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KEYNOTE ADDRESS.

'CULTURE IN ANOTHER SOUTH AFRICA' CONFERENCE.

In this year of the 75th anniversary we salute you in the name of the ANC and congratulate you for all the risks, sacrifices and varied contributions you have made towards the 'Advance to People's Power' in our beloved country. This, a conference and festival for anti-apartheid cultural workers, comes five years after two historical cultural festivals, 'Culture and Resistance' organised by the MEDU Cultural Ensemble in Gaberone July 1982, and the 'Cultural Voice of Resistance' - Dutch and South African Artists (Against Apartheid December 1982.)

Among cultural activists who were the key participants in these festivals are some who are no longer with us. Thami Mnyele our magnificent people's artist whose life is a monument and example of the best we can attain, cut down by the murderous SADF commandos in Botswana 1985, James Madlope Phillips, Johnny Dyani and Kingforce Silgee, to mention a few. We remember them now for their illustrious contribution and take a minute's silence in their honour and their spirit which can never be vanquished.

This festival opening is an occasion for tribute paying for the meritorious work done to achieve our common ideals. It necessarily also is a time for humble assessment of the objectives we have set ourselves to eradicate the apartheid monster which feeds so greedily on diversion, division and manipulation. This effort is a powerful reminder of our own potential as cultural activists and solidarity workers hand in hand. We must express our deep appreciation for this chance of reunion and discussion with our Dutch counterparts and the all too brief but enormous opportunity to embrace our brothers and sisters, our comrades who come from the frontline of politico-cultural resistance, who in their daily confrontation with apartheid, are still decorated with the scars and stars of courage, determination and sacrifice displayed daily by all our people in struggle. Comrades, your example is an inspiration to us and your patriotic performance strengthens our own dedication to our joint just cause and all the tasks we have set ourselves to create a united, democratic, non-racial South Africa.

We can never be exiled from our homeland because daily your songs, your poems, your plays, your paintings and films - magnificent manifestations keep our attention riveted to our inevitable freedom. Through your excellent work the reality of ANC presence is now even acknowledged by our enemies.

We would rather that the scene of this festival had been closer to the battlefield and indeed for some of us here, it may have been cause for concern that we must meet here in the Netherlands from whence the ships of colonialism sailed to exploit our people 335 years ago. Notwithstanding, this meeting confirms our con-

viction in the oneness of the human race and that colonialism is not of the Dutch people in general, that the resistance against apartheid is not of black South Africans only. Rather, that colonialism and the support of apartheid is designed by specific groups that sought and still seek to gain from exploitation, oppression and other forms of barbarity. Thus, we are here, because our friends and supporters in The Netherlands, in common with the majority of humankind, have taken a principled stand against apartheid and have constituted themselves into a significant component of the pillar of international solidarity. Nonetheless, the major thrust is on the shoulders of the South African people, who value the complementary efforts of international solidarity.

Our gathering here, to share in and have discourse on the burgeoning alternative culture in the making of South Africa is also an acknowledgement of the integral contribution made and still to be rendered by cultural workers in the bitter struggle ahead. It constitutes part of the seeding that will bring about "another" South Africa.

The theme of CASA Festival underlines the dichotomy of apartheid South Africa, which in its dying fits, is vainly struggling to throttle the birth of a democratic, united, non racial South Africa, refusing to yield to the inevitable. But that which already fully formed and shaped will emerge against all odds. It is the law of nature and as one of our poets has sung, "To every birth its blood". The real South Africa, struggling to be born is represented by the fighters of freedom, the popular spirit of resistance and self affirmation. That real South Africa is seen in the strong emergence of the Mass Democratic Movement, that straddles every aspect of South African life and culture today. So that in education, the workplace, the churches, even in the enemy camp, there is today evidence of this encompassing inclusive, culture of liberation. The dying social system which seeks to pull everyone into the murky bottoms of antiquity, which does not represent the best of South Africa or Africa, is an inhumanity which has been progressively rooted out. That the two South Africas are not defined by geography or skin colour is daily becoming a vindication of the ANC position that South Africa belongs to all who live in it. While the overwhelming majority of the oppressed have chosen to fight for and build a new South Africa, the spirit of resistance is also filtering into the former strongholds of white supremacy. Reality dictates that ultimately those who have enjoyed the privileges of white South Africa must cast their lot unequivocally with the oppressed, in word and deed. Unarguably this will hasten the demise of apartheid and the establishment of a new order.

We are a generation that has witnessed the birth, in the sub-region, of Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. We know of the apartheid efforts to nullify the hard won independence and sovereignty of these states because of what they represent and because they support our cause. Certainly we are also products of an era when economical and political destabilisation, when military aggression is commonplace. We are also familiar with the impunity with which apartheid causes mass hunger and famine, massacres, and dislocation. The apartheid tactics of divide and rule, pa-

ternalism, promotion of negative traditional customs and the cooption of collaborators as a buffer system - all these are carried out in a "constructive engagement" with those Western powers who bolster and support them. Indeed, it is a wonder and achievement, that in the face of such concentrated racist sway we have not and must never succumb to racial solutions. The challenge of these grim conditions of necessity dictates that we, cultural workers are freedom fighters first, that political reality, be the mirror in which we reflect our creativity. Thus, we are an integral part of the overall struggle, not artists who merely contemplate on the cataclysms of our era. Our art springs directly from the experiences that have been moulding our national consciousness over the centuries to the present. Now, at the brink of dawn of our freedom, in the process of becoming, it is essential that as our President has stated: when dealing with the role of cultural workers in his January 8th, 1985 address: "Let the arts be one of the many means by which we cultivate the spirit of revolt among the broad masses, enhance the striking power of our movement and inspire the millions of our people to fight for the South Africa we envisage.

As the tactics of our enemies become more refined and also more brutal so we must call on all our reserves of strength and creativity to make the day of triumph come sooner. Our resistance today is built on the cumulative experience of our forebears from the ancient Khoi khoi and Nama to Sekhukhune, Moshoeshoe, Makana to the giants of the present, to Mandela, Sisulu. Kathrada and our other political leaders in the resurgent mass democratic movement. Recently we have witnessed the release, after 23 years of imprisonment, of Govan Mbeki. Last Friday Govan Mbeki was placed under strict banning order by the racist S.A. regime. The banning of our leader Govan Mbeki makes a mockery of his supposed unconditional release. Clearly, the welcome accorded him on his release by the S.A. people has frightened the racists.

However it is not an accident that Plaatjie a writer, or Vuyisile Mini, a composer, were also political activists. It is in the tradition of our history of resistance. We have not invented revolution and we have and shall never imitate the presumptuousness of the unwashed voyages of the colonial era who claimed to have discovered what was already there and commonplace to the owners of the land. That is why it

is customary in our culture that on great days of celebration or observance the mlbongi always praised the ones who charted the path before them. The performance, exhibitions, discussions at this festival are in no small way a praise song to our predecessors. They are also an encouragement and spur on the long and difficult journey ahead.

At the present moment there are various organisational forms for progressive people's artists. We need to address the question whether they are reaching the people, whether they represent the majority of patriotic artists and serve to accomodate the needs of groups at various levels of consciousness. It is pertinent that in the late sixties and early seventies it was the black consciousness cultural awakening which emphasised the building of self confidence and national spirit of the oppressed. The positive contribution of this movement had been acknowledged by the ANC. In a statement issued after the Second Session of the ANC NEC in 1973, our Secretary General pointed out that:

"The assertion of the revolutionary identity of the oppressed black peoples is not an end in itself. It can be a vital force of the revolutionary action involving the masses of the people, for it is in struggle, in the actual physical confrontation that the people gain a lasting confidence in their own strength and in the inevitability of final victory - it is through action that the people acquire true psychological emancipation".

Happily we can say with confidence now 8 years later that with the workers, students and many other sectors these words have become true. Is this also a fact for the cultural sector? Of course we are aware of our own traditional attitudes towards artists as well as the apartheid regime monopoly and control of culture that have impeded the development of an authentic peoples culture". But we are greatly encouraged by the fine work of the relatively young UDF Cultural Desk and the COSATU Cultural Structures. The formation of COSAW, Congress of S.A. writers, is also a happy addition to these forces. We hail these efforts and have confidence in their strength. The work of organising cultural workers is on its way but a major part of the tasks still lies ahead of us. To break down certain assumptions about artists we have to guard against sometimes raising our own consciousness to a fetish. We must eschew exclusivism or arrogance lest we alienate potential activists. We also need to guard against relegating to irrelevance the contribution of our white democratic compatriots. We must encourage the trend of Afrikaner cultural workers of the past and present, take cognisance of and support their efforts to identify with the national democratic struggle.

Cultural workers being of and for the people cannot merely assume the role of teaching or prescribing for the people. We can learn from the overall activity of the people and on occasions when they seem slow to respond then we must exercise patience and persuasion, because mobilisation, political education and involvement differs and it takes more time than the coercion that is the overwhelming characteristic of the enemy.

As comrade Alfred Nzo, who spoke to you last night, has pointed out: "The speed of a column on the march is determined by the pace of the slowest and weakest soldier and not the fittest and fastest. The most advanced sections should therefore at all times seek to advance the least developed ones, keeping in the forefront the principle of the greatest and highest unity of the people and at all times fighting against all tendencies of seeking to "go it alone" through impatience and contempt for the less developed forces of the revolution." Logically this statement infers that the advance contingent of cultural workers - many of whom are in this hall today, should of necessity move at the pace of our people. The work of an artist is mirrored in the popular response of the masses and the latter would gain a lasting confidence in their own strength and in the inevitability of final victory.

Peoples culture, born of cross-pollination among the artists and the people themselves in the democratic mainstream of socio-political and economic change, is a growing dynamic process which is defined by subjective and objective circumstances. It is a scientific growth in the conduct of struggle that determines and paves

way towards the assumption of peoples power. For instance, Marabi, Mbaqanga, Sicathamiya, Kwela, today are universally accepted as authentic South African peoples art forms, but it was not always the case. Their practitioners were at one time despised and shunned, and at other times completely "buried" by the notorious Gallo and other institutionalised capitalist-orientated recording companies. It is precisely due to the development of the struggle, the involvement of the masses of our people that these art forms have now been given their rightful place in our peoples culture.

Given what our president has referred to as the changing balance of strength in our country and the shift of strategic initiative into our hands, there is therefore a sense in which the apartheid forces are becoming the opposition by unleashing indiscriminate violence upon the ascendant democratic movement, rather than the other way round. The advancing forces of a new social order in our country - of which you are part - as against the degenerating and collapsing machinery of apartheid, are moving at a pace apartheid finds difficult and impossible to reverse. We must as our president O.R. Tambo exhorts "move from a position of an indestructible force to a conquering force".

It is a critical situation which requires vigilance on our part against complaisance and arrogance. The gains made must be guarded and augmented. Among these gains have been the success of the cultural boycott of apartheid South Africa. Due to the emergence of alternative structures which are actively implementing the boycott inside our country, and the complementary actions from the international anti-apartheid-movement there are relatively very few foreign artists at the moment coming into South Africa to perform. The few mediocre artists prepared to earn bloodstained money are still lured by the lucrative contracts offered. There is no doubt as to the origin of this collaborative funding. However it can no longer be concealed that a fully fledged democratic culture is in place in South Africa. As stated by our President "a definable democratic culture - the peoples culture permeated with and giving expression to the deepest aspirations of our people in struggle immersed in the democratic and enduring human values". Referring to the cultural boycott issue president O.R. Tambo in his recent ground breaking analysis at the Canon Collins Memorial Lecture, stated that this alternative culture is the core of cultural workers engaged in creating this peoples culture are simultaneously engaged in developing our own institutions and structures which are aligned to the mass democratic organisations in our country."

He therefore concludes that "This is our position that those who belong to this category of dedicated fighters of a genuine and democratic culture should not be boycotted but should be encouraged and be treated as democratic counterparts within South Africa and similar institutions and organisations internationally."

What this conference urgently needs to consider is the methods and means to realize the fullest achievement of our revolutionary cultural objectives which are at the core of our overall struggle. Let us exhaust ourselves to the services of all our people as cultural workers with a vision of another South Africa, a united, non-sexist, non-racial South Africa. Let us work tirelessly for a new South Africa.

Victory

AMANDLA!

Barbara Masekela