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BRIEFING  
Political Committee  
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RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

THE KAIROS DOCUMENT



MEMORANDUM ON THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

AND THE REVOLUTIONARY CHRISTIAN STRUGGLE.

CONFIDENTIAL

Cedric Mayson.

March 1986.

The recent publication of the Kairos Document in Johannesburg makes it possible and necessary for the African National Congress to take an entirely new look at the crucial question of the role of Christianity in our liberation struggle. In other spheres, such as political, economic, and educational, we have always advocated a revolutionary struggle to transform the present motives and structures on the initiative of our people. We have not done this in regard to religion hitherto, but the Kairos Document now makes it feasible and essential for the ANC to espouse a truly revolutionary role in the religious field:

This is the subject of this memorandum.

1. The religious nature of our people.

Our people are religious by nature :so-called African, Coloured, Asian and White people adhere to one of the major religions of the world, or to one of the many 'independent African Churches' or to traditional beliefs. The focus of this religious part of our nature in terms of the struggle has sometimes been difficult where the religions have been in need of liberation themselves.

Those with open religious affiliations have been forced to take part in unsatisfactory religious concerns; many who have found their inner religious yearnings unsatisfied by the churches have simply become lapsed Christians; and many comrades have become agnostic, and attempted to satisfy the psychological, cultural, and transcendental demands of their nature by other non-religious interests.



What we required was a faith fully in tune with the revolution. When the religious yearnings of people are either prostituted or unrealised, it produces an inherent weakness in the struggling masses. The importance of this for the struggle can be recognised even by people who have no sense of such a need for themselves. Because most of our people are religious, a relevant faith is vital for the struggle.

2. The historical background of the Churches and the ANC.

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Christian individuals have played a prominent role in the ANC from its inception, and still do, but the role of the churches has been ambivalent. Many comrades have correctly taken a critical stance towards the churches on the grounds of their belief (incomprehensible, irrelevant, immaterial) and their structures (authoritarian, capitalistic, appeasing, supportive of the system).

Church leadership by the nature of its selection procedures has tended to exemplify these criticisms in its personnel, and has thus been susceptible to the oppressors propaganda (where it did not instigate it). It has been increasingly 'anti-apartheid', but it has not been 'pro-liberation struggle', and thus not supportive of the ANC.

Comrades have been reluctant to voice their concerns and criticisms of the churches openly because they did not wish to alienate possible allies, and because they did not know enough about the church to be effective. Our attitude to the churches has thus been quite different from our attitude to the other structures in our society: we have tried to woo them in a half hearted fashion, instead of expecting them to be revolutionised.

In fact, a revolution was going on inside the church but most people knew little about it.



### 3. Christian Belief versus Church Structures.

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It is necessary to differentiate between theology (christian belief) and the church (the structures of the religious denominations).

The beliefs about living originating in Jesus from the woodworkers home in Nazareth, were taken up by his first followers who instituted the early communistic models of the New Testament in about AD 30-40. The movement spread rapidly, and in the third century the 'church' was hijacked by the Roman Emperor Constantine who put down the foundations of the religious trans-nationals of today. At many times these church structures have borne little relationship to the theology behind the beliefs of Jesus.

There have been constant conflicts between 'the kings and priests' (who usually supported the status quo) and the 'prophets' (who reminded the theology for every age, usually working with the people).

Church leaders have repeatedly claimed the right to define what people should believe, and to use this control to promote the church structures, but this has been resisted, and the subsequent controversies are a matter of history, to which the differing denominations bear witness.

This conflict persists, and it is important for our struggle that we recognise it, because it is quite possible for Christian theology to play a positive role in liberation even whilst the upholders of church structures maintain the status quo. The church structures are the religious parts of our society which need liberating with everything else but radical Christian belief is a source of liberation.

### 4. The Revolution in what Christians believe

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Modern theology (like modern science, politics, education etc) has revolutionised traditional belief. Ideas about God, the understanding of Scripture, the practice of churches, the relationship between religion and politics, and the relevance of theology to the liberation struggle, have changed out of all recognition in the past generation. Theology no longer



has a denominational base : radical Christians from all backgrounds agree on the fundamental precepts of modern theology, particularly when they are engaged in a common liberation struggle as we are . Christians in our struggle do not think competitively as Methodists v. Anglicans, or Catholics v. Protestants or Reformed : they think as Christians.

Most of the concepts of Christianity which people criticise ( particularly in radical political circles) are hangovers from the 19th century which most theologians threw away years ago. This modern theology must be made available to and through the ANC if our Movement is to be abreast of the times.

#### 5. Relation of Christianity and Marxism.

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This is nowhere more apparent than in the relationships between Christianity and Marxism. The historical conflict was occasioned first by the identification of the Church structures with oppressive capitalist society, and authoritarian elitism; and secondly, with the rejection by Marx of 19th century concepts of deity. Both of these areas have been totally decimated by modern theology, and millions of Christians today find no difficulty in relating positively to both Jesus and Marx.

This notion is still anathema at home for three reasons: because it is dangerous in the face of government attitudes; because many church leaders (black and white) see Marxism as a usurpation of their autocratic control; and because many Christians are still deeply oppressed by the forms of western Christianity which equate this with anti-communist paranoia.

But none of this should deter us from presenting a true liberated position in which we recognise that Christians, Marxists, and Christian Marxists all have a legitimate role in our common struggle.

#### 6. Significance of the Kairos Document.

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6.1. For the struggle. The Kairos Document arose out of consultations amongst people deeply involved in the day to day struggle against the



system some of whom had the skills to express these beliefs in theological language. In its critique of State Theology and Church Theology, and its promotion of Prophetic Theology with a Call to Action, the Kairos Document is giving us for the first time a positive theology of the liberation struggle ( rather than a negative anti-apartheid statement).

It has had a profound effect at home, where 25,000 copies are now in circulation and six translations in hand, not least because it is giving a genuine people platform for the theological revolution which is implicit in our struggle. It is encouraging and enabling our people to spell out their fundamental religious awareness within the liberation struggle in positive and accurate terms. The dichotomy between religious belief and liberation commitment is replaced by a strong integration which is of profound importance.

6.2. For theology. The content of the document has become and will increasingly be seen as a crucial analytical tool, in which a modern contextual theology is soundly rooted in and rises from the South African people.

6.3. For the Churches. Subtitled ' Challenge to the Church', the document is not merely a challenge to what the churches do and say, but to what they are. It challenges the nature of the church structures, and how they can fulfill a positive Christian role in the liberation struggle. Inevitably, this carries the struggle to the heart of the churches, most of whom are now in general theoretical agreement with it, and have already set up commissions to examine their own role and reaction.

6.4. For the World. If the authors were surprised by the wideness of the reaction at home, they were totally unprepared for the world-wide response to the document, which has been reprinted constantly and is the subject of intense study in Europe, North and South America, and to a lesser extent in Africa. It is recognised throughout the western world that these crucial new insights are 'setting the Christian agenda for the rest of this century'.



The absence of the approach taken by the Kairos Group is a major factor behind some of the difficulties experienced in our sister countries in Africa since their independence, and its promotion within those countries is important to our future development as well as their own. A positive faith and positive new forms of church are necessary facets of a liberated country and continent.

7. ANC response.

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An ANC response is necessary for the sake of the struggle and for the Movement, and it is important that this response should NOT be in the sense of a superior judgment made against a competing group. The Kairos Document is not an official statement from the Churches, but an initiative by an independent group, most of whom are our own people, with an enormous and constantly growing support group back home.

In setting up any group to consider the matter it would seem desirable to include:

1. Some who are in full understanding of and empathise with our comrades in the KAIROS Group in Johannesburg.
2. Some representation of the traditional ANC approach to the church organisations.
3. Some people from other religions, and some professed atheists to keep everyone's <sup>feet</sup> on the ground!
4. I believe that a small group of this nature should be set up as soon as possible to examine the question of Christianity, Religion and the liberation struggle, now that the Kairos Document has given us a base for a revolutionary consideration of this area; and that the group should be expected to come up with a suggestion for a small in-depth consultation to be held later this year at which a few key individuals presently working in different countries would need to meet together. It would be desirable for the whole question to be considered confidential until we know where we are.

ENDS.

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Briefing July/1  
NF/AZAPO  
Political Committee  
London, July 1986

NATIONAL FORUM AND AZAPO, AZASM, AZANYU

Notes on history, policy, structures and individuals



## NATIONAL FORUM

### SUMMARY HISTORY

NFC initially included "notables" like Tutu, Manas Buthelezi, Piroshaw Camay, Emma Mashanini, Kehla Mthembu, Neville Alexander, Saths Cooper, Joe Variava, Frank van der Horst. Set up on Azapo initiative. CAL joins as important NFC partner.

First meeting: June 83; 800 delegates. Cosas and Saawu later reject NFC claims that they had sent observers, saying people had gone in personal capacities. Produced Azanian Manifesto.

Second meeting: April 84. On Nkomati, said Mozambican leaders were "tools of imperialism".

Third meeting: July 84. Adopted Manifesto. Much participation from Azasm.

Fourth meeting: 250 people, claimed credit for anti-election campaign. Discussed "Isolate the traitors" campaign for 1985 with aim of making state institutions "unworkable" (according to Nassim Dollie, 1986:270). Committee of notables abolished, and new committee elected: Cooper as national convener, Mandla Nkosi as co-convener, and secretary Lusiba Ntloko.

Fifth meeting (called the third NF) in April 86. 1300 reps - Cooper. Theme: "National Convention - Problem or Solution". Much hostility from floor to UDF. Badly organised. Groups attending: Azactu, Azasm, Azanyu, CAL, Azapo and others.

Dollie (ibid:272) claims that NF is not an organisation despite some members calling for it to become a national liberation front. However, Cooper says there is a programme of action for NF for 1986.

### POLICY QUESTIONS:

a. Re-affirmed blacks only. Cooper denies split in NF on the issue.

### INTERNAL PROBLEMS:

a. W. Cape trotskyist groups (excl CAL) like New Unity Movement in NFC are suspicious of EC (ibid:271). On the other hand, some Azapo people openly resent the class analysis and socialism lines of the trots.

b. Some in NF see AZAPO as the principal organisation, and oppose any role for NF as a unitary organisation. Even NF as a federal



body with independence for constituent organisations is seen as premature.

c. Delegates at March 86 NF criticised leaders for NF falling behind other organisations. Cooper said in response that a programme of action with community involvement was planned for '86. (1.4.86).

#### ACTIVITY:

1. April '86 meeting decided to open London office, recruit exiles and meet president of the OAU.

2. Call for consumer and worker action from 1 to 4 May. From press reports (possibly reflecting ambiguity at NF) it is difficult to see if the aim was for this action to actually begin on this date, or whether it was to be planned during this period but would actually take place in June 16 to 26.

Whatever, the action was to include withdrawal of support from labour, rent, education, investment to "give the govt the opportunity to resign and relinquish power why they still have the opportunity". Called "active engagement", the plan was to have labour, rent and education boycotts, intensification of disinvestment campaign and moratorium on sports and social activities.

Cooper said that 600 000 members of affiliates would be involved.

3. Cooper said that NF would have its consumer boycott campaign only after "full and free discussion with members of the community has taken place, thereby eliminating the emergence of faceless committees who have no mandate from the community. (City Press, 6.4.86.)

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Dollie, N: 1986, The National Forum. *South African Review* 3, SARS Braamfontein Jhb.

#### RELATIONS WITH UDF

Crit of UDF having petty-bgs leadership and being in favour of negotiations and civil rights struggle.

Dollie (ibid:274) claims there has been co-operation with



affiliates at a non-public and shortlived level.

NF has hit out at "imposition of consumer boycotts by faceless committees" without prior consultation. This created hardship caused by elements "who enforce the boycott in an undemocratic manner", said a resolution at the April 86 Durban forum.

#### AZAPO

##### CURRENT LEADERSHIP:

500 delegates at annual congress in Durban Dec 1985 elected Cooper as president. Dep pres: Nkosi Molala, Cape vice-pres: Mbuyiseli Mahlathi; Tvl vice-pres: Dan Habedi; vice-pres (political education): Lybon Mabasa; v-pres (finance) Haroon Patel; gen sec George Wauchope, publicity sec Muntu Myeza, National organiser: Phambilika Ntloko; projects co-ordinator Zithulele Cindi. Ishmael Mkhabela defeated for two positions and not elected to central cttee. Theme of congress: Forward to Socialist Azania.

Cooper criticised for setting up Biko Foundation without mandate.

##### GENERAL ANALYSIS:

Saths Cooper has described SA as a "situation of internal colonisation", but goes on to revive BC's old style identification of race and class. (This is unlike some other Azapo figures who have acknowledged that the two are not identical.) For Cooper, the "ruling class" = whites. The exploited group, the have-nots are the blacks. (Nambian, 14.2.86).

Despite his misuse of Marxist concepts in this, he does use some other Marxist concepts, in a more conventional way: eg. "interventionist strategies employed by imperialists to ensure the embourgeoisification of sections of the black people", "committing class suicide" (ibid.). The "thesis is white racism

A tendency to use concepts and words in a strange way is also evident in Cooper's remarks that the NF call for appropriate action to mark May Day and June 16, was not a call for a boycott or stayaway. Rather it was a "withdrawal of support for the system in education, labour and sports spheres through consumer action". WM17.4.86 Nonetheless, he still maintains that "for the black people of my country there is very very little mystery about black consciousness" (Nambian, 14.2.86).



## POLICY

- a. Whites must effect change in white communities (DD 3.3.86).
- b. Socialist change; must be gradual and controlled, concentrating on monopoly sectors. No immediate nationalisation (ibid). "We present a true socialist option for the people. It is convenient for the government to allow only anti-apartheid groups to be heard and not groups such as ours", Cooper - people crying out for leadership, and getting duped by "petty bourgeois charlatans masquerading as supposed revolutionaries".
- c. Trade unions are not revolutionary (Marx) - Cooper. Unions should be independent and exclusive of middle class interests.
- d. National convention; Only Buthelezi, Hendrickes and Rajbansi support this "anachronistic demand" - Losiba Ntloko. Reject the politics of negotiation, support war of liberation where after victory "power will have to be transferred to the working class, otherwise they will simply seize it".
- e. Azapo policy post liberation; maximum democracy, no bannings, free flow of ideas and information, a multi-party socialist state.

## POLITICAL ASSESSMENTS:

- a. Boraine & Slabbert resignation; "Sheer opportunism" according to Cooper. For years they have been giving a racist parliament credibility and "whether they voted against it, they must accept some responsibility for iniquitous laws".
- b. Consumer boycott; Flaw is that you are appealing to the (non-existent) conscience of the ruling class. Also consumer boycotts must be time-bound and national. Problem when people forced to buy in township from councillors as the boycott then doesn't affect the sell-outs.
- c. Cosatu; object to undemocratic imposition of political programmes on unions.
- d. Mandela; Has a major role to play, but no individual will transform the country; Cooper hopes Mandela will "emerge as national figure of reconstruction and unity, and that he won't lapse into any sectarianism. If he lapses into thumping a sectarian dream, it will only add to the tensions and conflict



existing." (DD 3.3.86).

e. Kwa-Natal: a ruling class ploy by Inkatha and PFP.

f. Did not attend NECC conference, but endorsed decisions that were in line with Azapo strategies. Later held 4 meetings in Tvl to brief followers on the conference and "popularize the decisions of the national consultative committee" - Myeza (10.1.86).

g. Pass law "reform": now being imposed on everyone with universal fingerprint requirement and "so-called 'Africans'" would be asked to produce their id book more often than others. - Cooper (S Tribune 16.2.86).

#### RELATIONS WITH UDF

Cooper says the Charterist resurgence after 1977 was so intense that it was the force of the early 1980s, but says it has now peaked. People want a viable alternative, not just an anti-apartheid position. The Charter is inadequate on the land question, ethnicity, minority rights, and socialism "which we believe must not be based on any existing model but must be shaped by the material conditions which obtain in the country". They also reject the "liberation, not education" slogan.

Cooper believes both groups have a right to exist and express views, and "extends the hand of friendship to UDF". He called on UDF at Dec Azapo congress to "join with us in working for the only way forward to a socialist Azania". "UDF have a very legitimate role in the community's struggle against apartheid and we should work together. Our door is wide open without any conditions attached".

Cooper hoped to be "neutral mediator" in conflict between Azanyu and UDF in Mbekweni after several deaths resulted. A truce between UDF and Azapo was signed here, and they hoped to get Azanyu to also sign it.

Muntu Myeza (publicity sec) sacked Rev Magina for not following Azapo's code of conduct. It appears, inter alia, that Magina had testified against UDF people in PE - Azapo members may not testify against "fellow-blacks". Myeza said Azapo extended the hand of friendship to the UDF. (23.1/86, Sowetan).

#### RELATIONS WITH SWANU



Cooper went to Namibia in Feb to address Swanu and Namibia Education Forum.

Sec gen of Swanu, Vekuii Rukoro, was guest speaker at Azapo congress in Dec 85.

#### ACTIVITY

1. Been trying to launch Border branch in Ginsberg township (Kingwilliamstown), though many meeting bans, and detention of Ginsberg exec. Claim of 80 branches nationwide (DD 13.2.86) - a "force to be reckoned with" - Cooper.

2. Soweto branch warns thugs harrassing and robbing people in the name of "student-comrades".

3. Plan to organise defence against Inkatha.

#### AZASM

President is Arthur Ratlana, final year medical student.

Did not attend NECC conference as it was "sectarian, undemocratic and manipulative". Would follow NECC decisions that were in line with Azapo strategies.

Called for national school stayaway May 1 to May 4 to complement worker stayaway's over same period.

Pledged solidarity with Medunsa students opposing white students there.

#### AZANYU

LEADERS: Carter Seleke, Cunningham Ngakana, Mapule Makwele, Justice Lebea.

#### ACTIVITY:

a. In E Cape, it broke away from Azapo with Rev Ebenezer Magina when he was expelled by Azapo national leadership. Magina has no official position in Azanyu, but helps and advises them. Azanyu, like him, claim that Azapo has betrayed Africanism by wanting a non-racial solution. (Sowetan, 17.2.86).

b. Launched at Turfloop in 1985.