

- - - - -

H) SOUTH AFRICA: SANA INFORMATION SERVICE DOCUMENT No. 6, 1976:
'A DELEGATE'S ACCOUNT OF THE BLACK PEOPLE'S CONVENTION CONGRESS
(BPC), KINGWILLIAMSTOWN, DECEMBER 13-16, 1975'.

(INCLUDING EXTRACTS FROM THE FINAL CONGRESS REPORT)

Amid shouts of 'Black Power' and Black Power salutes the Fourth General Congress of the Black Peoples' Convention (BPC) was opened by Father James Gawe on December 13 in the Anglican Church Hall at Ginsberg - near Kingwilliamstown in the Eastern Cape.

The Congress was attended by more than 100 delegates from Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, East London, Pietermaritzburg and Kingwilliamstown and was the first since the series of arrests and detentions of BPC leadership and supporters following the attempted pro-FRELIMO rallies in Durban during September 1974.

This was a crucial and formative Congress since there has been a lull in the four-year-old movement's activities because of extreme harassment by the Security Police in the form of constant intimidation and detention of BPC members and seizure of documents. Also, policy decisions on the following issues: 'Detente', the 'Transkei Independence', Angolan, Namibian and Zimbabwe questions were to be taken.

The BPC President, Mr T.S. Farisani, delivered his presidential address after a song, 'Unzima lomthwalo' - usually sung by the Terrorism Act trialists during court appearances - and a poem which he read entitled 'Azania shall be free' which was hailed with shouts of 'Amandla' ('Power').

On December 14 the conference hall was surrounded by three cars occupied by several members of the Security Police, both Black and White, but delegates paid no attention to them. The Congress then split up into the following five Commissions on: Black Consciousness; Government created platforms; Black Communalism; Relations with other bodies and on the nature of the BPC envisioned liberated State.

In a report, which was unanimously adopted, the BPC declared that Black Consciousness was aimed at inculcating amongst Blacks a sense of pride in themselves and a desire and eagerness to analyse their problems and offer solutions.

According to the report, Black Consciousness aimed to break the 'stranglehold' that White society had on privileges, wealth and opportunity and to create a truly open plural society in which all persons would be treated as equal before the law. It further aimed at eradicating racial prejudice in all its forms and to promote real understanding amongst the various ethnic groups in the envisaged open society. 'Black Consciousness is the realisation by Blacks of the need to rally' around the cause of our oppression and to operate as a group to rid ourselves of the shackles that bind us to perpetual servitude.' The report continued, stating, that through Black Consciousness Blacks were determined to expose the myth that being Black was an aberration from the 'normal', which is white, and stressed the reconstruction by Blacks

of their value system and the attempt to see themselves as defined by, themselves and not by others; that Blacks rejected the value system that sought to make them foreigners in the country of their birth; that Black solidarity, an integral part of Black Consciousness, was defined as the coming together of Blacks for the specific purpose of solving their problems and using their numbers and Blackness in building up 'a strong power base'; that Black solidarity was the rejection of, 'the overplayed importance of sectional, tribal and religious differences so often overplayed by the believers of the divide and rule policy'. In conclusion the report from the Black Consciousness Commission, adopted by the BPC, declared that the cardinal goal of Black solidarity was 'bargaining through a show of strength and unanimity of purpose against whoever withholds from them whatever they believe to be rightfully theirs'.

In the report of the Commission on Relations with other bodies, also endorsed by the BPC, it was recommended that the BPC shall consult with, take part (on invitation) in the projects of, co-operate with and exchange material with any organisation, national or international that subscribes to the philosophy of Black Consciousness 'as defined and understood by the Movement'. Relations with national groups operating outside the framework of apartheid, but not subscribing to the philosophy of Black Consciousness would be informal and on the basis of expounding the philosophy to them. The BPC, the report continued, would also relate to whatever organisation it deemed fit, to relay the true feelings of Blacks in South Africa to the outside world.

On the night of December 14 the packed congress hall was addressed by the Guest Speaker, Mr D.J.K. Tjongarero, Information and Publicity Secretary of the Namibia National Convention (see SANA Information Service Document No. 4, February 1976). There were several solidarity and Black Power ('Amandla') interjections during his speech by the emotionally moved congress audience. The Security Police again were present outside the hall during Mr Tjongarero's address. A letter from the General Secretary of the All African Council of Churches, Canon Burgess Carr, accepting the BPC invitation and conveying solidarity was read to the congress. The day was closed with the singing of liberation songs.

On the third day of the congress, December 15, with the hall still under Security Police surveillance, the reports of the Commissions on Government created platforms and the projected State were discussed and adopted.

Government created platforms were strongly condemned by the BPC. They were said to be created to divert the energies of Blacks 'from the true struggle for National liberation to racialist, tribalist and divisive political undertakings which at best kept the real goal of total liberation out of the immediate sight and attention of Blacks, and at worst served to bolster the white racist regime'. According to the former report, Blacks were 'cheated' into participating in these because of built in safe-guards which made it impossible for any Black person using them to liberate themselves.

The creation of these (Government platforms), the BPC felt was to 'hood-wink' the international community into accepting the racist policy of the white regime as a 'sincere' programme designed in the interest of Blacks and that any participation in these was only lending credibility to their fraudulence, to the detriment of the Black people. The BPC rejected these and opted to operate outside their framework as a true political movement which believes that 'Blacks have an inalienable right to determine their destiny', and further asserted its conviction in the solidarity of the Black community irrespective of ethnic origin, prescribed residential areas or religious affiliation, and in a 'unitary

State in which all inhabitants of Azania formed one unit, one nation, whose affairs shall be run by one Government which must be representative of the people of Azania'.

The report of the Commission on the projected State was discussed at length and after certain amendments was adopted. It stated that 'there is a need to radically change Azanian society to keep with the wishes, aspirations, hopes, interests and ideals of the majority of our country'. Further that: the BPC was striving for a society in which all citizens were accorded the franchise - irrespective of colour, race, religion or any other consideration of a similar nature, as well as a state in which all participated in the making of the laws under which they lived through a national assembly which would be a body constituted of duly elected representatives of the people;

that: ownership of land, sea and air space would be vested in the State and all citizens needing land would be allocated such proportionately for their purpose;

that: education in the ideal State would be free and compulsory for all citizens and would be an instrument of national unity as well as raising the cultural, social, political, economic and intellectual level of Blacks;

that: environmental studies would also include constitutional structures mainly of this country, but also comparatively with other African and other states;

that: specialisation in education would be introduced at the minimum effective level and all teachers would be trained to specialise in various fields;

that: health services would be the primary responsibility of the State and all medical and para-medical personell would be civil servants;

that: all citizens would have the right to a fair trial and access to legal defence and all lawyers would be civil servants employed by the State to afford all citizens an equal opportunity of good legal representation;

that: 'every sane and healthy adult shall form part of a national defence force and foreign forces will be excluded';

that: 'Peaceful collaboration with all nations of the world on a basis of mutual understanding, national sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-aggression and non-interference in domestic affairs would be maintained';

that: monopoly in industry, trade and commerce would be abolished and the principle of communalism would be institutionalized into industry, trade and commerce.

This was the first time that the BPC had given a detailed indication of the nature of the State they are striving to attain.

On the evening of the third day, a symposium was arranged specifically for the local community. This was well attended and speeches were hailed with shouts of 'Amandla'. The speakers, Mr Tjongarero and Mr Keke (who was released from Robben Island in 1973, after serving a ten year sentence, and whose two-year banning order had just expired) covered a wide range of topics.

The fourth and last day of the Congress commenced on a high note despite continued close Security Police surveillance. Resolutions on Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, 'Detente', Transkei Independence, Sonny Leon and the Coloured Persons' Representative Council (CRC) were adopted.

In the Angolan resolution the BPC recognised the Luanda based MPLA movement as the only legitimate government of Angola, whose prerogative it was to come to terms with other liberation movements operating in Angola

and to steer that country to eventual unity and prosperity. The BPC noted that 'the civil war in Angola is essentially a domestic affair amongst the indigenous people of Angola who are anxious to establish a government best suited for themselves and that the intervention of certain foreign powers compounded the problem'. The BPC also took note of the debate amongst the white political parties of South Africa vis a vis the wisdom of S.A.'s involvement in the Angolan conflict and warned of the consequences that might accrue from such involvement. The Convention condemned the international intervention in what it termed 'the affairs of an African country' and called upon the OAU and UN to insist on the immediate withdrawal from Angola of all such countries engaged there.

On the Namibian question the BPC noted that as a result of the application of the policy of apartheid to that territory Namibia was fragmented into so called 'homelands' against the will of the Namibian people though it was an inalienable right of a people to shape their destiny without interference. The BPC rejected the ethnically oriented talks as a farce, created to guarantee the continued occupation of Namibia by S.A. and the exploitation of its natural resources and that the results of the former would be inconsequential since the true destiny of Namibia should be determined by the Namibians themselves. In the resolution the BPC condemned the illegal occupation of Namibia by the 'white fascist South African Regime' and declared its solidarity with the Namibians in their struggle for national liberation.

Relating to the resolution on Zimbabwe, the BPC noted that the Kaunda-Vorster detente manoeuvre that culminated in the Victoria Falls talks failed because of the reluctance of Smith to allow the talks to reach the logical conclusion of majority rule. The overwhelming support of Bishop Muzorewa shown by the people of Zimbabwe, according to the BPC, demonstrated clearly the true ANC and its leader, Bishop Muzorewa, despite the confusion resulting from Nkomo's assumption of the so-called leadership of the ANC. The BPC resolved to commend and encourage Bishop Muzorewa and the ANC to maintain the principled stand which represented the true wishes and aspirations of the majority of the Zimbabwean people and to urge him and the ANC to continue to make overtures to the white Rhodesian minority government for the resumption of legitimate constitutional talks until it became absolutely clear that Smith was not interested in further talks. If and when such talks failed, the BPC declared that the ANC had the sole prerogative to determine how best to work towards the realisation of the aspirations of the people of Zimbabwe. It further urged Mr Nkomo to cease creating confusion and division by publicly apologising and rejoining the true ANC.

Detente was dismissed in a resolution as a sham aimed at 'buying time for the South African white racist regime to maintain their present hold on the indigenous majority whilst making the rest of the world believe that they are genuinely involved in the process of finding a solution to the complex problems of race and political power pertaining to the South African situation'. The BPC noted further that under Vorster's minority rule S.A. was taking advantage of a period of unsettlement to entrench its economic ties with as many African states as possible by increasing the quota of exports and imports into and from Africa such that the level of dependence by Africa on S.A. would dictate political considerations. Detente was further seen as a designation meant to split African unity and the OAU. The BPC thus totally rejected detente as a move calculated to entrench the position of the oppressors in this country at the expense of the oppressed majority and called upon all Blacks to see detente for what it is and abide by their Black aspirations, truth and convictions.

In a resolution on the forthcoming 'independence' of the Transkei the BPC asserted this move to be 'a cunning manoeuvre by the racist Vorster regime to give national and international credibility to the abhorrent policy of apartheid, precisely at a time when the process of liberation has shown itself to be inevitable in Africa and when the sub-continent has dramatically changed in favour of the struggle for national liberation'. The 'independence' was said to be yet another attempt to 'legalise' the alienation of the people of the Transkei from the rest of Azania, their motherland, so as to give the denial of their rights a 'legal constitutional backing'.

Mr Matanzima and Mr Guzana and all those who participated at the leadership level of the so-called homelands were termed 'Vorster's prefects who could not claim to be the authentic voices of the oppressed people'. The BPC rejected this independence and pledged to work harder towards the solidarity of all the people of Azania and towards the liberation of one indivisible Azania.

After noting the refusal by Mr Sonny Leon to pass the CRC Budget and his subsequent expulsion, the BPC, in a resolution, blamed Mr Leon for his involvement in the CRC despite prior warning from the BPC and called upon the Labour Party to completely disband and join forces with all the oppressed people.

The BPC, finally, called on Black people of Azania to re-iterate their principled rejection of all institutions calculated to frustrate their real aspirations towards liberation. The sentiments of all the resolutions, except the one pertaining to Sonny Leon, were to be conveyed to the OAU and the UNO and the Transkei Legislative Assembly.

After the final business of the Congress was terminated office-bearers were elected.

Mr Kenneth Rachidi from Soweto was elected the BPC President. (Mr Rachidi, 32, a father of three has had a long political background and long involvement in the activities of the movement. He had been expelled from two schools before he matriculated for political reasons. He was suspended for a year from Fort Hare University in 1966 - also for his political convictions. He was then finally expelled from Fort Hare shortly before graduating, after the 1968 Fort Hare strikes. Mr Rachidi later joined the University Christian Movement (UCM) and has been with the BPC since its inception. In 1972 he was elected Vice-President and after the detentions in September 1974, he became the Acting Secretary-General.

Mr Mxolisi Mvovo, 29, of Kingwilliamstown was elected Vice-President; Mr Tandisizwe Mazibuko of Maritzburg, Secretary-General, and Mr Roley Maroleng of Daveyton, Publicity Secretary.

In his first speech as President of the BPC, Mr Rachidi stated that the BPC was striving for the total liberation of Blacks and that their unity was mostly desired for this purpose. He said the intention of holding the Congress at the township was to get to the grass roots of the Black people and make them aware of the situation under which they live as well as to compound the philosophy of Black Consciousness.

He called on the people to refuse to be 'launched' by the apartheid policy and its institutions i.e. the Bantustans. He urged them not to have their goal removed from their sight by the 'white minority regime', and to strive for their unity and liberation.

He thanked the participants for their attendance at the Congress and called on them to further interest themselves in the activities of the BPC.

6

SANA 26.

The Congress ended with the singing of 'Nkosi Sikelela iAfrika' with raised Black Power salutes.

Delegates formed a procession which was joined by the local community and marched through the streets of the township singing liberation songs.

The Security Police watched the proceedings from their cars.