

Namibia with the presence of Cuban internationalists in Angola."

The President then added:

"The People's Republic of Angola is not seeking peace at any price."

PEOPLE'S WAR— the task is to make these words a reality



**Interview with
Comrade Joe Slovo**

Below SECHABA publishes an interview which first appeared in DAWN, the journal of Umkhonto we Sizwe, armed wing of the African National Congress. The interview was conducted with Comrade Joe Slovo. He was asked first for his assessment of the main features of the current politico-military situation in the Southern African region and he replied:

In general, it can be said that today in Southern Africa we are witnessing perhaps one of the most intense and co-ordinated offensives by imperialism. The purpose of this offensive is clear: it is to destroy Angola and Mozambique because of the advanced social systems which are being built there; to delay Namibian independence and when it comes to ensure the installation of a puppet regime; to destabilise all the surrounding states and make sure that they are compliant with the sub-system of imperialism which is centred on South Africa in the South; and above all to strangle our struggle.

This offensive shows itself in a number of ways and the world has seen in the recent period the kind of activities which are being undertaken in pursuit of this offensive. There is open aggression by South Africa against Angola. There has been the invasion of Lesotho with the massacre of not only ANC refugees but local Lesotho citizens; there are the Zimbabwe incursions; and apart from these direct acts of aggression there is aggression through the proxies of the South African racists and of imperialism generally.

There is Unita in Angola, MNR in Mozambique. There is the preparation of vast numbers of ex-Selous Scouts in various parts of South Africa, some of whom have already committed aggressive acts within Zimbabwe, admitted by the South African Defence Force. There is the encouragement, arming and support for the BCP based in South Africa which regularly makes raids into independent Lesotho.

Particularly sinister is the recent

development in the region in terms of which the Zairean government has embraced the regime whose actions in the Middle East have horrified the world, i.e. the Israel fascists. Recently, Shamir visited Zaire with a band of 90 military advisers and it is clear that what is intended there is to create another front against the embattled government of Angola if there should be a settlement in Namibia. In other words, to create military forces for the purpose of lending more support for the old, discredited FNLA.

Apart from these direct and open acts of actual military involvement there is also the economic and diplomatic offensive by imperialism, which uses its most important sector, i.e. racist South Africa. There too the purpose is clear; to undermine the resolve of independent Africa in support of our struggle. We have recently witnessed the pressures and threats against countries like Swaziland, and there are many other examples. It is clear in general that imperialism has chosen South Africa as one of the zones of time-strategic importance in the world, not only in Africa. And imperialism is devoting its considerable and many-sided resources to attempt to reverse the gains of the independence process and more particularly to destroy the new social systems that have emerged, and even more especially to destroy the revolutionary movements like Swapo and the ANC. It clearly must not be allowed to succeed, and one can say that it can be stopped, that with the continued, growing and necessary support of the socialist world, of the progressive forces in the rest of the world, and above all through our own struggle, this process can be stopped.

Coming to our country, I think to give the main characterisation in brief, one would say that first of all there is at the moment a serious economic crisis with the main burden of the crisis clearly falling on the black people and in particular, the black working class. For a short time (about a year ago) the rise in the price of gold

interrupted this decline in the economy. But now it is admitted on all sides that South Africa is in trouble. There is a negative growth rate, a decline in investments in the manufacturing sector, a growing deficit in the balance of payments — it had to be rescued recently by the International Monetary Fund which interestingly enough did not impose in South Africa the kind of conditions which it always attempts to impose on developing countries. It is only too ready to give South Africa an enormous loan without insisting on any of those conditions which we know usually amount to interference in the internal affairs of the country who accepts the loans.

In addition, there is a decline recently in foreign investments. If one leaves aside these high-sounding phrases about growth rate and so on and so forth, for the people it really adds up to one thing: A GROWING MISERY.

Unemployment is reaching the 3 million mark, the wage packets people are getting are buying less and less, consumer goods, rents are rising, transport costs are rising etc. In the military sphere, I think it is obvious to all that what we are witnessing in South Africa is the militarisation of the whole state. The defence costs are rising; there is the rising influence of the military apparatus at every level of the government; every white from the age of 16 to 60 is expected to answer the military call-up; and in general one can say the influence of the military as evidenced by the elevation of Malan, is rising and will continue to rise in a state which can really only depend for its survival, in the end, on brute force.

Basically, one can say the most important process taking place relates to the new constitutional proposals we have been hearing about in the recent period. We know that these proposals are basically designed to split the growing unity of the black people. I think that it is sad indeed that the Labour Party, which in the past has played such a positive role in the struggle against apartheid, has become tempted to

collaborate in what we can only describe as 'this grand design' of apartheid. And it is interesting to note in this regard, that no sooner was the decision taken from the Labour Party conference, than Botha himself, the government press, the US State Department, the British Foreign Office and other similar groups welcomed it with joy and celebration. We are confident that in the long run the Coloured people will not allow themselves to be used in this way. The only future of all the people, including the Coloured people, lies in **black unity**.

In general it can be said that in South Africa there is no way the racists can maintain their rule without black collaboration. Their strategy of survival rests on this: to win the Coloureds on their side, to win the Indians on their side, to build the power of their African puppets in the Bantustans, to fill the army, the police force and their security services with African, Indian and Coloured collaborators, and to win the Black middle class to their side by a few concessions.

Looking at the situation in South Africa, one can say that it is the special irony of South African history that the perpetuation of the whole structure of white domination — economic, military and political — depends upon the very people who are oppressed and exploited by it. When this truth is fully realised by all people and acted upon, there can be no doubt that racist power will crumble like a structure which is built on sand.

On the sharpening contradictions within the ruling Nationalist Party of Botha and Malan, Comrade Slovo had this to say:

Every serious revolutionary movement takes advantage of all divisions that may emerge within the ruling camp. For us too, the divisions we have seen developing within white politics are something we have to take into account very seriously. It is of advantage in the long run to the revolution-

ary struggle. There have been very important new divisions which have emerged particularly in the Nationalist Party. What is at the bottom of these divisions?

There is no time to make long analyses about this in the course of this short interview. In general, one can say that some of the divisions have an economic cause because although all classes within the white group benefit from white domination, they do not all benefit to the same extent and in the same way and therefore you have occasional policies advanced by the ruling class which may do a little bit of immediate damage say to the white working class, or to other groups within what one will broadly call the white ruling class, its appendages and its supporters.

There are of course other divisions which are not based in pure economics and these are connected very often just with the political power struggle which goes on inside and outside the ruling National Party. So one could say much more on this. But for us really the important question is whether we can conclude that within the sphere of white politics there is any hope of a fundamental change of course in favour of the people, I think the answer that we must give is an unqualified NO. There is no such prospect.

For example, our movement is trying to bring about a revolution, to put it simply. To put it simply again, ranged against us are forces who are trying to stop that revolution. Now, we know that even within our ranks, within the ranks of the revolutionary movement, we debate. We sometimes even disagree on how to make that revolution. But we are in one camp. We eventually reach a consensus and whatever differences of emphasis emerge from time to time, as to what is the best way of making the revolution, of advancing it at any given movement, we belong to the same camp. And in a sense, from a reverse point of view, it is the same with the enemy. There is basic agreement between them that the purpose is to try and stop that revolution.

Whether it is Treurnicht, whether it is Botha, whether it is the Republican Party, whether it is the PFP — the one thing that is common to all of them is that they belong to that group which is trying to stop our concept of the revolution.

Of course there are differences within their camp as there are differences within our ranks. There are differences between them on what is the best way of stopping that revolution, what is the best way of maintaining white domination. And therefore, much of the division within the camp of white politics relates to the very polemic, to the very debate on tactics, a debate on how far they must go at every given moment in pursuit of something which is common to all of them, i.e. to stop the creation within South Africa of one united non-racial democracy. And every serious force in white politics has a policy which is based on that objective, on that there can be no doubt.

There is one more thing to be said and that is the division we have noticed recently; the emergence of new political forces within the white community indicates strengthening of right-wing rather than left-wing tendencies. We can say further that because of the split-away of the rightists from the right-wing National Party, we can expect that so-called verligtes like Botha are going to be increasingly tempted to move more and more in the direction of the right in order to maintain their support amongst their traditional groups in the town and countryside. We can see this process taking place in the so-called liberal elements in the white community. Even the PFP which we have never regarded as a revolutionary force, but has expressed some liberal and humane concepts in the past, is now being pushed in this direction. It was disgusting to read how their spokesmen praised the murderers of the South African Defence Force when they moved to murder the men, women and children in Maseru. It is equally disgusting to read in the columns of the Financial Mail, which in the past has

projected itself broadly as the supporter of Oppenheimer, the PFP etc., when it is inciting the government to hunt and murder us wherever we are.

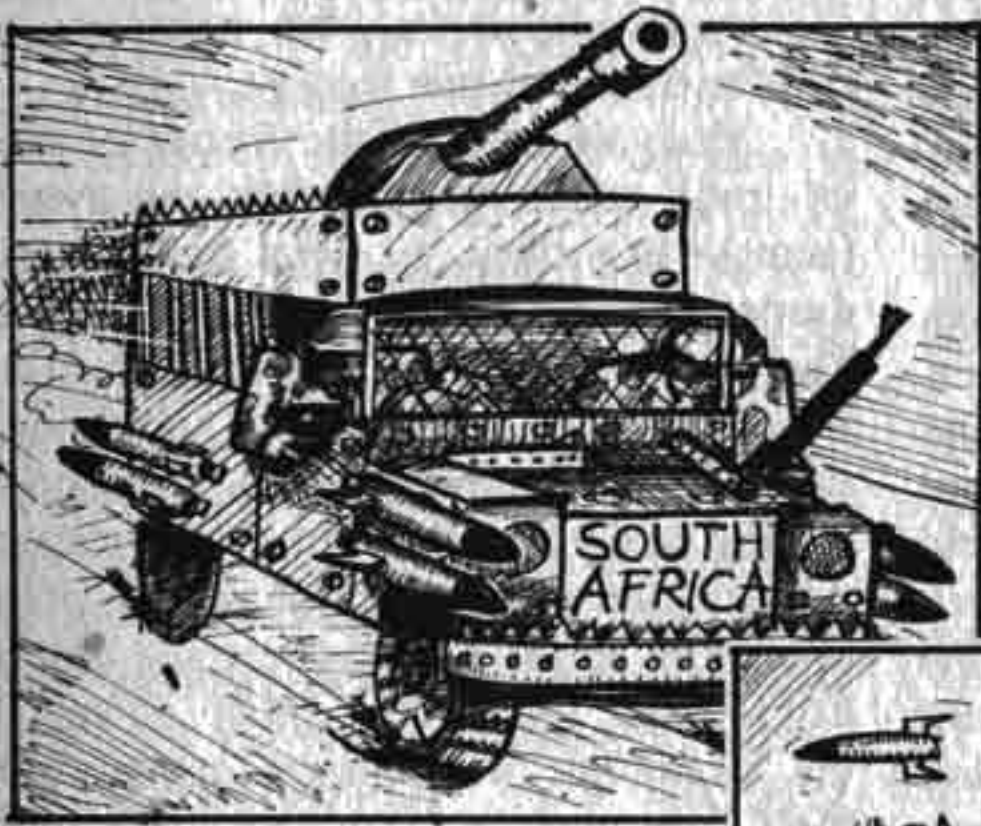
So, to end up, where there are divisions we must not ignore them — they weaken the enemy. Even divisions within the right weaken the enemy. But the dangerous thing would be for us to expect, as some people sometimes are misled to expect, that within the sphere of white politics there will be some kind of move or there is some kind of potential for a real advance in the direction of fundamental change in South Africa. That can only take place through our struggle and through our power.

Comrade Slovo explained the connection between the tasks of this year and those of last year as follows:

In brief I may say that looking at the 3 year period you referred to, it was a period of perhaps the most amazing advance and achievement in the whole history of our organisation. It is true to say that it is during this 3 year period that the ANC was accepted as never before as the only serious opponent to the racist regime. It is regarded everywhere as a viable alternative force for future power, by the world, by Africa and more importantly by our own people.

This has happened not because people have suddenly come to understand what we are and the correctness of our policies. It has happened because people have seen what we have done in action. People have witnessed the calibre of our leadership inside the country; the readiness of our cadres to sacrifice even to the extent of giving their lives in the course of liberation. It is this revolutionary practice and not just revolutionary theory which has won for us this unchallenged place.

In the political field our underground has grown and has over the period more and more been able to provide guidance to mass



struggles. In the military field we have proved that there is no target beyond our reach; whether be it Sasol, Voortrekkerhoogte or nuclear power stations. And the connection between the tasks of this year and those of last year is that we have to build on these achievements. The slogan of united action is appropriate and is the key because, as I have already mentioned, the enemy has, as never before, embarked upon a policy of dividing the black people. Therefore the struggle against Bantustans, against the new constitutional proposals, against the community council, is inseparable and indivisible.

It is not enough to just keep on saying we are one people in one country, we must ensure that we act in that way. We have to ensure that the one people in South Africa,

consisting in the first place of the black oppressed, of the African, Indian and Coloured people, together with those sections of whites who are prepared to come in, in an unqualified manner, and join the revolutionary struggle, act in unity. It is the united action of these forces which is the key to this coming period. And in general, although it has been rephrased and reworded, it is now the slogan of united action, it is basically the continuation of what we set ourselves in 1982, only more so.

Comrade Slovo looked at the question of the organisation of trade unionism in South Africa and assessed the problems confronting our revolution in the vital field of working class mobilisation in the following way:

Like all projections into the future, the prospects depend upon our liberation movement. Left to itself, without the participation and leadership of our revolutionary movement, we cannot expect great things from the great events that are happening in South Africa, i.e. the growth in the organisation of the black workers. I say this advisedly and let me explain why. We know that there has been an enormous and unprecedented leap forward in the field of trade unionism in the past few years. It is difficult even to catch up with the statistics. The last time I came across them I counted that there were over half-a-million black workers organised into trade unions. I believe it is not being unrealistic or over-optimistic to say that within a year or two we can expect this figure to jump to over a million, an immense force. And its not only trade union organisations. We have seen in the past year, as a result of the deteriorating economic situation to which I have already referred, the growth of militant strike action. I think we can also project in the coming year that this process will be deepened, because the economic conditions are going to continue to deteriorate and the workers will of necessity be thrown into struggle, to win back the pay rise which they have achieved in the past and which has now been eroded by inflation and other factors, and to improve their conditions generally.

So it is clear to everyone that all this creates an enormous potential for the advance of the revolutionary movement because we know, and we have said so over and over again, that is the working class which is the backbone of the alliance of classes which constitute the liberation forces. It is the working class which is the only force that will guarantee that our victory will lead to real social emancipation, will lead to the abolition of that kind of exploitation which is at the foundation of racism, and not just a regime which will just replace the one set of exploiters for another, even though they might be of

a different colour. So we all understand that the working class has this most profound and fundamental role to play.

When we look at the figures of growth in trade union membership, or even the increase in strikes, we must understand the deeper meaning of what is happening. There have been more strikes in the United Kingdom in the same period, and in France than in South Africa. They have not led to any basic leap forward in the participation of the working class at the political level. The social democratic trade unions in Europe are among the most powerful in the world but trade union organisation in itself has not led to the revolutionary advance of the working class or its ideology. So what I am trying to say is that on its own the trade union movement does not spontaneously generate revolutionary politics. It does not lead to more advanced revolutionary action. The fact that it is there, and it is growing, that the workers are organised, are embattled with the bosses, provides an enormous potential for the future.

But whether that potential is exploited or not depends upon the politics of trade unions and the ideology of trade unionism, and that in turn depends upon the role of political movements. It depends on our role as the revolutionary movement to provide leadership and guidance to this mighty force which is emerging amongst the workers. It depends on us having the capacity of injecting the right kind of politics and thinking into the working class; and helping to make it understand that it is not there just to engage in what is basically the famous struggles for higher wages, which we support and which are necessary, struggles for better conditions which in themselves can become schools for making the working class receptive to a deeper understanding of the workings of the system that they need to overthrow. But basically if we leave it at that, it is even possible that trade unions which are not motivated by correct politics can

become collaborationist groups. They can become part of the so-called reformist lobby in South Africa.

Therefore it depends on workers in South Africa, on the advanced workers, it depends on our movement, to be able to connect the struggle that is going on, the organisation that is going on, with the more long-term objective of getting rid of the racist regime and the system it upholds. Finally, trade unionism which is divided as black trade unionism is in South Africa today is trade unionism which can be more easily exploited for the very purpose I referred to, by the enemy. Therefore, one of the fundamental tasks facing us as a movement, as workers in South Africa, is to try to bring about unity between what exists and to go forward in unity; and to create that kind of trade union movement in South Africa which will really mould the working class into a force which in the long run is unconquerable.

And finally he saw the further unfolding of our people's war, particularly its military aspects, as follows:

I am pleased you have used the words *people's war* because it is these very words *people's war* that define our tasks in the further unfolding of the armed struggle. Our tasks are more and more to involve the people in actual participation and not just as sympathetic onlookers, not just as masses who welcome what we are doing, not just as people who cheer the brave deeds of our cadres and who weep when any of them are caught and destroyed by the enemy. If we are talking in terms of *people's war* as we are talking in terms of *people's war*, the task in the unfolding of the struggle is to make those words a reality. What we have done in the last few years has made this possible more than ever before. It has made possible for us to transform what we are doing into something which approaches much more closely the

words *people's war*. I've already referred to some of our great achievements in the operations we have carried out, but in every struggle we know that the very success of your actions by the use of a specific set of tactics changes the situation and poses new tasks and even new tactics.

President Tambo has spoken about this at a number of meetings and public declarations in the recent period. He has made clear in recent speeches (one example is the funeral of our comrades in Lesotho) that we are entering a stage in which we have to answer the enemy's murderous and terrorist tactics against civilians, against women, against children, against unarmed refugees, by more than just hitting their economic targets.

We have been very patient. It is the history of the ANC, which some have criticised that it has a lot of patience. For the first 50 years of its existence, it had the patience to hope, and to organise the people in an attempt to bring about a change without illegalities, without violence. In the first phase of our armed struggle there has been the patience — and we have been praised for it — to try to carry out our activities trying to minimise the loss of innocent blood. Indeed, this burden which we have imposed on ourselves has prevented us from doing even greater things. There is no example the enemy can point to of us having killed or murdered a white woman, or a white child as they did in Maseru. There is no example the enemy can point to where we have in our actions deliberately fired into residences, being completely impervious to who is in there, even whether the people there have anything to do with the enemy. We have conducted ourselves in this way.

But as the Manifesto of Umkhonto we Sizwe says, the people's patience is not endless and clearly the time has come when we must raise our struggle to a qualitatively higher level.