



## 'AS WE WALK THIS FINAL MILE...'

I cannot over-emphasise the role international solidarity has played in the struggle for democracy and national liberation during the last one hundred years. The political culture of human rights, democratic values and social justice, with which the Socialist International has always been identified, has been most brutally assailed during the course of this century. The ability of those countries and peoples who have been victims of this assault to call upon support from the rest of humanity has been crucial to the successes that have been scored.

Two decades ago, before the end of the Salazar-Caetano dictatorship, it would have been impossible for the Socialist International to meet in Lisbon. The mutual support between the struggle for national liberation waged by the oppressed peoples of the Portuguese colonies and the democratic forces inside Portugal is a matter of historical record. It was the struggles waged by all peoples oppressed by the dictatorship, in the colonies and Portugal alike, supported by democrats throughout the world, that finally brought down the regime and thus also opened up the way for the dismemberment of a five-centuries-old Portuguese overseas empire.

And so it has been with the South African people's struggle for freedom and democracy. I want to take this opportunity to reiterate our profound appreciation of the support our struggle has enjoyed from the Socialist International. No South African democrat can forget the outstanding contribution made by the late Olof Palme, individually and as a leader of the Swedish Social Democratic Party, in support of the liberation struggle in South Africa. We remain equally indebted to the social democratic parties of the other Nordic countries. The firm stride South Africa has taken in its march to democracy would have been delayed if it had not been for the support our movement was able to marshal internationally. The agreement on a Transitional Executive Council, to take over some functions of government, will be written into law. It represents one of the most decisive moments in our country's transition from minority domination to democracy. It is a signal to the people of South Africa and of the world that change has reached the point of irreversibility. Though we do not want to underestimate the real and possible dangers still in our path, it was our view that the remaining international sanctions which played a certain important role in complementing the efforts of our own people in the struggle, could now be lifted. In my recent speech to the United Nations, I stressed that the lifting of sanctions must not be construed as a reward to the De Klerk regime for good behaviour. It is a measure consistent with the original purpose of sanctions, which was to support the struggle for democracy and freedom and not offer comfort to the minority regime.

International engagement with South Africa, which we wish to encourage, must in the first instance assist and strengthen the democratic forces in our country and empower the oppressed and disenfranchised. This entails finding creative ways of relating to emergent democratic institutions in both state structures and civil society and avoiding the temptation of restoring 'business as usual' to the minority state.

Though our assessment is that the process has now become irreversible, there remain,

*Nelson Mandela describes  
the crucial stages of South  
Africa's transition to  
democracy.*





*'Full of hope and confidence'*

nevertheless, a number of obstacles in the path of a smooth transition. Chief amongst these is the coalition of far-right forces, black and white, who are motivated by fear of or opposition to democracy. Both the Inkatha Freedom Party and its ally in the Concerned South Africa Group, the Conservative Party, have withdrawn from the multi-party negotiations forum. Violence, whose purpose is clearly to undermine the negotiation process, still plagues our country. There are wildly held though mistaken perceptions that the source of the violence is rivalry between the ANC and the IFP. The ANC has over three years conducted a dialogue with the leadership of the IFP. There have been three summits, as well as continued meetings at executive level between sub-committees of our respective national leaderships. The African National Congress has set in motion a range of initiatives to address the fears expressed by the IFP and its allies regarding the over-concentration of power in a future democratic constitution.

It is generally accepted that the broad constitutional principles agreed to in the multiparty negotiation forum contain elements of federalism. We cannot accept, however, the IFP's insistence that the powers of the constitution-making body be compromised by arriving at substantial constitutional arrangements even before the elections to that body have been held. In this regard the African National Congress has made far-reaching concessions. We have come out very clearly for a strong central government, a strong regional government, and a strong local government. In particular, we have proposed in our draft document that each region should have the power to make its own laws, to impose its own taxation, to control education, housing, health care, transport, the environment, communications, electricity, water, town planning... We are not prepared to go beyond this, because this is all that is required for a region to be able to run its own affairs within its own boundaries.

But we have had talks also with the white ultra-right, with a view to averting the dangers of civil war. We are pleased to note that these efforts have not been fruitless. We shall continue to explore the best ways of accommodating the apprehensions of the white minority about democracy without compromising the interests of the disenfranchised majority who are the ANC's constituency.

Our perspective remains that of a democratic constitution, freely drawn up by the elected representatives of the people of South Africa. The ANC wants to see a constitution that entrenches universally accepted democratic principles, the first among which is that the government must derive its authority from the consent of the governed. This implies regular free and open elections based on one person, one vote. The majority principle is central to any democratic political order. This cannot be over-



6 emphasised, especially in South Africa where the majority have been systematically excluded from the political process. However, democracy is not based solely on these principles. The ANC also stands for a Bill of Rights which will entrench the fundamental human rights of all citizens in the constitution, placing them beyond the reach of any government or temporary majorities that may emerge in the political process. Such a Bill of Rights would place constitutional constraints on the power of government and guarantee the citizen a number of inviolable rights. Needless to say such rights could be enjoyed in both an individual and a collective context.

The ANC has always recognised and celebrated the cultural and religious pluralism of our country. In our view a democratic constitution must give due recognition to this diversity and protect it. We advocate this not as a means of enhancing differences or to encourage discrimination, but rather to underscore the variety of human experience that determines individual as well as collective identities.

While the Bill of Rights must accommodate all, it cannot serve the purpose of the economic or political subordination of either the majority or the minority. Though it will be an instrument for stability, it must also empower the historically disenfranchised and serve as an instrument to effect change. We shall not accept conditions that will impair the ability of a future government to address the enormous challenges posed by poverty, deprivation and illiteracy in our country.

There are two more areas I want to mention. The first of these is Angola and Mozambique. As South Africans, we feel a particular responsibility in relation to these two countries, not least because of the role that the present South African government has played in their destabilisation. The prospects of peace in both countries will remain elusive as long as the key players are not compelled to live up to the agreements already reached. We want to lend our voices to the ongoing initiatives to bring peace to Angola. It is clear to us that the baseline for all negotiation must be the existing agreement and recognition of the democratic verdict of the Angolan electorate.

At a time when the seemingly intractable problems of the Middle East are close to resolution, it is ironic that conflicts around which workable agreements have been reached should still smoulder on. Everyone recognises the need for continuing international support in order to make the Middle East agreements workable. The same sort of commitment is required in the cases of Angola and Mozambique, to ensure that peace can be restored to those troubled lands.

The final issue I want to touch on is the future of South African democracy. We have argued and convinced a large number of our compatriots that democracy is the best investment we can collectively make in stability. It is not as readily recognised that stability will itself be a condition for the survival of democracy. South Africa's fledgling democracy will require a massive injection of development aid and investment in order to reverse the terrible legacy of apartheid. While the levels of poverty and misery found in our country prevail, South Africa will continue to live under the threat of tension and strife that could subvert democracy. Such development aid will have a 'knock-on' effect throughout the region, greatly enhancing the ability of the continent to deal with its human problems.

None of this can be realised without the victory of the democratic forces in South Africa's forthcoming elections. Some nineteen million people, who will make up 91 per cent of the electorate, will be voting for the first time. We are consequently faced with an immense task of educating and mobilising voters. I appeal to the parties of the Socialist International to find ways of assisting the ANC-led democratic electoral front. We will need both financial and material assistance on a massive scale. As we walk this final mile in our struggle for democracy we know we can rely on the continuing solidarity and support of our friends of long standing.

As an international movement, the Socialist International can also play a vital role in ensuring that the elections are indeed free and fair. South Africa requires a climate of free political activity so that all our citizens will be in a position to exercise their choice without fear of intimidation, violence or harassment. We invite you to send election monitors to observe both the election campaign and the contest to assist in ensuring such a climate.

We approach the challenge of democratic elections full of hope and confidence. It is the realisation of a goal for which we as a movement have striven for more than eighty-one years. ■