

# Isolate Apartheid Culture

Speech by Comrade Barbara Masekela, Secretary of the Department of Arts and Culture of the ANC delivered at the opening session of the Workshop on Culture and Apartheid organised by the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement on Friday 25 April 1986 at Trinity College, Dublin.

THE CULTURAL BOYCOTT of South Africa is integral to our campaign for the imposition of mandatory and comprehensive sanctions against the apartheid regime.

It is a call not only for the repudiation of the South African racist regime, but also for their total isolation. Above all, the cultural boycott cannot be divorced from our nation's bitter struggle for the destruction of apartheid and the creation of a democratic, non-racial and united South Africa.

In recent years the world has witnessed a dramatic escalation of state terrorism against opponents of this heinous system. The scenes of indiscriminate shooting, sjambokking and tear-gassing of men, women, youths and even infants; the massacres of South African refugees in Botswana, Maseru and Matola; the massacres at funerals of apartheid victims are daily fare on television screens all over the world. This catalogue, which includes imprisonment, torture, assassination by racist murder squads, forced removals of more than 4 million blacks, unparalleled infant mortality in our land of plenty - this incalculable human loss is reminiscent of Hitler's genocide in Nazi Germany. Yet it is all occurring in our time. This blood, these tears and this sweat of exploited workers exists side by side with the indolence and arrogance of white privilege in South Africa. Yet the flow and direction of events is inexorably towards the realisation of freedom.

Today, we exhort you in the name of the African National



Congress to say - Mandela, Sisulu, Kathrada, Mbeki, Mhlaba, Motsoaledi, Mlangeni - - to say --Raditsela, Goniwe, Mxenge, Bathandwa Ndondo - -to say --Oscar Mpetha; Gugulethu, Langsa, Sharpeville, Mamelodi, Alexandra, Uitenhage, Lamontville, Stutterheim, KwaNobuhle, Soweto, Umlazi, Krugersdorp, Welkom, Crossroads -- to shout the names of all the hamlets, villages and townships of South Africa whose chilling determination and courage speaks for itself.

Juxtaposed with this state of terrorism is the inspired and united resistance against apartheid which involves our people in all their various formations as civic, trade union, student, youth and cultural organisations. That is South African culture today.

The drive to destroy the apparatus of apartheid, to pull out all its roots, cannot be stemmed. The momentum towards our seizure of power and the establishment of democracy in our country is irreversible. It is our

responsibility, the national liberation movement of South Africa, to sustain this drive in all its ramifications. We in the ANC see this task as a major responsibility. Over and above all else it is the people of South Africa who are exhorting us to isolate the apartheid regime, who are saying Mandela, the Freedom Charter, who are upholding the ANC flag and demanding the unbanning of the ANC, who are in open defiance of the illegal authorities, who want nothing less than one man one vote in a unitary South Africa. That is South African culture today.

## CULTURAL BOYCOTT

No consideration of the cultural boycott that looks away from the daily occurrences in the streets of South Africa, the daily struggle and sacrifice, is of any consequence. The cultural boycott is no rigid theoretical discourse. It is a practical political exercise that must be designed to aid and abet the initiatives of our patriots against the scourge of racist economic exploitation. It is a question of choosing to betray or support our struggle for national liberation. It calls upon all of us to reject outrightly false reforms, palliative measures and delaying tactics - as those whose blood flows in the streets are daily demonstrating.

The categorical imperative of the cultural boycott is to exclude all foreign artists, academicians, scientists and sportspersons from performing in South Africa, in person, film or otherwise. The highly selective and occasional integration of public facilities,



The Penny-whistler — Pen and ink drawing by MILES PELO

for example, in Sun City, Bophuthatswana, or when teams such as the All Blacks or the British Lions are visiting is nothing but a mockery of our suffering. We want permanent equality in all of South Africa for all of the people. Then, What is apartheid culture?

It is an exclusionary culture based on the domination of the white minority over the black majority. It devalues black culture, cheapens black life and distorts the perceptions of white South Africa.

Apartheid culture is an extension of conscious and deliberate educational deprivation which results in neo-slavery. Thus black cultural workers, as with workers in other sectors, do not have equal opportunities. Cultural workers have no unions as yet. They have no proper rights to their creative and productive efforts.

Apartheid culture distorts reality. It attempts the fragmentation of the majority population into "tribes", seeks to engender chauvinism in its system-

atic efforts to prevent cultural unity.

Apartheid culture is genocidal, relegating the black majority termed superfluous to reservations called bantustans, where unemployment, rampant disease from malnutrition and starvation, infant mortality is the order of the day.

Apartheid culture is repressive. It seeks to silence opposition through censorship, even unto denying photographing of actual police and army atrocities against people; banning orders, torture, assassination, imprisonment, judicial murder and massacres.

Therefore, the position of our people, be they student, industrial worker, artist, trade unionist or other oppressed is not alleviated by the red carpet visit of foreign artists who come at the invitation of and are paid lucrative sums by the racist oppressor.

It is the consensus of our people that such visitors are mere cultural collaborators with fascism and we reject them out-

rightly. For their own safety, we also caution them that, in the present violent turmoil, instigated and maintained by the regime, their safety cannot be ensured.

Consequently, we call upon academicians, sportspeople, scientists and all cultural workers to desist from visiting South Africa. They must further dissociate themselves from the criminal regime by refusing to have their products purveyed in South Africa.

As anti-apartheid activists, we must also highlight those who have spurned apartheid invitations in a principled and public fashion. It is the responsibility of the international anti-apartheid movement to ensure that these activists are honoured publicly and involved in constructive actions supportive of our overall struggle. It is not enough to merely condemn. We are thinking, for example, of the United Artists Against Apartheid whose Sun City project is now a byword; the initiatives of the Artists

Against Apartheid in Sweden who staged a two-day Festival in Gothenburg; the AAA Festival which took place in Toronto in May, and the AAA recently formed in England. We commend the many other individual artists and groupings who have actively contributed their talent to complement the struggle of our people.

The issue of cultural exchange is also pertinent to the question of the cultural boycott. Certain South African artists who have been sent on propaganda missions by the racist regime to perform or exhibit in countries such as Chile, Israel and Taiwan are to be wholly condemned. South African artists who support, or lend their works, expertise or reputation to the perpetuation of the apartheid concept and system should be systematically isolated and barred from all legitimate international forums, stages, festivals, seminars and halls.

There is an alternative culture in the making both inside and outside apartheid South Africa. In the ANC we have our cultural ensemble AMANDLA, who have performed extensively in Europe, West Africa, Southern Africa and Latin America. Their visits to all these countries have helped them gain insights into their calling and have also mobilised immense international support.

We likewise have students, trade unionists, musicians and other artists studying and working outside South Africa. They are mobilising support and preparing themselves to play a constructive role in a free South Africa. Their exposure abroad is helping them to hone their skills for the tasks still ahead.

#### ART FOR ART'S SAKE

Inside South Africa itself, we have committed playwrights, poets, actors, musicians and artists whose work is helping to shape the future consciousness of our nation. They too must be beneficiaries of cultural exchange in the form of study, workshop

and performance opportunities that do not often exist for them inside the country.

However, in the climate of misinformation orchestrated by the regime worldwide, it is essential that the ANC be consulted on which artists are true representatives of the people. For instance, the charade "Ipi Tombi" was inimical to the people's struggle and it was correct for it to be roundly condemned and stopped.

This was achieved through co-operation and consultation with the ANC.

By all means the individual

artist, unless married to the noble aims of the people should not be considered a spokesperson of the people. In our present situation we totally reject the notion of art for art's sake.

Our confidence that we will triumph over apartheid is reinforced by the certainty of our just cause. We believe that the escalating violence can be reduced from what would otherwise be a cataclysm by active and effective support of comprehensive mandatory sanctions including the cultural boycott of South Africa.



AMANDLA CULTURAL ENSEMBLE performing in London, backdrop designed by THAMI MNYELE