equating particular forms of democracy with the rule of a particular class. To do this he draws on a misleading historical analogy, the democracy of slave cities and states, which was a democracy for the slave owners and a dictatorship over the slaves. (One could say the same of the whites-only parliamentary system that prevailed in South Africa for many decades). Democracy, Lenin concludes, is always a form of class dictatorship. There is slave-city democracy/dictatorship; there is parliamentary democracy (= bourgeois dictatorship); and there is soviet democracy (= dictatorship of the proletariat).

This argument ignores the contradictory character of "bourgeois" parliamentary democracy. Unlike slave-city democracy, or colonial white minority democracy - it tends to include (more or less, the degree being the outcome of struggle) the oppressed classes. Rather than being a simple instrument of class oppression, parliamentary democracy is a real site of contradiction and struggle. (A point made interestingly, and eloquently, by Marx in his Class Struggles in France - see Hunt 1980).

Lenin's approach (and it has had many echoes within our own liberation movement) undercuts the possibility of thinking a transformative struggle on the terrain of a capitalist society, in this case on the terrain of representative democracy. Instead, working class democracy is posited as a wholly separate institution (soviet democracy/dictatorship of the proletariat), which smashes parliamentary democracy. The political project becomes an external project, one form of democracy, consolidated outside of the system, which seeks to abolish another.

One can actually see the uneasy and unresolved cohabitation of this kind of thinking with the realities of representative democracy in the following argument by Blade Nzimande:

"Our immediate goal should be the total defeat of the National Party and the apartheid regime ...The first step towards the total abolition of apartheid is the total and decisive defeat of the National Party...If we decisively defeat the National Party and its surrogates in a democratic election let them become the opposition or disappear from the face of a democratic South Africa." (Nzimande 1992, p.22, my emphases).

Here the old paradigm is wrestling with the actual reality of an engagement with electoral politics. Many of the characteristics of the old paradigm are invoked nostalgically, like the all-in moment (immediate, total, decisive, decisively), with its difficulty in thinking of the co-existence of opposing forces. There is also the invocation of an irreversible teleology, not to mention a certain voluntarism: "let them... disappear". But how? Unfortunately, none of this equips us to engage effectively with, amongst other things, the realities of representative democracy.

### Politics from without

The inability to think adequately a revolutionary struggle on the terrain of capitalism has, as I have said, tended to result in conceptualising the struggle as one in which power is accumulated

externally. Hence the notion of "dual power", two separate powers, the State and the anti-State (the soviets). In the national liberation movement paradigm this dual power has often been concretised in "liberated zones", and, perhaps even more, in that other externality - the socialist bloc (the antithesis to the colonial/imperialist powers). It was the existence of this socialist bloc that enabled, so it was thought, post-liberation African societies to transcend capitalism, to be Other, to pursue an autonomous course in the realm of that awkward non-category, the "non-capitalist" path (for an interesting contemporary critique of this category see First 1991 and 1992).

Externality prevents us from developing an effective strategy of engagement with the reality of a capitalist dominated world, and, in our country, a capitalist dominated society. Yet, whether it is in the defence of socialist gains like free health care, or the right to work (as in Cuba, or Russia at present), or in the attempt to progress towards a socialist democracy, there is no meaningful alternative to a concrete, but transformative project, on the actual capitalist dominated terrain in which we find ourselves.

### The inevitable result of national liberation and socialist thinking?

In 1991 Marina Ottaway was one of the few academic voices to be sceptical about the relevance to South Africa of the "transition to democracy" paradigm. Unfortunately her scepticism was not rooted in a disagreement with the tenets of the paradigm:

"As an analytical model of what was happening in South Africa...the transition-to-democracy paradigm was rather questionable. The major problem was not that the National Party still appeared determined to safeguard as much power as possible for whites...Such resistance on the part of the incumbent government and administration must be considered normal. Rather, the relevance of the above paradigm was challenged by the fact that the opposition organisations, and above all the ANC, were liberation movements - and nowhere in Africa have they spawned democratic regimes." (Ottaway 1991, p.62)

This is not a rejection of the principles of the low intensity democracy paradigm. It is an argument about application. What remains constant is the cynicism. We are being told that National Party anti-democratic obduracy back in 1991 "must be considered normal" within the paradigm (an interesting reflection on the paradigm). It is the ANC, because it is a liberation movement that is, by paradigmatic definition, the real threat to democracy.

I wonder whether in 1994 Ottaway would be prepared, in the face of much counter-evidence, to argue her case as brazenly? Nevertheless, Ottaway's views do present a challenge. Are the flawed tendencies which I have enumerated above (teleology, vanguardism, substitutionism, all-or-nothing reductionism, rejection of representative democracy's pluralism) essential and defining features of a national liberation movement as an organisational form? I believe they are not, and I believe that the actual practice of the ANC (as opposed to some of the ways in which we have tried to conceptualise that practice) gives the lie to Ottaway's dire predictions.

### Liberation movement or political party?

But the question of the organisational means for deepening democracy in South Africa is more than the simple liberation movement versus political party debate to which Ottaway reduces it. In the first place, it is one of the ironies of our transition that it has not been the ANC liberation movement, but the "political parties" (the NP, in particular) and the neo-liberal theorists themselves who have lacked conviction in a cornerstone of traditional parliamentary politics, namely an effective opposition. It has been the NP and the neo-liberals who have pushed for a government of national unity (GNU), a demand which was, eventually, conceded by the ANC as a five-year confidence building, transitional measure.

Ottaway, with justification, points to the tendency of African liberation movements to suppress oppositional parties in the name of national unity in ethnically divided countries. Ironically, the ANC's negotiation opponents have advanced precisely the same arguments for a GNU here in South Africa. To be sure, the GNU is multi-party in character, but clearly some of the traditional features of parliamentary democracy are being curtailed in the name of "nation building", and the need for "reconciliation".

These concerns are not necessarily wrong. They suggest that there are objective political and institutional challenges at work in newly independent, post-colonial African societies, including the more anomalous South African case, which cannot be resolved simply through multi-party representative democracy. This brings me to a broader question:

### Political formations and social movements

There is, indeed, much more at stake in the organisational character of the ANC, and this relates to another and bigger irony nestling in Ottaway's argument. Precisely at a time when the ANC has been bombarded with advice to change itself into a "normal political party", in the heartlands of representative democracy, the party political form is in a state of considerable malaise (Keane 1988; Arrighi et al. 1989; Mulgan 1994; Hirst 1994). Particularly in countries where representative democracy has been institutionalised for decades:

"a huge gap has arisen between democracy as an ethos and culture and democracy as a set of institutions...All over the world, this gap is fuelling political crisis. Germany's verdrossenheit, the collapse of old political systems in Italy and Japan, the rise of business leaders like Berlusconi and Perot: are all signs of societies struggling, however messily, to achieve a politics that better fits their needs. Everywhere the most dynamic movements are negative ones: the anti-government and anti-mafia networks in Italy, the anti-EC movements in Scandinavia, the hugely successful anti-smoking campaigns in the US...In the UK, the main parties'

memberships are less than a third what they were in the 1950s. Fewer than 5 per cent of their members are under 26..." (Mulgan 1994, p.16).

The processes to which Mulgan is referring go back some two and a half decades at least. 1968 was an important global moment in which new social movements (anti-war, black power, life-style and ecological) challenged party politics, not just in Paris, London, Berlin, Los Angeles and Chicago, but also in Tokyo, Mexico City and Prague.

The relationship of these new social movements to political organisations and parties was, and has since been, complex and often fraught. In some cases, like the German Greens, they have themselves launched into electoral politics, with some initial success, but with diminishing returns. Worldwide there are now, however, important initiatives to find ways of interconnecting parliamentary politics and social movements, experiments with aggregating heterogeneity.

All of this is born of a sense of the limitations of the narrow party political form, and the need to infuse politics with the energies of autonomous social movements.

"In the coming period it will be more necessary than ever to combine the organisational form of the political party with those of popular self-organisation and self-help. Political struggle through the Party with the sole or primary aim of achieving state power should no longer be the central focus. On the one hand, it remains essential not to default on state power to the forces of exploitation and oppression...On the other hand, it is imperative to go beyond struggles within the framework of bourgeois representative democracy by combining this level of struggle with workers and popular direct democracy." (Gills, Rocamora and Wilson 1993, p.31).

In South Africa we have a relatively unique situation. Our local 1968 was 1973 (the emergence of a new trade unionism, built partly on old traditions) and 1976 (the students and workers uprising). Mass sectoral and community based organisations have been at the centre of the rolling semi-insurrectionary struggles in our country through the 1980s. Increasingly, in the course of

the 1980s, these formations gravitated towards the broad ANC-fold, not without contradictions and problems. But the gravitation was (and is) essentially positive and crucial to the ongoing transformation tasks.

The challenges facing South Africa are complex. They include broad national unity and the consolidation of democratic institutions, but not at the price of failing to carry through socio-economic reconstruction and development (a failure that would destabilise the new political institutions themselves).

These core challenges point to the need for effective governance, and effective social movements. The need for co-ordination of effort and resources, but not the stifling of community and sectoral based organisation and empowerment. The neo-liberal appeal for the transformation of the ANC into a "normal political party" is, consciously or otherwise, an agenda to deprive the ANC of its principal strength: its mass support, its relative rootedness in oppressed communities, its internal dynamic of unity and diversity (class, ethnic, sectoral and ideological). Deprived of its liberation movement character, the ANC in government would quickly become, at worst a neo-colonial bureaucracy, and at best another third world "centre left" party, which, in government, would simply implement the same structural adjustment programmes as its centre right parliamentary rival (see for instance, the recent history of Peru, Frank, 1993, p.41-2).

This is the more or less explicit agenda underpinning the Business Day's editorial comment on the April elections:

"Eventually the ANC will need to develop a role as broadly popular party of the centre capable of building a strong economy while retaining [that is, 'delivering'] mass support. This may eventually cost the party a radical wing which tires of power-sharing. The gains [for whom? - JC] will more than compensate."  
(May 2, 1994)

One should add, that precisely at the time when "transition to democracy" pundits are encouraging political movements in the third world to transform themselves narrowly into electoral

parties to compete for office in national governments, the accompanying neo-liberal economic programme is weakening the sovereignty and capacity of national governments - through privatisation, enforced cuts on social spending, tax reduction, and the opening up of local markets to the unfettered intervention of the multinationals. Cut loose from their social movements, progressive governing parties find themselves holding increasingly weakened institutional power in the face of global realities:

"Most Third World governments today are weak because they lack the support of their own people. Civil society and popular organisations must grow in autonomy in order to build strong government and to articulate the interests of the majority..." (Gills, Rocamara and Wilson 1993, p.29)

Progressive governance requires an effective and self-mobilised social base.

On the other hand, deprived of a political movement, the mass sectoral and community based organisations that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s could be fragmented and marginalised, reduced to watch-dogs and lobby-groups, like so many of their counterparts in the advanced capitalist countries. In this version they serve, at least in the neo-liberal and older modernising theories, to establish "cross-cutting allegiances", thus blunting the edge of a majority politics.

This is not to say that the dynamic interconnection between the political formation and social movement is not often, in progressive cases, contradictory and fraught with many problems. The re-emergence of a legal ANC in 1990, badly unsettled the mass democratic movement - partly, through deliberate demobilisation ("the community and sectoral formations were just a stand-in for the banned movement, now we're back in business there is no need for any autonomous existence"); partly through the loss of key cadres into full-time ANC work, which nonetheless greatly strengthened the ANC; and partly through the reduction of vibrant sectoral formations into leagues of the ANC and platforms to spring leaderships into national politics. (For comparative



material from other third world struggles see Burbach & Nunez 1987; Alvarez & Escobar 1992; Rocamara 1992 & 1993; Bendana 1993; Barnecker 1990; and Gonzales 1992).

### Rethinking what we are doing

It is essential that we engage critically with our theoretical heritage. There are many assumptions within this heritage which are plainly inadequate to our present situation (and indeed to any situation). Over the past three or four years, fortunately, a number of interventions have begun to offer a theoretical perspective, from within a revolutionary socialist standpoint, that is more adequate to our reality, and to our often un- or maltheorised practice. Among the contributions one could mention Saul 1992; Webster & von Holdt 1992; Godongwana 1992; and Zita 1993. Some of this work draws on Poulantzas (1978) and on Kagarlitsky (1990). But, above all, it draws upon considerable South African struggle experience over the last decade and a half. While not all of those mentioned agree on everything, they share a basic way of approaching the struggle, which seeks to avoid the twin dangers of mere reformism, on the one hand, and the subordination of everything to the logic of a grand moment, the panacea (that never comes).

This is not the place to review this literature in any detail, I refer to it to acknowledge a debt, particularly in regard to its attempt to theorise an active revolutionary engagement with a complex transition process. Amongst other things, this approach enables us better to take democracy seriously.

### Taking up the challenge of democracy

Both within the national liberation and "marxist-leninist" paradigms there has been a lacuna in regard to political democracy. The neo-liberal "transition to democracy" paradigm has, in the 1990s, seized on this lacuna, and on the yearnings of people worldwide, and not least in the third world and in the

former second world, for greater democracy. As I have tried to argue already, this neo-liberal model is not very democratic, and it certainly will not meet the broad popular aspirations of people, either for political democracy, or for broad social and economic transformation.

We must not throw away our national liberation movement, or a class analysis, or a commitment to socialism. Nor, on the other hand, is the existence of a neo-liberal agenda a reason to simply dismiss actual negotiated transitions to democracy, as if our neo-liberal opponents' agenda was bound to win out - this is a tendency in some left positions (see, for instance, Mckinley 1994; and Frank 1993). The challenge is to engage with the democratic transition process, with a perspective (and a movement) that is more democratic, more far-reaching in its popular empowerment implications, a perspective that extends political democracy beyond the critically important institutions of representative democracy to embrace direct and participatory forms as well. And we need to extend democracy beyond political institutions, into the social and the economic.

Broadly speaking, this is precisely the direction in which the ANC-alliance's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) is pointing, with its commitment to "a people-driven process":

"Development is not about the delivery of goods to a passive citizenry. It is about active involvement and growing empowerment. In taking this approach we are building on the many forums, peace structures and negotiations that our people are involved in throughout the land." (p.5)

The RDP also links reconstruction and development to the deepening of democracy:

"Thoroughgoing democratisation of our society is...absolutely integral to the whole RDP. The RDP requires fundamental changes in the way that policy is made and programmes are implemented. Above all, the people affected must participate in decision-making. Democratisation must begin to transform both the state and civil society. Democracy is not confined to periodic elections. It is,

rather, an active process enabling everyone to contribute to reconstruction and development." (p.7).  
(For more detailed elaboration of direct and participatory forms of democracy and the role of mass and community based organisations see also SANCO 1994, and ANC/SACP/COSATU 1994).

In the past we tended to conceptualise change as a struggle to capture the commanding heights, as a struggle to nationalise ownership and control. We will be more faithful to the fundamentals of our national liberation and socialist heritage, and more useful to the actual tasks at hand, if we begin to think, as the RDP starts to think, of the main task as being about democratising power. All power.

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