



PCR CONFERENCE – WCC

THE YOUTH SPEAK OUT

Mr Moderator, it is an honour for me to exercise our right to address this conference on behalf of the youth of South Africa. Much has been said about events in South Africa and because of time constraints I shall move on to talk about issues that confront the church and which we find deeply disturbing.

We call upon the church to take sides in the struggle for liberation. This call may come across as strange to many of us who believe that the church had in fact already taken sides. This, Mr moderator is a myth. The church continues to merely identify with the oppressed, to make a preferential option for the poor, to support the poor.

But, for the church to become a credible institution it has to become part of the oppressed, it has to become the poor in its involvement in the struggle. It must take the sides in the conflict with the oppressed and move beyond the arrogance of refereeing the morality of the means that the oppressed have adopted to secure their liberation.

For how long can the church hide behind what it calls 'prophetic distance?' For how long is it going to be the fire-fighters that pour water over the anger of our people? For how long is it going to hide their own cowardice and inability to get involved behind flowery phrases such as reconciliation? As if the rapist can be reconciled with the

raped, whilst that crime is being perpetrated! Reconciliation starts from one side, in the same way that bridges don't get built from the centre. One starts at a side and the Church must now decide which side it is going to start.

Today we challenge the church to abandon the claims that it is in the forefront of the struggle for freedom. The truth is that, the vast majority of our resisting people are Christians but they do not take to the streets because they are Christians, or because the church has asked them to do so. They are resisting because they are tired of being oppressed and because they are organized by the secular forces under the leadership of patriotic and democratic forces. Indeed, if the Church could have its way, then the street battles would probably come to end because they disturb the comfort of ordinary parish life.

The church also claims a deep commitment to the struggle by virtue of its statements, declarations and the involvement of church leaders such as Beyers Naude, Allan Boesak and Desmond Tutu. The truth is that these people are not the church and neither are the masses of Christians within the obtaining structures the church.

The church is a powerful far too powerful bureaucracy with its moderamen, synodical councils and bishops conferences who

have to be dragged along with the people so that they may not be co-opted by the other side. The church cannot continue to hide its own darkness behind the lamps of the Naudes, the Boesaks and the Tutus. This is what we mean when we say that the church must take sides.

The church conveniently talks about liberation movements when the people of our country have long since decided that there is only one liberation movement the ANC. For as long as the church sees two instead of one it can continue in its prophetic distance of irrelevant neutrality. They can draw courage from the supposed divisions and continue standing on the side lines for the fear of antagonizing the other side.

The referee doesn't have to get dirty and he can still make 'chommies' with whoever turns out to be the winner at the end of the game. Mr moderator, an outsider can say that the absence of certain groups from the terrain of struggle is the result of a conspiracy by the liberal or bourgeois press, but the church inside South Africa cannot.

The truth is that our people recognize the African National Congress as the source of their hope for a new South Africa and the inspiration to continue the struggle to attain a non racial, non sexist and democratic South Africa. The term 'liberation movements' is alien to our people, and if the Church is truly of



the people then the term must become alien to it as well.

A good few questions were raised about the future of the church in a liberated South Africa. We challenge the Church to stop asking for guarantees, and to work for liberation because people are suffering out there, because they are being hanged out there, because they are being dehumanized out there. The church must know that what happens to the body of Christ in a liberated South Africa will be determined by what the body of Christ did in an enslaved South Africa. The future is being shaped today in our factories, in our streets, at our graveyards, and in their prisons. If the body of Christ is a part of this present, then, and only then, will it be a part of that future.

The church must commit itself to the struggle for liberation, but it must do so

in a humble manner. We cannot dictate the responses of our people or of the liberation movement, but can, if we truly become a church of the people then become a decision maker alongside with the other progressive forces. The church must understand that Christianity, however distorted, may have had a monopoly over the problems in our country but there is no way through which it can monopolize the solutions as well.

The Church has repented for its silence and even for the theological support that it has afforded apartheid over years. That is all very well. What it needs to understand, nevertheless, throughout those dark years, secular elements gave their lives for our country and its freedom. Communists languished and died in the prisons of our country

or in exile. We cannot afford to walk too haughtily in our religious arrogance.

There are Muslims, Hindus, Atheists, Jews and African traditionalists in South Africa and the christian faith can not pretend that these religions are not there. We are tired of the church wanting to Christianize everything. We are tired because the blood of our children, of people of all faith and religions have flown in the struggle to create a new South Africa. Therefore, they are in South Africa to stay, and indifference to their existence can less contribute to the building of a future free democratic and non racial South Africa

FROM THE YOUTH

PCR CONFERENCE



Beyers Naude addressing the Conference

at the ANC creche during excursion.



**PCR CONFERENCE
COMRADES
IN STRUGGLE
TOGETHER
IN CHRIST**



L. to R. — Dr Emilio Castro, Gen. Sec. WCC; O.R. Tambo President of ANC; Dr. N. Koshiy WCC and James Mutambirwa, PCR, WCC.



From page 24

That time has now come to South Africa. We shall not submit and we have no choice but to hit back by all means in our power in defence of our people, our future and our freedom.

We of Umkhonto we Sizwe have always sought — as the liberation movement has sought — to achieve liberation, without bloodshed and civil clash. We do so still. We hope — even at this late hour — that our first actions will awaken everyone to a realisation of the disastrous situation to which the nationalist policy is leading.

In these actions, we are working in the best interests of all people of this country — black, brown and white — whose future happiness and well-being can not be attained without the overthrow of the Nationalist government, the abolition

of white supremacy and the winning of liberty, democracy and full national rights and equality of all people of this country.

We appeal for the support and encouragement of all those South Africans who seek the happiness and freedom of the people of this country.”

The stand taken by various religious and Christian international organisations to declare apartheid a heresy and a crime against God's creation, simply emphasises and signifies that our's is a just and holy war, designed to destroy what is not of God. It is through us, in destroying the barbaric racist regime that God's divine power in action will be realised.

The power of the just and truly religious witness

in South Africa lies in our hands to proclaim the Lord's favourable year for the poor. It is in partnership with the poor, the down-trodden, the exploited and the underdog that our divine witness will find its true religious and christian expression. The church is called upon to judge and challenge the racist regime.

This is the message of our Lord:

- Proclaim God's judgement.
- Tell it that its satanic rule is short-lived.
- Educate all people about its idolatry.
- Isolate it.



WE MUST TAKE SIDES