

"WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO GIVE THE ENEMY A PRESENT"

These extracts from a paper by a well-known COSATU leader explain some of the aims, and why certain organisations were asked to attend the Anti-Apartheid conference

On bantustan organisations outside the democratic movement

We need to accept that most of those organisations that will be coming to the conference, have always been falling outside the sphere of direct political influence of the democratic movement. In a situation where the state has been pushed into the retreat, it is to be expected that it will aim to win support of such forces when it reorganises its capacity to roll back our gains. It therefore goes without saying that what people outside the democratic movement, expressing themselves in organised activity, do or abstain from doing, hastens or retards the historical process and helps or hinders the creation of conditions favourable for us to make a necessary leap forward.

The foregoing consideration brings us to questions raised by some people we encountered in the process of consultations. It should not be assumed that everybody within the ranks of the democratic movement understands the importance of inviting "Bantustan opposition parties" to the Anti-Apartheid conference. It seems inconceivable to some, that having taken a principled stand against the Bantustan system, we can invite opposition parties from the Bantustans....We hate the Bantustan system for reasons which are obvious. However, we cannot wish Bantustans away. We have

to tackle them as part of our objective reality...Our people were never consulted as to whether they wanted Bantustans though they often expressed their opposition in various forms of protest. When the first Bantustan (Transkei) was set up, the most dedicated and progressive of the peoples' leaders were either in jail, exiled or banned as was the only mass organisation - the ANC. Nevertheless, despite all these restrictions the Transkei electorate voted overwhelmingly for the Transkei Democratic Party which stood for a non-racial democratic South Africa and opposed Bantustans. Matanzima's Transkei Independent Party got only 25% of the seats and was only able to form a government with the support of nominated chiefs. In Mphahlele's Venda Bantustan the overwhelming majority of our people voted for the opposition party and Mphahlele was only able to form a government through the same tricks. The people of Kwa Ndebele rose in revolt almost to a man when Pretoria was about to force them to become "independent". The Ciskei became "independent" in open defiance to the will of the people in that part of our country. The recent uprisings in Venda, Bophuthatswana, as well as the problems encountered by the Matanzima brothers in the Transkei indicate that the Bantustans have once more become areas of instability for the Apartheid system. Yet when these schemes were launched, they were meant to stabilise the system.

It happens to be true that most of the activities of our people in the Bantustans have not taken place under the auspices of the mass democratic movement. However, this does not alter the fact that those activities have served to reduce the capacity of the Bantustan structures to serve the enemy. To sit back and wait for the day when all the people in the Bantustans will shout the slogans we are already shouting within Cosatu will amount to a dereliction of leadership duties. Working class leadership entails meeting the challenges which these activities have thrown up. If we are to broaden our moral and political influence we have to see the forces that are at play in the Bantustans as a terrain we have to contest. We are not prepared to give the enemy a present....

On white liberals

Whilst we remain committed to organising and mobilising our people, we cannot shirk the responsibility of identifying whatever forces from the other side of the barricades have a modicum of democracy. Not only do we have to identify them, but part of our responsibility is to dislodge them from the trenches of the enemy.

Years of our own unbending struggles have brought home to some of them the fact that parliament is not a viable route to a peaceful South Africa. It was the strategic blunders committed by the racist regime in the heat of battle that have pushed a significant number of whites into no-mans' land. These whites are not about to become as militant as the millions of oppressed in the squatter camps, townships and rural areas have been. However the positions they have taken and continue to take do constrain the regime.

Aims of the conference

It is important for us to understand this conference for what it is and to also understand what it is not. We have committed ourselves to fight for the reopening of the legal space which the democratic formations of our people have occupied. This means that replacing the UDF is not part of our intentions. Consequently we do not visualise a new organisation formation or a new realignment of forces to emerge out of this initiative. We know what is achievable and what is not achievable.

The best we can achieve out of this initiative is the recreation of the space we need in order to advance. To this end, an accumulation of forces and the placing of those forces firmly on the wrong side of the most reactionary sectors of our society is the most appropriate recipe. Whilst these groups that we are trying to bring into this line up of forces have not hitherto been part of our programmatic activities, they have nevertheless not been hostile to our programmes. They have only been outside our scheme of things because we have not been able to reach out to them.

