

STATEMENT BY A REPRESENTATIVE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S WORKERS TO THE CONFERENCE:
"PEOPLE OF THE WORLD AGAINST APARTHEID FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA"

Comrade Chairperson of the Conference - Salim Ahmed Salim

Our honourable Comrade President of the ANC, Comrade O.R. Tambo

Honourable Comrades of the NEC of the ANC

Comrade President of SWAPO - Comrade Sam Nujoma

Comrade delegates, friends & peace-loving people of the world,

It is a great honour and privilege for me to address this historic International Conference marking the 75th Anniversary of the vanguard of our national liberation struggle in South Africa, the ANC. It is equally important to be a participant in the deliberations of this Conference.

It has already been mentioned that our attendance & identity must be kept anonymous for two simple reasons:

- (i) The link with our external comrades must be maintained at all times and we need to fight many more battles in the future;
- (ii) We shouldn't give our enemy ammunition to say that our Federation is a front of the ANC, thus jeopardising those on trial inside S.A. at present.

I am not here to make a speech but to give an account of happenings at home from a writer's point of view; a testimony of the situation in S.A. and the possible solutions -- as seen by us workers, the politically oppressed and economically exploited black majority.

First of all, let me give you a brief history to lay the foundations of my evidence. We know the bitter struggle of dispossession and resistance from 1652 ended with the last battle in Natal - the Bambatha rebellion.

In 1910 the British government handed over South Africa to the white minority settler, racist government, excluding the great majority of the indigenous people of this country. In 1912 the ANC was born, to struggle non-violently for participation in the decision-making machinery of our motherland, South Africa. In 1913 the first Land Act was passed to divide South Africa into 87% for whites and 13% for blacks. We know of the formation of the Communist Party of South Africa in 1921 and of the Rand Revolt of 1921 too, followed by the 1924 Industrial Conciliation Act which further divided white workers from black workers. Many, many laws followed thereafter.

All these laws were equally challenged by bitter resistance by our forefathers e.g. the Defiance Campaign of the 1920's, against blacks using goods trains, etc. The 1946 Great Mine Strike; the 1950 protest against the Suppression of Communism Act. The formation of the Congress Alliance in 1954 and the birth and adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955 and also of the birth of SACTU, the South African Congress of T.U. All these are forms of Political Struggle waged by our people under the guidance of their political vanguard, the ANC. The ANC itself underwent a transformation, from an organisation of intellectuals to a mass based revolutionary organ of liberation. 1961 saw anti-pass laws struggle and the subsequent banning of the ANC. Then the stage of armed struggle began - sabotage etc. - and finally the Rivonia Trial. The struggle that followed, because of repression and suppression by the enemy, was to temporarily mobilize International solidarity. It is against this background that we need to understand resistance of the early 1970s, and the subsequent emerging unions, students and community organisations. They were continuing the long bitter struggle that our gallant and well-tested leaders fought earlier.

The 1976 student uprising, the formation of mass-based trade unions and finally the existence of Cosatu was a result of bitter struggle, debate, quarrel and persuasion, not only internally but our leaders in the ANC and SACTU, based externally, contributed. The existence of Cosatu should be jealously guarded. We therefore don't see the need or right for the existence of another federation, except as a means of keeping our people divided and confused. Willingly or unwillingly they become agents of imperialism. The imperialists rejoice at our division, because divided we fall and united we stand.

We also want to inform the Conference and the international community that we equally don't see the need for the existence of any other national liberation movement except the ANC. The ANC is an organ of unity. It was founded on the principle of broad unity amongst our people. In its policies and constitution there is room and a home for all kinds of belief for all men and women who are serious and true compatriots. The struggle is not playing games. Men, women and children are daily imprisoned, tortured and killed. We don't want to encourage the existence of the Savimbi's and Renamo's. Thus we appeal to the international community to help us avoid it. Only the fascist, racist white minority and Reagan will encourage the existence of a third force.

Our struggle is one and therefore we need only one national liberation movement. Unity is a product of action. Only through unity in action will people be able to give strong blows to the enemy. Cosatu like the ANC has always based their strategy for liberation on unity in action. Through action people learn and come to know each other, begin to trust one another, and thus develop the preparedness to sacrifice and die for one another in their just cause. Unity is not forged in Conference halls or debating societies, or amongst the leaders with their briefcases, but in mass mobilization and united action. Thus our noble request as workers from Cosatu, the majority representative of workers is that you recognise only the ANC as the sole representative and legitimate organisation of all the South African people. We were encouraged by the speech by Comrade President Hassan Mwinyi in Zimbabwe during a solidarity Rally on Namibian Independence, that the organisation in South Africa that needs to be supported and give every assistance is only the ANC. We wish the QAU would take such a stand, to act now to avoid the Renamo's and Savimbi's of South Africa, While there is still a chance to destroy them, and not regret their inaction later.

Calls for unity, mass mobilization, etc. still continue by Cosatu. We called for united action against state of emergency, rent boycotts, Hands off the People's Organisations etc. We found ourselves and progressive organisations tackling the problems alone. Hence the killings, the bombings, arrest and torture are experienced only by us, our youth, civics, women, students etc. But nothing is done to our other brothers, because they are not a threat to Botha. The Living Wage Campaign is also a call for united action by serious trade unionists in the fight to forge alliances and unity.

A living wage demand is not a new thing in our history. During the SACTU days it was called Pound-a-Day. Today we broadened it, because a living wage in reality is a political demand for self-determination of us blacks. We demand housing, better education for our kids, hospitals, better salaries, no taxation without representation, etc. This campaign was branded as a communist plot by the scared Botha fascist regime. Rallies all over South Africa to launch it were banned. We challenged the ban in court, only to be confronted by a Major, supposedly specialising in the ANC and politics. Comparing speeches from the top leadership of ANC and Cosatu, he drew similarities which he indicated were reason enough to prove that Cosatu was used by the ANC, and thus the living wage campaign was a communist plot. They forgot that the ANC is an organisation formed by South Africans to

further their political and economic interests. It is our weapon of armed struggle. They forgot that Cosatu is equally formed by the same people as a weapon of non-violent struggle. Thus the language of the people will be the same whether in ANC or Cosatu. These organisations are our instruments of liberation.

We remember the OK Bazaars strike, and how the progressive forces fought that struggle and won it; the post office strike, with demands that shook racism within the public sector, even though finally they were forced to sign agreements at gunpoint. The nurses and hospital workers, the municipal workers including municipal police, have struck. All these were challenges by our people to the racism embodied in the public sector; the railway workers even shook them a little, hence the brutality with which they clamped down on the workers yet the railway workers stood firm and thus won in the end; the most recent strike was by the mine workers. This ~~strike~~ was well organised. Preparations were made and lessons drawn from other experiences. Thus they firmly stood together for 21 days. All these strikes are just the beginning. Much more is still to come.

It is against this background that the Botha/Malan junta is now ~~coming~~ up with a new Bill, trying to reverse the gains of the workers. He cannot reverse the wheel of change. We regret to inform Mr. Botha that this is not possible. The people are coming. They are prepared to die for freedom now so that their children and grandchildren should live a better life. The black masses in South Africa are no longer prepared to be ruled in the same old way.

We are certain the ANC is our future government. That the people are sure of. When and how, however, only time will tell. Mandela and Tambo have become household names. Schools, townships, blocks and even zones are now named after our leaders in jail, exile, and some who have laid down their lives for the national democratic struggle.

Our people have rejected capitalism. They have seen that is unworkable in South Africa. They are now embracing socialism, hence there is much discussion about socialism in every corner of our townships. Some areas are even called by the names of socialist countries, eg Nicaragua, Cuba, the Soviet Union, GDR, and Vietnam to name but a few. The Communist Party

has become more popular today amongst workers and our youth than ever before. Names like Joe Slovo, Castro, Lenin, Marks, Kotane, Mbeki and Mabhida are on the lips of our people, are used in our people's slogans.

The adoption by Cosatu of the Freedom Charter was based on these parameters. It was adopted as a living document enshrining our minimum demands for a democratic government which is a necessary condition for a transformation to scientific socialism. The Freedom Charter is still relevant, and is very much alive today. These demands we will fight for, side by side, sparing neither strength nor courage, until we achieve them as workers, youth, women, businessmen, churchmen and every democrat. Let every worker be a combatant, every combatant be a patriot and every patriot a revolutionary.

Cosatu and the UDF do not wish to, and will never, replace Sactu and the ANC respectively. Both organisations are still relevant and valid today in South Africa. The ANC lives among the people, it is within our people. Their rich experiences are ours. They are still our instruments of liberation.

The popularity and liveliness of these organisations is not only demonstrated through songs and slogans, but practically, in the fight for the unbanning of the ANC and the campaigns for the release of political prisoners, etc. Nelson Mandela and others bear testimony. Comrade Govan Mbeki's release was received with very high enthusiasm that shocked the apartheid fascist regime. For instance, in Johannesburg, we only learnt at 16.00 hours that he would be at Jan Smuts Airport at 13.00 hours. Within these two hours there were 5,000 people at the airport waiting to welcome him home after so many years. We have seen how he was welcomed in his home town. Even the recent rally in the Cape was to be restricted to reduce the numbers of people prepared to welcome him as a leader, a combatant and a revolutionary. He was up to date with the feelings of the people. He was relevant in saying he was a member of the ANC and that he still remains a member of the SACP. He even went further to give direction by saying he embraces Marxism-Leninism. He was not out of touch. He still reflects the aspirations and beliefs of our people.

People need to be serious and sincere about negotiations. They have to be ready for this process. The South African government, the Botha/Malan junta is still playing games. The conditions are not yet conducive for negotiations.

We are happy and moved by the views of the Frontline States on this issue. Our fears at home were that they might jump at the first opportunity to get rid of the burden of repression, the killing, maiming and destruction of their communities and property by the fascist, racist white minority rule regime in South Africa. Despite all this, they are standing firm, they agree with us that conditions are not yet right. We are happy to have heard that from Comrade Chairman of CCM, Comrade Julius Nyerere. We understand the pressures, the cries, the suffering, the destruction of children men and women of their countries, all this makes them see that South Africa is not seriously ready for that process. Our minimum conditions at home are the same, whether in jail or in exile:

- * Release of all Political Prisoners and detainees.
- * Unbanning of the People's organisation, ANC;
- * Dismantling of the Apartheid system;
- * Removal of occupational troops & police from townships;
- * Lifting of the State of Emergency;
- * Confining of troops to barracks; and
- * Allowing MK to occupy strategic areas too, because the army exists within our people, they are there in South Africa. They will not see OR coming from Lusaka to occupy those areas but people from within.
- * FREEDOM of movement, organisation, campaigning and free consultation within the country and outside. MK only can guarantee protection to our leaders during this process.

These are but a few of our demands.

In Cosatu's 2nd National Congress we had to strengthen our existing policies and come with new ones to create clarity and avoid confusion and opportunism about our political policy. The following resolutions were adopted:-

- * Immediate mandatory and comprehensive sanctions, including an oil and arms embargo.
- * Cutting of cultural, sporting, trade, academic, links; landing rights, air space, export & import of South African goods and finance, in short the total isolation of South Africa;
- * Assistance to the neighbouring States with all material necessary, including investment there.

- * Recognition of the Angolan government by those who have not yet done so, including the U.S.A.;
- * Total rejection of linking the Cuban question to Namibian independence
- * The occupation of Southern Angola, the attacks on Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique, and the destabilisation of these independent countries is a challenge to the International Community - Apartheid is no different from Nazi Germany. Reagan is a leader of terrorist groups. The Nicaraguan Comrade has rightly said that he should lead those delegations for negotiations whether in Angola or Nicaragua.

We are inspired by the Vietnamese people who stood against USA might.

Workers have come out to show the world that we in South Africa accept our comrades in the Socialist countries. As workers we cannot be restrained by Botha, Reagan or Thatcher. We invited comrades from Cuba, the Soviet Union, GDR, Angola, Mozambique, etc. to our Congress. Some did send messages of support. We are not doing this to alienate our good comrades and supporters from the West. But we have the right to make friends and relations everywhere.

- We want to forge links & strengthen relations with neighbouring Trade Unions. We have already started with Namibia, hence they were given special attention.
- We agree to affiliate to the AITUU through SACTU.
- * We were also encouraged in our Congress to receive messages of support from SACTU, ANC/SACP and we were delighted to see their language being the same as ours including that of the UDF.

Apartheid is vulnerable. We as workers have the power. People of the world unite against Apartheid, for a democratic South Africa is timeous. Apartheid must go now and not next time.

AMANDLA! LONG LIVE ANC, TAMBO, MANDELA, SLOVO, SACP and SACTU!