



MESSAGE FROM THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT (BCM) TO THE WORKERS' SUMMIT HELD ON 26 AUGUST 1989

COMRADES:

This Workers' Summit comes at a crucial juncture in the history of Southern Africa and it is therefore appropriate that it coincides with Namibia Day. We in the BCM urge that the sights and sounds of solidarity with the Namibian struggle take shape here and ring out across the globe.

The heroic rebellion of the Azanian people during 1984-1986 has forced the Pretoria regime to adopt the language of liberalism (or "reform") while tightening the noose of repression. Hence we have witnessed the Labour Relations Amendment Act (LRAA) which attempts to wrench the law at a stroke into a new pattern and to regulate and police the Black union movement. Hence the elaborate plans for privatisation and de-regulation and the near-permanent state of emergency. Hence the report by the South African Law Commission whose "Bill of Rights" does no more than entrench the existing system root and branch.

Comrades, liberalism is being used to contain the Azanian revolution. Anyone who sees an ally in liberalism is making a fundamental error about the nature of our enemy. Suffice it to say that the centre of liberalism in South Africa is made up not of petty bourgeois democrats but of real capitalists.

The system restricted the Workers' Summit held on 26 August 1989. This message was to be delivered by Nkosi Patrick Molala, the AZAPO President.

It is with this backdrop in mind that the BCM wishes to reiterate that its guiding principle is the hegemony of the Black working class within the national liberation movement. In occupied Azania the Black Proletariat numbers in the millions, in the world as a whole the Proletariat number in the hundreds of millions.

We believe that the Black Proletariat is the pivot of the liberation movement because it can only end its own exploitation by ending **all** exploitation. Only the Black Proletariat has an interest in and the power to make the Azanian Revolution a reality.

We cannot over-emphasize that without the right to rule, any prattle about the "rights of labour" is absolutely meaningless! This is the cold truth . . . let us make it the liberating truth!!

There is no doubt that the union movement is destined to make great strides in its historical campaign against the LRAA. And there is no doubt that the Black working class is destined to play its historical role as the creator of an anti-racist, socialist Azania. More than that, the Proletariat and oppressed people all over the globe need to lock hands across con-

tinents to see to it that the "earth shall rise on new foundations."

In many ways, the LRAA provides an acid test for the union movement. We are required to exploit our *independent* mobilizing potential and make the LRAA unworkable!

We in the BCM wish to make the following suggestions regarding the campaign against the LRAA:

1. Calls for spectacular "stayaways" (whether beginning on the 1st or 11th Sept. 1989) fail to take into account that the Black working class has been on the receiving end of renewed repression and tyranny and is just beginning to muster strength. We suggest that the most organized plants undertake industrial action first and that those who have been temporarily disorganized use the time to prepare for action. Industrial action can therefore take the form of sustained and prolonged waves. However, we do not disfavour a complete stayaway on Tuesday and Wednesday the 5th and 6th of September with lunch-time placard demonstrations and other creative actions starting from the 1st September.

2. Joint Regional Campaign Committees of all unions participating in the anti-LRAA campaign must be established and must be guided by principled unity. The substratum of principles must include anti-imperialism, anti-racism and anti-sexism and must be guided by the policy of anti-collaboration. Any opportunist alliances with government stooges or those involved in the bantustan or tricameral system (including the Democratic Party, Inkatha, Inyandza, etc) or white liberal factions (including the Black Sash, Idasa, etc) amounts to a betrayal of the liberation struggle. To falter here is to blunder at a crucial point because of which the Black working class will never be able either to rediscover revolutionary greatness in itself or to win new energy from the connections newly entered into, until all classes with which it contended in 1652, 1832, 1960, 1976 and 1984 themselves lie prostrate beside it.

3. It is tactically urgent for unions to negotiate Recognition Agreements with employers and to be careful that these Recognition Agreements really reflect the interests of workers in the "collective bargaining" relationship. Where Recognition Agreements already exist, a critical re-appraisal of them is a necessity.

Unions ought to work towards the implementation of these collective contracts rather than continue working within the framework of the LRAA. We believe there is unexplored potential in Recognition Agreements which potential must be fully exploited.

We would like to address the argument that the union movement as *the union movement* can provide the political lead to free occupied Azania.

We must decide whether we are building a labour movement or a liberation movement. If we are building a labour movement, however militantly we go about it and however much we attach and tack on militant slogans and pro-

paganda, we will ultimately create a reformist movement.

A liberation movement on the other hand includes economic demands as part of its overall process and overall character, but as a very definitely subordinate part of it.

We can learn from Lenin in this regard:-

"If we begin with the solid foundation of a strong organisation of revolutionaries, we can ensure the stability of the movement as a whole and carry out the aims both of (socialism) and of trade unionism proper. If, however, we begin with a broad worker's organisation, which is supposedly most 'accessible' to the masses (but which is actually most accessible to the police), we shall achieve neither the one aim or the other; we shall not eliminate our rule-of-thumb methods, and, because we remain scattered and our forces are constantly broken up by the police, we shall only make trade unions . . . the more accessible to the masses."

What is required for REVOLUTION is bold, decisive national leadership. A revolutionary leadership has to link up the struggles and sacrifices of today – those struggles for a living wage, for better and humane living conditions, for proper health care, for better housing and an improved quality of life, for proper education, etc. – with the the goal of building a new world, a world where class, colour or gender is not made the basis of a person's worth, a world without exploitation and oppression.

Genuine revolutionaries do not use the struggle of the masses as negotiating chips with the enemy nor do they seek to replace the existing authorities just to sit on the same old system of exploitation.

A call for a negotiated settlement with the excuse that it offers a way to broaden out democratic possibilities is palpably in the air. It comes in the wake of renewed and bitter mass struggles which are rumbling in full rage and fury and seeks to dilute these struggles from their aim of smashing white rule and carrying out a national

and democratic revolution to free Azania of imperialism and its local props. It is a response to imperialist manoeuvres: after all, the futures of Namibia and Angola were negotiated with everyone except the Nambian and Angolan people themselves. Similar manoeuvres are evident in occupied Palestine and occupied Eritrea.

The Black working class must take the lead in making all these schemes of "working within the system" non-starters. A negotiated settlement will be nothing less than CAPITULATION: it is imperialism's way of buying time until the 21st Century.

There is no logic in representing the oppressed by trying to be the "State President" of the very system that oppresses them. That's like representing fish by trying to be "President" of the sharks that eat them!

It is high time that the world be wrested from the hands of the imperialists and reactionaries who now run it. Their rule means continued misery for the immense majority of people throughout the globe. And despite their talk of peace and understanding, the real danger still exists that the imperialists will launch a Third World War. Only the revolutionary struggle of the Proletariat and its allies can change this state of affairs and unlock the doors to the future.

Whether a new stage in the struggle will be born in the tempest challenging the outmoded order in South Africa or whether this upsurge becomes a bloody and tragic loss for the world's people depends, comrades, on all of us who know what it is to suffer scorn and be beaten down, all of us who long to dig existing society's grave.

Either we belong to the trend towards World War III or the trend towards thoroughgoing Revolution. Put differently: either we work towards a horrible end or we end the horror once and for all.

Amandla ba Sebenzi!

Izwe Lethu I Afrika!

One People One Azania One Nation! ■