

A country in mourning

What the SA Govt has done

To talk about current prospects for negotiation in South Africa was like being asked to sing an exhilarating jazz number at a funeral, Dr Oscar Dhlomo told the joint Inkatha Youth Brigade/Youth for South Africa congress in Johannesburg in April.

KwaZulu's Minister of Education and Culture and Inkatha's Secretary-General said that at this time there seemed to be no prospects whatsoever that genuine negotiation would ever come to pass.

Democrats were mourning the actions of the South African Government in restricting 17 organisations and banning another as well as threatening newspapers and keeping one Editor in custody without any charges.

It was the South African Government which had imposed the state of emergency and had threatened unspecified action against prominent church leaders like Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Rev Frank Chikane and Dr Allan Boesak who had dared to speak out against the injustices of apartheid.

The South African Government had told the world, apparently in the name of apartheid, to do its damndest.

Finally, it was the South African Government that had rejected the KwaZulu-Natal Indaba without even the decency of communicating first with the originator of the concept, Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

"We are dealing with a Government that apparently delights in foolishly squandering the patience and sincerity of a dedicated democrat like Dr Buthelezi ..."

Dr Dhlomo said it was "no wonder" that the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly was considering whether or not to withdraw its support for the Joint Executive Authority and the Indaba.

"Can you blame me if I ask in despair: negotiation ABOUT WHAT and WITH WHOM?"

"Can genuine negotiation get off the ground under the present circumstances?"



L-R: Mr Musa Zondi, Chairman Ink
Mr Marthinus van Schalkwyk, Chair

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It appeared that at present there was nothing any Black leader with a sizeable constituency could negotiate about with the South African Government. In the first place, the Government seemed to want to negotiate about how much apartheid would be dismantled and how much would be retained.



...h Brigade, Dr Oscar Dhlomo and ...h for South Africa.

Democrats held the view that there was no compromise where apartheid was concerned.

In the second place, the National Party was attempting to establish a false premise that groups could only be recognised if they shared a common skin colour and not just a common language, culture and religion. Hence so-called Coloureds were not Afrikaners in terms of National Party policy because their skin was not white enough.

"A common skin colour is the bottom line," he added.

Furthermore, National Party policy decreed that group membership became authentic only if it were imposed on people through legislation.

"Voluntary group affiliation or freedom of association are concepts that don't exist in the political vocabulary of the National Party.

"Given such policy absurdities what can we really negotiate about?"

Finally, the National Party wanted to establish another false premise that a group, once created forcibly by statute, could only safeguard its existence and protect itself if it enjoyed political self determination over its affairs.

"Yet the National Party refuses to concede that the Conservative Party is at least honest in its madness when it insists that group political self determination as defined by the National Party can only be practised within an own separate territory and not within a non-racial unitary state of South Africa which we are busy creating.

"It is therefore surprising why some of

us see no material difference between National Party and Conservative Party policy?"

The National Party wished to use the "exclusive group" concept to commit political suicide within a unitary South Africa whereas the Conservative Party wished to use the same exclusive group concept to commit political suicide within a partitioned South Africa.

"And so it is clear that as long as the National Party concept of group is exclusive, racially based and imposed without any scope for freedom of association, there is nothing to negotiate about."

Negotiation With Whom?

Dr Dhlomo said some were now on the verge of believing that the National Party was not really interested in genuine negotiation with any Black leader whether he espoused the politics of negotiation or the politics of revolution.

The Government should have known that by restricting the UDF, COSATU, AZAPO and other organisations it was simply adding more preconditions to Inkatha's already long list of preconditions for negotiation.

"The Government must first stop paying lip-service to the concept of genuine negotiation if there is to be hope that negotiation is possible at this particular time. People are there to be talked to, not banned or restricted."

"Negotiation about what and with whom? Can genuine negotiation get off the ground under the present circumstances?"

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