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Prender

African National Congress

(south africa)

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FORWARD TO A PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENT.

On March 9, 1980, the racist Prime Minister of South Africa, P.W. Botha, surprised the world with the announcement that his government had decided to summon a conference representative of all races in our country to "deliberate about matters affecting South Africa". He gave as the reason for this decision the fact that the election victory of President Mugabe's ZANU-PF had changed the strategic situation of South Africa.

How should we understand this move? Does it mean that Botha and his lieutenants have at last recognised the iniquity of the colonial and racist apartheid system and acknowledged the justice of our demand for a united and democratic South Africa? Does this move therefore represent a decision by the white minority regime to relinquish its monopoly of power?

The answer to these questions was of course given by Botha himself. For, in the same speech of March 9th, he re-affirmed his racist government's opposition to the democratic principle of one person one vote. He also pledged to maintain white minority domination, declaring that "the National Party will defend the white man, his political rights, culture, and his right to self-determination." A quarter of a century ago, Botha's predecessor, Hans Strydom, made a similar declaration:

"Our (the apartheid Government's) policy is white domination, baaskap, separate development - call it what you like".

In other words, the apartheid regime stubbornly refuses to learn the simple lesson, so clearly demonstrated in recent years in Mozambique, Angola and now in Zimbabwe, that it is impossible to keep a people in perpetual servitude.

Under cover of "verligte" pronouncements P.W. Botha is faithfully following in the footsteps of Portugal's Caetano and Rhodesia's Ian Smith. But he is haunted by the spectre that, with the collapse of the apartheid regime's Zambesi River defence line under the pounding blows of the heroic people of Zimbabwe, the strategic situation of racist South Africa has deteriorated further - and dangerously, in favour of the South African liberation forces headed by the African National Congress and its allies. He knows that in this situation, in order to "defend the white man and his political rights", it is not sufficient to place exclusive reliance on the "brave" police of Sharpeville, Soweto and Silverton fame, or on the much-vaunted might of the racist army, which has not halted the people's march to victory, notwithstanding that its exploits in Southern Africa during the past decade have already cost this continent more than 30,000 innocent lives in Zimbabwe alone.

Botha is therefore looking for ways and means of strengthening his white minority regime and shielding it from the crushing blows the oppressed and exploited masses must and will deliver in the pursuit of liberty.

By calling the proposed conference, Botha is inviting the Black people to become his political army for the defence of white minority domination. He wants us to lend legitimacy to a crime against humanity, in return for meaningless and inconsequential reforms which have nothing to do with the only real question of South African politics and international peace - the question of the transfer of power to the majority and the re-constitution of South Africa as a united, democratic, non-racial and peace-loving country under the leadership of a people's government.

Casting an imperialist eye over the independent states of Southern and Central Africa, and armed with his expansionist plans for the economic and political domination of Africa, P.W. Botha is calling this conference of ethnic groups, homeland "nations" and people with separate "identities" with the added aim of laying a foundation for his "Constellation of Southern African States", a goal which he knows must remain a remote dream in the absence of a master-and-slave alliance between the racist regime and the victims of oppression, exploitation and racism in South Africa. But there can never be any such alliance.

At a time when everywhere across our borders, people's governments have been or are being formed through the stubborn determination of the people themselves and their ensuring willingness to make sacrifices and pay the maximum price for the liberation of their countries, we, in South Africa, can have nothing to do with a conference called ostensibly to discuss South Africa's future, but whose real and sole intention is, and which can only serve, to reinforce our colonial status, consolidate the structures of apartheid, and ensure our continued super-exploitation.

We shall not betray Africa and the progressive world. We shall not betray our own heroes and martyrs, the men, women, youth and children who fell in the fight for freedom. We shall not betray the national leaders and captured militants whose release from imprisonment has been, and continues to be the subject of world-wide demands and appeals by people from every walk of life.

As against the apartheid regime's survival strategy, we have a strategy for victory whose indispensable imperative is unity in action, a sustained and ever-growing attack and resistance on all fronts, and which requires constant consultations among all our patriotic people at national, regional and local levels, to ensure a co-ordinated offensive for the attainment of agreed strategic and tactical goals.

Following the heroic victory of the Patriots of Zimbabwe and the stunning defeat of the forces of colonial-apartheid domination, the order of the day for the oppressed and democrats of our country is: Attack and once more attack without giving the enemy the respite he seeks.

We call on the international community also to intensify its offensive, to fight harder for the all-round and complete isolation of the criminal apartheid regime and to step up its moral and material support for the African National Congress. The captain of the fascist clique has openly admitted the stunning effectiveness of the world solidarity movement in the struggle against apartheid tyranny and oppression. Now is the time to deliver more telling blows.

At the same time, it is of great importance that the friends of the struggling peoples of Southern Africa should support more firmly than ever before the principled and patriotic positions of SWAPO, the sole and authentic representative of the people of Namibia, against the manoeuvres of the Pretoria regime and its imperialist allies.

The young republic of Zimbabwe needs assistance and support in the continuing struggle to safeguard its independence and the freedom of its people. The independent states of Southern Africa remain still under the manace of the sweet-talking Botha and his bloodthirsty generals. The historic victory in Zimbabwe has increased rather than diminished the aggressive intent of the Pretoria regime against the peoples of Southern Africa. The commitment of the rest of peace-loving mankind to the strengthening of the economic and defence capacity of these countries must therefore increase rather than diminish.

The struggle continues! Victory is certain! Forward to a people's government!

O. R. TAMBO
PRESIDENT, ANC.

16/3/80