

J.F. As I say, I wish that I'd - I think I must ask you about the kind of issues in in this, you know, the (Art Club?) document. I mean it's just that so many people

(tape off)

You can define the terms a bit, I mean, is what we're talking about or what I'm saying I want to talk to you about called non-racialism? Is that the same thing as the national question?

F.M. No, it's not exactly the same thing. I mean, non-racialism is non-racial outlook - ideological question - an attitude towards a certain situation, a given situation. By national question I have in mind the question of - the - of - and overcoming the national and racial inequality in South Africa - Its disparancies - the differences - and the constitutional racism of the regime. And the question of differences between the different ethnic groups - black on the one hand and whites on the other hand. How do we resolve that problem?

Of course it's through armed struggle - It's through national liberation - It's through the implementation of the Freedom Charter - and all the other things which are there. But of course, freedom of equality before the law - it's different from equality in practice. You can be all equal before the law, but if you have the means of production and I don't have - I'll - if you have you'll be my employer; I'll be your employee and that actually means there's no equality between the two of us. There will be need for the ANC at some stage after the revolution to concentrate more on the development of the blacks - in the interest of the revolution - that is, to bridge the gap between black and whites. And in some instances that might even mean arresting the development of the whites in the interest of the development of the blacks. Not being anti-white as such, but actually in the interest of relations between black and whites - so that this yawning gap should be overcome. That is briefly and crudely what I understand by the national question.

J.F. And do you see as you look at the South African political landscape today - do you see opposition to the way the ANC would resolve the national question? Or make efforts to to deal with that - just in terms of the different political groups, groupings that exist?

F.M. I see opposition of course. I mean, they say the ruling power never really hands over power willingly - it has to be forced to do that. But even if they are forced, they will try and do something to to sabotage the the new government.

I was talking to some whites from South Africa recently, and they told me that they're convinced change in South Africa is inevitable - but their role is to make that change as slow as possible. That is already a problem. If it's inevitable they make it slow - and if we take over they will try and sabotage.

And because of apartheid the industries in South Africa are in the hands of the whites - I don't mean owning them - talking about the managerial staff and all the other things. When we take over we might not have enough man-power

F.M. to run Sasol or the - run Vanderbylpark and all these heavy industries. We might need expertise from abroad or perhaps use the whites who are there in South Africa. And we're not sure all these people are on our side - this is one of the problems and that's why it'll be necessary for the ANC to educate as many people as possible so that all those industries are in the hands of ANC people.

Though of course other groupings like (Egarte?) and these other things - I don't think in a free South Africa we'll have something like UNITA - because UNITA is there because it's financed, deployed and trained by the South African Defence Force. And if we liberate South Africa there won't be anything like that - it will mean the end of UNITA; the end of MNR and things like that. But some of these forces might still be there at the beginning of the revolution and they might cause disruption. We'll have to deal with them thoroughly. These are some of the problems we'll be getting.

And of course the question of land distribution is not an easy problem. There'll be initial problems - trying to redistribute the land - trying to educate the people: politically and otherwise - introducing new machinery and all these other things. Technology might cause problems.

And even the economy itself will have to undergo drastic changes and they may lead to sort of lowering of standards. And we might even call on our people to tighten their belts so that we can overcome these initial problems easily. Most of that we are engaging in armed struggle - quite a lot of industry and economy will be damaged and we'll have to - I wouldn't like to use the word inherit because we won't be inheriting - we'll be taking over actually - it's a new system. Anyway we'll take over from the government perhaps a partially destroyed economy which we'll have to repair and build up and so forth. And you can't fill the stomachs of the people with slogans - people want milk, people want food, people want mealies, want everything. They might start complaining - so there's this question of increasing the productivity but at the same time making sure that the development is balanced - tightening you belt and also increasing productivity. I suspect those are the initial teething problems we might have - but they are teething problems I suspect.

J.F. What about that issue of working class leadership? Is that something that you find - that you debate when you talk with other people in the ANC? Do you look at the debates about it within South Africa - and some of the published material and - how do you respond to that call for working class leadership - that expressed from the left in South Africa saying: We're worried about whether that will be guaranteed under an ANC government?

F.M. Ja, well people will talk about this working class leadership. Actually they look at the problem very abstractly. They, they talk about working class leadership which is not fighting for national liberation but for socialism by the way.. They want socialism now. That is there against what we call a two stage theory - national liberation leading to social transformation. They want direct transition to socialism - the workers must lead this socialist revolution. That is their formula.

- F.M. Of course, all this question is a very sectarian approach because the people who are involved in the struggle today are talking abstractly about concrete people - they are not all working class people. Bishop Tutu is not working class; Alan Boesak is not working class. There are many others - intellectuals - who are not working class people but they're very much interested in the question of national liberation from apartheid. And we have to move with all these people towards a future which is enshrined in the Freedom Charter. Therefore when you talk of working class leadership you should look at working class leadership in that context: the working class championing the cause for national liberation. That is where these other people go wrong.
- J.F. Do you ever worry that some of the concepts that we've been talking about - non-racialism - may in fact be destroyed or weakened by just the very actions of the the government itself? I mean, if you look at what's going on in South Africa right now - will non-racialism survive an experience where where it's such draconian measures?
- (Tape off)
- Your ever worry that so much of what we've been talking about in terms of building the kind of non-racialism which will be important in building South Africa's future - may actually be broken down by the methods of the regime itself? You know, the way blacks are being treated right now?
- F.M. Ja, of course, I mean, right through the years the racist regime has been very worried about the non-racialism of the movement because it sees this as a real threat to its existence - because the very mere existence of apartheid is a violation of the principles of non-racialism. It has been doing this through many ways - wither bantustans or this tri-camaral(?) parliament or whatever means they would get. I mean, they would do whatever they can to destroy the the feelings of non-racialism within the movement. But because of the deep roots of the ANC within the community, within the people, it is impossible to destroy the feelings of non-racialism. They might weaken them in some sections of the community but with the growth of the strength of the ANC this loss of position can always be regained.
- J.F. What what is that source of your confidence that non-racialism will continue to to be a force? What makes - I mean, you must see people coming out of the country right now - you know, possibly more when you go to Africa. I mean, there are lots of people who have to leave who are joining M K or who are going to come into your structures. What makes those people that you see non-racialist, non-racial? I mean, they've been brutally treated and yet you're saying that they support it. What what is it? Is it a theoretical, or is it experiential, is it just the ANC says it's non-racial? Is it - were - were those pe- those younger ones coming unlike yourself - have they actually worked in a non-racial way and is that the origin? I mean, what what is the source of it?
- F.M. Well, the source, I think it's the ANC's commitment to the policies of non-racialism. Even during the darkest days - this recent past - the ANC's not shifted a bit from the principles of non-racial - racialism.
- (Tape off)

J.F. You're talking about the strength of non-racialism.

F.M. Right. The commitment of the ANC to the principles of non-racialism - even during our darkest days in the recent past - I'm thinking of Soweto - I'm thinking of the killings since September '84 - the ANC has not shifted an inch from the principles of non-racialism. What I think will sustain these principles is the the organisation of the movement within the country - the strength of the move- movement within the ordinary working class and peasant and the ordinary people in South Africa. And the fighting spirit of the people - fighting for non-racial ideals. People are dying for the Freedom Charter - Solomon Mhlangu and many others after them were murdered, executed. Others are killed in the streets, maimed and all these other things. What are they being killed for? For non-racial ideals. And the people don't easily forget these things.

So in their mem- memory, that is collective memory of the people, the people think about the Freedom Charter not as an ideal or a document for the future but this is something we are dying for, this is something we are being killed for. And in that confrontation the the the convictions of the people are strengthened. And what is also a re- re-inforcing factor is the fact that the coloureds, the Indians and some democratic whites are involved in the struggle - the Barbara Hogans - and Ahmed Kathrada(?) and others who who have been killed in the struggle. And others are operating internally under those difficult conditions - M K Unit(?) and all these other people involved in that struggle. So I think all these factors are actually the roots or the anchor on which our battleship of non-racialism is is anchored.

J.F. What - just a few little points to follow up on. What - what is - what do you hope to achieve with with Sechaba? I mean, you talk about people who are involved in experience of struggle. I mean, it's it's not everyone in South Africa can even read. You know the're the're a lot of people struggling who would even be in that milieu to read. I mean, what what are you - when you put together an issue of Sechaba - what is your goal? What are you hoping to achieve with it?

F.M. Well, Sechaba - we're addressing ourselves to the international community - we're addressing ourselves to ANC people and to the people inside the country. It's true not everybody can read English but the ANC has made provision for that because there's Radio Freedom which is broadcast to the country in African languages. You don't need to read, you don't need to be literate to to understand the message of Radio Freedom. I must admit it's not adequate, it's not enough but Sechaba is playing a very important role in this struggle.

J.F. OK. So you've been editor of Sechaba since '77?

F.M. Mmmm.

J.F. And that's your current position?

F.M. Ja.

J.F.

Ja, I think we could go on and on but I know you don't want me to, so I think that should be it. What I'd just like to conclude with is to just ask if I could kind of ask you to sum up and just kind of articulate the theory of nation and class. I was particularly interested in in the concept that the working class be free of nationalism - and then this concept here about - that black workers can't be kept in a cocoon. I mean, I haven't actually asked you to deal specifically with the kind of National Forum or ultra-left critique. But I don't exactly know what you're saying - they're saying - is meant by keeping workers in a national cocoon. Anyway, if you could just pick up on some of the issues talked about and this theoretical piece - and how they relate to non-racialism and the national question.

F.M.

Well, I suppose one has to talk about the relationship between African nationalism and non-racialism or internationalism. In a situation like in South Africa where the blacks are nationally oppressed, brutally degraded, and exploited as class, it is very important to note that African nationalism, which is an ideology reflecting an unresolved national question by the way - African nationalism is not necessarily an antidote to internationalism, to non-racialism or to to communism.

All what one has to take into consideration in South Africa is that African nationalism emerged and developed in a context of a multi-racial society - I'm using the word multi-racial deliberately. That means with the growth of the ANC, the strength of the ANC, the ANC bringing people into the organisation - I mean now - coloureds and Indians and democratic whites - the ANC being a non-racial organisation, an anti-racist organisation - African nationalism has to take into consideration these factors - that means the multiplicity of the ethnic groups in the South Africa situation: Hindus, Moslems, and other cultural groups have come into the organisation. This situation never really faced the progressive forces in Kenya or Tanzania or even in Zimbabwe for the simple reason that the coloureds and the Indians in those areas and the whites never fought in a meaningful way on the side of the Africans - individuals did -

but in South Africa you've got masses of coloureds and Indians on the side of the blacks, killed, arrested, imprisoned for the same cause - and some democratic whites. The whites were involved in our struggle - not that many. But compared with the rest of Africa under colonial rule when the Africans were fighting for national independence - I'm talking about independent Africa now - they are relatively more. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the whites in South Africa are relatively more than the white settlers in the other independent African countries.

Anyway, what I'm saying is that African nationalism in South Africa has to take these factors into consideration and that is what reinforces the the non-racial aspect of African nationalism in South Africa. What I'm saying is that the national question in South Africa - the struggle for the overthrow of white oppression, white domination, - is closely interlinked with the questions of internationalism, with the questions of non-racialism.

F.M. Because in South Africa, as I said before, we are fighting to liberate the Africans, the oppressed people in South Africa. But at the same time the liberation of South Africa will in the - will actually mean the freeing of independent Africa from the threat of apartheid. I'm thinking of Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and so forth - they're independent nationally but their independence is threatened by the existence of apartheid. And with Angola it's even more clearly - because parts of Angola which occupied by South Africa. What I'm saying, we're fighting against apartheid to liberate ourselves. But at the same time we're fighting to emancipate the independent African countries from the threat of apartheid of from the sheer destabilisation from apartheid. We're also fighting for their cause and that is why they're committed to our struggle.

This brings me to perhaps - can we just stop here?

J.F. Ja.

F.M. Perhaps this should be said by the ANC - that it should be emphasized that South Africa is a highly developed country in that region. South Africa was developed not only by South Africans but millions and millions of workers from Angola, from Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Swaziland, even as far as Tanganyika - came to South Africa, worked in the mines and developed that country. And by doing so they were contributing to the development of the country. Instead of thanking them the racist regime is attacking these countries. It should be thanking them for developing the country.

What I'm saying - the ANC will have a moral obligation to regain the confidence of this country by recognizing the role they have played - the role their workers have played in the development of South Africa. That might not be non-racialism as such but it's definitely internationalism - the internationalism of the ANC. The recognition of the fact that these people contributed to our development and therefore we have a moral obligation and responsibility towards these countries. We can't attack them; that is the last thing we would do - in fact, we'll never do that. On the contrary, we'll help develop where we can.

J.F. OK.

F.M. So I went beyond non-racialism - I talked of internationalism. I suppose the two are connected, isn't it?

J.F. Mmm. And do you, do you think the kind of debates about non-racialism that go on in some circles in South Africa - kind of National Forum of kind of ultra-lefts, academics, those kinds of debates maybe maybe among working class blacks, I don't know, I don't know - if they, you know, come back to work after a stay away and say you know: These whites are, you know, they they've just can't deal with it and we have to have more ANC (...?) against whites or whatever. I mean, I don't know if there's any area where you think there's a debate that in any way threatens this, the substance of the non-racialism you've been articulating.

F.M. Well actually, you see, non-racialism of [redacted] or Neville Alexander, I mean such people, - it's so abstract it is actually meaningless. Because [redacted] - I believe is not an Indian he's black, you know, - that type of thing - Neville Alexander is the same thing - with him it even goes further than that - I mean to deny the existence of races and all these other things. But that's not what I'm talking about.

What I'm saying is that non-racialism doesn't necessarily mean that you should deny your national and ethnic origin. In fact, what you should do is to move with your national ethnic group towards the others and build a one South Africa which is a South Africa composed of different ethnic groups because they are reality - they are not a creation of the mind. Those ethnic groups exist in reality and one can't run away from that reality. To say that I'm not Xhosa, I'm African - Sat [redacted] is not Indian, he's black - I mean, it's to run away from reality. Reality is that there are ethnic groups in South Africa - different - there are whites who exist in reality. The whites can't just say: I'm not white, I'm a South African. I mean, that's meaningless - it's just rhetoric. What is important is to mobilize this group and move them in one stream and the people are now in motion, in a flux - and it is the task of the ANC to really show the way, not only to the blacks but to the whites as well. The whites need the ANC.

J.F. OK. Well, we're destined to stop there. Can I just ask you some things - just not on tape. Just to follow up on - have you..? First of all, that Padmore - that book you mentioned....

(End of Side 1, Tape 3)