

or?Jote\ om.a\Â»s

STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS, OLIVER TAMBO, AT THE 50th SESSION OF THE OAU COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE LIBERATION OF AFRICA - HARARE, ZIMBABWE, 13 MAY 1988

Comrade Chairman,

Your Excellencies, Honourable Ministers,

Distinguished Delegates to this historic Session of the OAU, Liberation Committee,

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners, Comrades, ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me on behalf of the African National Congress and the struggling people of South Africa, to convey revolutionary greetings to the participants of this historic 50th Ordinary Session of the OAU Coordinating Committee for the Liberation of Africa.

We also avail ourselves of this opportunity, to register our profound appreciation of the opening statement delivered by the Honourable Senior Minister, Comrade Maurice Nyagumbo, on behalf of that indefatigable freedom fighter, the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Comrade Robert Mugabe.

Comrade Nyagumbo's statement will no doubt serve to guide our deliberations and greatly inspire the masses of our peoples in Namibia and South Africa, who are presently locked in battle with the most vicious monster that has ever stalked the African continent - the apartheid regime of South Africa.

It is indeed most appropriate that this eminent Committee of the OAU should meet in Zimbabwe on the occasion of its 25th Anniversary and its historic 50th Session, The independence of this country, eight

page 2

years ago now, was the latest in a succession of victories that the peoples of our continent have scored in pursuit of the goal of the total liberation of Africa which was decided upon and proclaimed at the founding conference of the OAU 25 years ago.

Eight years on, independent Zimbabwe remains still the most recent additional jewel on the African crown, a sparkling tribute to the heroism of the fraternal people of this country and the steadfastness of the peoples of Africa in the struggle for the complete destruction of the system of colonial domination and white minority rule.

It is because of that commitment by the party, government and peoples of Zimbabwe, that we are able to meet here today to consider from a point so close to the borders of racist Gouth Africa what next should be done to end the criminal apartheid system, achieve the freedom of Namibia and South Africa and bring peace to all the peoples of our region.

We are especially pleased that we have an eminent leader of the revolutionary masses of this country, Comrade Nathan Shamuyarira, as our chairman, charged with the task of guiding our work during this session, piloting the adoption of our decisions by the higher councils of the OAU and ensuring their implementation afterwards. The baton of leadership could not have passed into more capable hands, espacially at this time which calls for the greatest possible intensification of the struggle to achieve our common objectives. We congratulate our dear brother and comrade on his unanimous election.

At the same time we would like to pay tribute to the out-going chairman of our Committee, Major-General Ike Ni'rachukwu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In the very short period of his stewardship of the Committee, he has made an impressive in-put that will certainly contribute to the greater effectiveness of our Committee.

In paying tribute to the out-going chairman, we would like to congratulate him on his statement at the opening session, which was delivered with great sincerity and forthrightness and in which he raised very pertinent issues. This will no doubt enable the Committee to engage in a meaningful reappraisal of its positions in the past 25 years.

We would also like to take this opportunity, Comrade Chairman, to salute and pay tribute to our colleague, the Executive Secretary of the Committee, Brigadier Hashim Mbita, and the other African patriots who work with him to carry out the decisions taken at the various meetings of the Committee and the OAU as a whole. Without them and without their dedication to the noble vision of Africa's total liberation, our continent's contribution to its own emancipation would not have been as decisive as it has been and continues to be.

We extend a similar tribute to all their predecessors who, together with the current incumbents, made the Liberation Committee a true point of reference for the liberation movements as they sought political and material assistance to enable them to conduct their various but common struggles.

Like Accra before the formation of the OAU, for these past 25 years Dar-es-Salaam, the seat of the Liberation Committee, has been and continues to be the revolutionary capital for the Liberation of Africa. Accordingly, we would like to take this opportunity of the 25th anniversary year of our Committee to extend our deep appreciation to the Party, the Government and the people of the United Republic of Tanzania for the enormous contribution they have made to the struggle to free all of Africa.

The African countries represented here, which were charged by the OAU collectively to coordinate the process of the total liberation of our continent, can justly take pride in the fact that, with the exception of Namibia and South Africa, they have discharged their mission. Today, all of us are confronted with only one colonial and settler regime to vanquish, the racist regime of Pretoria. We are certain that the united might and resolve of Africa will score yet another triumph by crushing the criminal apartheid system, and thus attaining the historic result of the total and final emancipation of our continent.

As we mark the 50th Session and the 25th Anniversary of the Liberation Committee, we are confident we shall together achieve this victory which is long overdue, sooner rather than later. Like all the others before it, our success can only come about through the most intense and all-round political, military, economic and diplomatic struggle. This important Session of the Liberation Committee should accordingly agree to a bold programme of action which would serve as a clarion call to the whole of Africa and the rest of the international community that the time to end the apartheid system is now.

The fact that our meeting takes place in one of the Frontline States emphasises and underscores this point. This important grouping of countries has emerged in the course of struggle, and as a product of our victories. It is the cutting-edge of this Committee itself and the OAU as a whole in our common offensive for justice. By its actions, it gives meaning to the historic declaration first pronounced by Kwame Nkrumah and then adopted by the leaders of Africa, that the independence of any African country has meaning only in the context of the total liberation of the continent.

A quarter-of-a-century ago, when the OAU was born and this Committee formed, the Pretoria regime of the day pursued the same basic strategy as the Botha regime does today. This strategy focussed then, as it does today, on the entrenchment and perpetuation of apartheid within South Africa, the colonisation of Namibia and the maintenance of a so-called cordon sanitaire around the borders of the apartheid empire.

Of course, Pretoria battles to implement this strategy in circumstances that have radically changed from those that obtained 25 years ago, thanks to the victories that the African Revolution has scored, which have permanently changed the balance of forces in favour of the forces of liberation.

The defeat of the Portuguese fascists and colonialists as well as the Rhodesian Smith regime and the end of British colonialism in our region despite the desperate attempts of the South African racists to stop this process, meant that Pretoria had lost the protective shield which had been provided by the erstwhile colonial regimes.

The invasion of the Peoples' Republic of Angola in 1975 and the decision by Pretoria to incorporate the MNR into its armed forces signalled the determination of the apartheid regime to re-establish this shield through naked aggression and the negation of African independence by the imposition on the peoples of our region of puppet forces that would carry out the bidding of the racists. The campaign of aggression and destabilisation carried out against the independent states since then, and especially from 1981 onwards, which has focussed especially on Angola and Mozambique, is intended precisely to achieve these objectives.

The defeat of the invading apartheid forces in Angola in 1976 and the current successes of the Angolan armed forces on the battlefield, supported by the Cuban internationalist forces, are a decisive factor reflecting and reinforcing the changed balance of forces in our region. Cuito Cuanavale could prove to have been the Stalingrad of our region. Strategically, these successes mean that, provided independent Africa has the requisite means, she has the capacity to repulse the aggressors and put paid to the enemy's strategic aims of imposing itself on the peoples of the sub-continent as a so-called regional power.

Thus the historic people of Angola, under the leadership of their -arty and government deserve the highest commendation of this Committee for the decisive role they have played and are playing to defend the independence of our continent, to thwart the enemy's intentions of creating client states and to guarantee the right of the peoples to determine their own destiny.

We would also like to take this opportunity to salute the rest of the Frontline States which have similarly withstood Pretoria's aggression, remained steadfast in their opposition to the apartheid system and supremely loyal to the decisions and objectives of the OAU, despite the very high price they have had to pay for taking these positions. Through their sacrifices, they have served as a bulwark against the desperate efforts of the racists to reverse the political gains of the peoples of our continent and saved Africa from the terrible consequences of a veritable process of recolonisation.

We would like to further pay tribute to our comrades-in-arms of SWAPO of Namibia and the valiant masses of that country. Through a continuing and intensifying struggle, they have steadily increased the cost the apartheid regime has to bear for its colonisation of Namibia.

The independence of Namibia is assured. The only question that remains to be answered is when - and that question is being answered by the people on the battlefields of that country.

Likewise we extend active revolutionary solidarity to the valiant Palestinian people and their sole legitimate representative, the PLO. In the face of an unprecedented wave of terror unleashed by Zionist Israel, the masses of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories have earned world-wide admiration for their steadfastness and heroism.

We must also pay tribute to the people of Central America who are daily sacrificing their lives for justice and peace. In this connection we support the peace efforts undertaken by the Sandinista Government

and would also like to associate ourselves with those Non-Aligned countries who have expressed their support for the Nicaraguan Government's candidature to host the next Non-Aligned Summit Meeting in Managua.

The massive campaign of repression that the ^Pretoria regime has launched against our people is an indication of the extent of its desperation. The successive states of emergency have failed in their intention.

The combat spirit of the masses of our people remains high. The commitment to liberate themselves is higher than ever before.

Similarly, the enemy has failed to destroy the mass organisations of the people despite the attempts it has made which include the banning of organisations and individuals, mass arrests, detention and torture and the assassination of leaders and activists. The fact that the enemy has failed reflects the level of maturity that our people have achieved the depth of their commitment and their willingness to make whatever sacrifices are required of us on the road to victory.

Central to its strategy for survival, the enemy has entertained the vain hope that it would make sure that the armed struggle does not take root within our country. Accordingly, it has done everything in its power to achieve this objective. The reality however, is that our armed offensive has steadily mounted. The enemy itself has been forced to concede this fact. The number of combatants of Umkhonto we Sizwe deployed in the field of battle, many of them trained within the country, has continued to grow, expanding the possibility for us to transform our offensive into a people's war.



The masses of our people themselves consider this 'armed struggle as their own and are impatient to participate in its conduct in their millions. The more the repressive measure the enemy adopts, the greater the realisation among our people that the sooner they get rid of the regime of terror, arms in hand, the better. Accordingly, the perspective ahead of us is that of a continuing and escalating armed offensive against the apartheid regime.

Equally, the mass political struggle, engaging millions of our people in united action for people's power, is an important part of the reality of our country. Only recently, on March 21st, these masses stayed-at-home in a general strike that was part of the political offensive against the regime of terror.

Furthermore, the sanctions imposed by the international community, limited as they are, are also having their effect in reducing the capacity of the Pretoria regime to carry out its criminal schemes. The Committee might be interested to hear what the apartheid Minister of Finance had to say on this issue when he presented his budget about two months ago;

"Our economy is hamstrung by a host of political motivated and international orchestrated restrictions that distort the optimal allocation of the resources which our country is so richly endowed. The outcome, regrettably, is that our ability to channel even the resources we already have to the areas of greatest need is constrained. The sanctions and boycotts are nonetheless a fact of our economic and financial life, and they serve a purpose, insofar as they force us to put everything into using our resources, to extract from them and maintain maximum economic advantage".

What we have spoken of, and as the other side of the coin, this regime hopes that having suppressed the organisations of the people and eliminated or incapacitated their leadership, it can then impose an amended apartheid constitution on our people and coopt some black collaborators into structures.

It would then claim that it has taken a decisive step towards a political solution that meets the aspirations of all the people of our country.

Behind all this pretended departure from the basic tenet of the apartheid system, namely white minority domination, lies the reality that the Botha regime has not in any way abandoned its commitment to the perpetuation of this system, especially the bantustan policy.

It is clear that all the Botha regime is after, is to buy a further lease of life for apartheid, to try to extricate this system out of its crisis, by lending a false legitimacy through the inclusion of some black collaborators into its structures. We call upon the OAU to provide leadership to the international community as has been the case in the past, to defeat this latest manoeuvre. In this way we are certain that these schemes will fail dismally as have previous ones such as the bantustans, the community councils and the tricameral system, all of which were intended to pacify the masses of our people, so that they acquiesce and even participate in their own oppression.

Twenty five years ago, when the OAU was formed and this Liberation Committee came into being, the apartheid regime of the day thought that it had succeeded to smash and suppress the African National Congress for all time. After all, during the same

year, our most senior leaders inside the country were captured and remain in prison to this day, with the exception of my colleague and friend, Comrade Govan Mbeki.

Just how much of a pipedream the notion was, that the ANC could be destroyed, has once more been demonstrated this year of the 25th Anniversary of the OAU, when leaders of the ruling fascist party have been forced to admit, that no solution to the problems of our country can be found without the ANC. Botha has himself been obliged to say that he is willing to talk to the ANC.

But of course, as we all know, all that Botha is interested in, is that we should surrender. And therefore he makes it a condition for talking to the ANC that "it must lay down its weapons, stop its terrorism".

And yet the one who calls on us to lay down our weapons, is none other than the sponsor of state terrorism, which has resulted in the murder of hundreds of thousands of people throughout Southern Africa. It is none other than the one who has commanded his assassination squads to murder Dulcie September, former ANC Representative in Paris,

Albie Sachs in Maputo and many others. It is none other than he whose hands are red with the blood of that great African patriot and revolutionary, Samora Moises Machel.

But clearly, Botha must do everything he can because he is fighting for the survival of the criminal system over which he presides. Twenty five years

of struggle, since the OAU was formed, has as we have said, radically changed the balance of forces in our region in favour of the process of liberation. All the manoeuvres that the Botha regime is engaged in emphasise that we must take the battle to the enemy which is desperate because it is losing.

We consider it of great importance that this Committee and its parent body, the OAU, should adopt new measures to strengthen the international campaign for the total isolation of apartheid South Africa. It is necessary that we look at ourselves, as the African continent, to ensure that no one among us is acting in a manner likely to undermine this objective.

We should also find ways and means by which we can encourage the US Congress to take further steps to expand the package of sanctions along the lines already agreed to by the Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee of the House of Representatives. New initiatives should be taken to put additional pressure on the EEC and Japan, to follow the lead given by the US Congress, so that the Governments of these countries respond to Africa's demand for sanctions, which is supported by the ordinary people of these countries. Similarly, all necessary support should be given to the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers' Committee on Southern Africa, which is dealing with these issues, so that this body of nations should itself take further effective measures against apartheid South Africa.

Part of the new strategy, Mr Chairman, should be to popularise peoples' sanctions as adopted by the ANC Arusha Conference and endorsed by the Ministerial Council.

In this regard, we are greatly encouraged by the on-going consultations towards the implementation of the Council's decision to work for the convening of the UN Security Council meeting preferably in southern Africa.

We are also of the view, that our continent and its organisation should also discuss afresh the steps it can take further to increase the defence capacity of the Frontline States, to enable them to continue to repulse the campaign of aggression and the destabilisation which Pretoria continues to wage against these countries.

Our continent should also maintain its vigilance with regard to the area of sport. In particular, there is a danger that some players may be bribed to join an international rugby team to tour South Africa. We should also be on guard to ensure that South African tennis players do not manage to smuggle themselves into the Olympic Games, scheduled for later this year.

Comrade Chairman,

In July of this year, our organisation, the masses of our people and the rest of the international community, will observe the 70th Birthday of that great African patriot and revolutionary, Comrade Nelson Mandela.

This will be an occasion further to intensify the campaign for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela, the release of all detainees and the granting of prisoner-of-war status to all captured freedom fighters. We believe, that the Liberation Committee should take the initiative, to ensure that our own

continent of Africa, marks this occasion in a fitting manner, especially as the Committee's 25th Anniversary coincides with the 25th Anniversary of the Rivonia arrests, as a result of which Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and the others were sentenced to life imprisonment.

SWAPO and the ANC will continue to rely on this important and unswerving ally in the struggle for freedom, the OAU Coordinating Committee for the Liberation of Africa, to extend to us and our fighting peoples the necessary political and material support, to enable us to step up our offensive against the common enemy.

The Committee has fought side by side with us for a quarter of a century, sharing with us both the good and the bad. It is aware of our needs. It is conscious of our demands of our respective struggles. It is, like us, inspired by a sense of urgency with regards to the tasks we have to accomplish in order to secure the Liberation of our countries.

As we mark this historic occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the OAU Liberation Committee and its 50th

Session, and cast our eyes west into the Caprivi Strip and Namibia and across the Limpopo into South Africa,

we see the tree of freedom rising in all its magnifi-

cence, watered by the blood of our own peoples and nourished by the victories that the peoples of our continent have scored during the last quarter of a century.

There will be no 50th Anniversary of the Liberation Committee to celebrate and no Hundreth Session, because long before then, we shall all meet in a liberated Namibia and liberated South Africa together to attend to the urgent question of the rebuilding of our Continent as a zone of prosperity, peace and friendship among the people.

But all of us will know, that those objectives will have become achievable, because the OAU Coordinating Committee for the Liberation of Africa, carried out its mandate, sweeping aside all obstacles to the emancipation of the peoples of Africa from the shores of the Mediterranean to the confluence of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans.

Thank You!