

DRAFT STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE ANC,  
COMRADE OLIVER TAMBO, TO THE OAU LIBERATION  
COMMITTEE : ARUSHA, TANZANIA, FEBRUARY 10,  
1983.

Mr Chairman,

Your Excellencies,

Comrades representatives of the Liberation Movements,

Ladies and gentlemen

Our meeting takes place at a critical time for our continent. We are at a moment in our history when a coincidence of circumstances has conspired to test our resolve to remain loyal to the objectives set by the founding fathers of the OAU and therefore of this august Committee. The current situation poses to all of us the question - do we have determination enough to honour, in struggle, the memory of the countless African patriots who sacrificed and perished for the accomplishment of their objectives. It demands of us that we ask ourselves whether our common determination to win is being translated into a victorious united offensive.

Mr Chairman:

The continent of Africa today carries a primary responsibility to defend the enormous successes it has achieved over the last two decades and beyond. The reality of those successes is not in doubt. Who, for instance can be so blind as not to see the brilliant torch of Freedom which lights every corner of our great motherland! We cannot forget that only a few decades ago, ours was described in supercilious tones as the Dark Continent - benighted, the backyard property of other forces rather than its indigenous peoples, these

peoples themselves subservient, bemused and child-like wards of others who disposed of powers that only the gods could claim as their heritage.

But through their heroic efforts, the peoples of Africa rent asunder the veil of darkness that colonial and imperialist domination had draped over our continent. Acting not as subservient, bemused and child-like wards, but as self confident and conscious makers of history, as our own liberators, we, the offspring of the same benighted continent, destroyed and buried an entire historical epoch that had been imposed on the peoples of our universe by the ruling classes of an allegedly enlightened Europe and North America. We who were described as backward, became the midwives of a new social reality of independent peoples, of the collapse of the colonial system, and confounded those who, having invested themselves with an omnipotent and omniscient personality, had thought such a result impossible, undesirable and even inconceivable.

It is these victories that have so altered the balance of forces in Africa that our own success has become as close as it is. Our common enemy does not rejoice at this fact. It is to him a challenge to which he must respond and is responding.

Sincere tribute is due to this Committee, its members, both as individuals and as representatives of countries and peoples, and to its parent body, the Organisation of African Unity, for the seminal role they have played in helping to bring about this outcome. Today, only two countries on our continent, South Africa and Namibia, remain under colonial and white minority domination. This might suggest that we should today so formulate our agenda that only two items should appear on it, these being Namibia and South Africa.

But as we have said, Mr Chairman, Africa has a primary responsibility to secure the advances she has made which have brought us within reach of the goal of the total elimination of colonial rule on our continent. She has this responsibility because other forces in world politics have not accepted that what we want to make of our countries and our continent should be our exclusive concern. Accordingly these forces seek to circumscribe the independence we have won in order to protect what they view as their vital interests and to promote their global strategies.

Nowhere is this clearer than in Southern Africa. The liberation of the majority of the countries of this region, like that of our continent as a whole, constitutes a decisive contribution to the process of our own liberation. It constitutes an inexorable challenge to the still apartheid system, the most pernicious, stubborn and formidable manifestation of colonial domination that our continent has seen.

Because of this, those who benefit from apartheid are striving to ensure that this independence ceases to be a material factor in the struggle for the liberation of Namibia and South Africa. What they would like to see is a continent made up of client states, bound hand and foot to the imperialist forces which seek to dominate and exploit the peoples of Africa. The strategy they pursue is therefore not aimed at joining hands with us to consolidate our independence: rather, they aim that we should revert to a situation of dependence.

An undeclared war is raging throughout Southern Africa. People are dying everyday. Homes are being destroyed. Economies are being ruined as a matter of deliberate policy. Considerable resources have to be channelled to meet defence requirements in a situation characterised by pressing social needs for food, housing, jobs, health, education, and so on. Uncertainty, tension and insecurity have become daily fare for millions of people in our region.

But whence the solution to these problems? The solution lies in the achievement of the objectives which have constituted the mandate of this Committee since it was established, 20 years ago. Hence the heavy responsibilities that rest on the shoulders of the leaders of Africa who are gathered here today.

In plain terms, this means that we must together intensify the struggle for the eviction of the apartheid colonial regime from Namibia and the destruction of this regime within South Africa. Our peoples are correctly demanding victory over the Pretoria white minority regime. They see that victory as overdue and realise clearly that peace and stability cannot be brought about in Southern Africa, and indeed in other parts of Africa, while racist and colonial domination continues to hold sway in South Africa and Namibia.

For their part, the Pretoria regime and its allies view as necessary conditions for the ~~the~~ defence of the apartheid system that:

- they must defeat and destroy SWAPO and the ANC;
- they must destabilise the independent states of Southern Africa, compel them to abandon their anti-apartheid positions and, if possible, impose puppet regimes on the peoples of these countries; and,

- ensure that the rest of Africa does not bring its united weight to bear in support of the independent states and the liberation movements of Southern Africa.

This requires that we adopt a double-pronged and integrated strategy which has both elements of attack and defence. Within South Africa and Namibia, we have to wrest the initiative out of the hands of the enemy and increasingly force it into a defensive posture. This means that the urgent task that faces SWAPO and the ANC is to activate their respective peoples and popular armies into a significantly heightened offensive against the common enemy.

To the extent that such an offensive succeeds to tie down the enemy forces within South Africa, it will at the same time, contribute significantly to the realisation of the objective of defending the frontline and independent states of Southern Africa. It is however also urgent and important that determined measures be adopted to strengthen the defensive capacity of the Southern African independent states and to repulse the aggression of the Pretoria regime.

Africa is pledged to the total liberation of our continent. Accordingly, she has an obligation to continue to mobilise the necessary political and material resources to achieve this objective in Namibia and South Africa. The OAU, itself an eminent product of Africa's liberation, remains the one vehicle we have at our disposal to coordinate and mobilise this continental effort aimed at the completion of the task of finally *expunging* colonialism and racist domination from our continent.

We are all familiar with the tragic situation that has arisen within the OAU which threatens to paralyse it, at best, and at worst, to destroy it. The situation in Southern Africa, which has fundamental~~/~~ implications for the future of our continent, however demands that we must arrest and reverse this dangerous situation. The OAU must live. The OAU must be strong. It must remain the property of all the peoples of Africa and a vanguard ~~of~~ ~~all~~ force with sufficient authority to lead Africa in a victorious assault on the bastions of colonialism and war that remain entrenched in Southern Africa.

It is for all these reasons that we suggested earlier that we should not formulate our agenda so that only two items, <sup>"</sup>Namibia and South Africa, appear on it. The mandate of this Committee demands that indeed we discuss these two questions. The objective situation, the African setting within which the struggles in these two countries are taking place, however demands that we should also take a look at that African setting. This means that we should consider the situations in the rest of Southern Africa and in Africa as a whole, certainly as these situations relate to the struggles in Namibia and South Africa.

The political and military struggle within South Africa continues to grow in its scope and intensity. Ever increasing numbers of our people are being drawn into active struggle around both local and national issues. At the same time, our popular army, Umkhonto we Sizwe, basing itself among, and being part and parcel of these struggling masses, continues to hit at the enemy at far-flung places inside the country.

The "solutions" that the enemy has devised to save itself have all failed to achieve their objectives. The arrest, torture, imprisonment and murder of patriots has failed to stop the growth and combativeness of the broad movement for national liberation. Similarly, the Bantustan and so-called separate development programme continue to be rejected by the masses of the people, as was demonstrated by the massive boycott of the December elections in the Bophuthatswana Bantustan. The murderous raids and assassinations carried out against our people outside the country, have only served further to rally the masses of our people behind the ANC and to strengthen our own resolve to defeat the enemy in the shortest possible time.

The apartheid regime and its supporters are getting desperate. Naturally, they try to hide that desperation behind a torrent of words projecting the racist regime as invincible. Its actions however tell a different tale of a regime that is floundering in a quagmire of ~~deep~~ *immense* proportions.

Its invasion of Lesotho on the 9th of December last year and the cold-blooded murder of 42 ANC members and Lesotho nationals, was such an act of desperation. This criminal action was sparked off by the inability of the enemy to stop our armed units as at Komatipoort, where we destroyed an enemy barracks, inflicting serious casualties on its personnel, and at the Koeberg Nuclear power plant, to mention only two of our recent actions.

Inspired by that same sense of desperation, the apartheid regime persists in its lying claim that Umkhonto we Sizwe maintains military bases in the neighbouring states. Of course, the regime dare not admit to its



supporters that our armed combatants are inside South Africa and launch their attacks from within South Africa. After all, if Pretoria did make this admission, what would remain of the carefully nurtured image of super-efficient security forces and the false sense of security that Pretoria strives to inject among the white population!

The enemy has also realised that it can no longer count on the white population alone to save the apartheid system from destruction by our liberation movement. This is the fundamental reason behind its schemes aimed at the cooption of the so-called Coloured and Indian people through the proposed constitutional arrangements for the creation of a three-tier parliament.

Despite the gravely erroneous positions adopted by the South African Labour Party at its Congress last month, committing the Party to a policy of cooperation with Pretoria in implementing this constitutional manoeuvre, we are confident that both the Coloured and Indian people will respond positively to our call, and that of other democratic forces, to refuse to become junior partners of white racist South Africa.

Sensing that the forces of liberation in Namibia and South Africa, under the leadership of SWAPO and the ANC respectively, <sup>were approaching victory,</sup> the United States government decided that it was necessary for it to intervene in Southern Africa to save the apartheid regime. This strategic aim is disguised under the deceptive nomenclature of constructive engagement.



Nothing constructive has come out of this engagement. Instead, it has encouraged the apartheid regime to persist in its stubbornness over the Namibian question, further to intensify its campaign of repression and terror within South Africa and to step up its programme of aggression and destabilisation directed against independent Africa. Quite clearly, the apartheid regime is intent on using the period of Reagan's tenancy of the presidency of the United States to make the greatest possible advances in the implementation of its counter-revolution programme. Our own calculations and planning must therefore take into account the reality of this strategic alliance between Washington and Pretoria, designed to bolster the apartheid regime and produce a result in Southern Africa that favours interests that are inimical to Africa's independence and progress.

We would like to assure this important meeting of the commitment of the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe and the oppressed people of South Africa to the path of intensified all-round struggle. It is a measure of the impact of our struggle that a supposedly liberal journal such as the Johannesburg "Financial Mail" has had to shed the mask of liberalism. Accordingly, in an editorial <sup>in</sup> ~~the~~ its issue of the 24th of December, it openly called for the destruction of the ANC, saying that our people must be hunted down and killed.

Contrary to these wishes, the ANC will not be destroyed. Instead it will grow in strength. It will bury the illusions of the South African forces of repression and their allies by leading our people in a victorious onward march.

To achieve these results, Africa's support and this Committee's involvement in that struggle are vital. We are certain that we do not entertain an illusion in the conviction that this Committee will live up to the enormous and urgent challenges of the present situation and adopt practical measures to increase assistance and support for the ANC and SWAPO.

With all the power at our command, we would also like to urge that this Committee should, through the OAU Headquarters Secretariat, make known its views to all African governments, its views on the urgency of increasing assistance to the liberation movements, of joining hands with the frontline and independent states of Southern Africa to help strengthen their defence, of further extending the world campaign of solidarity with our peoples and on the decisive role of the OAU in the struggle to achieve these objectives.

Let this session of the Liberation Committee signal that the continent of Africa has crossed the Rubicon and has gone over to an uninterrupted offensive which will, within this decade, see the flags of liberation flying over Windhoek and Pretoria.