

NUS-AAM
CONFERENCE ON SOUTHERN
AFRICA

Keele University

5th-7th July 1974



NUS/AAM Student Conference on Southern Africa

Keele University, July 5th-7th 1974

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

The NUS first adopted policy on Southern Africa in 1970. In 1972, after two years of campaigning, the NUS and the Anti-Apartheid Movement held a joint student conference at Plaw Hatch Country Club. This conference was a success, and greatly increased student activity the following academic year. Since Plaw Hatch, the NUS/AAM conference has become an annual event - an extended planning workshop for the campaign. This is the report of the third conference, at Keele in 1974. Rather than being a report of an activist conference held over a week-end in the summer, it should be regarded as the foundation for the campaign over the next twelve months. The success of the Keele conference cannot be measured yet; but it will be seen as the year progresses, as the level of student activity on Southern Africa.

P R O G R A M . E

Friday 5th July - Evening

1. Introduction to the Conference - Steve Parry, NUS National Secretary.
2. Films: Namibia Slide Show
Last Grave at Dimbaza
Manchester Connection
A Luta Continua

Saturday 6th July - Morning

3. The African National Congress - Abdul Bahm, ANC.
4. Assessment of developments in Southern Africa - Ruth First
5. Discussion groups on the political situation in Southern Africa.

Afternoon

6. An analysis of the changes in Portugal and of developments in the Portuguese territories - Barry Munslow, CFMAG.
7. The student and Trade Union Movements in South Africa - David Davis.
8. The Liberation struggle in Zimbabwe and Namibia -
John Sprack, AAM Executive
Peter Katjavini, SWAPO
Kalayi Ngini, ZAPU
9. An assessment of last year's campaign - Hugh Bayley, NUS Vice President
10. Discussion groups on campaign priorities for next year.

Sunday 7th July - Morning

11. Discussion Groups on tactics and organisation for next years campaign.
12. Adoption of the campaign programme and debate of resolutions.
13. Close of Conference - Steve Parry

THE PLENARY SESSIONS

Steve Parry, National Secretary of NUS, opened the conference with an introduction covering the development of the National Union's policy on Southern Africa, which since 1970 has enabled NUS to extend very real material and political support to the liberation movements of Southern Africa. Only recently the NUS Liberation Fund had provided Radio Freedom, the ANC's broadcasting station in Zambia with equipment to enable them to continue broadcasts to South Africa.

Films were then shown, covering the background and current situations in some of the territories of Southern Africa; all are examples of the type of material local groups should utilize in Southern Africa campaigns and names and addresses of distributors are appended to this report.

The Namibia Film Strip with taped commentary gives a useful introduction to Namibia, with emphasis on the history of European expansion into Africa. Last Grave at Dimbaza gives a comprehensive coverage of the nature and contrasts of life in South Africa today; recently filmed illegally in South Africa, it shows some African strike activity and raises the issue of British investment and collaboration with apartheid. The Manchester Connection was made by Manchester University Union when the campaign to end the University's investment in South Africa was at its height; valuable as one way to give life to any disinvestment campaign. A Luta Continua was filmed in Mozambique and covers the struggle waged by FRELIMO and their political and social programmes in the liberated territories.

The first main session started on Saturday morning, when Abdul Bham of the African National Congress (South Africa) was introduced by Steve Parry. Abdul spoke of the history of the struggle in South Africa, and the present situation, with the ANC moving towards a position of being able to take up arms to liberate South Africa.

Ruth First then spoke of her experiences in South Africa, helping union workers organise a strike in mining compounds where the workers are kept isolated and unable to communicate freely, the

problems of trade union and political organisation in such a tightly restricted society, the kind of repression hurled immediately at any political activist through banning orders, house arrest, detention or prison sentences. Following a break and questions to Ruth, we broke up into discussion groups of the situation in Southern Africa and its implications for action on our part.

In the afternoon, Joanna Rollo from CFIAG, introduced Barry Munslow who spoke of the present position as regards the Portuguese colonies in Africa. He told us of the continuing need to support the liberation movements in their demand for total independence from Portugal, and described the situation of the struggle in the three countries: that in Guine Bissau the independent state has now been recognised by 24 countries, and the free government there is in control of $\frac{2}{3}$ of the territory; that FRELIMO was making constant military advances in Mozambique, and that in Angola too the MPLA are holding to the demand for full independence. He also spoke of the reconstruction programmes of FRELIMO in the liberated areas, and the democratic political and social structures being established in Guine Bissau and in Mozambique.

Hugh Bayley (NUS) then introduced David Davis, who had recently fled from South Africa after being under house arrest for his part in the recent strikes of textile workers. He traced the development of the work of student groups which investigate African wages and conditions and from this tried to assist Africans to put their case through those limited channels which existed. He personally moved from this voluntary work into a full time trade union organiser's job, and spoke of his work at the time of the mass wave of strikes in Natal. He stressed the value of the increased consciousness amongst workers of their collective political and economic power which these strikes generated. He spoke also of the South African student union, SASO, and the role it plays in the current development of the African political consciousness, and NUSAS'S assistance to black trade union and student organisation.

Following a break, Jen McClelland (AAM) introduced a session on Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) and Namibia (South West Africa). John Sprack spoke of the political and strategic importance of the countries,

and mounting apprehension of the white minorities for the safety of their rule, and the success of the liberation movements. Peter Katjavivi from SWAPO told us of recent events in Namibia - the arrest of leading SWAPO members, increased repression against SWAPO members and sympathisers, and of what we in Britain can do to help Namibians in their fight for freedom and to end our complicity in their repression. Kalayi Njini from ZAPU outlined the recent history of the struggle in Zimbabwe, the cooperation between ZAPU and ZANU, and the progress that ZAPU has made. In answer to questions, he said that the African National Council did not represent the people in Zimbabwe, and that a settlement made with them would not constitute a true settlement.

On Saturday evening our minds turned to an assessment of the past year's campaigns, introduced by Hugh Bayley, and the possibilities for the coming year. Whilst he felt that last year's conference had laid the foundation for a successful coordinated campaign throughout the country, the political developments in this country had weakened its thrust. It was felt that NUS should develop its coordinating role and local groups should take more independent initiatives. There had been a very successful national picket of South Africa House demanding the release of Nelson Mandela and all political prisoners in Southern Africa.

Discussion groups on campaign priorities were then held, and on Sunday morning we went straight into discussion groups on organisational problems and tactics, and then into the final plenary session. Group reports for the discussions on Saturday evening were distributed and reports on these and the morning groups were heard. Several resolutions were passed (see below), and the conference was closed by Steve Parry.

THE DISCUSSION GROUPS

The Conference broke up into discussion groups three times; to discuss the political situation in Southern Africa, campaign priorities for next year, and tactical and organisational questions.

The first groups, on the political situation, acted as a forum to assess the significance of developments during the year. The guest speakers, and the representatives of the liberation movements circulated amongst the groups to answer questions. These groups, early in the conference, were intended to act as a starting point from which detailed consideration of each of the territories in Southern Africa could take place in the plenary sessions to follow. It would probably, in retrospect, have been more useful to have held the groups later so that the delegates could draw on the ideas that the guest speakers put forward. The groups recognised the major advances that the liberation movements have made in the last year.

On Saturday evening the groups discussed campaign priorities for next year. These were the most successful of the conference, and the delegates clearly came to terms with the problems facing the campaign. Last year's campaign was seen to have been so broad that there was not the necessary flexibility to adopt to a changing circumstances. The result was that activity in many areas had not been seen through to completion. The groups agreed that the forthcoming campaign should be one of support for the liberation movements, concentrating on direct support in the form of a fundraising and material aid campaign, and on a disinvestment campaign in solidarity with the liberation movements. A target of £10,000 was set for the fundraising campaign and the participants realised that this called for very great efforts to be made if it was to be realised. In addition it was decided to run a Boycott Barclays campaign at the start of the academic year, since it is ideal for raising the issue of Southern Africa amongst new students and will lead into the other campaigns.

The third discussion group session on the Sunday morning was less constructive as many delegates were tired from the night before. Although it is very useful to meet other activists informally

at conferences, late drinking sessions damage the conference itself, and so defeat their own objectives. Tactics were discussed and it was stressed that all campaign events should lay emphasis on the political issues at stake.

It was agreed that NUS would produce a general poster and briefing papers for each of the campaigns. These are to be ready for the first NUS/AAM network meeting in September. A newsletter is to be produced; it will be printed centrally but the collection of copy for each issue will be the responsibility of a Student Union or activists group. Some delegates suggested regional network meetings, and it was agreed that these could be useful but should be organised locally rather than by NUS or AAM. The need to start the campaign early (during Freshers weeks), and to maintain interest with continual activity was stressed. Links with other organisations, such as trades councils and local AAM groups should be developed, and efforts should be made to raise the issue of Southern Africa at NUS area meetings and to assist small unions to take up the campaign. Contacts must be made with the local press, and reports of all activity and especially fund-raising should be sent to NUS. Money collected should be sent to the NUS liberation movements fund with a covering letter if it was collected for a particular organisation. NUS, AAM and CFMAG offer services (speakers, information etc) which all activists should use; in order to make the best use of these resources it was suggested that delegates should join AAM and CFMAG, and/or subscribe to AA News and Guerilheiro. Organisational points about the campaigns themselves are contained in the briefing documents, but the discussion groups did stress the need to act quickly. The Barclays campaign must be ~~launched right at the start~~ ^{launched right at the start} of term if it is to be effective, and the dis-investment should also be got off to an early start, particularly in the universities where all the decisions have to be made by university governing bodies within the academic year. The fund-raising campaign is more flexible and can be planned especially to fit between the high points of activity on the other campaigns. However it should never be allowed to die down completely as we have set ourselves such a target. Once again an early start is essential.

RESOLUTIONS

During the final session of the conference, the programme for the coming year's campaign was adopted. This was based on the reports from the discussion groups on Saturday night and Sunday morning.

Four specific resolutions were also carried:

- To call on the Labour government to recognise the independent state of Guine-Bissau.
- To call on the Portuguese government not to return SWAPO members in Angola to Namibia.
- To inform the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa of NUS's opposition to the British Lions rugby tour.
- To inform the TUC of the conference's attitude to the TUC visit to South Africa.

SERVICES AND USEFUL ADDRESSES

Information, campaign material and speakers on Southern Africa can be obtained from:

1. Anti-Apartheid Movement,
89, Charlotte Street,
London W1P 2DQ
(01-580-5311)
2. Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, Angola and
Guine-Bissau,
12, Little Newport Street,
London WC2 AH 7JJ.
(01-734-9541).
3. International Defence and Aid Fund,
104/5, Newgate Street,
London EC1A 7AP.
4. NUS International Department,
3 Endsleigh Street,
London WCTH ODU.
(01-387-1277).

The films shown at the conference are available as follows:-

The Namibia Slide Show - From: SWAPO
Last Grave at Dimbaza - From: Morina Films,
607A, Grand Buildings,
Trafalgar Square,
London WC2.
(01-839-1907)

The Manchester Connection - From: External Affairs Officer,
University of Manchester
Union,
Oxford Road,
Manchester M13 9PR
(061-273-5111)

A Luta Continua - From: CFMAG.

Other Useful Addresses:

1. African National Congress of South Africa,
49, Rathbone Street,
London W1A 4NL (Phone: 01 580 5303)
2. South West Africa People's Organisation,
10, Dryden Chambers,
119, Oxford Street,
London W1 (Phone 01-437-8391)
3. South African Congress of Trade Unions (same as ANC)

Publications

The best way to keep up to date with developments in Southern Africa is for your activist group or Union to subscribe to the journals published by the above organisations. These are:

1. AA NEWS (Anti-Apartheid Movement)
2. Guerilheiro (CFMAG)
3. Sechaba (ANC)
4. Namibia News (SWAPO)

DELEGATES LIST

UNION

DELEGATE

Aberdeen College of Education	Yvonne Strachan
Queens University SRC, University Road Belfast 7.	Hugh Cox
University of Bristol Students Union, Queens Road, Clifton, Bristol BS8	Howard Smith
NUS Bristol Area	Winston Kendall (Soundwell Tech), Tom Archer (Bristol University)
Cambridge University Union, 3 Round Church Street, Cambridge	Mike Gapes, Paul Bivand
University College Cardiff Union, 20B Dumfries Place, Cardiff CF1 4PL	Alison Amos Swastik Watts,
Gloucester College of Art & Design Students' Union, Albert Road, Pittville, Cheltenham, Glos.	Sam Sykes,
Doncaster College of Education, High Melton Hall, Nr. Doncaster.	David Duff Adrian Hare
Heriot Watt University Union, 30 Grindlay Street, Edinburgh EH3 9AP	David Brew, George Pigott
Jordan Hill College of Education, 76 Southbrae Drive, Glasgow G13 1PP	Stuart Goodsir, J. McCarry
University of Kent Students' Union, Canterbury, Kent	George Henderson Shymala Rajan Peter Vince
Kingston Polytechnic Students Union, Penrhyn Road, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey.	Robin Goddard,
Lancaster University Students Union, University House, Bailrigg, Lancaster	Mary Prior,
Kitson College Union, 64 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds 2	Ali Sheitani,

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ANC (South Africa)

Abdul Bahm

SWAPO

Peter Katjavivi

ZAPU

Kalayi NGINI

NUS

Hugh Bayley (Vice-President)
Steve Parry (National Secretary)
Roger Trask (International Manager)

AAM

Jenny McClelland
John Sprack (AAM Executive)

CFMAG

Joanna Rollo

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