



# To the Reader

With the declaration of the state of emergency on June 13, hundreds have died, thousands are incarcerated; the media, nationally and internationally, has been muzzled. All organised activity — which in any case has always been viewed with suspicion and fear by the Pretoria regime — has been declared illegal. People of our country now find themselves in the throes of the kind of repression which can only exist in a Kafkaesque nightmare. But the truth continues to be told. This issue comes also in the wake of the murder in cold blood by the regime of cultural workers such as Thami Mnyele a year ago on June 14 in Gaborone and Mary Nomkhosi Mini in Maseru in December.

As of this writing, the raging fires set to raze down the Crossroads resistance have not died down. The smouldering embers cannot hide the fact that the women of that community went forth and performed plays, sang songs and declaimed poetry about their struggle — our struggle. And the world, sometimes so fickle, dare not forget that people lived there. The spirit of their courage and determination lives on. The cultural voices will never be stilled. People lived, resisted, died; the *witdoeke* vigilantes, paid assassins of the racists — nay, the racists themselves whose hands are drenched with the blood of children — cannot sleep. They have set houses and people ablaze. They have first-hand knowledge of the meaning of fire. It burns.

This issue celebrates the work of the cultural

worker. We salute the stand taken by artists, mainly musicians whose resolute position forced the moneychangers of Johannesburg to abort the incredibly cynical Johannesburg Centenary of Gold. It is such actions which demonstrate that cultural work inside our country has become the necessary adjunct of the political consciousness which reigns there. The songs, the chants, the slogans; the poems, short stories and novels that our writers pen at tremendous risk to themselves — all these are rocks of the foundation of our freedom. Each act presupposes and predetermines the demise of the most inhuman regime since Hitler's Nazi Germany. What is more, the regime and its paid servants are not unaware of this fact.

We have featured in the main people who passed away in the course of struggle. This should not dishearten the reader. It is better by far to commemorate the spirit of a fallen hero than to speak about a living ghost who is a pale imitation of his master. And, it must be borne in mind, there are many dead people walking the streets of our country; many of them have been given the seats of the mighty in the impotent so-called governments of the bantustans.

When President O.R. Tambo exhorted the cultural worker to "let the arts be one of the many means by which we cultivate the spirit of revolt among the broad masses," he must have known that the inevitable conundrum in which South Africa now finds itself was coming. Through this,

as cultural workers, we are enjoined to make the community issues our issues; the battle-cry that is increasingly deafening on the issue of sanctions should be taken, through the arts, through the length and breadth of our country. The arts must educate. All the specious and spurious arguments that black people are going to suffer if mandatory sanctions are imposed should be set at nought. The question that must be asked and subsequently translated into vigorous action is, since when have the masters become so magnanimous that they spend sleepless nights agonizing over our welfare? Cultural workers must also organise themselves on their front for the consolidation of people's power.

It is logical that cultural workers must hanker and work towards the destruction of the apartheid state. The state has a definite role in guaranteeing that all citizens have access to cultural services, training and values. Given the antecedent of apartheid culture, it is crucial that the previous state apparatus for culture, which has always promoted unequal and racist values be eradicated and new cultural organs be set up in all sectors - visual, performing, technical and crafts. In a word, the doors of learning and culture shall and should be opened.

It is through cultural work that the spirit of the people refuses to die. During the Siege of Leningrad, soccer players never failed to have their football matches even when the players were

almost crawling with hunger. The people knew that as soon as they stopped these matches, this would be the first act of surrender to Hitler. So they played. Musicians were there on the frontlines with their instruments, in the trenches, invoking the spirit of heroic patriotism. We qualify "patriotism" because the version manifested in the AWB fulminations is nothing but a desperate shadow-boxing of a spectre.

It is heartening, therefore, to see the strides that workers have taken, to quote President Tambo in "using their craft to give voice, not only to the grievances, but also to the profoundest aspirations of the oppressed and exploited." The burgeoning theatre performances, the poetry and song that the workers in their various democratic formations have contributed speak of a phase in our struggle that cannot now be reversed or subverted. The African National Congress, through its cultural organ, RIXAKA, salutes these efforts. This development is in tandem with the cultural impulse the German working class developed in the darkest days of the Third Reich. This Reich, like Smith's Rhodesia, was supposed to endure for a thousand years. Today as the people of our country push from ungovernability to the seizure of power, many songs that the children are singing in the face of Casspirs and invading armies, speak of the racist regime in the past tense.

Let us hasten that process!

