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The Congress of South African Trade Union (COSATU) is a success story of trade unions organisation under very difficult conditions. This year COSATU, launched on December 1, 1985 will hold its congress.

In the South African situation trade unionism cannot be divorced from political issues. Precisely because under apartheid the workers are exploited as workers and oppressed as blacks. Since its inception COSATU has had to tackle all round problems of the workers. Following its launch, COSATU moved towards and increasing identification with the United Democratic Front(UDF) on a local political level and held cordial talks with the African National Congress.

A joint communique after the Lusaka meeting was explicit about COSATU's stand on the ANC: 'There was a common understanding that the Pretoria regime and the ruling class of South Africa are powerless to provide any real and meaningful solution to the general crisis, that lasting solutions can only emerge from the national liberation movement, headed by the ANC, and the entire democratic forces of which COSATU is an intergral part.

What COSATU has always sought is to unite all trade unions under one trade union federation hence the slogan 'One Federation One Country', This has not been an easy task and is far from being completed.

undoubtedly COSATU is a giant Federation with many affiliated unions. However the enemy is determined to break the unity of workers. On the first of May last year, the puppet so-called leader of the Kwazulu Bantustan, Chief Gatsha Mangosuthu Buthelezi launched his trade union federation at Kingspark Stadium in Durban. The United Workers Union of South Africa(UWUSA) was launched to counter COSATU particularly in Natal. According to Buthelezi 'Members of Inkhatha who are members of COSATU asked him to intervene because they did not agree with the policies of COSATU'

Buthelezi put together businessmen, who have very little experience of trade unionism. Its General Secretary, Simon Conco, is a businessman and a Kwazulu MP. The rest of the executive comsit



There are already reports that grassroots members of UWUSA are leaving this reactionary trade union federation in their hundreds, precisely because the leadership is not capable of solving their problems.

Another hitch to the formation of one trade union federation has been the emergence of the black consciousness federation namely CUSA-AZACTU. This federation objected to joining COSATU on the grounds that whites are involved (COSATU is a non-racial trade union federation). However both federations remain committed to discussing the basis of working class unity with truly worker controlled organisations. ~~THE~~ This door must be kept wide-open.

there are still major tasks that face South African trade unions. The great majority of black workers, especially those in the rural areas remain unorganised. This is a problem which can only be overcome by an organisation campaign which is not blemished by rivalry between COSATU and the BC oriented unions. The essential task that faces the trade union movement is the issue of super exploitation of the workers. It is important to grasp the fundamental point that apartheid owes its existence to the many forms of direct and indirect assistance from its allies in the western countries. Multi-national corporations (MNCs) that invest in South Africa extract huge profits by extreme levels of exploitation and are responsible for proping up a brutal regime that has murdered thousands of people, detained thousands more, a regime that resort to abduction and assassination in a desperate attempt to stop the people's brave struggle for liberation. The sole objective of the MNCs is to reap huge profits—no matter what the cost.

As a result of the struggle being waged in South Africa a large number of MNCs began to apparently withdraw, not out of moral indignation against apartheid but out of the usual MNCs strategy of going where they can securely maximise profit. COSATU has clearly spelled out its position on sanctions. Its General Secretary Jay Naidoo stated that the call for sanctions "was not just a call made by senior leadership or the Central Executive Committee, it was a call made in congress after proper discussion and democratic structures discussions at all levels of all our structures".