

TRANSFORMATION TIME!

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transform (from the Latin *trans*, across, over and *formare*, form): 'To change in form or appearance; metamorphose; to change in condition, nature, or character; convert; to change into another substance; transmute'.

(*The New Webster's Dictionary*, 1981:1047)

Introduction

In his *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* Ernesto Laclau argues that 'Every age adopts an image of itself - a certain horizon, however blurred and imprecise, which somehow unifies its whole experience' (1990:3). The notion of 'transformation'¹ is fast gaining political coinage as the appropriate term to describe both the general character of the conjuncture as well as the nature of specific progressive interventions on different terrains in South Africa. It is a term used as goal as well as process and sometimes as a hazy combination of the two. Who uses the notion of transformation, in which contexts and with what meanings? Although a favourite of university-based writers and speakers,² it is also increasingly being invoked by leaders and activists in political organisations, by unionists, journalists and others in contexts that range through academic discussions, party political literature, newspapers and political fora of different kinds. In their characterisation of contemporary world politics, Kegley and Wittkopf link the idea of transformation to political developments whose outcomes are as yet fluid and inconclusive.

If a new world politics is in the process of unfolding, that process cannot be regarded as complete. A new structure has not emerged to replace the pre-existing one. Hence the global system as it currently exists defies easy characterisation. It is clearly moving, but discordantly and in seemingly divergent directions. Because the path to the future has not yet assumed recognizable definition, the description of the present as an age in transformation is most compelling (1989:522).

South Africa is certainly in an age of transformation insofar as it manifests the uncertainty and discordance of the above description. However, the idea of transformation and transformation politics often aspires to a more radical agenda of democratically planned change than merely indicating a transitional politics whose outcome is unclear or indeterminate.

Through its frequent use, transformation is acquiring, contradictorily, both an obviousness and a mysteriousness that is making it into a rather slippery notion. It may also be in danger of becoming a trivialised catch-all concept encompassing many activities and conceptualisations, a grab-bag of aims, projects and initiatives located along varying trajectories and with differing, even contradictory agendas. Its gain in popularity may be accompanied by a problematic gain in generality and fuzziness in a way that threatens the very specificities that the term is intended to signify. On the other hand, it is also not clear whether its greatest value does not lie in its very lack of specificity, its indeterminacy as a general signifier of radical change, a veritable black hole of possibilities for radical agency. An examination of many of the uses of transformation indicates either a sliding over into a highly generalised notion of radical change or a plethora of specific concerns and issues connected by a common thread that is not at all transparent.

Even before 2 February 1990, the notion had gained currency in progressive discourse as denoting or encompassing the institutions, values, practices and social relations of an alternative political order desired by radical opponents of the present one. Since this epochal date, it is often postulated, though not without controversy, as a defining characteristic of the conjuncture, in contrast, ostensibly, to the moving spirit of the politics that preceded February 1990. The politics of transformation is argued to have superceded the politics of protest.³ Clearly, the validity of this distinction will hinge on the meaning(s) of transformation, as will the question of whether the identity of the conjuncture is appropriately captured by this notion. The pursuit of such meaning is crucial to the question of how we link the politics of resistance to the politics of reconstruction and whether we develop the appropriate policy and strategic responses to the socio-political demands of the time. Otherwise, the danger exists that we become entrapped in a fuzzy or euphoric transformation politics that claims more than it can deliver at the present stage.

Is it possible or even advisable to delineate a common set of signifiers for the notion of transformation which could then form a consensual basis for transformative practices? The beginnings of clarification could lie in the posing of a web of questions about the subject, the object, the means and the motives of transformation. The struggle to identify and articulate sets of 'answers' to these questions and the debates around them may help to disaggregate the different ideological currents and emphases underlying transformation initiatives, thus making clearer whether different social actors and social forces share common or related views on the subject. The proponents of transformation would do well to accept the fact that the notion of transformation - its terrain, its framework, its goals, its content and its strategies - is itself up for contestation. Instead of mystifying

transformation through attempting to 'naturalise' it, instead of assuming that it is more or less self-evident, inevitable or pre-determined by history, class struggle, negotiation, etc, it would be more enabling to view the various dimensions of transformation as the outcome of contestation between 'reformist' and 'radical' constituencies and among 'radical' constituencies themselves.⁴

Just when you thought it was safe to talk of transformation...

In so far as transformation hinges on the idea of substantive change at the level of social organisation as well as social relations, more general debates about socialism, civil society, the relationship between national-democratic struggle and class struggle, the nature of the future state and the future economy, a new education system, the social contract, etc, all encompass the issues of transformative struggle in both general and specific ways. In fact, at the heart of these debates lies the question of the identity of transformation as process, mechanism and goal. But why are these debates cast increasingly in the discourse of transformation?

The resort to transformation may be an indication of the search for new bearings for oppositional political activity insofar as the era of negotiation politics necessitates going beyond political intervention predicated on sharp theoretical and strategic distinctions between reform and revolution.⁵ Transformation may be the appropriate image for political activism and initiative at a time when revolutionary seizure of power is not a real possibility and socialism not on the immediate agenda but reformist evolutionism not acceptable either. It is a notion that may be seeking to position itself within a conceptual world whose certainties, distinctions and dichotomies have become unsettled by recent developments in national and global politics. If the master narratives of revolution and working class victory are now on the retreat through various theoretical and historical assaults on them, transformation may be the most apt post-modern metaphor for political struggles in the present.

Thus, the shift in South African state strategy together with its accompanying dynamics and the collapse of the historically 'communist' empire may be giving a particular edge to the way transformation is being conceptualised. Many of the militant notions of pre-negotiations discourse like the revolutionary seizure of power, the need to smash the apartheid state, mobilising for a people's war, victory of the oppressed, etc, are now either existing parallel to or yielding to themes and language which reflect an accommodation to the 'realities' of the political terrain, including the need to address the crisis of socialism. The use of democratisation, restructuring, reconstruction, and, of course, transformation are thus moving into centre stage within oppositional discourse. The issue is, of course, whether such reconstruction of the discourse of struggle is a euphemistic

accommodation to reform or a creative interpretation of revolution.

Clarification of the notion of transformation should not be predicated on the desire to construct a grand theory of transformation that will establish a new orthodoxy to control restructuring, but on the need to support and enhance popular initiative in this respect. Given the current discrediting of 'Stalinism' in different quarters, we should be wary of the dangers and follies of taking a fundamentalist approach which seeks to set out the one politically correct line on transformation. Given also the current emphasis on grassroots participatory democracy, we should insist on the importance of giving creative rein to transformative initiatives on different terrains involving as many people, institutions and organisations as possible. And yet, transformation cannot be so open-ended as to be completely vacuous. Are there core elements associated with it which make it possible to distinguish transformation from other paradigms of change?

Central to the way in which transformation is often utilised is the presupposition that it is the reconstructive moment rather than the oppositional which gives transformation its determining identity. Thereafter, silence prevails on the question of the continuing role and status of opposition and resistance within the politics of transformation. The question of reconstructive agency is also crucial to the nature of transformation politics. Despite the fact that the search for participatory strategies and mechanisms is an uneven and problem-ridden one, there is the assumption, both at the level of rhetoric and reality, that transformation requires a substantial and meaningful degree of organisationally-based popular participation in all key initiatives rather than the imposition of the views of elites, leaders or special interest groups, no matter how benevolent. However, the politics of the inter-regnum insofar as it involves public and hidden negotiations as well as the phenomenon described as 'elite pacting'⁶ will severely strain the commitment to genuine mass participation in transformatory initiatives. A further complication in this phase is the continuing political activity of regime-connected actors alongside or together with the interventions of those associated with sections of the liberation movement. This makes extremely problematic a clear identification of the social forces or combinations thereof that will function as transformatory agents. The identities of such agents are themselves fluid and unfixed, given the processes of re-stratification that are taking place in the struggle to find an appropriate political niche within the present conjuncture.

The reconstructive moment is itself grounded in a network of principles or values that are seen as crucial to any authentic transformation. Some of the most prominent of these are, for example, that it involves fundamental deep-rooted restructuring rather than adjustment/modification of the status quo, piecemeal tinkering, reformism, band-aid patching up; that it involves a re-organisation of

power relations and an irreversible shift in the balance of forces in the direction of the previously disempowered; that it involves the aspiration to a social order and social policy that focuses on common or majority interests rather than on special or minority interests; that it advances gender and working class interests; etc. Given the range of social stratifications that it would have to encompass, transformation could be viewed as a network of intersecting struggles around different social categories and issues (class, gender, race, ecology, peace, etc) at different levels and in different sectors, preferably but not always with a national or global convergence.⁷

In its most radical conceptualisation, the proponents of transformation might argue that, whereas reform-related paradigms of change share a greater measure of continuity of interest (if not of form) with existing inequitable distributions of power and privilege, transformation as a progressive mode of change is committed to and actively seeks a disjuncture between the present distribution and any future one. Its ultimate and maximal objective is to undermine and re-order a number of decisive hierarchies that persist at an institutional and national level, well expressed by Kegley and Wittkopf in the following way:

The economic hierarchy that divides the rich from the poor, the political hierarchy that separates the rulers from the subordinates, the resource hierarchy that makes some suppliers and others dependants, and the military asymmetries that pit the strong against the weak... (1989:498-99).

However, in addition to these radical commitments, transformation also houses what might be interpreted as accommodatory strains brought on by the negotiations moment, as radical theory and practice are forced to redefine themselves against the 'pragmatic' pull of the centre.

In order to understand the political significance of resorting to the notion of transformation, it may be instructive to range briefly over the ideas that it has displaced or is in contention with. In the discursive battle to capture most appropriately the peculiar conjunctural circumstances prevailing in South Africa, the proponents of transformation have to locate it within a political map that encompasses old contenders like reform and liberation and new ones like transition. 'Reform' was most closely associated with the tri-cameral politics of change with containment plied during the PW Botha era. It encompassed a conception of politics that was resisted as unacceptable and unworkable by opponents of the government. However, in a recent analysis, Saul (1991) employs the notion of 'structural reform' to describe a possible way forward for the Left in the uncertain journey towards 'structural transformation' in South Africa. I will return later to Saul's argument. 'Liberation' has not been jettisoned completely by the liberation movement although the terrain of negotiations has

inflicted a body blow to its homogeneity as a concept premised on the defeat of the oppressor-enemy. Its meanings may depend on a variety of modifications and qualifications linked to the attitudes of different organisations towards the politics of negotiations. Also, depending on the outcomes of such politics, liberation may yet have some future as a rejuvenated battle cry of the disillusioned.

'Transition'⁸ is a serious contender of transformation in the attempt to convey the historical sense of a society in the grip of a sea change but whose future political identity still hangs in the balance. It is a paradigm of change that has also been used to describe political processes in certain Southern European and South American countries (the transition from military/authoritarian rule to civilian rule)⁹ as well as in Eastern and Central Europe (the transition from authoritarian socialism to 'market democracy'). Transition in these contexts ushered in new regimes and certain vital liberalising and democratising measures, mostly at the level of political society. In the absence of regime change in this country up to this point, transition could refer to the new policy and strategic options initiated by the present government as well as the utilisation by oppositional forces of the dynamics and spaces generated by those options to push beyond state desired parameters in a way that increases their own advantage or the national advantage or both.¹⁰

At face value, transition seems to describe only the movement between different conjunctural phases. Whether a transition produces emancipatory outcomes or not depends on the prevailing balance of forces and can be judged by specific developments in the socio-political and economic spheres. What are the conditions that will facilitate transformation understood in the maximal sense outlined earlier on? Du Toit argues the following:

... to understand the nature of transitions from authoritarian rule it is vitally important that we distinguish very carefully between three different processes: liberalisation, democratisation and the transition to socialism or 'socialisation.' We should also note the ways in which they do and do not complement and interact with each other (1990:2).

Liberalisation and democratisation refer to the different degrees of the widening of social and political space. Socialism requires that issues of economic inequality and economic democracy be addressed. However, there is no telos in a transitional process that encompasses liberalisation and democratisation that will drive them to culminate in socialism. In fact, as Du Toit points out, the very achievements of the former in the sphere of political democracy might arrest any further transition towards socialism.¹¹

This brings us, then, to what must be one of the most decisive questions for

transformation - its potential relationship to a socialist project. In positioning it more centrally in the political arena, are the proponents of transformation engaging in the business of reposing the question of socialism? Is it, in fact, the continuation of socialism or revolutionary struggle by other means? If it is not, does this signal the suspension, modification or the abandonment of the goals of either? Is viewing transformation as the forerunner to socialist democracy the best way to understand it? Or is its goal the setting up of democratic structures within which contestations about the most appropriate social forms and relations can take place? Transformatory actors correctly stress the importance of process but process without consideration of goals is blind. The potential richness and rightness of the present idea of transformation does not, therefore, relieve its proponents of the task of spelling out the ideological parameters and goals of transformation. Notwithstanding the fact that the theory and practice of socialism is itself under critical interrogation, the attempt to conceptualise transformation as the appropriate mode of radical political activity cannot avoid engaging with the question of socialism.¹²

In this regard, it is useful to return briefly to Saul's analysis of the South African problematic especially as it relates to the future possibilities of socialism. He maintains approvingly that 'somewhere between the potent pull of "reformism" and the abstract irrelevance of calls for "revolution" there are emerging in South Africa elements of a project of "structural reform" that might yet prove appropriate to the exigencies of the post-apartheid moment' (1991:33). Following Gorz's distinction between a "genuinely socialist" policy of reforms (and) reformism of the neo-capitalist or "social democratic" type' (1991:5), Saul proposes a "structural reform" approach to socialist transition' as best encompassing the circumstances and possibilities of any claim to left politics in the country. Reforms certainly open up spaces and possibilities for transformatory gains by organised constituencies in different terrains but they may also be designed by the ruling bloc specifically to close off or weaken such gains. Therefore, in seeking to distinguish 'structural reform' from 'reformism', he argues that the former cannot be 'comfortably self-contained (a mere "improvement")', but must, instead, be allowed self-consciously to implicate other "necessary" reforms that flow from it as part of an emerging project of social transformation' (1991:5). Saul also highlights the necessity for 'structural reform' not to come from 'on high' but to 'root itself in popular initiatives in such a way as to leave a residue of further empowerment - in terms of growing enlightenment/class consciousness, in terms of organizational capacity - for the vast mass of the population, who thus strengthen themselves for further struggle, further victories' (1991:6).

Saul's characterisation of 'structural reform' as the substance of a left politics

in South Africa will, no doubt, be contested. However, it forces a reconsideration of well-worn controversies and debates about evolutionary and revolutionary paths to socialism and whether there could be something theoretically and politically respectable in between. If socialism, despite its troubled condition, is still the objective of some of those seeking an emancipatory politics in the name of transformation, the struggle for it will have to be inserted into specific terrains in creative and unorthodox ways that, as pointed out by Saul, are dynamic enough to shatter the pressures and lures of non-socialist reformism. In an epoch when so many ideological certainties are against the wall, this is obviously more easily said than done. It would be useful, nevertheless, if those who utilise the discourse of transformation specify their minimum and maximum understandings of the notion. The different ideological agendas that may be congealing behind it could then become more visible.

Transformatory self-reflexiveness will not obviate the necessity of an unflinching re-examination of the basic tenets of what is supposed to count as socialism. Such a re-examination will certainly highlight the centrality of real democracy to any future socialist project, since so much of the analysis of what went wrong in the 'communist' world focused on the issue of an inadequate or misconceived notion of democracy. However, the intent to enlarge and substantiate democratic participation and decision-making by the mass of the citizenry within the context of a reconceptualised socialism will have to contend with the attempts by ruling bloc forces to represent their own reformist initiatives as part of the process of increasing democracy. For this reason, the identification of transformation with an unclarified notion of democratisation is inadequate and dangerous. Democratisation cannot but be a crucial component of transformation but the relationship between the two will have to take into account the ideological closures and possibilities of different types of democratisation.

Conclusion

If transformation is on the agenda in South Africa, clarification of its ideological underpinnings and its content is urgent and inescapable. The family resemblances, if any, among transformation, reform and socialism need to be explored and made more explicit. Such clarification could begin a process of necessary contestation around the meanings of transformation. In a negotiations moment, transformation will signify strength and creative use of political space to some, while to others it will spell weakness, opportunism and the danger of co-option. Crucial to the use of transformation to characterise the conjuncture is the question of whether and what kind of social ground is available for the politics of transformation. What continuities and compromises with the recent past can transformation tolerate? And, conversely, how much of transformation can the

present tolerate, given that, although new spaces for struggle are now available, there has been no rupture either at the level of the regime or in the mode of accumulation?

What is necessary is a clear understanding of the factors and interests that could shape, advance or constrain transformation. Also important is equal recognition of the limits as much as of the possibilities of transformation within the present circumstances. Reflections on the limits of transformation in a non-revolutionary situation, the limits of institutional transformation within a national political order whose essential outlines are not yet clear, and the limits of national transformation within a global framework marked by capitalist triumphalism are indispensable for any transformation project that seeks to be an effective rather than a euphoric response to the conjuncture. Its proponents will have to live with the reality that transformation will be less than utopia, that it will be less stirring than the call to revolution, less constitutive of myths of final victories or happy endings and that it might falter or fail in confronting the continuing violence as well as the bleak anomic life experiences of vast numbers of people in this country.

In an era of transformation politics we may be confronted more and more with issues concerning the moral and political qualities of the oppressed and exploited. In a period of acute repression, one could ascribe to the immorality of the oppressor most of the negative or destructive features of the moral and political landscape. In the current phase, where transformation politics involves the struggle of the inajority of South Africans to shape the policies and institutions of the future, we will have to take more seriously the obstacles posed by 'the enemy within'. Opportunism, greed, careerism, sectarianism, apathy, an absent or weakening work ethic, inadequately confronted racism, sexism and homophobia, etc, among the ranks of those who seek radical change will all impact on the quality and even the possibility of transformation. Those who presume to be transformatory actors or agents cannot avoid the recognition that not all oppositional behaviours and values are likely to be transformatory. The search for progressive strategies cannot, therefore, avoid the issue of transformatory discipline and the organisational and other mechanisms through which this could be institutionalised. The question of transformatory consensus or unity will also be rendered more vulnerable by ruptures and resentments stemming from the possibility that, in a period of transition, different participants will benefit differentially from the fruits of transformatory initiatives. Transformation will, therefore, have to find a footing within integrative and disintegrative tendencies pulling in different directions.

The line between the politics of resistance and the politics of transformation is not as clear-cut as some might imagine. In the era of resistance politics, trans-

formatory concerns were not absent though they may have been differently focused. More crucially, in what is presumed to be an era of transformation, resistance is not off the agenda even though other imperatives have inserted themselves onto that agenda. Clearly, that resistance has also to be conceptualised anew, given the changed dynamics of the situation. It will have to encompass both the ongoing struggle with various manifestations of the pre-February 2 dispensation as well as the resolute contestation with new strategies developed by existing or re-forming power blocs which seek the closure of transformation. Thus, the clarification of transformation also requires thinking through the relationship between transformation and resistance. To believe that the former is positive through being reconstructive and the latter negative through being oppositional is to understand inadequately how engagement and contestation is central to both in the present conjuncture.

The usefulness of transformation to characterise the politics of the conjuncture will itself depend on how we characterise the notion. To insist on believing that nothing has changed since February 2 could be potentially self-paralytic. To argue that we are in the era of transformation politics in the sense that our energies and attentions can turn in an unqualified way from resistance to reconstruction is an equally problematic reading and depiction of the conjuncture. Transformation could be understood as the maximal utilisation of new political space to push the struggle for popular participation and empowerment further. It could be viewed as the opportunity to insert progressive constituencies into positions where, through contestation with ruling bloc forces, they could intervene in the struggle to shape the South Africa of the future. This is, perhaps, the most appropriate way to locate transformation between pessimism on the one hand and euphoria on the other. Transformatory politics, could be viewed as the process within which, through contestations that take many forms, the ground could be prepared for a reconstruction of South African society that is not closed off to aspects of a possible socialist project.

NOTES

1. Gavin Williams begins a review essay in the following way: 'It is common ground that apartheid is dying and that South Africa's peculiar institutions must be reformed or transformed' (1988:57). The characterisation of transformation as the alternative to reform captures some of the flavour of the progressive use of the notion without specifying a theoretical framework or a programme of action for it. It is of little value in demarcating the spheres of discontinuity with reformist measures and even less in negotiating the grey areas between reform and transformation or clarifying how the contradictions of reformism could be exploited for transformatory gains. Some other examples of the use of transformation are the following: '... a perception of the class nature of South African society is the only way to understand what might be meant by its transformation without coming asunder on the national question' (Freund, 1986:124-25); 'the interrupted transformation of our society through a fundamental change in the mode of production' (Cronin, 1982:75); 'As we work towards a post-apartheid society in South Africa, it is therefore essential that we strive to

- eliminate not only the racism of apartheid, but also exploitation of women and the working class, if we want to achieve a democratic transformation' (Horn, 1991:28); 'At the theoretical level, using Marxism as a tool and not as a cathexis, our Party developed its truly indigenous theory of the South African revolution based on its conception of colonialism of a special type. This analysis led to our commitment to the national democratic transformation of our country as a stage towards socialism' (Slovo, 1991:8); '... the revolutionary alliance has not found a formula for linking mass struggle with the main, potential cutting edge of transformation... the negotiating process' (quoted Saul, 1991:27, from an SACP editorial in *Umsebenzi*): 'CODESA represents the closest we have come to the new South Africa and introduces the principle of transition through consensus into the process of transformation' (*New Nation* editorial, 06-12.12.91). Within the South African context, the word 'transformation' is often used on its own but sometimes it is accompanied by fairly emphatic qualifiers which generate their own complexities, eg 'meaningful transformation' and 'substantive transformation' (Cronin, 1987:78); 'socialist transformation' (Hudson, 1987:56); 'transformation from below' (Bundy, 1987:73); 'fundamental transformation' (Gerwel, 1987:78); 'democratic transformation' (Horn, 1990:28; Davies, 1990:26); 'national democratic transformation' (Slovo, 1991:9). These qualifiers cover a range of emphases attaching to the basic idea of transformation and indicate the nature of concerns and interests that people have about its realisation.
2. *UDUSA News*, the newsletter of the Union of Democratic Staff Associations, would be severely constrained if it was unable to resort to this notion!
 3. See, for example, Mike Morris in his guest editorial for *UDUSA News*, September 1991: 'Political activity has shifted from the politics of protest to the politics of transformation'.
 4. These distinctions are themselves full of ambivalences produced or made more acute by the shifting dynamics of the present situation. Also, transformation is not always or automatically used to describe emancipatory initiatives. Morris and Padayachee choose to characterise reform as transformation of the state's own strategies (1988). Desai and Padayachee refer to the phenomenon of the 'opportunistic transformation' of staff at the University of Durban-Westville after the appointment of a new Vice-Chancellor (*COMSA News*, November 1990).
 5. Raymond Williams' *Keywords* defines revolution as 'violent overthrow of the established order', and evolution as 'a new social order brought about by peaceful and constitutional means' (1984:273). Within the context of the debate about the nature of the path to socialism, reformism and revolution represent the two poles around which debates have coalesced concerning the manner of attaining socialism. The issues concern 'whether the transition to socialism could be achieved without violence; whether that transition would be a gradual and smooth process of incremental social change or one best characterized by struggle and crisis culminating in a decisive moment of social transformation' (Bottomore, 1983:409). The reformist strategy for attaining socialism is, however, different from reform politics within a capitalist framework, ie reform politics with a non-socialist agenda.
 6. See Saul (1991) for a discussion of 'elite pacting' and some of its implication.
 7. Amin et al, in *Transforming the Revolution* argue that 'anti-systemic, social, popular movements' which include 'socialist or labor movements, nationalist or national liberation movements, peasant movements, women's movements, peace and ecology movements, even some religious movements... represent the key lever, and even the key locus of social transformation' (1990:10-11). These movements are seen as transforming the revolutionary process itself.
 8. In addition to frequent usage of 'transition' by political analysts, journalists and others, there is a notable increase in book titles employing the notion. Note, for example, the title *Transitions to Democracy*, edited by Robin Lee and Lawrence Schlemmer (1991) which takes its cue from the belief that President de Klerk's February 2 speech 'marked the 1990's as a decade of transition for South Africa'. A random selection of other recent titles are the following: *Apartheid City in Transition*, edited M Swilling, R Humphries and K Shubane (1991); *Tradition and Transition in Southern Africa*, edited by AD Spiegel and PA McAllister (1991); *Exchanges: South African writing in transition*, edited by D Brown and B van Dyk (1991).
 9. A rich and valuable source in this regard is the four volume comparative study entitled *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, edited by O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986). See Andre du Toit (1990) where he applies the analytical framework developed by O'Donnell and Schmitter to discuss the different dimensions of the transitional process in South Africa.
 10. The SACP also speaks of a national democratic transition. See Molapo (1991). At the opening presentations at CODESA, Nelson Mandela referred to the transition taking place from apartheid to democracy.
 11. See, for example, *Workers' Voice* pamphlet 2, November 1991, where negotiation politics is depicted as being about 'De Klerk winning agreement from our liberation organisations that

the transition to a new South Africa will be limited to removing apartheid laws and limited to introducing a reconstructed social system in which the capitalist market could flourish'. It is also argued that '... the rulers of South Africa are seeking ways to include yesterday's liberation movements in a POWERSHARING deal. Certain political leaders (ANC and Inkatha) will be invited into government to share responsibility for the transition to a post-apartheid South Africa. We believe that this controlled reform of apartheid from above is intended to ensure that a socialist revolution from below never occurs'. This perspective raises the question of whether and to what extent those involved as partners of the government in transition are legitimate in simultaneously invoking the paradigm of transformation.

12. In the South African context, this preoccupation is not out of sheer obliviousness to the historical and theoretical crisis of socialism. Despite the counter-factual lessons provided by this crisis, socialist aspirations, even if not formulated in the correct jargon, find a deep resonance in the lived experience and the political history of vast numbers of people. See Bundy (1991) for an analysis of conditions in the local context which make for continuing popular support for socialism. The commitment of sections of organised labour to socialism has not been diluted by its troubled history elsewhere. Note the resolution from the National Union of Mineworkers 1991 National Congress rededicating it to 'build socialism and to achieve full political and economic emancipation for the working class' (*South African Labour Bulletin* 15(8), 1991:13). See also Joffe's description of COSATU's Economic Policy conference in May 1991: 'The vision of socialism which began to emerge at the conference is one which emphasises a good quality of life through providing basic goods and services, ensures democratic control of how decisions are made, demands a strong role for the state, and considers forms of ownership that are in working class interests (1991:43).
13. In the societies where it has seemed to have occurred, revolution as signifying a violent and decisive break with the past has not automatically brought transformation in the form of substantial popular empowerment at all levels of existence but conversely, is it possible that such transformation can be achieved without such a revolutionary rupture?

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