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NO. 120/15. 12/15/85. 12/15/85. page 2 of 2

SPEECH

THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC STRUGGLE

The entire bourgeois world is haunted by a spectre of drastic and often revolutionary change around the corner. Our, capitalist world is masked nowadays by a condition that might be termed stable crises. Crisis is no longer the exception; it is the norm. Whatever way we want to look at it, there is a complete discord between what is actually happening on the ground and what the western media want us to believe. For today it is no longer unusual to hear of 350,000 German workers striking in favour of a reduction of working hours from 42 to 35 hours per week. Neither is it unusual to hear of thousands or even millions of people in Western Europe taking to the streets to demonstrate their disgust at the deployment of Nuclear Missiles in their own countries. Perhaps to bring it nearer home, it is not surprising to hear that 50,000 people in Britain demonstrated against racist P W Botha's visit to Margaret Thatcher. All these are pointers to one thing and one thing only - that the crisis is deepening. When the crisis deepens, the imperialists try to create diversion by going to invade

peace-loving people in places like Grenada. For how else can you explain events like this and the mining of the harbours of Nicaragua by America. At the same time, they want to tell the whole world that the Soviet Union has done the same in Afghanistan. On the contrary, it is a fact of history that after the people's 1978 revolution in Afghanistan, some feudalists, in collusion with Pakistan, America and China, tried to subvert the revolution in Afghanistan. There is no doubt that the sovereignty of Afghanistan was threatened. As a result, President Karmal of Afghanistan invited his Soviet friends to come and bolster his country's defence capabilities. The imperialists are now saying that the Soviet Union has colonised Afghanistan. We know for a fact that the Soviet Union does not have a single colony at least on this planet called earth. Therefore those who in their Congresses resolve that they are "opposed to imperialism, be it from the West or the East", are themselves minions of the imperialists.

We in South Africa are not the only people today who find themselves fighting for liberation. The people of Namibia for instance, find themselves today travelling along the same road. Those who are occupying that country (illegally of course), are

saying that they are now prepared to work for a negotiated settlement. The way they want it, is that SWAPO must negotiate with traitors who bear the tag of the so-called MULTI-PARTY CONFERENCE. We have seen these things happening elsewhere - when Ian Smith went to Lancaster House, he was accompanied by Abel Muzorewa. In Angola for instance, the USA, South Africa and their common market allies, have been trying to preserve that country for imperialism by trying to force (through the use of arms) the MPLA to negotiate with Jonas Savimbi. What is happening in SA today, can also be explained in that context. The existence, apart from popular structures, of parallel structures which also purport to be fighting for liberation, is not a peculiarity of South Africa.

It is indeed a dynamic age we are living in - an age of social revolutions and national liberation movements. The profound changes in the life of society, the intensifying struggle between ideas that are refusing to die and ideas that are struggling to be born, places ever greater demands on our ideological positions. The material base for ideas dominating in any given society, is the economic system of that particular society. Thus when a given economic system is established, there always crystalizes out from the

whole process of ideological and institutional activity, a complex of ideas and institutions which serve the definite function of preserving the established order. South Africa's socio-economic structures, just like the socio-economic structures of any other capitalist country, rest ultimately on class relations which are maintained through political domination. Every law passed by the State, every law enforcement measure is a political measure. These laws are enacted and enforced with a view to protect the fundamental interests of one class over the other - which is domination, pure and simple. Theories have emerged which are held by people who profess to be motivated by the "desire for change". We hold it to be absolutely correct that the progressiveness of these theories can only be evaluated by their ability to transform political relations of class domination.

This paper wishes to examine three trends which are contemporarily contesting the legitimacy of having a correct interpretation of our objective situation and of being capable therefore, to transform the objective situation. In the process, I am going to expose some of these tendencies for what they are and for what they represent in totality - treachery and counter-revolution. Without qualms on my rectitude, I

must also point out that the basic rationale governing the selection of issues around which to focus my analysis has been to justify and project the specificity of the national democratic revolution without obscuring what is of universal significance.

We have this one tendency that has chosen to address itself solely to the question of exploitation of one class by the other. On the other hand, we have the other tendency which addresses itself solely to the relationship of one race with the other - thus seeing the White race as a monolithic block. I will not try to refute their arguments solely on theoretical grounds, but I will try to establish the facts as they exist in our objective situation.

We must come to understand that it is not simply a coincidence that in South Africa we have the vicious exploitation of the black people in factories, mines and farms existing alongside a political system which denies them a say in the governing of the country. It is obviously the demand for cheap labour by the industrialists that gives rise to this situation. The long and short of what I am saying here is that capitalism in South Africa has taken a racial form.

What is easily discernible therefore is the dialectical interconnection between the racial and the class aspects of the system in South Africa - and refusal by anyone to recognise this does not alter the fact. It is this specific feature of South African Capitalism which lends absolute legitimacy to the stress placed upon the importance of the national democratic struggle as a particular form of class struggle to be waged under the present South African conditions. It is from this premise that we can safely conclude that while it is legitimate on the one hand to challenge capital in the factories, it is retrogressive on the other hand to refuse to recognise, as workerists do, that issues of class domination go beyond the factory gates. It is equally retrogressive for any tendency to fail to grasp that much as the political domination of one race by another is a realistic problem in South Africa, the principal contradiction remains the one between capital and wage-labour. It is against this backdrop that we wish to submit that both positions are inadequate - precisely because in refusing to grapple with our societal conditions, they destroy their own revolutionary potency. For there is just no way that you can transform any given society for as long as you are not armed with, and not guided by, a revolutionary theory which is sufficiently capable of challenging the basis of that Society.

Given the South African societal conditions as outlined above, the conclusion therefore becomes inescapable that the only tendency which is capable of confronting and changing these conditions is the one that takes into cognisance and strives to crystallize through action, the dialectical interconnection between the national and class aspects of our struggle. That tendency must also distinguish between contradictions which the enemy can afford and these that it cannot afford at any given time. As for those which the enemy cannot afford at any given time, they must be sharpened with the velocity which the enemy will find difficult if not impossible to block. For it is the sharpening of such contradictions that erodes the base upon which this society is founded. When we talk about contradictions upon which our society is founded, we are thinking about contradictions which manifest themselves in all spheres of our lives. We are actually thinking about the way people relate. These contradictions manifest themselves at the workplace in the community where people live, at schools and universities and also in the way people relate as men and women. These relationships are of class domination and thus oppressive in nature. Over and above, they are reinforced through political measures.

In the majority of cases these contradictions are not clearly visible. Also, our obsession with the question of colour makes racism in our country the one antagonism that we perceive the most. For instance, when we think about a "Pass Book" and the fact that Africans are expected to carry these around with them, the conclusion that we immediately come to is that the "Pass Book" is a symbol of racial discrimination. It is only when people have come to understand our society in its totality that they will be able to understand that a "Pass Book" is a mechanism of capitalist control. Only consistent organisation and mass mobilisation can make these contradictions visible and reveal the structure of society and its fundamental antagonism. This actually forms the basis of the strongly felt need for organisations to emerge in various sites of our struggle. These organisations (they already exist in our country), were not formed simply because people wanted some veneer of respectability by belonging to some organisation, but rather because people have identified the need to combat oppressive conditions and transform their objective situation - a process which will make our country a zone of freedom where people shall live in peace and prosperity.

By placing emphasis on this multi-dimensional nature of our struggle I am trying to show that exploitation as a relation, is not only maintained in the factories. This is the main thrust of my argument! This then clearly indicates that the working class has to wage its struggle in alliance with other democratic minded sections of the community, be they in the student organisations, womens' organisations, civic bodies or issue-orientated structures like the ANTI-PC and RMC. For the actual destiny of the workers, no matter how bold and self-sacrificing they may be, depends on whether they gain the support of the broad masses. To illustrate this point, we only have to look back into our recent past and ask ourselves if the Fattis and Monis, the Red Meat and Wilson-Rowntree boycotts would have been maintained without the support of people and organisations who are not necessarily operating on the factory floor. To contend that these boycotts would have materialised without this support is unhistorical, and is to distort the actual picture of our social development, its driving forces and its prospects.

This compels me to take your congress a little bit to the deliberations of our progressive unions which are

involved in the Unity Talks. Somewhere in this paper I talked about what is happening in the international scene. This aspect is imperative for us because what is happening on the international plane has a bearing on our internal situation in South Africa. For the struggle of the oppressed people of South Africa is taking place within an international context of transition from Capitalism to a new social order, of the breaking down of the colonial system as a result of national liberation and social revolutions, and the fight for social and economic progress by the people of the whole world. It is an open secret that the so-called "INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS" (ICFTU), tried to dissuade SACTU from its affiliation to the Congress Alliance by offering SACTU a lot of money. We know the role of ICFTU has played in overthrowing progressive governments in Central America. We know of the manouevres they did in Africa - in Nigeria, in Kenya, in Ethiopia and also here in our country. Their sole aim here in South Africa was to dissuade SACTU from participating in the general struggle for the seizure of power by the masses of our people. Therefore all those who are proponents of this "workers alone" position, are wittingly or unwittingly, part of a network which is working in the direction of bringing down the pitch of the working class struggle and diverting the working class from

political action. So long as working class struggle is limited to such purely economic aims, its utmost stretch is to gain concessions from capitalism while it continues to accept the existence of the system. The Trade Union movement in our country can pass from this phase of fighting for no more than reforms within capitalism only when it is able to link the day-to-day factory-floor issues to the broader question of fighting for a Unitary South Africa where the people shall govern. The only way to attain this strategic objective, it seems, is by stepping up all forms of ideological struggle against anti-proletarian tendencies and sentiments which are ushered into the labour movement by those corrupt unionists who spend two hours in South Africa and twenty-two hours between Jan Smuts Airport and the offices of the AFL-CIO in America. It is only then that we shall be able to prevent unions from sinking into the quagmire of spontaneous reformism.

At the very Unity Talks that I have just referred to, people were debating whether or not it was necessary to organise a joint campaign against the banning of SAAWU by the Ciskei puppet administration. To those who are genuinely looking forward to the advent of a new South Africa, this is not an issue of controversy or even

debate. The most ridiculous of arguments to come out of these deliberations was that an immediate campaign against the Ciskei regime would serve no purpose because the labour movement as a whole is still very weak. All we need to do as proponents of this position argued, is to organise and organise until the Bantustans wither away. We have no problems with the withering away of the Bantustans, but we cannot conceive of the Bantustans withering away on their own. It is this sort of argument which weakens the combativity of the masses. For working class struggle cannot be based on a passive accumulation of forces. It is this passive accumulation of forces which is dangerous, precisely because it stifles the initiative of the masses and puts them in a Utopian waitingroom while the enemy is busy consolidating its own position. We are not saying that this campaign could have brought an immediate collapse either of the Bantustans or of the South African regime as a whole. That is not our concept of gains. We do not look for victory in every minor skirmish against the ruling class. It is logical that Lennox Sebe would not mind to be seen to be ruling by consensus. The repressive posture he adopted was the results of the struggles of our people in that part of our Country who made that area virtually ungovernable for him. It was therefore going to be absolutely necessary for us to direct

nobilization efforts towards heightening the consciousness of our people more and more to a point of fully understanding the interlocking between State and Capital - or even for them to understand the manner in which Bantustan quislings become protagonists in the theatre of apartheid.

It is a matter of historical record that political consciousness is organic - it is something that needs to be advanced by conscious effort as a regular part of political struggle. It is one thing to formulate fanciful notions about what the objective situation is and another to engage in programmatic activities aimed at transforming that objective situation. It is true that before the industrialisation of our Country, our African people in the rural areas had an outlook which was essentially tribal. For a long period of time the tribal system slowly disintegrated as people were forced to leave their homes and forced to work down the mines, on the farms and in the factories. It was then that a new identity was born. This made it possible on the one hand to form the AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS, and for the ANC, once formed, to fight for the development of a coherent political consciousness among wider and wider sections of the people. The tribal

consciousness that we are speaking about was reactionary insofar as it was unable to connect oppressive conditions and the national consciousness which people developed as a result of material conditions under which they were living, was relatively progressive. It is important to stress that this change in the people's outlook - giving them a new sense of identity, did not come about on its own. It was the end-result of organisation and mobilisation of people around their own experiences. Steve Biko once said: "The whole notion of psychological liberation implies that you can change the world by changing the way people think". We have already seen that people do not think independently of their own society. The structural form which our Country took before industrialisation, formed a material base which was conducive to tribal consciousness. Industrialisation took place and the industry needed labour. The industrialists did not care whether you came from Transkei, Gazankulu or KwaZulu; all they needed was the cheapest labour they could get. The people started to work and live under one roof and experience the same problems. This made it possible to unite and wage struggles as one people. The concept of race started to take a distinct form. You do not do away with racism by trying to wish away the concept of race. You have to organise and mobilise towards a new order

that conduces to non-racialism .

This brings me to reproaches and accusations which we constantly hear levelled against our position, and which lead to wholly wrong conclusions. We have been condemned for instance, of being ethnicists because of our unequivocal adherence to the FREEDOM CHARTER which explicitly recognises the existence of national groups. I wish to point out that the world of political change is a harsh one and it is not enough to tackle questions of social change simply on the basis of wishful thinking. Certainly it would be an ideal situation to have people in this Country being conscious of being one single nation. However, it is not enough to just stand on a Regina Mundi platform and mouth pseudo-revolutionary slogans in the hope that when you wake up the following morning the situation will have changed. You have to mobilise the masses and involve them in activities which are geared to alter conditions which gave rise to their reactionary ideas. It is also at this instance that I wish to differ with Azapo's Lybon Mabaso who at a meeting of the NATIONAL FORUM said: "We are witnessing the re-emergence of ethnicity on the one hand and bantustans on the other, endorsing the system of apartheid". Through this statement Mabaso was implicitly saying that there is an

analogy between the revival of the TRANSVAAL INDIAN CONGRESS and the established of for instance, the KwaZulu or Ciskei bantustans. Unfortunately that is not in keeping with our experience. Our experience is that the TRANSVAAL INDIAN CONGRESS was revived with a view to consolidating the gains made during and through the ANTI-SAIC election campaign. The ANTI-SAIC COMMITTEE was not formed only to reject the SAIC elections but also to mobilise people towards a goal of non-racialism from a particular community. It is a materialist analysis of society which asserts that communities, because of segregation, have different material conditions. We are not going to impose notions to our people in these segregated communities. On the contrary, we are going to organise them according to those material conditions and steer this organisation towards a non-racial democratic position. This is what we have set ourselves to do - and not to meet in an annual talk-shop to formulate concepts which are aimed at masking treachery.

While this paper pays tribute to struggles which people wage through their first level organisations, it simultaneously points out that those struggles will not be won until people have been able to free themselves from the political oppression and



exploitation which lies at the root of their problems. The fundamental question that we have got to address is the question of change. This is the one question which calls for maximum mobilisation of all the forces that are looking forward to changing the character of our Country. The refusal by our people to:

1. Participate in sham community council elections.
2. Participate in the SAIC elections.
3. Go along with the Coloured Labour Party in its sell out ploy;

and

4. to pay increased bus fares in the Ciskei; is a pointer to the fact that the majority of our people identify with the strategic objective of the seizure of power. Our people have even decided to co-ordinate their democratic activities and channel them towards showing that the Constitutional proposals are not accepted because they say nothing of our minimum demand which envisages the creation of a unitary South Africa. This decision gave rise to the formation of the UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT.

Some closeted intellectuals argue that the UDF does not represent the working class. But if I look at the mass of the people who are members of the UDF through their organisations, I find that they are workers or are involved in activities which do not run counter to genuine positions of the working class struggle. In fact, when we talk about a united front... a united front organises and unites all patriotic forces who are prepared to unite and fight against the common enemy.

With apology to none, and with absolute interest in the advent of the People's Republic of South Africa, we are going to continue to mobilise all the relevant forces for a maximum impact on the existing situation. And that is what the national democratic struggle is all about.

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(GENERAL AND ALLIED WORKERS' UNION OF S.A.)

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