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CONGRESS PERSPECTIVE ON THE STRUGGLE.

1. INTRODUCTION

We bring fraternal greetings and a message of solidarity and hope from Natal at a time when the growing and all embracing forces of resistance face a crucial and momentous period of decision, commitment, correct assessment and united action. This is a time requiring courage, fervour and vision guided by discipline and a clarity of thought and purpose. The aim is to harness all the forces which can be correctly regarded as the forces of positive change on the road to victory. But this vision, this clarity of thought and purposeful action draws its direction and inspiration from a clear and undisputed beacon. We need critically to look at our own strength and weaknesses on the one hand as well as the strength and weaknesses and methods of oppressor. It is only upon this basis of reality that a broad strategy for change can be worked out, a strategy whose determined framework allows for changes of detail when this is necessary or desirable.

We will try to show that a correct assessment of reality demands not only a change which is to the benefit of the majority of South Africans, but also won by all of us through struggle. The programme must be designed to encourage maximum participation, to galvanise our strength and minimise our weaknesses and to take every advantage of chinks in the armour of the other side. We will in this paper contend for the rights of National Groups to their culture, the participation of all oppressed people in the struggle for change, and for a path which does not exclude the truly democratic whites from participation in the movement for change. It is only through commitment and struggle that we can do true justice to our history, to the memory of those who died for change, to those who languish in prison or who are banned, exiled or house arrested and to those who continue to suffer under the yoke of this oppression.

2. THE SOUTH AFRICAN REALITY:

2.1 What is the reality in South Africa?

Have we been forced into this fragmentation or is this a united South Africa?

Are our True Leaders, like NELSON MANDELA languishing in prison or driven outside our borders or are they, the Matanzimas, Sebes, Hendrickses and Rajbansis?

Does our Country perpetrate mass removals, use bulldozers to destroy our homes and people and cause the death of innocent people for no reason, or do we live in a peaceful Country where there is freedom of movement and adequate housing, security and comfort for all?

Does our Country show labour exploitation, rank unemployment and migrant labourers torn from their families and pushed into cold lonely hostels?

2.2 What are the defining features of South Africa today?

Are the so-called reforms a few open beaches, open cinema premieres and so-called integrated sport or is there adequate excruciating reality which it is imperative for us to understand if we are to contribute correctly to the struggle?

2.3 South African Reality

Population

Of the total South African population of about 29,6 million 72% or about 21,3 million are Africans with the Indian, Coloured and the White people representing approximately 3,5%, 8,5% and 16% of the population respectively. The African, Indian and Coloured population together represent 84% of South African people. These 84% are today without any vote or say in the running of the Country.

2.4 Political Status

The Government has commenced a devastating design to hive off the majority of South Africa's population into the so-called Independent States and Homelands. In addition it contemplates offers of mock participation in Government structures to the Indian and Coloured in the shape of the President's Council Proposals.

2.5 Oppression and Exploitation

All African, Coloured and Indian people in South Africa are oppressed by a batter of unjust, discriminatory, and repressive laws. This highly repressive system ensures the creation of conditions for the super exploitation of Black labour; exploitation which is deliberately perpetrated by South African big business aided, encouraged and supported by International Capital.

2.6 Monopolisation of the Economy

The resources of this Country and even of the whole of the Western World is in the process of passing rapidly into fewer hands. The only logical consequence of this development is a drastic fall in the number and viability of small businesses, and industries.

2.7 Protection of Western Investments.

We witness, to day the shameless and unjustifiable support of this repressive regime by Reagan, Thatcher and their cohorts. This represents an immoral and undisguised effort to protect their own business interest in this Country at the expense of the lives and freedom of millions of South Africans.

2.8 Falling standards of living

The living standards of millions of Black South Africans are under constant attack from big business and Government. rising food prices, rampant unemployment, static wages, rising inflation, increasing general sales tax, rising rents and transport costs, and hopelessly inadequate health care etc. This gives rise to an unprecedented scale of malnutrition, disease and deaths.

2.9 Forced Removals

At the time when apartheid is said not to exist in South Africa forced removals accompanied by brutality, violence and death become increasingly prominent features of the South African Social fabric.

2.10 The Black Oppressor Breed

This vile system has bred and continues to nurture a new degenerate brand of Black Oppressor who unashamedly competes for infamy with his White counterpart. The Sebes and Matanzimas have undoubtedly joined these ranks with the alacrity with clear indication that the Rajbansis and Hendrickses will join them there soon if they accept the Presidents Council Proposals.

2.11 Resistance

But the South African oppressed people are fighting back valiantly: the daily struggles of workers for democratic rights, high wages and better working conditions, students for a democratic and equal education, communities for housing, lower rents, cheaper transport and better recreational facilities; and by all these forces for full democratic rights.

2.12 Crisis

Not only the Botha regime refuse to meet the genuine aspirations of the people to eliminate exploitation, and eradicate oppression the structural constraints placed upon this regime by its own policy of apartheid makes it impossible for him to achieve these results. It is this refusal and inability exacerbated by militant resistance which forces the Government into a deepening crisis.

3. CHANGE

3.1 It follows from the above that this is an unjust and discriminatory society in which the minority white oppressor possessed of the greatest share of South Africa's wealth seeks to preserve itself and its position by dividing African, Indian and Coloured one from another, African from African, the student, the worker, and the businessman each from the other. Furthermore the harsh reality which we are asked to forget is that this system is maintained by violence, and an unashamed use of newspapers, radio, television, schools, to, in the words of numerous oppressor army generals, "win the hearts and minds of the people".

3.2 Participants in change

It is accepted by all, that the oppressor in South Africa is the white minority regime. There is however considerable debate and confusion in the ranks of patriots about who the oppressed are. We believe that African, Indian and Coloured South Africans, of whatever class are victims of national oppression; that they are mainly oppressed on the basis of colour. Naked racial oppression, manifested by discriminatory legislation (e.g. Group Areas Act, Black Administration Act, Population Registration Act), separate and unequal amenities, inferior transport services, unequal education, inadequate and insecure housing, the subjugation of Black Women are within, the lived experience of South Africa's oppressed majority. It is through this experience that we perceive our oppression. It is necessary to guard against approaches of a few intellectuals who seek to substitute their own conception of oppression for the peoples perception through their lived experience.

It is precisely because of the magnitude of racial oppression that the Black worker, businessman, student and professional is discriminated against in relation to his White counterpart. At this point in time therefore the possibility of participation in any struggle by the worker, student, businessman or professional across the colour line is remote. The absolute exclusion of whites is unjustifiable on the basis that the movement for democratic change has room for democratic whites, however few they may be. There are 2 reasons for this:

- a) the democratic movement cannot and does not reject the contribution of any individual or group of persons to the process of change.
- b) our struggle involves the creation of a society in which liberated Blacks and whites will live side by side in shared harmony.

On the other hand, there is a shared and common experience of discrimination by African, Coloured, and Indian, of all classes and it is this shared experience which makes it feasible for all to unite in a national struggle against national oppression. The participation in the struggle is therefore not the Indian, Coloured and African alone nor the worker, businessman, student or professional alone but all these forces welded into a popular

unity. While each of the forces referred to cannot act on its own, they cannot be effective as disorderly aggregate either. The struggle is not conducted by these forces simply acting at the same time but as a result of a dynamic interaction between all of them (recognising of course, that some are primary and other secondary) acting together and in unison and creating something new with its own dynamic.

3.5 In short we struggle together for the liberation of our nation not only from white supremacy but also from the bondage of starvation, inadequate housing, high rentals, low wages, racist education, and oppression of women.

4. THE PEOPLE

4.1 The Freedom Charter

The only document which encapsulates this vision and this theory of our struggle is the FREEDOM CHARTER adopted by the Congress of the People on 26 June 1955. The Charter represents the culmination of a significant part of the history of the struggles of our people which include the Passive Resistance Campaign, Defiance Campaign etc. and of a democratic process in which more than a 1/4 million people participated. It also represents the beginning of a new era of clarity and perspective, of commitment and vision, designed to unite and galvanise the majority of South Africans into an unbreakable dynamic whole. In its reflection of a people's commitment to a struggle for equal distribution of resources, the Charter establishes the national democratic nature of our movement, for it is impossible to achieve these laudable goals without dismantling the economic and social order of this unjust society.

4.2 Many ill-informed individuals and groups have dared to criticise this living instrument of change because it recognises the existence of national groups. The criticism, to the extent that it is intelligible, is that the mere recognition of this fact reinforces division and separatism, and so plays into the hands of the oppressor.

That there are Indians, Coloureds and Africans and Whites (national groups) in our Country is self-evident and undeniable reality. It is a reality precisely because each of these national groups has its own heritage, culture language, customs and traditions.

Our task is to heighten the positive features of each national group and to weld these so that there arises out of this process of organisation a single national consciousness. This national consciousness enables each national group to identify with the South African State and to be an integral part of the new South African Nation. It follows that a national consciousness is not inconsistent with existence of national groups. The state, relying upon the negative features, uses culture to reinforce separation and division. In so doing, it deliberately blunts the positive features or elements which have a potential for change and development and for inter-action between national groups, resulting in the development of a single national consciousness: a consciousness which far from destroying national groups and cultures allows these to exist and develop within itself. The Charter recognises this reality. The failure to recognise the existence of national groups is a grave political error and smacks of the most retrogressive brand of intellectualism. The oppressor far from recognising positive cultural features emphasises ethnicity reinforcing division through it.

4.3 Testimony to the Freedom Charter as a living document is to be found in the undisputable fact that its programme has not only survived almost 30 years but has during this period formed a continuing basis for the determination of strategy and tactics for organising people, for welding unity and for raising and strengthening consciousness.

5. THE PRACTICE OF CHANGE

5.1 But theories are not enough! How can we use these theoretical considerations in the process of achieving that change which we consider necessary. We already said that:

5.1.1. The oppressor is the current white regime bolstered by Western Imperialism.

5.1.2. The oppressed are all the people of South Africa, Indians, Coloureds and Africans; workers, students, professionals and businessmen.

5.1.3 There are 4 national groups in South Africa, each with its own culture, traditions, customs etc.

5.2. Unless we can translate these theories into meaningful action contribute to the achievement of our objectives we will be r time. Our practical task is to find a link between

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5.1.4 Our task is to weld all features and to mobilise all forces including the democratic whites to work together towards the creation of a national consciousness and

5.1.5 Our goal is the creation of that society envisaged by the voice of the Freedom Charter.

5.2. Unless we can translate these theories into meaningful action which contribute to the achievement of our objectives we will be wasting our time. Our practical task is to find a link between the objective reality and the achievement of our objectives; a creative link which bridges the gap between theory and practice and which enables the oppressed people to act jointly in the process of change. Without this, befuddled politicians are reduced to facile rhetoric and sloganising. If the existence of national groups is a reality and if each national group has its own cultures, traditions and problems, the movement for change is best facilitated by enabling organisation around issues which concern people in their daily lives; issues such as low wages, high transport costs and poor housing.

5.3 The next challenge is to discover that process through which the common day to day problems of people and the root cause of these problems interconnect and articulate. This is a process of struggle involving the participation of both the leadership and the masses through victories and defeats. Participation in this process enhances consciousness which in turn encourages more effective participation. This development of consciousness and increased participation enables both the people and the leadership to relentlessly climb up the formidable mountain of history towards a national consciousness and ultimate liberation.

5.4 Participation by the people and the leadership in the struggle is a necessary prerequisite to the development of unity and fundamental to it but is clearly not sufficient in itself. It would be therefore impossible to develop a national consciousness and a national unity if the struggle fails to transcend day to day issues. But every step in this process can be taken only at the appropriate time in relation to the reality both national and international and in relation to the consciousness of the people. Sensitive assessment and reassessment would dictate the nature of each step to be taken however small. It is in this sense that the detailed tactics remain flexible, but only within the framework of the objectives of the Freedom Charter and of the method of organisation. Rigidity of tactic spells doom because of the failure to recognise ever changing reality and consciousness. The whole process is therefore dynamic and not static.

5.5 But participation by a small group or class of persons in isolation is also not enough in the long term. There must be participation by the majority of South Africans. However, because people are organised around day to day issues which concern different groups, the nature and level of activity and the level of consciousness would differ from area to area, from group to group. This is another expression of the need for flexibility which is applicable not only to different levels of activity, but to the form and structure of organisations as well. It is obvious that the form and structure depends on the nature and level of activity, the number of people involved in this activity and the level of consciousness. The structure of organisation must of necessity be flexible and responsive to changing conditions.

However, the whole process is held together by the common programme contained in the Charter and by a consistency of method and approach. Moreover, this method imposes the duty to search creatively for common issues so that organisation around these will operate as a binding force to supplement the unity engendered by the Charter.

6. Political Organisation

6.1 Although the process of liberation has its roots in the participation of groups or communities, around issues of their immediate concern, their ultimate freedom can only be spearheaded by their political

6.2. The building of a political organisation which is led by an experienced and tested leadership with an unequivocal allegiance to the oppressed masses remains our historical task.

6.3. Such a political organisation can be built only through the participation of people in struggle, and in turn leads cohesion, thrust and direction, and character to the struggles of the masses.

Ultimately it is the embodiment of the momentous unity of the oppressed masses and it carries within it the seeds of a just, equal, anti-racist and liberated South Africa.

7. PROBLEMS CONFRONTING OUR STRUGGLE

Every struggle has its problems, setbacks, weaknesses and enemies. These arise often from an aggressive state, misguided sympathisers, sometimes as a result of our own weaknesses. Our responsibility is to clearly understand these problems and setbacks and devise appropriate responses. "Tell no lies, claim no easy victories" said Cabral. Similarly we must confront our problems honestly and courageously and not shy away from self-criticism. At the same time we must not underestimate the strength, cunning and sophistication of our enemies - both within and outside the Country.

7.1. The Danger of regionalism

The political reality in South Africa imposes innumerable constraints on organisational work: state repression handicaps any effort at co-ordination of activity and imposes an uneven and fragmented development of our work. The debilitating repression of the 1960s dismembered the development of our democratic movement and resulted in one or 2 generations of militants growing in geographical historical and political isolation and overwhelmed by local conditions.

These factors contribute to the possibility of the emergence of forms of regionalism and parochialism. We must guard against these dangers, for there is only one struggle. Our obvious task is to struggle against these dangers and strive for an effective unity in action.

7.2. Other political tendencies

Every political situation generates diverse political tendencies with their own conceptions of the struggle and their own approach. But the dominant political movement is established over decades of struggle by the unfolding of history. Even though these tendencies are peripheral they require a brief scientific response.

The criteria by which we develop our response are:

7.2.1. how is the political reality analysed and understood.

7.2.2. what are identified as the principal forces in the struggle.

7.2.3. which of these forces in their assessment belong to the people's camp and which to the enemy camp.

7.2.4. the political program by which each moves towards its deals.

7.2.5. the methods, strategies and tactics they use.

7.2.6. the relationship to other political forces.

There are those who believe that workers have a special role in the process of change outside of any meaningful alliance with other social groups. To the extent that their approach generates antagonisms with other political groups, we believe that whilst polemics are important, such antagonisms are not in the interest of either the workers or other social groups struggling for national liberation and serves merely to fragment the unity of patriotic forces. In all humility we suggest that our programme, the Freedom Charter, which has stood the test of time and struggle, remains the most viable basis for our advance to liberation. We are reminded that nowhere in the world has national liberation been attained by workers alone.

7.3. Third Force

The oppressors, both national and international, have sophisticated a method by which they subvert, co-opt and create individuals, grouping and even movements. Their sole function is to deflect, disrupt and misdirect efforts of a democratic movement by intervening at moment appropriate to the oppressors upon their instructions. They will persuasively claim to be genuine participants

In the democratic struggle. Misdirected political forces can easily fall victim of these manoeuvres. Continuous and vigorous vigilance is the only safeguard.

7.4. Bantustans

The creation of Bantustans and the establishment of tyrants like Sebe and Matanzima gives rise to challenging strategic problems to our struggle. Firstly, each of their corrupt bureaucracies harbours an administrative elite which rapidly develops a state in the system, owe their allegiance to Pretoria, become defenders of the system and carry out its iniquitous policies. Secondly, they replace the Pretoria Government as the oppressor and commit the most heinous repressive acts in the interests of the apartheid system.

Democrats need to confront this reality, and evolve creative strategies to advance the struggle.

7.5. Imperialism

Western imperialist countries have vast sums of money amounting to billions of rand invested in South Africa. Their only interest in South Africa is to safeguard their investments and maximise profits. They will do anything to achieve this and will not hesitate to subvert our struggle. Their leaders, Reagan and Thatcher, brazenly support the Botha plans and give active assistance to the apartheid regime.

We reject their notion of "constructive engagement". They will be regarded as enemies unless they support the demands of the Freedom Charter.

8. THE ROAD AHEAD

The quest for freedom can never be quelled. We have walked this long and arduous road for 3/4s of the 20th Century. During this period our struggle has grown and our people have become resilient and determined. Their march to freedom will continue relentlessly despite the state repression and regardless of the price paid in lives. This struggle which reached new heights at the Congress of the People in the adoption of the Charter represented a greater maturity to the liberation alliance. A maturity which sustained

the movement, despite its fragmentation through the harsh and traumatic 60s. The growing militancy of the masses during the last decade bears testimony to the resilience of the democratic movement and to the Freedom Charter as a living document.

Today we are poised on the threshold of a stage of our struggle in which we will witness the cementing of our unity, the consolidation and deepening of our organisations and the increased militancy of our people. This stage presents us with critical challenges:

1. to intensify our efforts to organise the oppressed;
2. to generate an effective and responsible leadership which will always be fully conscious of the needs and aspirations of our people;
3. to develop a profound understanding of our struggle and propagate this amongst our rank and file.

The road to freedom will be hard and protracted requiring diligence, commitment, sacrifice and above all courage. To meet the challenges posed by a sophisticated enemy we will need creativity and an adherence to principle combined with tactical flexibility.

This is the content in which theocratic Front has the potential to forge our unity across all barriers through a process of organisation and struggle. Democratic forces today have a historical responsibility to collectively strengthen the United Democratic Front at every level: across regional and provincial barriers, across racial and class barriers, across worker and community barriers, and across rural and urban barriers. Today we call upon leaders and leading militants, throughout our Country and in every sector of organisation to sink their differences and actively reach out to each other to forge lasting bonds which will inspire united action amongst the masses in the unequivocal rejection of Botha's plan. There is a place in the democratic movement for all. All have a significant contribution to the struggle. We commend the initiative to re-establish the Transvaal Indian Congress today. This is yet another historic step forward in the building of a people's democracy. We join with democrats all over the Country and indeed all over the World and salute the revival of yet another component of the democratic movement. It is impossible to liberate any one national group without freedom for all. It is for this reason that we remain committed to fight side by side to create the society contemplated by the FREEDOM CHARTER.

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