

# TO THE READER



As this is being written, the world media report about the raid on Gaborone where people designated as 'ANC terrorists' have not only been slain in cold blood in their sleep, but petrol or some extremely inflammable solution has been doused over the bodies to make them unrecognisable. A Botswana Minister, Madame Chiepe — when asked what Botswana could do about this gross violation of her territory — says that the international community could lodge the strongest protest so that the perpetrators of this ghastly deed should get cold comfort. She mentions, also, that two of the murdered people were Botswana nationals, young women.

What she omitted saying was that the world community has always been asked not only to protest against these unspeakable acts by the Pretoria racist regime against its neighbours, but also to act. The countries, the governments that have always traditionally supported the apartheid state have been shown, in every possible way, that one of the most effective methods of bringing forth a peaceful solution to the South African tragedy is the imposition of mandatory and comprehensive economic sanctions against racist South Africa. Most governments, including the Reagan Administration, have been enjoined to respect the injunctions of the United Nations: certain measures have been taken. They are not enough and there is always that attempt or willingness on the part of that Administration to give with one hand and take away with the other.

The British Government, through its spokesperson Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, has been more insultingly vocal in its refusal to heed this call for sanctions, a call, it must be remembered, that was voiced by the Eminent Persons' Group. What this means is that all the suffering and bloodletting that takes place in our country is summarily ignored just because the imposition of sanctions would, in the minds of the British Government, 'open a way for the African National Congress to seize power'. All those corpses, all those displaced communities, don't matter. Moreover, there are all these investments that need to be protected. Someone once made this chilling observation: 'When they pour in the dollars, the soul goes'.

Since it has become glaringly clear that we're dealing with a situation where the soul has gone, what do we, cultural workers, do about the situation in our country?

The people in our country are writhing under the State of Emergency, a most cowardly method through which an unpopular regime can try to impose its will. On top of that, on February 24, 17 organisations were effectively banned; this was followed by the announcement that certain organisations would be barred from getting external funding. The *NEW NATION*, a mouthpiece of a gagged nation, has been dealt with in a way that would have made Hitler smile in the knowledge that the last bastion of Nazism is still holding sway. Our job is to wipe fascist smiles off the face of the earth.

In this issue questions about the direction we should take are raised; in the last decades of the 20th Century we should be striving to eradicate from the face of the earth all vestiges of mediaeval practices. This is why the CASA Conference and Festival which was held in Amsterdam in 1987 becomes so important. That was where all of us, cultural workers operating outside within the liberation movement and those of us still in the belly of the beast, came to an understanding that we're facing a most cowardly and heinous regime. Cowardly people tend, all the time, to wrestle with shadows.

We have included here some of the papers and discussions that took place in Amsterdam. It is the intention of this journal to publish in future some aspects on Language and Literature and also the paper on the visual arts.

We have been successful in holding out even in the teeth of the most cowardly of regimes. It is a regime which has spawned such obscenities as swastikas and murder; history has proved that swastikas have no place within the ranks of civilised humanity. Our task is to turn those swastikas, all

those symbols of man's descent into the jaws of chaos, into democratic images that speak of a people elevated from all forms of self-hatred and self-destruction.

This issue, then, celebrates all that is best in us; it speaks about the children who were represented at CASA, it speaks about the fact that we have to use all our arts and crafts to defeat the racist culture of death. It means we have to bear in mind that we have to employ a collective view as to how the struggle should be executed. Gone now are the days of our using our creativity on an individual basis without tapping the creative crucible, or drinking from the fountain that the people in our country have dug and nurtured for all these centuries.

Our work must finally dictate to us and, through our acts, to the enemy, that it is very easy to ban names of organisations and their affiliates, but it is an insuperable task to ban the thoughts in people's minds. As they say, you can kill the dreamer but it is impossible to kill the dream. Let our creativity be a death blow to silence.

