

COSATU — what

On December 1, 1985 the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) was launched at King's Park stadium in Durban. Reported attendance was between seven and ten thousand.

COSATU represents 34 affiliated unions (membership figures quoted in the Press range between 380 000 and 500 000) and it is significant that, at the time of its launch, tens of thousands of Inkatha members were also members of unions who had affiliated to COSATU. No overall general ballot of members was held before the affiliations to COSATU.

Inkatha, a non-violent black liberation movement, has 1.3 million paid-up members in branches throughout Natal/KwaZulu, the Transvaal, Orange Free State and Northern Cape. It is now in its eleventh year and although it was started in KwaZulu, has both Zulu and non-Zulu members.



Mr Elijah Barayi, 53, President of COSATU. Mr Barayi is a personnel assistant at Rand Mines's Blyvooruitzicht gold mine near Carltonville in the Western Transvaal. He has worked on the mines for 25 years.

On the day of COSATU's launch its President, Mr Elijah Barayi, wasted little time in firing the opening salvos of what has become a continuous attack on Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the KwaZulu Government and Inkatha.

At the same time he made it clear that under his leadership COSATU would support disinvestment as an "essential and effective" form of pressure on the SA Government. He claimed Chief Buthelezi did not have a mandate from the people to oppose disinvestment. Mr Barayi did not articulate his own alleged mandate to support disinvestment.

At the December launch Mr Barayi gave the Government "six months" to dismantle apartheid and made it clear that COSATU would involve itself in politics "as part of the liberation struggle ..." Political commentators now agree that COSATU sees its involvement in politics as one of its main tasks.

Mr Barayi said COSATU

would aim at "applying socialism in South Africa" and that it favoured the nationalisation of major industries. He came out strongly against the free enterprise system.

COSATU has also made it known that it plans to challenge the growing power of multinational corporations.

Soon afterwards more than 10 000 trade unionists and workers, who support Inkatha and its stand against disinvestment, met in Empangeni in Northern Natal to voice their disquiet at the stance taken by Mr Barayi.

These workers also sent representatives to Ulundi to discuss their problems regarding COSATU with Inkatha leaders. For many years now, at mass meetings throughout the country held by Chief Buthelezi and Inkatha, hundreds of thousands of black workers have voiced their opposition to disinvestment and they made it clear they were not happy with Mr Barayi's statements on

their behalf.

Inkatha does not support disinvestment and is cautious about socialism in view of the fact that nowhere in Africa has it improved the quality of life of ordinary citizens.

It believes the free enterprise system remains the most powerful system man has devised which is capable of fostering sustained economic growth. However, Inkatha has made it clear that it would like the free enterprise system freed of the exploitative aspects which have created such strong reservations about it in the black community.

After the workers' meetings, the Secretary-General of Inkatha, Dr Oscar Dhlomo, told the Sunday Tribune in Durban: "We have, all along, tried to steer clear of politicising labour. Therefore we encouraged our own members to join existing trade unions. We feel trade unions have to do with the rights of workers. We do not want to hijack their agendas for our own selfish rights."

worried the workers



The COSATU rally at Curries Fountain in Durban on May 1 — the same day as the UWUSA launch. It was attended by about 7 000 people.

"However, we have now been approached by workers to find out how we expect them to behave when some unions are now spending their time denigrating Inkatha."

Persistent reports of COSATU's constant attacks on Inkatha resulted in the Central Committee of the movement resolving to "... reserve our right to mobilise the full strength of Inkatha's workers to find alternative means of negotiating for worker rights if any particular trade union abandons this prime responsibility in favour of playing a party political role."

Inkatha President, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, said a short while later that Inkatha would "not stand by ... when the African National Congress Mission in Exile and the United Democratic Front move in to usurp the function of those trade unions which are so deeply valued in all Western industrial societies ..."

He said Inkatha was faced with a situation in which cross-

cutting membership between it and COSATU could become problematic and warned that the Inkatha black liberation movement would, if necessary, enter the field of labour relations.

Trade unions that put politics before employees' rights would prey on the benefits of workers and contribute to the poverty of those who had no viable unions to fight for their rights.

Workers should recognise, he said, that trade unions had a union job to perform which was of vital interest, not only to workers, but to the country as a whole.

Inkatha would not sit back while COSATU "politically poached" members and tried to hijack the SA trade union movement.

Since its inception, COSATU has made it clear that it supports the pro-violence African National Congress Mission in Exile. While initially denying links with the organisation, its leaders have subsequently had meetings

with the ANC in Lusaka and elsewhere. Within South Africa COSATU's political links lie firmly with the United Democratic Front.

In another move which angered Inkatha members and supporters, COSATU announced that it was planning a national and international campaign against Inkatha.

COSATU general secretary, Mr Jay Naidoo, alleged that Inkatha had attacked COSATU members. This charge was vehemently denied by Inkatha's leaders. Charges and counter-charges of violence between the two organisations have continued.

Chief Buthelezi responded to Mr Naidoo's threat of an anti-Inkatha campaign saying that COSATU wanted to get involved in a "winner-take-all bareknuckle fight" with Inkatha. It came as no surprise that COSATU was going to openly campaign against Inkatha — this confirmed what Inkatha had known all along.

COSATU was actively attempting to sow seeds of

confusion about Inkatha and in so doing was harming the cause of black unity. Since the very day of its inception the leaders of COSATU had gone out of their way to vilify Inkatha. Their action was a part of a carefully orchestrated and vicious plan to sow confusion about Inkatha and its leadership.

For instance, there were widely circulated statements alleging that "Inkatha vigilantes are running amok in townships and murdering people — with the cooperation of police ..."

Chief Buthelezi said one could not give COSATU the credit for initiating this all by itself.

"The facts of the matter are that COSATU is taking its orders from the ANC Mission in Exile, as do other organisations well known for their continuous attacks on Inkatha."

Mr Aziz Pahad, an executive member of the external mission of the ANC, had also announced that the ANC was to step up its offensive against him (Chief Buthelezi) and Inkatha.

"COSATU are merely following suit and, in so doing, are telling the world who really calls the shots in their organisation."

He warned COSATU to remember that there were many Inkatha members and sympathisers within its ranks who were unhappy about the unmandated actions of COSATU leaders.

"If one follows the thinking of COSATU, then Inkatha has no right to exist as a national cultural liberation movement dedicated to non-violence and peaceful change in South Africa," he said.

What, then, has Mr Barayi been saying that has worried so many people?

The following pages highlight some of his statements, as reported in the South African media. Clarion Call has not published many of Mr Barayi's insulting and inflammatory remarks regarding Chief Buthelezi, the KwaZulu Government and Inkatha.

ELIJAH BARAYI... in his own words

The following are excerpts of an interview conducted with Mr Barayi for LEADERSHIP magazine:

Do you see a difference between so-called worker issues and broader political issues? If so, which is more important?

Barayi: I think COSATU was formed to concentrate on the broader political issues. Of course, I do believe this should start with the workers on the factory floor. COSATU should not neglect issues such as wages or working conditions, because that is where our strength comes from. But COSATU is going to involve itself politically in the struggle.

Your General Secretary, Jay Naidoo, has already visited Harare where he met with the ANC. What is COSATU's policy with regard to the ANC?

Barayi: I would not like to comment on that.

Chief Buthelezi has strongly criticised COSATU, and claimed it is a front for the ANC. What do you say to this allegation and why do you think he has displayed this hostility towards your organisation?

Barayi: It is a pity that Chief Buthelezi has accused us of being a front for the ANC and in reply we say he is a front for the Afrikaner Government. He is making accusations against COSATU because he's scared. He thinks he's supposed to be

the only person who can speak on behalf of the millions of black people in this country. We in COSATU say: No, you are wrong Chief Buthelezi. You were not democratically elected by the majority of people in this country. He was elected by that certain clique in KwaZulu called the Zulus ...

Both COSATU and the National Union of Mineworkers have taken a strong line on disinvestment and economic sanctions. What exactly is your position on this key issue?

Barayi: This is a sore point. The western countries say they are prepared to embark on constructive engagement with the South African government. The question arises: Are they prepared to engage themselves constructively with the majority of the population or with the minority government? In addition, I do not think places such as Great Britain or America which are more than 6 000 miles away should liberate the black people of South Africa. We, the black people of this country, shall liberate ourselves.

What of the argument that sanctions will hurt black workers the most as they will lose their jobs when companies pull out?

Barayi: I don't think it is true to say that when sanctions are applied to this country it is the black people who will be hurt.

Blacks have been suffering since the arrival of the Boers in this country as far back as 1652. We have massive and growing unemployment in this country yet investment is still coming in. Where does that money go? Why should we have unemployment like this and be told we would suffer more if sanctions were applied? We are suffering right now whilst sanctions are not applied. The black man has been suffering for more than 300 years.

At the inaugural conference you said that a COSATU government would nationalise the mines. Is that your personal view?

Barayi: That is correct. Black people are the ones digging



gold and in return they are paid peanuts. Once we nationalise the whole industry, our belief is that everyone will reap the fruits of his sweat and toil rather than a few individuals getting it all for themselves from the sweat and toil of a black person.

Would you describe COSATU as a socialist organisation?

Barayi: Yes, I believe COSATU is a socialist organisation and I would like to see a socialist State in South Africa ... This country is in a crisis because of capitalism, if we at least nationalised the big firms, then the government could look after its people and the people could look after the government.

WHAT COSATU IS DOING ...and what the papers are saying

ANC, COSATU hold talks

African National Congress president Oliver Tambo was among ANC leaders who held two lengthy sessions with a Congress of SA Trade Unions (COSATU) delegation visiting Lusaka ... *Business Day, March 6.*

ANC takes COSATU talks seriously

A seven-person delegation of leaders of the Congress of SA Trade Unions (COSATU) completed two days of talks on political and union issues with a joint African National Congress and South African Congress of Trade Unions delegation in Lusaka yesterday ... *Weekly Mail, March 7 to 13.*

ANC and COSATU getting together

As black worker militancy has increased in South Africa so the South African Communist Party has progressively raised its profile ... the SACP has begun distributing a new quarterly publication inside South Africa which goes by the name of "Umsebenzi" (The Worker) and its flag has begun to appear at funerals ... COSATU's organised strength and its declared willingness to participate in distinctly political campaigns, rather than those restricted to shop floor issues, has made the trade union congress a must for the ANC alliance ... *The Daily News, March 7.*

COSATU, ANC and SACTU delegates agree: Union unity is strength.

Lasting solutions can only emerge from the

national liberation movement headed by the ANC and the entire democratic forces of our country — of which COSATU is an important and integral part ... A senior SA Communist Party official, Joe Slovo, was present at the ANC/SACTU/COSATU talks, reliable sources told City Press. It is not known what part, if any, he took in the talks ... *City Press, March 9.*

Taxes, rent under fire

COSATU hardened its defiant stand against the Government at a rally ... in the Western Cape. Mr Elijah Barayi challenged the payment of taxes ... and the payment of rent on "matchbox houses." "We must all stand up and say to hell with taxes, from today workers must stand together and refuse to pay rent on these houses," Mr Barayi said. *Sowetan, March 25.*

Barayi rejects 'Inkatha union'

"We call upon Buthelezi to resign ... and join COSATU ..." *Interview with City Press, March 30.*

Double attack on govt.

Mr Barayi delivered a scathing attack on the launching of the United Workers' Union of SA, which he said was an attempt to divide workers. He wanted to know why, if Chief Buthelezi was a real leader of all South African blacks ... had agreed to govern only KwaZulu and not the whole of South Africa ... *The Star, May 2.*