

C22

The Crisis And Our Tasks

I am going to speak briefly to you about the ^{Be' C} crisis facing us and our tasks. But first, Mr Chair comrades, I am honoured to be able to say these few words to this historic gathering - and this day is going to be an historic event.

This day signals another step forward in our valiant struggle for freedom and democracy. This day shall kindle more brightly the flames of freedom burning in all our hearts and that are spreading the length and breadth of our country. This gathering mirrors the growing unity of the struggle that is sweeping through our country: from Lamontville, Kwamashu and Mdantsane on our eastern coast to Vryburg, Kuruman and Zeerust on our border with Botswana; from Mitchells Plain, Tiroloer and Crossroads on our most southern coast through the complex on the Reef - Soweto, Mamelodi, Lenz and Western Township - to Pieterburg, Tzaneen and to our most northern border. The flame of that struggle has spread right across our country from south to north.

The signs are clear, for those who want to see, that like the heaving and swelling of the mighty sea the oppressed are rising. When those waves roll more and more in unison they will amplify each other into a raging storm. The signs are clear, for those who want to see, that that storm shall sweep away onto the rubbish dump of history racism, exploitation and the oppressive regime under which we suffer.

and bring a new South Africa.

But I must also warn, and all our people must also understand, when all those waves of the struggle roll in disunity and discord our efforts will be dissipated into futility delaying the new South Africa we live and strive for.

Those who rule over us, those who reap the benefits of our labour and those who have plundered our resources to build an affluent ruling class and powerful nations abroad are reading the signs of the oncoming storm. Make no mistake about that. They understand that the broken bodies and steered minds and spirits that roam the ghettos, the squatter camps, the human dumping grounds are crying out more and more loudly for redress. They can no longer implement their policies as arrogantly as they used to do unconcerned with the consequences. Gone for ever are the days when they could simply encircle us load us on lorries and dump us wherever they choose.

They understand that that storm can not be contained by their arsenals of murderous weapons. The armoured cars, mirages and machine guns can not produce the lifeblood of this country - gold, diamonds, coal, iron ore, agricultural products and all the many other goods. The jugular vein of that economy is the downtrodden but struggling Black workers on the factory shop floor, the mine complex, the building site, the communities in the townships and ghettos as well as our struggling students and scholars. Make no mistake

the rulers understand this very well. They spare nothing to try and destroy the growing unity - setting white worker against black worker, skilled worker against unskilled worker, urban worker against rural worker, one religious group against ~~the~~ another, students against parents and one community against another. We have been driven into so many compartments to keep us apart in the hope that we shall not learn the tremendous strength we have as a united people.

Our experience on the factory shop floor, in the mass struggles in the community and in the school have brought us together in a national struggle for total liberation. We have also learned the lessons of Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and of other ~~the~~ oppressed people that those who rule over us by the gun are not as invincible as they would like us to believe and that we are not as weak as they like to pretend. They are whistling in the dark to keep up their spirits and to frighten us.

The rulers therefore have to sharpen their efforts for looking for allies in our ranks. Thus they make renewed efforts in their so called new constitution to coopt sections of the coloured and Indian middle class as junior partners and defenders of the existing regime where the vast majority of the oppressed will be forced to be doing cheap labour. They are attempting in the Koozhof bills to coopt sections of the urban black workers

against the vast majority of oppressed workers. We must understand that we are being offered a few crumbs, poisonous crumbs, in return for our birthright. The vast majority of our people have spoken with one voice

- we shall not be betrayed by the Hendrickses, the Curries, the Rajbanses, the Thebechedis and the like;
- we shall not trade our birthright, the right to determine our future and the destiny of our country for your poisonous crumbs;
- we shall not let you divide our struggle for total liberation;
- we shall not let our children be conscripted into the hated army to impose the will of our oppressors on us or to die fighting their brothers and sisters who had to flee beyond our borders.

we shall not accept a constitution imposed by a minority ruling class and that there will be no peace in this country until we meet in a national convention with all our leaders, now held in prison or exile, to determine our constitution based on the Freedom Charter.

If we have understood what we are up against - the bannings of our meetings, the detention and harassment of our activists, the seizure of our posters, banners and pamphlets and the repression of our views, then our tasks are clear:

- We must strive in our individual trade unions to defend our people and struggle for improvements.

in wages and working conditions but we must strive most resolutely to link hands across industrial boundaries and build a united trade union federation. A trade union federation that can address itself to the question of capital and labour;

- We must strive in our individual community organisations to fight the battles of housing, rents, health facilities, transport services, security of employment, security of the home, youth services but we must strive most resolutely to link hands across our various organisations to address the fundamental problems of our community,

- We must strive in our individual schools and SRC's to better the quality of education and fight for our right of assembly but we must strive most resolutely to link hands across our individual youth organisations so that we can address the problems of the youth

● But when we have done this, we must above all, if we do not want to engage in disjointed action and dissipate our energies in futility, strive most resolutely to unite workers, community and students into a massive anvil on which the fundamental conflicts of our society can be hammered out. It is the duty of each and everyone here, and in all the many venues our people are meeting today, to go out mobilize and organize our people into that massive anvil

Let us go forward with a new determination to fight for our liberty. In our day to day struggle

- let those of our people who are in the oppressors prisons, Mandela, Sisulu, Mbeke, Mhlangueni, Kathrada, Goldberg and the many others, serve as constant reminders that we are still held in the land of our birth;

- let those who had to flee beyond our borders and who are hounded from their refuge serve as constant reminders that we have yet to win our freedom;

- let those who have been so cruelly robbed of life, Mabhanga, Magoorane, Mosobodi, Motunng and the many others who fell in Caringa, Maputo, Maseru and elsewhere inspire us with new levels of courage, strength and determination to grasp our freedom and see the dawn of a new South Africa coming shining through.

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Talk delivered at the UDF
People's Rally, Nur-ul-Islam
Hall and Patidar Theatre
Lenz, Johannesburg 30/10/8

Collection Number: AK2117

DELMAS TREASON TRIAL 1985 - 1989

PUBLISHER:

Publisher: **Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand**

Location: **Johannesburg**

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