

The Struggle for South Africa's Liberation: Success and Failure

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This paper was presented at a seminar at the University of Johannesburg on Wednesday, August 5, 2015. Albie Sachs and Ben Turok served as discussants and a lively, disputatious but comradely exchange followed – with some challenging interventions from the large audience as well.

It is true that I'm from Canada and only arrived in Africa, in Tanzania to be specific, in 1965 at the age of 27; nonetheless, it was in Africa that I grew up, at least politically; not, initially, in South Africa but in Tanzania where I taught for many years and in working with Mozambique's [FRELIMO](#) in exile in DSM; in visiting the liberated areas of a new Mozambique in Tete Province in 1972; and, later, in teaching in a liberated Mozambique at the Universidade de Eduardo Mondlane.



Of course I visited South Africa throughout these years too, even once, in the 1980s, doing so illegally (having been refused a visa), I've had books banned by the apartheid government, and I've taught here in Jo'burg, just down the road at Wits at the turn of the present century. But, in the 1960s and the 1970s, my "African education" began not with the Freedom Charter but with Fanon, Cabral and Nyerere. We were aware of what the Freedom Charter had to say in 1955 needless to say and honoured it. But in Dar es Salaam we were beginning to judge movements throughout the continent not by what they said in the heat of struggle but by what they actually did once they were in power. And we were looking for voices – Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral and Julius Nyerere were three such voices – within the camp of liberation that could instruct us.

Let me also make a further specific introductory point if I may. Let me, in fact, pick up from where I left off my brief appearance at the South Africa Book Fair last weekend and, assuming that there's not too much overlap of audience, even use the same entry point. It seems appropriate to do so in part because I have been instructed by my old friend David Moore to change my topic from the one I had proposed (that being entitled "The Struggle for Southern African Liberation: Success or Failure") to "South Africa's Freedom Charter and its legacy: reflections on anti-colonial programmes, post-colonial practices, and possibilities for the future" – in order to fit in with the broader topic of the 60th Anniversary of the Freedom Charter already established as to the overall theme of the seminar series of which my presentation now makes a contribution.

Freedom Charter: Clause by Clause

I shall do so, albeit only in part. As you know the launch of the [Freedom Charter](#) occurred in June, 1955, and the anniversary occurred a month ago. But since I wasn't here a month ago to sample the full range of opinion expressed, I felt free to harken back to an earlier occasion, precisely 30 years ago to be exact – to the moment of the 30th anniversary of the Freedom Charter and to a book of the time, one edited by Raymond Suttner and Jeremy Cronin, that marked that event. And in that book was a text by Steve Tshwete, a Robben Island graduate and an ANC National Executive Committee member who died in 2002. This important text, although it is little noted now, was entitled “Understanding the Charter Clause by Clause,” and it is one that can help me to bridge from the Charter to the present moment of possible recasting of the politics of a new South Africa. For Tshwete, speaking of the Freedom Charter, pointedly wrote:

This is a document of minimum and maximum demands – maximum for the progressive bourgeoisie... and minimum for the working class [and the poor?]. In other words, the bourgeoisie would not strive for more than is contained in the Charter, while the working class will have sufficient cause to aspire beyond its demands.

What happens after the implementation of the people's charter – whether there is a socialist democracy or not – will certainly depend on the strength of the working class itself in the class alliance that we call a people's democracy.

If the working class is strong enough, then a transition to a working class democracy will be easily effected. At that point in time there will be realignment of forces. Mobilization will be on a purely class basis and the working class ideology will constitute the engine of transition.

But if, on the other hand, the working class has not been prepared for this historical role and is thus weak in the people's democracy, the bourgeoisie will turn the tables. There will be a relapse to pure capitalist relations of production. The Freedom Charter takes the working class a step nearer to its historical goal, while it does not tamper much with the bourgeois order. [\[1\]](#)

I also found a further quote to my purpose from no less an authority than Thabo Mbeki – Mbeki as cited by William Gumede in his book entitled *Thabo Mbeki and the Battle for the Soul of the ANC*:

Thus as early as the late-1980s (writes Gumede) Mbeki could be found 'privately telling friends that he believed the ANC alliance with the Communist Party would have to be broken at some point, especially if the ANC gained power in a post-apartheid South Africa... [T]he ANC would govern as a centre-left party, keeping some remnants of trade union and SACP support, while the bulk of the alliance would form a left-wing workers' party'![\[2\]](#)

Let me suggest then: Is this not, in South Africa, precisely the moment, anticipated by both Tshwete and Mbeki (although they would not have phrased the point quite as I do), when the country must choose between, on the one hand, the “exhausted” and, for many intents and purposes, “failed” nationalism of the ANC and, on the other, and however unclear its precise outlines may still be, the broad and inchoate movement-cum-party-in-the-making that is seeking to grope its way forward toward focusing the new and much more radical

politics of South Africa's proletariat and precariat^[3] (what the Democratic Left Front/DLF, for one, is always careful to term, precisely, the politics of "the working class and the poor."

In short, I feel compelled, in talking about South Africa, to step outside the Freedom Charter (while also acknowledging the resonance of Tshwete's point that the Charter is, first and foremost, most promising to an aspirant South African bourgeoisie). For far more promising of producing a deeper understanding of just what happened here was to invoke the names and writings of militants from the sixties, in particular those of the aforementioned Fanon, Cabral and Nyerere. Recall, for starters, Fanon's perspective on apparent African independence, an "independence" that in his mind had merely produced a "false decolonization." For he found that little had changed, with the new African elites comfortably stepping into privileged positions as mere "intermediaries," acting in their own class interests but also on behalf of capital:

The national middle class discovers its historic mission: that of intermediary. Seen through its eyes, its mission has nothing to do with transforming the nation; it consists, prosaically, of being the transmission lines between the nation and a capitalism, rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the masque of neo-colonialism. The national bourgeoisie will be quite content with the role of the Western bourgeoisie's business agent, and it will play its part without any complexes in a most dignified manner. But the same lucrative role, this cheap-jack's function, this meanness of outlook and this absence of all ambition symbolize the incapability of the national middle class to fulfil its historic role as a bourgeoisie.^[4]

Indeed that, in Fanon's eyes, is why decolonization came so quickly in the end in Africa north of the Zambesi:

[A] veritable panic takes hold of the colonialist governments in turn. Their purpose is to capture the vanguard, to turn the movement of liberation to the right and disarm the people: quick, quick, let's decolonize. Decolonize the Congo before it turns into another Algeria. Vote the constitutional framework for all Africa, create the French Communauté, renovate that same Communauté, but for God's sake let's decolonize quick.

On this model, one might hypothesize, that when a capitalist-friendly ANC was beckoned, as Fanon had once said, to "settle the problem" around "the green baize table before any regrettable act has been performed or irreparable gesture made," the stage was also being set for just such eventual accession by the ANC to formal power.

For consider also Cabral's skepticism about many if not most national liberation struggles themselves. Indeed, he went so far as to wonder whether, in the form it took, the "national liberation struggle [was] not [in fact] an imperialist initiative," suggesting that

... there is something wrong with the simple interpretation of the national liberation movement as a revolutionary trend. The objective of the imperialist countries was to prevent the enlargement of the socialist countries, to liberate the reactionary forces in our country which were being stifled by colonialism, and to enable these forces to ally themselves with the international bourgeoisie.^[5]

Moreover, I also once heard Julius Nyerere make the following very Fanonist statement (as summarized in the TANU newspaper, *The Nationalist*, of the time) at a large outdoor meeting in Dar es Salaam: in 1967 in invoking TANU's new Arusha Declaration, itself designed to begin to chart a socialist future for Tanzania,

Nyerere called on the people of Tanzania to have great confidence in themselves and to safeguard the nation's hard-won freedom. Mwalimu [Nyerere] warned that the people should not allow their freedom to be pawned as most of their leaders were purchasable. He warned further that in running the affairs of the nation the people should not look on their leaders as saints and prophets.

The President stated that the attainment of freedom in many cases resulted merely in the change of colours, white faces to black faces without ending exploitation and injustices, and above all without the betterment of the life of the masses. He said that while struggling for freedom the objective was clear but it was another thing to remove your own people from the position of exploiters. [6]

Steve Biko and Black Consciousness

Are such images of a presumed African liberation north of the Zambezi not also more accurate about what has actually happened in South and southern Africa than anything to be found in the Freedom Charter. Indeed, one could start to paint a clearer picture of the liberation struggle and its outcome in South Africa not with the Freedom Charter but with something once said by – this time by a South African – Steve Biko, the key intellectual force behind the Black Consciousness Movement here in the 1970s.

Thus, in an interview of the time, [7] Biko was asked to identify “what trends or factors in it ... you feel are working toward the fulfillment of the long term ends of blacks,” and he responded that the regime's deep commitment to a racial hierarchy had actually acted as “a great leveler” of class formation amongst the black population and dictated “a sort of similarity in the community” – such that the “constant jarring effect of the [apartheid] system” produced a “common identification” on the part of the people. In contrast, he suggested that in the more liberal system envisaged by the Progressive Party of the time, “you would get stratification creeping in, with your masses remaining where they are or getting poorer, and the cream of your leadership, which is invariably derived from the so-called educated people, beginning to enter bourgeois ranks, admitted into town, able to vote, developing new attitudes and new friends ... a completely different tone.”

For South Africa is, he continued,

one country where it would be possible to create a capitalist black society. If the whites were intelligent. If the Nationalists were intelligent. And that capitalist black society, black middle-class, would be very effective at an important stage. Primarily because a hell of a lot of blacks have got a bit of education – I'm talking comparatively speaking to the so-called rest of Africa – and a hell of a lot of them could compete favourably with whites in the fields of industry, commerce and professions. And South Africa could succeed to put across to the world a pretty convincing integrated picture with still 70 per cent of the population being underdogs.

Indeed, it was precisely because the whites were so “terribly afraid of this” that South Africa

represented, to Biko, “the best economic system for revolution.” For “the evils of it are so pointed and so clear, and therefore make teaching of alternative methods, more meaningful methods, more indigenous methods even, much easier under the present sort of setup.”

[W]hat occurred, simultaneously, was arecolonization of South Africa by capital, with the ANC/SACP acting as the crucial intermediaries in guaranteeing such an outcome and here the vast mass of the South African population the real losers.

Yet it is of crucial importance to note here that Biko was both *correct and incorrect* at the same time. “Apartheid” did not in fact stay in place so firmly or so long as to teach the black population that “black consciousness” would be, had to be, a necessary vector of transformation in South Africa. At the same time, he was correct in seeing that the one way open to the dominant classes was that of defusing black anger and growing resistance in South Africa by dumping apartheid and opting for a free-standing capitalist system of colour-blind class distinction. Then, and in line with Cabral’s worst nightmares, they could even move to invite the ANC inside the tent of a new post-apartheid system of class power and distinction. Of course, on Biko’s analysis, they quite simply could not follow such a course, of that he was confident. And yet, *pace* Biko, this is precisely the transition that did occur. In the end there were numerous complications, especially between 1990 and 1994 – as many whites of the Far Right of the National Party (including even De Klerk), the Freedom Front, and the AWB remained slow to accept the new logic of any settlement on capital’s new terms. Nonetheless, up to a point, this process did produce a successful transition beyond apartheid and a step forward: I would be the last to argue otherwise. But what occurred, simultaneously, was a *recolonization* of South Africa by capital, with the ANC/SACP acting as the crucial intermediaries in guaranteeing such an outcome and here the vast mass of the South African population the real losers.

How else to explain the feeble result that the transition away from apartheid has produced in South Africa? How else, indeed, could we interpret it? Note on this latter subject the attempted explanation of no less a militant than Ronnie Kasrils.[\[8\]](#) Thus Kasrils has written of the ANC and the SACP having “chickened out,” identifying the period 1991–96, what he labels as having been the ANC’s “Faustian moment,” a moment when “the battle for the ANC’s soul got under way, and was eventually lost to corporate power; we were entrapped by the neoliberal economy – or, as some today cry, we ‘sold our people down the river.’”

[W]hat I call our Faustian moment came when we took an IMF loan on the eve of our first democratic election. That loan, with strings attached that precluded a radical economic agenda, was considered a necessary evil, as were concessions to keep negotiations on track and take delivery of the promised land for our people. Doubt had come to reign supreme: we believed, wrongly, there was no other option; that we had to be cautious... [In fact, however], we chickened out. [emphasis added] The ANC leadership needed to remain true to its commitment of serving the people. This would have given it the hegemony it required not only over the entrenched capitalist class but over emergent elitists, many of whom would seek wealth through black economic empowerment, corrupt practices and selling political influence... [For] the balance of power was [then] with the ANC, and conditions were favourable for more radical change at the negotiating table than we ultimately accepted. It is by no means certain that the old order, apart from isolated rightist extremists, had the will or capability to resort to the bloody repression [anticipated] by Mandela’s leadership. If we had held our nerve, we could have pressed forward

without making the concessions we did. [\[9\]](#)

Prisoner of Capital

The ANC “lost its nerve”? “Chickened out”? That’s one explanation then. Meanwhile, an even more shaky explanation of the form South Africa’s transition took is that offered by my deservedly eminent compatriot Canadian writer-activist Naomi Klein:[\[10\]](#) ANC lost any accurate sense of just what was going on, and became, she suggests, the prisoner of capital; it was, in fact, short-sighted and naïve as regards the severe dangers of the capitalist entanglements it was taking on. She even summons up some strong South African voice to support this analysis. For example, she cites economist Vishnu Padayachee as arguing that “none of this happened because of some grand betrayal on the part of the ANC leaders but simply because they were outmaneuvered on a series of issues that seemed less than crucial at the time – but turned out to hold South Africa’s lasting liberation in the balance.”

Similarly, William Gumede’s view, as directly quoted by Klein, is that

if people had felt [the political negotiations] weren’t going well there would be mass protests. But when the economic negotiators would report back, people thought it was technical.”

This perception was encouraged by Mbeki, who portrayed the talks as ‘administrative’ and as being of no popular concern. As a result, Klein says, Gumede told her,

with great exasperation, ‘We missed it! We missed the real story... I was focusing on politics – mass action, going to Bisho... But that was not the real struggle – the real struggle was over economics’.

True, Klein further notes, Gumede did “came to understand that it was at those ‘technical’ meetings that the true future of his country was being decided – though few understood it at the time.” But she herself can still register apparent surprise that “as the new government attempted to make tangible the dreams of the Freedom Charter, it discovered that the power was elsewhere.” Really? But surely here one can be permitted to ask: had Padayachee, Gumede, and even Klein not read their Fanon? For it is, in fact, impossible to think that the ANC leadership, having sought assiduously to will just such an outcome, such a “false decolonization,” from at least the mid-1980s, could itself have “missed it” – missed, that is, the main point as to what was happening to South Africa.

We missed it!” Not quite good enough, then, and certainly not as an explanation of the ANC own actions. But take one further example, that of long-time Communist Party and ANC activist (and a minister in the present Zuma government), Jeremy Cronin.[\[11\]](#) Thus, in a 2013 speech entitled “How we misread the situation in the 1990s,” Cronin presents a markedly weaker argument about the ‘errors’ of the 1990s than Klein, even though it does, nonetheless, bear a strong resemblance to hers. For naïveté is again presented as being the key, Cronin also seeing the ANC as merely having taken its eye off the ball – albeit for 19 years! His variant of this argument: “In particular, we vastly overestimated the patriotic credentials of South African monopoly capitalism (and its soon to emerge narrow BEE [Black Economic Empowerment] hangers on)”; these advised us “to open all our doors and windows to attract inward investment flows.

The result:

[A]lmost the exact opposite has occurred. Surplus generated inside South Africa, the sweat and toil of South African workers, has flown out of the open windows and open doors. Between 20% and 25% of GDP has been dis-invested out of the country since 1994. Trade liberalization in the first decade of democracy blew a cold wind through our textile and clothing sector, through our agriculture and agro-processing sector and by 2001 a million formal sector jobs had been lost.

As for the 19 years just mentioned, it is actually Cronin himself who raises this spectre, asking precisely “Why had it taken us nearly 19 years to appreciate the need for a second, radical phase of our democratic transition?” But he really gives no answer to his own question nor makes any attempt to explain two decades of what, on his analysis, must have been an extraordinary level of official naïveté as to the progressive propensities of “South African monopoly capitalism.” Why indeed?

Thus, for Kasrils, the ANC/SACP lost its nerve, for Klein, the ANC was “short-sighted,” and for Cronin the ANC simply “misread” (for 19 years!) the situation... while waiting, no doubt, for the much discussed second phase of the “national democratic revolution” to kick into action!

But surely a more straight-forward explanation in terms of class dynamics is the more potent one: a new class, politically victorious as centered and represented by the ANC, gained power on the back of the liberation struggle broadly defined (a struggle that took place both outside and, principally, inside the country) and used that power in both its own interest and in the interests of global capitalism. Thus veteran ANC/SACP hand and present-day MP Ben Turok can admit that he is driven to “the irresistible conclusion ... that the ANC government has lost a great deal of its earlier focus on the fundamental transformation of the inherited social system,” and to the assertion that “much depends on whether enough momentum can be built to overcome the caution that has marked the ANC government since 1994. This in turn depends on whether the determination to achieve an equitable society can be revived.”[\[12\]](#) Cautiously phrased perhaps, but an important point. A second long-time ANC/SACP loyalist, Rusty Bernstein, was however – in writing to me not long before his own death in 2002 – prepared to go even further, asserting that

The drive toward power has corrupted the political equation in various ways. In the late 1980s, when popular resistance revived again inside the country led by the UDF, it led the ANC to see the UDF as an undesirable factor in the struggle for power, and to fatally undermine it as a rival focus for mass mobilization. It has undermined the ANC’s adherence to the path of mass resistance as a way to liberation, and substituted instead a reliance on manipulation of the levers of administrative power. It has paved the way to a steady decline of a mass-membership ANC as an organizer of the people, and turned it into a career opening to public sector employment and the administrative ‘gravy train’. It has reduced the tripartite ANC-COSATU-CP alliance from the centrifugal centre of national political mobilization to an electoral pact between parties who are constantly constrained to subordinate their constituents’ fundamental interests to the overriding purpose of holding on to administrative power. It has impoverished the soil in which ideas leaning toward socialist solutions once flourished and allowed the weed of ‘free market’ ideology to take hold. [\[13\]](#)

Buried in this statement is one other \$64 question about the transition, of course: why and how was the [UDF](#) persuaded merely to fold its tent and disappear? It was by no means a straightforward occurrence, even though for Jeremy Seekings, an important historian of the UDF, it's a no-brainer. Quoting Peter Mokaba, then president of the South African Youth Congress, as stating: "Now that the ANC can operate legally, the UDF is redundant." Seekings then gives as his own view, that such willed demobilization of the popular factor in the political equation occurred simply because it had become "apparent that the UDF [actually] had no choice but to disband in the aftermath of the ANC's unbanning." Indeed, he calls it "a logical, unavoidable, even unremarkable event."[\[14\]](#)

But was it? It was certainly not that for Bernstein, as quoted. And in fact many voices were raised in disagreement at the UDF's final conference that voted for the dissolution of the UDF. Indeed, as Van Kessel notes, the marked support – if, nonetheless, that of a minority – that existed in the meeting for the retention of the UDF as an effective organ of "people's power."[\[15\]](#)

Proponents of this view [she writes] envisaged the UDF's role as one of watching over the government, [and] remaining prepared to activate mass action if the need should arrive. Many leaders and activists emphasized that the preservation of the UDF was imperative to ensure that participatory, rather than merely representative, democracy prevailed in South Africa.

She also records the very tangible "demobilizing effect" of the UDF's demise – with the ANC doing little or nothing, in the longer run, to sustain people's waning spirit of active militancy. And she quotes Alan Boesak as making a sharp distinction "between the UDF years and the early 1990s":

He noted a widespread nostalgia for the UDF years. "That was a period of mass involvement a period when people took a clear stand. That had a moral appeal. Now it is difficult to get used to compromises ... Many people in the Western Cape now say that 'the morality in politics has gone.' The 1980s, that was 'clean politics,' morally upright, no compromises, with a clear goal.

In sum, we have "mass involvement" trumped by knee-jerk vanguardism. For vanguardism (AKA residual Stalinism) doesn't sit comfortably with genuine active popular democracy from below. Nor need it come as a great surprise that NUMSA and others name their challenging new political initiative the United Front and actually name check the United Democratic Front in doing so, promising to

... lead in the establishment of a new United Front [UF] that will coordinate struggles in the workplace and in communities, in a way similar to the UDF of the 1980s. The task of this front will be to fight for the implementation of the Freedom Charter and be an organizational weapon against neoliberal policies such as the NDP [National Development Plan]. [\[16\]](#)

More generally, might it actually be just as simple as Rusty Bernstein suggests. For what Bernstein has offered us is some pretty tough stuff – tough Fanonist stuff. Indeed, if his insights are taken as seriously as they must be neither historians nor politicians can easily get away with merely absolving the ANC for its key role in the defeat of the liberation struggle – even though the collapse of the Soviet bloc, the strength of South Africa's pre-existent, indigenous, and primarily white capitalist class, and the power of global capitalism

must also be given their proper weight within the explanatory equation. But don't forget for a moment the 1985 statement by Gavin Relly, the chairman of Anglo-American, after his meeting in Lusaka with the likes of Oliver Tambo, Thabo Mbeki, Chris Hani, Pallo Jordan, and Mac Maharaj that "he had the impression the ANC was not 'too keen' to be seen as 'Marxist' and that he felt they had a good understanding "of the need for free enterprise." [17] Time was to demonstrate fully just how perceptive was Relly's 1985 reading of the ANC top brass's own emerging mind-set even at that early date.

No, the fact is that Fanon is closer to the mark than anyone else in interpreting, albeit *avant la lettre*, developments in southern Africa: The national middle class-in-the-making, the nationalist elite, did indeed discover its historic mission: that of intermediary. And, in the end, as seen through its eyes its mission has had very little to do with transforming the nation; instead, it has consisted, prosaically, of being the transmission lines between the nation and a capitalism, rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the masque of neo-colonialism and, indeed, of recolonization.

What Next?

As for what next? Assuming no one would disagree with what I've said so far (but I'm obviously not so naïve as to really assume that) the next question must be: what will Biko's 70% – left out, left behind – do about it? [18]

Will they stick, on balance – in declining numbers, with clearly diminishing enthusiasm and for want of an as yet convincing alternative – with the ANC: the party of Mandela and, ostensibly, of liberation. Or will more of them begin to drift even further to the right, to the increasingly black-appearing and possibly more competent-seeming DA. Or will they increasingly be enveloped in the demobilizing folds of xenophobia, right-wing evangelical religions, and the like with incalculable continuing costs to the country.

Or, on the other hand, many may continue to veer left. Here one can allude to the dramatic sustaining of the "rebellion of the poor" in South Africa; to the further radicalization of some segments of the labour movement (epitomized, notably, by the break of South Africa's largest union, the National Union of Metalworkers/NUMSA, from any affiliation whatsoever with either the ANC or the SACP!); to the chaos (itself perhaps promising, in and of itself, of new possibilities) that COSATU itself has become; to the first signs of electoral success that have greeted Julius Malema's quite unapologetically populist Economic Freedom Front; to the seeds of a new feminism implied in such actions as the "RhodesMustFall" initiative in Cape Town in 2015; and to the initial stirrings of the "United Front," first instigated by NUMSA but with a broad appeal to other workers and to civil society activists.

Of course, it remains far too early to predict with absolute confidence that such initiatives will continue to flourish and even cohere into an effective and politically viable counter-hegemony to the ANC's present grip on power. And yet the game is clearly afoot as at no other time since 1994 as, slowly but surely, the struggle for a more equal and more genuinely liberated South Africa continues. But to turn left? Some have, more will, many, eventually, might. Let's see.

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Bond, of a history entitled [South Africa – The Present as History: From Mrs Ples to Mandela and Marikana](#) published in April, 2014. A longer article by John was published in the 2013 [Socialist Register](#) “On taming a revolution: the South African case.”

Notes

[1.](#) Steve Tshwete, “Understanding the Charter Clause by Clause” in Raymond Suttner and Jeremy Cronin [eds.], *Thirty Years of the Freedom Charter* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985), p. 213.

[2.](#) Thabo Mbeki as quoted in William Gumede, *Thabo Mbeki and the Battle for the Soul of the ANC* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2005), p. 38.

[3.](#) For a careful definition and discussion of “the precariat” see my *A Flawed Freedom: Rethinking Southern African Liberation* (London, Toronto and Cape Town: Pluto Press, *Between the Lines and Juta/UCT*, 2014), ch. 5, “The New Terms of Resistance: Proletariat, Precariat and the Present African Prospect”; there (p. 108) I also speak, in addition to a proletariat, of the existence of “‘a people’ – poor people, marginalized in both urban and rural settings – who are as capable of socio-economic upsurge as those engaged in socio-economic confrontation at the workplace. These latter can perhaps be called an ‘underclass’ /precariat (or even, in a far more metaphorical and much less scientific way, seen as members of ‘the working class’). In short, a politics that seeks to engage in broad-based mobilization of both proletariat and precariat could indeed, if mounted deftly, have cumulative, very real and entirely positive revolutionary potential.”

[4.](#) Frantz Fanon, [The Wretched of the Earth](#) (Penguin Books: Harmondsworth, 1967), p. 122.

[5.](#) Amílcar Cabral, *Revolution in Guinea: An African People’s Struggle* (London: Stage 1, 1967), pp. 57.

[6.](#) Julius Nyerere as paraphrased in *The Nationalist* (Dar es Salaam), issue of September 5, 1967.

[7.](#) The following quotations are from an interview of Steve Biko carried out by Gail Gerhart on October 24, 1972, and available from the [Aluka e-collection](#) of anti-apartheid-related materials (document accessed 30 September 2013).

[8.](#) Ronnie Kasrils, ‘How the ANC’s Faustian pact sold out South African’s poorest: In the early 1990s we in the leadership of the ANC made a serious error. Our people are still paying the price’, *The Guardian*, 24 June 2013, this being an extract from the introduction to a new edition of his autobiography *Armed and Dangerous: My Undercover Struggle Against Apartheid*, first published by Heinemann Books in 1993 and now, as a Fourth Edition in 2013, by Jacans Books, Johannesburg.

[9.](#) Kasrils, *ibid.*; as Kasrils adds “Since by 1991 our once powerful ally, the Soviet Union, bankrupted by the arms race, had collapsed. Inexcusably, we had lost faith in the ability of our own revolutionary masses to overcome all obstacles. Whatever the threats to isolate a radicalising South Africa, the world could not have done without our vast reserves of minerals. To lose our nerve was not necessary or inevitable. The ANC leadership needed to remain determined, united and free of corruption – and, above all, to hold on to its revolutionary will... To break apartheid rule through negotiation, rather than a bloody civil war, seemed then an option too good to be ignored.”

[10.](#) See Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2007), Chapter 10 entitled “Democracy Born in Chains: South Africa’s Constricted Freedom” (pp. 233-261), in which she also deploys the quotes from Vishnu Padayachee and William Gumede

cited here.

[11.](#) Jeremy Cronin, "[How we misread the situation in the 1990s](#)," speech to the 12th National Congress of the trade union SACTWU (as issued by the SACP, 22 August 2013).

[12.](#) Ben Turok, *From the Freedom Charter to Polokwane: The Evolution of ANC Economic Policy* (Cape Town: New Agenda, 2008), pp. 263-65.

[13.](#) "Letter from Rusty Bernstein to John S Saul," published in *Transformation*, 64, 2007.

[14.](#) Jeremy Seekings, *The UDF: A History of the United democratic Front in South Africa, 1980-1991* (Claremont: David Philip, 2000), p. 260, where he also cites Makoba's 1991 statement.

[15.](#) Ineke van Kessel, *'Beyond Our Wildest Dreams': The United Democratic Front and the Transformation of South Africa* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 2000); see also Van Kessel's *'Trajectories after liberation in South Africa: mission accomplished or vision betrayed?'* in *Zuid-Afrika & Leiden* (Leiden: University of Leiden, 2011). See also Elke Zuern, *The Politics of Necessity: Community Organizing and Democracy in South Africa* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011) and Mona Younis, *Liberation and Democratization: The South African and Palestinian National Movements* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

[16.](#) NUMSA (National Union of Metalworkers). 2013. "[NUMSA Special National Congress, December 17 to 20, 2013 Declaration](#)."

[17.](#) Gavin Relly, as quoted in the *Financial Times*, 10 June 1986. See also the advice of Malcolm Fraser, formerly the deeply conservative Prime Minister of Australia, to the Commonwealth leaders after serving as a member of the Commonwealth's Eminent Person's Group sent to investigate the situation in South Africa. Fraser's counsel: a collective turn against apartheid per se and a with African nationalist demands since in any escalating conflict "moderation would be swept aside [and] the government that emerged from all of this would be extremely radical, probably Marxist, and would nationalize all western business interests." Malcolm Fraser, "No More Talk. Time to Act," *The Times*, London, 30 June 1986.

[18.](#) Someone from the floor suggested, however, that the correct percentage breakdown would be more accurate if stated as being 80%-20%!

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