

NEW YEAR MESSAGE BY COMRADE PRESIDENT OLIVER TAMBO  
ON THE OCCASION OF JANUARY 1979, THE 67TH ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS OF SOUTH AFRICA

Fellow countrymen, Militants of the African National Congress and of the struggle for liberation in our country - Cadres of Umkhonto We Sizwe inside South Africa and outside - Comrades-in-arms in different parts of the world, Friends, Allies, supporters and sympathisers. We greet you on this 67th birthday of the African National Congress.

January 8th, 1979 is a day on which we are recalling the first steps which were taken along a new road by our forefathers, a day which comes at a time when power in our region is visibly changing hands. As we mark and observe this anniversary of our liberation movement, the African National Congress, the air still resounds with the echo and whine of the bullets of Umkhonto we Sizwe cadres who have during this past year been striking a series of telling blows against the enemy. This day also comes at a time when our fraternal liberation movements - SWAPO of Namibia and the Patriotic Front of Zimbabwe have reached the very threshold of power. In Zimbabwe, a generalised offensive is unfolding and the days of the racists and their stooges are strictly numbered.

Today, sixty-seven years after the great inaugural conference in Bloemfontein, the tasks which our founding fathers set themselves - the overthrow of white minority domination and the creation of a democratic South Africa - are yet to be accomplished. But, indisputably, we are making significant progress towards the attainment of our cherished and historic goal of liberation in our country. More than ever before, we are confident of victory.

Thanks to the international support and solidarity our movement has organised and mobilised over the years, the racist Vorster/Botha regime stands isolated in the international community today. World opinion has denounced and castigated the apartheid regime. Even its erstwhile supporters must publicly spurn it to avoid international opprobrium.

On the other hand, the justice and legitimacy of the struggle of the millions of oppressed in our country has won firm and widespread international recognition. Throughout this past year, as our people sustained the offensive against the repressive and violent system of racist oppression and exploitation, there were striking examples of the growing international acceptance of the African National Congress as the authentic leader of the liberation movement in South Africa, the representative of the real interests of all the people of South Africa. This recognition of the leading role of the African National Congress and its allies in the liberation movement is itself a tribute to the indomitable spirit and indeflectible determination of all the oppressed and exploited, as well as all true democrats of our country, who have stayed in the field of struggle, growing from strength to strength over a period of many decades, the African National



Congress being throughout this time the expression of their united strength, and the spearhead of their drive towards a new South Africa. In turn, we salute all the friendly peoples of the world with whom we share the common objective of a new world order.

The African National Congress, the mass of our people and the world progressive community, including the United Nations and the majority of its member countries, comprising OAU, the Socialist countries, the non-aligned group of nations and countries and governments in Western Europe. We are all together involved as partners and allies in the noble task of removing from the face of the earth, an outrageous scourge, a social cancer in the form of the apartheid regime and the violent structure it has created to perpetuate itself. Today, this regime is sponsoring and spreading death and destruction and terror all over Southern Africa. But victory and the future belongs to the forces for progress and peace, not to racists, baaskapists, colonialists, and aggressors.

We warn the Western powers, that unless they forthwith discontinue their political, economic and military support for the Vorster-Botha-Smith regimes, white minority racist rule, with or without its puppets and stooges, will have ruined all the much vaunted western interests in Southern Africa long before the oppressed and exploited masses destroy this white domination, which they will.

It is not without significance that the vicious campaigns of terror unleashed upon our people by the Vorster-Botha regime have only served to stoke the fires of revolution.

Our students and teachers have maintained a magnificent unity in the fight against Bantu Education and dare challenging many of the expressions of white racist arrogance. Our youth who have often spearheaded this militancy have kept alive the spirit of the 1976 uprisings.

The Black working-class has used its most powerful weapon, the withdrawal of its labour power, on numerous occasions to prevent the manoeuvres of the exploiters who have sought to make the working people pay for the crisis of their capitalist system. Our people in Crossroads, Clermont and other places that the racists had earmarked for demolition have by their vigilance and the support of the masses stayed the hand of the racist persecutor.

Despite the difficulties and hazards involved, units of Umkhonto We Sizwe, are spreading their armed presence in the country, and the enemy provokes them at its peril, as recent experience has demonstrated; for, to the armed attacks and brutal force the enemy uses against the people, the people have now to respond with armed force. What is more, the experience of our lifetime, including the experience of June 16, 1976 and after, teaches us that the issue of power and peace in our country, as elsewhere, will be resolved in our favour only by an



effective combination of political and armed activity, ~~however~~, however, targetted, not on persons, but on the racist system - except when persons go out of their way to defend the system.

The churches have in the past encouraged and participated in the practice of violence against our people by urging and collaborating with apartheid, itself a brutally violent system which can have no future. Recently, however, to significant measure, church leaders are identifying themselves with the cause of justice, regardless of the consequences. Many among them, in South Africa and abroad, have come to realise that however much they abhor all violent system, defended and upheld with the unrestrained use of armed force, does not lend itself to peaceful ways of dismantling it. On the contrary, it can only breed counter-violence - at the very least, as perfectly natural process. But what is more, systems of the South African racist type have outlived their time by decades. There is no place for them today, except perhaps as detonators of large-scale war.

The African National Congress is, demonstrably, a peace-loving people's movement because the majority of the people of South Africa whom it has led for decades love people. We all recall the policy of non-violence which governed the militant struggles of the 50's, led by the African National Congress. It was the armed police who opened fire on the unarmed people in Sharpeville and Ngquza Hill in 1960. It was the armed police, urged on by Vorster himself, who murdered, not just 300, but nearly 1,000 children in Soweto alone in 1976.

The people of Mozambique, Zambia, Botswana, Angola and Namibia have died in their thousands, all killed by the Ian Smith and the Vorster-Botha regimes who are attacking in close collaboration both in the planning and in the attack. Southern Africa, as a matter of stark reality, is at war.

We have all failed to reach our cherished goal of peace the soft way. It is clearly impossible to avoid the hard way to peace.

In our message to our people today, we call attention to the lesson of our own history, our own times; to the reality of our own situation: Nothing will change except at the instance of the majority of our people of all races and social strata: Nothing will change without enduring and sustained sacrifice on our part. Nothing - no force on earth, can deny us the victory of our just and united struggle. As we observe this anniversary of the formation of the African National Congress, the expression of the spirit of unity of the oppressed, we invite all our countrymen in their various organisational formations to seek and find ways of co-operation and collaboration in the quest for justice in our country, for liberation. The enemy of freedom for peoples has evolved a divisive structure which has found support among some of the victims of that structure.



The African National Congress calls upon all opponents of racial arrogance, domination and white supremacy to unleash this year, a determined assault on the artificial political, economic and racist barriers which go under the term apartheid or separate development. We invite all true patriots to join in this effort. It is our hope, it is our aim, that we should observe the 25th anniversary of the Freedom Charter on June 26 1980, under the banners of a people united in the declaration of the Freedom Charter, which says that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it", and that we can together re-affirm our commitment to the principle of "one country, one people, one government - a government of the people of South Africa". In this connection, the declaration of support for the African National Congress by the Labour Party is of great historic significance and will rank among the outstanding milestones in the march of the South African people towards a common nationhood, rich in its variety and experience, grounded on the strongest foundations of human equality and non-racialism.

This great initiative taken by the Labour Party, will surely be followed by all who believe we are fellow-countrymen, seeking a just future for ourselves and our children, a just future for mankind.

Let us in South Africa learn to stop being Bantus, Coloureds, Indians and whites. Let us be what we are, Africans in Africa. Let those who are committed racists, who came to this continent determined to keep Africans in chains, to be perpetual white masters over Blacks - let them persist in their role as foreigners on African soil.

But the ANC, the majority of us in South Africa, supported by the world community, will continue to convince them by our struggle that there is no longer any place in Africa for the enemies of Africa, and no longer any place in the world community for racists.

The ANC is launching a three year programme which will culminate in the observance of its 70th anniversary on January 1982. A programme which will reflect our struggle and activities in all fields, rising from strength to strength and reaching on that date a scale worthy of the heroes and martyrs of our struggle - worthy of the courage and dauntless determination of our youth, workers, peasants, women, intelligentsia and other social forces who represent the vast majority of our people.

It is our conviction and hope that 1982 will find the ANC with a membership representative of a cross section of our entire population, a membership which will include a substantial percentage of those South Africans now living under the doubtful privilege of being "White".



In looking forward to the challenging tasks of the next three years, we cannot overlook the year of the great Isandlwana.

One hundred years ago, King Cetshwayo's people's army spoke to the invading enemy with their spears. At the battle of Isandlwana, it engaged and defeated the pride of the British colonial army - a feat which has gone down in history as one of the most glorious and spectacular achievements in the world struggle to resist foreign domination. Faced with the might of superior arms our heroic warriors knew no fear. They shed rivers of blood to remain a free people in the land which was theirs.

In war which was deliberately provoked by the enemy, the people's army gave clear notice that a time comes in the life of a people when there is only way out - the way of challenging oppression by force and violence.

In doing so, they added a glorious page to the long history of our people's heroic resistance to the robbery of the land of our fore-fathers. Isandlwana has left us with a heritage whose spirit of no surrender, whose spirit of sacrifice and discipline, inspires and guides our whole nation in the battles to come, a heritage which is a challenge to all of us - the children of Isandlwana.

This great battle was one of many battles fought in the 200 years during which, in different parts of the country, stretching from the Western Cape to the northern most reaches of the Transvaal, our people, spear in hand, fought war after war in defence of their land, our freedom and for peace. Isandlwana was the highest point in the protracted struggle. It was, for the spear of our people a moment of glory!

Today, 100 years later, let us salute this weapon of our people and pay the highest tribute to the brave and gallant men who brought honour to the cause of justice and pride to all opponents of colonial plunder and national oppression.

Because of the central role played by the people's weapon, the spear, in the country wide struggle that culminated in that historic victory, the African National Congress has decided to proclaim the year 1978 as THE YEAR OF THE SPEAR.

It is a year in which our people must, as never before, take up the challenge of the spirit of Isandlwana. In this, the Year of the Spear, let us commemorate and remember the great battles fought by our people, in every factory, farm, kraal and home. Let us make 1979 a year in which every man and women, and all our youth and children learn the true meaning of the great tradition of Isandlwana and other battles fought by our people in decades and centuries of resistance.



Let us spread the message of defiance and resistance to all forms of racist rule. And let us popularise our cause - the cause of a new South Africa. Let us spread the spear, which is the symbol of Isandlwana, to every corner of our land.

Finally, on this day we salute our leaders, and brothers and sisters in enemy jails. We salute Solomon Mahlangu. We salute militants of the African National Congress, the various forces fighting exploitation and oppression in our country - in the cities and in the countryside. We wish you and all our friends a great year - THE YEAR OF THE SPEAR!

Let us all go forward in rising levels of intensity of struggle to the Year of the Spear, 1979, to the year of the Freedom Charter, 1980, to the year of the 70th anniversary of the African National Congress, 1982.

AMANDLA! MAATLA!

POWER TO THE PEOPLE!

8th January 1979.

LUANDA, People's Republic of Angola.