

REPORT OF SUB-COMMITTEE ON PROBLEMS  
OF THE CONGRESS MOVEMENT

The meeting of the Sub-Committee on the problems of the Congress Movement met on the 24th August, 1966. Present were MK, JB, DN. DN was appointed convenor.

The terms of reference of the Sub-Committee were as follows:-

- (a) To make extracts of the Memo sent from London and to make recommendations.
- (b) To prepare and recommend proposals for a new machinery if any.
- (c) To examine finances and make recommendations on both delegations as well as the suitability of the date and venue and other relevant preparatory matters.
- (d) To request our London comrades to spell out more the idea of a Council of War which was suggested in the document.

In view of the fact that the Executive had decided that a joint meeting was necessary and urgent the Sub-Committee regarded its primary task as the preparation of the recommendations to the Executive of proposals to be placed before the joint meeting. The Memo from London was regarded as material containing some proposals which might or might not form part of the recommendations of the Sub-Committee. It is in this light that the Memo was examined.

In examining the document "Problems of the Congress Movement" the Sub-Committee noted that the document:-

- (1) Characterizes the situation at home, in Africa and internationally. In so far as the home situation is concerned it describes the situation as one of a nation at war which needs a Council of War.
- (2) Discusses the whole of the Congress Alliance, its historic achievement and the need for its continued existence in one form or another. In fact the document states that the machinery of the Alliance as it existed is inadequate for "Revolutionary Struggle and guerrilla warfare" thus a new form of alliance is required.
- (3) States that the duty in the circumstances in which

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we find ourselves "devolves on all leading participants in the liberation struggle" outside to meet and to decide on organisational measures "to continue the existence and leadership of the alliance in a new form".

- (4) Further states that "the leaders outside have to do what can no longer be done at home - to formulate policy and take practical steps to give leadership to our respective communities and to South African people as a whole. It is in the spirit and tradition of our movement that all the other groups and organisations that constitute the forces of liberation in our country must do this work together and not in isolation from one another.
- (5) Proposes that "the situation calls for the establishment of a body to plan and direct the overall strategy of our movement, and a sort of Council of National Liberation enjoying the support of all constituents of the Congress Alliance. Such a body could mobilise all our human and material resources".
- (6) Suggests that "how such a body should be constituted, the extent of its authority and functions should be worked out at such a top level meeting".
- (7) Proposes an agenda and people to be invited by the ANC to such a top level meeting.

The Sub-Committee endorses the view that the situation at home is grave and the task and sacred mission of our people to free themselves from the monster of fascist oppression and tyranny is enormous. All peaceful means of achieving our freedom have been closed. The atrocities of the enemy against our people are mounting daily. Any form of resistance or opposition is treated by our enemy as an act of rebellion. The enemy has decided to mobilise the majority of the White population in combat readiness for a war in defence of fascism. The imperialist forces are giving open and clandestine support to this sinister plot. The oppressed people have been left with no choice other than to meet armed repression with armed revolt.

A revolutionary war is a peoples' war for the peoples' rights and interests and to seize political and economic

power. Its success depends on the maximum unity of the people and their full support and participation in the various aspects of the struggle. We therefore agree that it is always necessary to take steps to improve the organisational machinery to ensure the maximum participation of the liberation forces.

The spirit which grew out of the joint struggles of our different oppressed communities against the common enemy and which found organisational expression in the Congress Alliance forged a formidable instrument for our struggle. Historic victories have been scored by the joint co-ordinated efforts of our different communities and organisations. There can be no doubt whatsoever that the greater the unity and co-ordination of the liberation forces the mightier will be the force with which we will strike the enemy.

We also agree that from time to time and as circumstances change the Alliance, its machinery, its form might have to be changed in order to make it function more effectively in new conditions. Indeed the history of the alliance demonstrates that from time to time it has adapted itself to changing conditions with the view to making it more effective.

Its foundations were made in Xuma-Dadoo-Naicker pact in 1946. This established co-operation between the A.N.C. and what is now the S.A.I.C. These organisations with the support of the Franchise Action Council jointly launched the Defiance Campaign which rallied thousands of people from all groups including Whites into the liberation movement. Subsequent to the formation of the C.O.D. it too joined the Alliance and so did the S.A.C.T.U.

The next historic stage was for the preparation for the Congress of the People and the establishment of the National Action Council. The Freedom Charter was the embodiment of the common aspirations and objective of the members of the Congress Alliance. In its final statement the Freedom Charter itself states that:-

"These freedoms we will fight for, side by side, throughout our lives, until we have won our liberty."

....This...4

This was a historic pledge.

The machinery which was agreed upon to give effect to this historic pledge was joint Executive Committee meetings and in between them the National Consultative Council. These were the organs through which each organisation could make proposals of policy and action to the others, which were free to accept, modify or reject the proposals made. It was never disputed that because of the situation in South Africa the African National Congress was the leader of the Alliance.

Indeed the Congress Alliance has to its credit numerous heroic acts of resistance which shook the fascists and in desperation they resorted to all forms of tyranny and repression to break its growing strength. At all times, however, the real strength of the alliance was never greater than the combined strength of its component constituents. Its existence depended on the existence of the constituent organisations and so did its strength.

It might be helpful to recount some of the factors which made the alliance the force that it was:

- (a) At all times the alliance was noted for its stark realism and firm grasp of the objective conditions in the country. Its form, its historic policy document the F.C. its mass actions were all framed to meet the objective situation as it prevailed.
- (b) It was a body to which constituent organisations brought an analysis of the situation and conditions, of the different racial groups their potentialities and possibilities for mass action. No action which an organisation or community was not prepared or even capable of undertaking was ever imposed on it. One section might be engaged in a national strike and another in hartal, one might be engaged in pass burning and another in some different form of action, a campaign for instance against the Group Areas Act. All these diverse forms of action were decided upon by each organisation either on their own initiative or as suggested by another. The power and impact of even these diverse actions lay in the fact that they were co-ordinated.

- (c) The independence of each organisation was upheld and respected.

In its history the Alliance has had to grapple with various problems which affected its form and machinery, its mode of functioning both internally and abroad, its tactics and strategy, and even its method of struggle.

We wish to cite without elaborating all the details some instances of these problems.

- (a) There was the problem whether tactically the S.A.C.P.O. as it then was should boycott the elections for a Coloured representative or not. Which would be more advantageous to the movement ?
- (b) There was the problem of the Group Areas Act, whether people ordered to leave should defy and court imprisonment.
- (c) There was the issue of the anti-pass plan of the A.N.C. which visualised the anti-pass campaign culminating in volunteers trained and defying the pass law.
- (d) There was the issue of the All-in-African Conference, the role, scope and purpose.
- (e) There was the question whether it was not time that the A.N.C. accepted members from other racial groups and the present form of alliance be abandoned.
- (f) After the A.N.C. was banned the problem of adjusting the machinery of consultation and co-operation between legal organisations and an illegal organisation had to be examined. It was clear, however, that such an adjustment was necessary for the protection of both the illegal organisation and the legal ones, and the strengthening of the liberation movement.
- (g) When C.O.D. was banned the problem whether it should go underground or dissolve had to be solved. However, of the many problems which have faced the co-operation and joint action of the liberation force of the Congress Alliance there are two which arose and although they seem to have arisen in two very different spheres of activity they are interlinked today more so than ever before.

The first relates to the development of the external mission of the A.N.C. and S.A.I.C., P.A.C. etc. Externally a new form of alliance was attempted whose constituent members were A.N.C., S.A.I.C., P.A.C., S.W.A.P.O., and S.W.A.N.U. The alliance had a limited function to mobilise international opinion against South Africa. The effectiveness of this alliance is now well-known. By the time it was formally dissolved by a decision of the joint Executives at home it had in effect long ceased to exist and was merely being buried. It had been systematically murdered by the P.A.C. who had no interest over any alliance.

The problem then arose what form of machinery must be established ?

Should there exist an alliance externally as exists internally ? The question was debated and discussed and it was decided that the situation internally, and externally differ, internally the Congress Alliance and its constituent organisations exist because of objective reasons and they had definite functions. The conditions externally differ and require that the image of the African National Congress as the leading organ of the liberation movement should be projected. This was no fiction which was being created but was a fact which had been implicitly accepted at home and required projection abroad. It must be admitted that no formal machinery was established to substitute either the alliance or the United Front abroad. There was however a scheme known generally as the 'Grand Scheme' which it was hoped would solve this problem. In the circumstances which obtained however that scheme could not be implemented. We should recall too that up till the Rivonia arrests the External Mission, at least of the A.N.C. was no policy-making body but merely carried out instructions from home.

The second problem arose at home after the Mandela Strike and the Anti-Sabotage Act, the growing fascist terror. The A.N.C. reexamined the position and came to the conclusion that the time had come to make a break with non-violence and to engage in acts of violence and sabotage against the enemy.

This was a radical departure from the methods which were

common to the constituent members of the alliance. True to tradition the A.N.C. presented its case to the Joint Executives for their consideration. The S.A.I.C. as an organisation opposed the turn to violence, and as far as we know that is the position which the S.A.I.C. leadership at home maintains to date. The C.P.C. itself never adopted violence or an armed struggle as a method of struggle. It is correct that there must be a large number of individuals in those organisations who are in favour of an armed struggle. They have been and will continue to be welcome to join in the armed struggle. But we stress, they have joined as individuals, not as representatives of their organisations. In fact in some cases they joined in spite of the policy of their organisations.

S.A.C.T.U. too might give tacit support to armed struggle but it has not adopted armed struggle as part of its policy.

When we say therefore "The leaders outside the country have to do what can no longer be done at home: formulate policy and take practical steps to give leadership to our respective communities and to the people of South Africa as a whole", are we saying that we must now impose the decision of an armed struggle on these organisations which have opposed it? If not what do we mean by a "Council of War" and "the establishment of a body to plan and direct the overall strategy of our movements, a sort of Council of national liberation enjoying the support of all constituents of the Congress Alliance?"

The fact that all constituent members of the Congress Alliance are not agreed on armed struggle is an important fact to bear in mind, in considering the form and machinery of co-operation of the different organisations. Certainly, unless we are certain that all the organisations at home have now definitely decided on the question of an armed struggle it would be improper to establish a machinery of the alliance in any form whatsoever whose function would be to plan and direct the constituent bodies to prepare for and engage in an armed struggle.

We agree that because of the serious blows which have been suffered by our organisations the absence in various

degrees of a leadership at home, and the strenuous conditions of working under legal or semi-legal circumstances some of the work which cannot be done at home must be done by those outside who are able to work in conditions of relative safety.

The extent and authority of leaders of the different organisations who are outside differ according to the mandate given by the different organisations. The A.N.C. for instance has a provisional Headquarters whose functions are to carry out and prosecute the struggle in the form in which it was decided upon at home - an armed struggle. In the case of some organisations Executive authority might well have been vested in their members this is a question to be examined.

Whatever the extent of the authority the leaders might have, we think that we would be committing a grave error if we vested ourselves with the authority of making fundamental and radical policy decisions for our movements at home. Barney Desai and company, have already demonstrated how presumptuous and isolated from an organisation a group can become which vests itself with the authority of making radical policy decisions. They have departed fundamentally from the policy of their organisation and have even purported to dissolve it and they have been rightly denounced and renounced by their organisation at home.

The proposal to form a Congress Alliance machinery which will be a sort of Council of War to direct, plan, and prosecute the armed struggle at home is incorrect as it ignores the decided policies of the various constituent organisations of the Congress Alliance.

We wish to repeat that as individuals persons from other communities have been, still are, and will be free to join the armed struggle.

An armed struggle is one form of struggle for political power. To adopt it as a main weapon does not involve the exclusion of other forms of action, both on the national and international fields. The co-operation of the constituent organisations could be found in these fields where we have common tasks and can agree on common methods.



The problem as the Committee saw it was the proper accommodation of those individuals from other communities who have thrown in their lot completely into the armed struggle. And also to establish some machinery to get the constituent organisations of the Alliance so that they could work together whilst enabling them to maintain their identities.

The Sub-Committee is of the view that many of the problems could be easily resolved if the leadership of the A.N.C. was fully accepted by members of the Alliance.

In that event people could be grouped together into Sub-Committees both of a military and political nature and assigned specific tasks,

The Sub-Committee throws out the following ideas for thought:

Machinery

- (1) Addition to P.C.
- (2) Establishment of Sub-Committees.
- (3) Political International Activities:
  - (a) Running of office.
  - (b) Delegations to conferences and Seminars.
  - (c) Delegations to certain countries with specific missions.
  - (d) Liaison with national Anti-Apartheid Committees.
  - (e) Propaganda and Publicity.
- (31) The problem of the image of the Congress Alliance and the identity of its constituents and its proper projection at home has arisen from time to time. There was for instance the tendency of overdoing the making of joint statements which tended to blur the separate identity of the various organisations. This matter was specifically discussed with a view to curbing this trend.

The Sub-Committee is of the view that consideration should be given to the question whether constituent bodies should not have independent existence externally.

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