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STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS ON THE OCCASION
OF 8TH JANUARY, 1985.

Compatriots,

A new year has begun, bringing with it fresh hopes and new challenges. I am sure that I express our collective conviction when I say that during this decade, each New Year brings us closer to our cherished goal - the total liberation of our country.

The bells that rang in the New Year were, for us, a call to battle, summoning us to ever greater involvement and persistence in the struggle for democratic change. We can and will meet the new challenges successfully. The confidence with which we make this bold assertion is based on our unflinching commitment to fight with all our might, making all the necessary sacrifices, until victory is ours.

Compatriots,

Today, January 8th 1985, we observe and celebrate 73 years of the African National Congress. As has been the practice in the past 6 years, the National Executive Committee of the ANC addresses an annual message to you on this our national day. To do so is both a duty and a privilege. It is a duty because history has entrusted us with the destiny of our country, and we therefore must together render to one another, to the allies and active supporters of our struggle, and to history itself, an account of our stewardship over the past twelve months. We must together analyse and learn from our experience on the battlefield during this period and use our conclusions to chart the way forward to victory - our historically determined destination.

To address you, ~~compatriots~~ compatriots, on January 8th 1985, is a privilege. For, we are addressing a fighting people, who during a particularly ferocious offensive by the enemy, have accumulated a record of resistance and struggle worthy of our great heroes and martyrs; a people who not only have the resilience that defies defeat, but also the capacity to rise to the challenges of the hour and move on to the offensive; a people with a glorious future to fight for, a tough and brutal enemy to face, an assured and epoch-making victory to win.

It is five years since we rallied our people around the demands of the Freedom Charter during 1980, the year of the Charter. This year, as we mark the 30th anniversary of that historic document, we can with confidence say that the Freedom Charter is asserting itself as the embodiment of our deepest aspirations and the blueprint for a new South Africa.

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1984 saw us take bold steps forward on the road to freedom. The path we have traversed was fraught with numerous dangers and hazards. But despite these, it is clear at the end of 1984 - the Year of the Women, that we have succeeded in shifting the balance of power within our country in favour of the forces fighting for national liberation, social justice and genuine peace in Southern Africa. Through persistent collective labour and dedication we have progressed in forging a mighty people's movement against the racist monstrosity. As we said last year, it is in the attack that we shall find victory.

By attacking, we defeated the efforts of the racist regime to mobilise the Indian and Coloured or so-called Coloured sections of the black population into acceptance of the apartheid constitution.

By attacking, we frustrated the enemy's attempts to contain the militant democratic trade union movement and transform it into a ^{body} tame shadow that accords with the regime's wishes: ^{tame and timid, meek & mild, ready to bow before the bosses, duly de-politicised, and at the disposal of the regime for and subject to control and direction by the regime.} By attacking, we stripped the fig leaf of respectability which the regime sought to confer on the dummy institutions it has imposed on us in the urban areas. ^{In the urban areas, the regime has imposed community councils, management committees and other creations which the enemy sought to install.}

x By their refusal to be bullied ^{into accepting their determination} into acceptance of the enemy's schemes, our people ^{are determined} to defend our united struggle for a common victory against a common enemy. ^{By boycotting etc} We were asserting the truth that freedom is indivisible. ^{Freedom for some is freedom for none, and that but therefore no section of the black people can be free while another is oppressed.}

These victories were of great importance for the further advance of our struggle. They served to raise the degree of isolation of the oppressive regime and strengthened the ranks of the forces committed to the victory/triumph of the democratic revolution in our country.

x The defeat of the enemy's plans in August expressed our common recognition [✓] that apartheid cannot be reformed [✓] and denounced Botha's "reform" programme as a deceitful sham. It placed before the whole country the revolutionary perspective of the seizure of power by the people and the building of a new society in a united, democratic and non-racial South Africa.

Comrades and Friends,

The white minority regime lives in dread of the organised power of the black working class of our country.

That is why in the past, as in the present, it has imprisoned, banned, banished and even assassinated leaders and activists of the democratic trade union movement. We take this opportunity to salute the workers of our country who, in the teeth of the most vicious racist persecution, have sustained and kept alive the spirit of militant democratic trade unionism such as is embodied in the ^{policy and programme of The} South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU).

(x) During 1984, in addition to the magnificent shop-floor struggles waged by the workers, we saw the first joint ^{decision by} action of our workers, black and white, ^{when they voted together} voting together to take industrial action in support of their common demands. This was the decision taken by the ^{also, in September, we saw,} in September. Again ^{in October,} for the first time in 38 years, the black mineworkers ^{embarked on} embarked on a coordinated national offensive in this most sensitive sector of the South African economy.

Basing ourselves on ~~these~~ these gains, we must ensure that the and the mining industry will never be the same ^{in which respect} again. In future, (our objective must be that) wherever a struggle erupts, be it in a mine or factory, a farm or a building site, a shop or a service centre, we must emerge from such struggles with a stronger workers' organisation, a higher level of political consciousness and a greater determination to fight on as a united force, whatever the cost to ourselves as individuals.

^{request to wording in 2nd draft} (x) In November last year, during the most effective stay-at-home in recent years, the working class crushingly (resoundingly) wielded their organised power in the struggle for liberation. This ^{joint} magnificent joint action ^{involving} of the workers and the rest of the oppressed community, represents an indispensable basis for the organisational and political unity, and more importantly, the unity of views of the oppressed.

The organised workers formed the core of the stay-at-home which paralysed industry and commerce in the economic heartland of the country and compelled the capitalist owners of property to speak out. In an unprecedented move, the organisations of the leading capitalists drew the attention of the ruling group to the fact that the continued use of the old methods of repression would only serve to inspire the workers to intensify their offensive.

We, the people, by our massive united action, are forcing the capitalists in South Africa to see us not as mere instruments of labour, to be

bought and discarded at will, but as human beings with human feelings and human needs.

We salute the trade union leaders and activists of our country who, as patriots and defenders of the people's interests as a whole, did so much to give concrete meaning to, and advance in action, the perspective of a united people's struggle for the victory of the national democratic revolution.

Compatriots, Comrades and Friends,

We have just gone through

It is clear that the racist regime has signally failed to drive the ANC out of this region of Africa. Instead, twice during the past year the Frontline States have met and reaffirmed their support for ANC and SWAPO and our common struggle against the apartheid regime. These positions were endorsed and upheld by the 20th Summit of the OAU. Our continental organisation also underscored the point that as long as the illegitimate white minority regime survives there can never be genuine peace in Southern Africa. illy

The victories we scored during the year have plunged our opponents into an even deeper political crisis. Apart from denying them the chance to expand their social base, as we have said, they further sharpened the contradictions and conflicts within the ruling group and exposed the utter bankruptcy and failure of the overall political programme of the racists. These are important successes as they help further to weaken the enemy and enhance our possibility to defeat it.

Through struggle, we have forced the apartheid regime into a situation of confusion, indecision and an inability to define for itself any consistent direction of state policy. This situation has arisen because the efforts of this regime to project itself as a representative of the so-called forces of moderation, gradual and peaceful reform, have ended in failure. According to this tactical manoeuvre, the racists sought to present themselves as a reasonable and acceptable alternative to the revolutionary alliance headed by the ANC, on one hand, and the ~~fascist~~ fascist coalition of the HNP and the Conservative Party on the other.

Knocked out of balance by the intensity of our offensive, the white minority regime lurches from side to side, fumbling for an equilibrium that it can no longer regain. On one day, it pretends to be concerned about the condition of the black majority and, on the next, pledges itself to be maintainance ^{the} of the white minority domination.

At the same time, the posturing of this regime has angered large sections of the ~~allied~~ racists among the whites who see the maintainance of the apartheid system as a holy crusade. Moved by their attachment to the benefits that accrue to them from the system of the national oppression and the super-exploitation of the black majority, the political representatives of this tendency in white politics are challenging the Botha regime for the allegiance of, especially, the Afrikaner population.

The disarray in the enemy camp has compelled some to examine the fundamental premises of the entire system of racial oppression. The realisation has begun to dawn on a number of Botha's former supporters that no solutions to the problems confronting our country are possible without the participation of the black majority.

There are yet others from among our white countrymen, who are far-sighted and have, therefore, decided to break with a system that is so patently criminal and join the democratic movement. We are confident that the as yet small numbers of such whites will swell and grow as the forces of liberation demonstrate our increasing capacity to defeat the apartheid regime and liquidate the criminal system it upholds.

In order to hasten that day, we must give the enemy no respite; no time to regroup and recover lost ground. It requires that we must continue on the attack.

Compatriots,

We have entered the second half of the 1980s. When we cast our minds back to the year of the Charter, 1980, and the subsequent years, the one feature that stands out is the ever-expanding and visible role of the masses of our people in the making of this history. As we enter this second half of the Decade of Liberation, it is necessary that we examine not only our striking power, but, even more importantly, in which direction to strike and how to deliver the blow.

The question we need must answer in this regard are, at what pace shall we effect that forward march? (What distance shall we cover?) The answers to those questions depends on how much we succeed to strengthen the other two pillars of our struggle, to ensure the all-round vanguard activity of the underground structures of the ANC as well as the further expansion of Umkhonto we Sizwe inside our country and the escalation of our armed offensive.

With regard to these two decisive elements in our revolutionary struggle, we should neither dramatise our shortcomings nor blind ourselves to the reality that we have not advanced on these two fronts at a pace corresponding to our advance on the other two.

To move forward with the greatest speed (~~and to cover the greatest distance~~) in our forward march to people's power, (this year we must pay particular attention to the task of building a strong underground presence (organisation) of well-organised revolutionary cadres, drawn from the fighting masses and integrated among them. Such cadres constitute the dynamising factor in our situation - a force capable of

The dynamising factor in our situation is the revolutionary cadre. The force that is capable of bringing together the various strands of our struggle, to assist in their further development and coordination into one front of struggle, is such an underground revolutionary organisation which we, the struggling masses, must consolidate and expand.

The call we are making to all the democratic and patriotic forces of our country is that this year we must all pay special attention to the task of strengthening our vanguard organisation, the African National Congress. Already we have made great strides in this regard. And yet the imperatives of our struggle demand that we move faster towards the realisation of the task we mentioned even last year - to strengthen and expand the underground structures of the ANC, ensuring the active presence of our movement everywhere in the country.

Who are these revolutionary cadres about whom we speak? Where are they? They are not special people. It is us, men and women of the oppressed black people of South Africa together with democratically-minded whites who are prepared to fight and suffer with us. It is our working people in the factories, the mines, the farms, the commercial establishments and offices of various kinds. It is our people in health and educational services as well as those occupied within the residential areas.

What distinguishes the revolutionary cadre is the high level of discipline, dedication and courage in carrying out the tasks assigned by the movement. The revolutionary cadre continuously seeks to improve his knowledge of revolutionary theory through study, discussions and the guidance of his comrades and is ready to protect and defend the movement against all forms of enemy attacks, however, exercising maximum care not to expose himself unnecessarily to the enemy or its agents.

Dear Compatriots,

It is now 25 years since the illegitimate regime in our country proscribed the organ of our people - the African National Congress. The apartheid regime banned the ANC exactly because it wanted to deny us this dynamising factor in our struggle. Frightened by the fact that we have nevertheless defeated its efforts to destroy our mother body, this regime has now made mere membership of the ANC ^a treasonable offence. However through our relentless, daring and death-defying actions we have made the ANC ^a the household word in South Africa. x

During this past year, Comrades, we also took our struggle forward by beginning to carry out another strategic task we had set ourselves. As you will recall, last year we said we must begin to use our accumulated strength to destroy the organs of government of the apartheid regime.

We have now set out upon this path, and have done much to demonstrate our resolve to render the country ungovernable. This has not only meant the destruction of the community councils. Our rejection of the apartheid constitution meant, in its essence, that we reaffirmed our rejection of the illegitimate rule of the Botha regime. Other struggles, including those around the issue of education as well as the stays-at-home, themselves pitted our democratic power against the power of the forces of oppression, racism and counter-revolution, for the defeat ~~and of the~~ ^{popular power.} replacement of the latter by the former.

In this coming period, we shall need to pursue the task of reducing the capacity of the colonial apartheid regime to continue its illegal rule of our country, with even greater vigour. In order to advance, we have to weaken this regime. To weaken it means to destroy its organs of government everywhere and as part of our continuing mass offensive.

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The student and working youth of our country have once more confirmed their place in our hearts as the pride of the nation. These relentless fighters for a South Africa that we can proudly call our own have, throughout this past year, swelled the ranks of the mass movement by joining this movement in hundreds of thousands. Despite the campaign of murder and terror unleashed by the racists against them, including the very young, they have stood firm in their demands. They have refused to break from the ranks of the broad democratic movement.

Through their actions, supported and reinforced by the workers and the parents, they have forced the apartheid regime to give ground on many issues. This spirit must be pursued in relation to the demand for a national educational programme. The mobilization for adoption of the Education Charter must become the common platform of teachers, parents and students in a mass campaign for a democratic system of education. In saluting our students and working youth, we can truly say that they have earned for themselves the honour of being called the Young Lions.

A special responsibility devolves on our youth during 1985. By its decision to observe the International Year of Youth, the racist regime has thrown down the gauntlet to the youth of our country. Among the numerous crimes this regime has committed and continues to commit against our people, some of its most heinous have been specifically against our youth and children.

It is a matter of record that the scandalously high infant mortality rate amongst black children; the death and deformation of our young as a result of malnutrition; the stunting of their growth through the use of child labour; the warping of their intellectual development through Bantu Education are all directly attributable to the policies of the apartheid regime.

South Africa is littered with the graves of young patriots who were massacred by the apartheid regime in 1976 and in the subsequent years. This self-same regime, which bears responsibility for these crimes, has, with great impudence decided to observe the International Year of Youth, whose motto is: Participation, Development and Peace! We call upon the youth to take this year as their own and to use it as a means to advance our own perspectives of youth participation in society, in development and in the struggle for peace. The gains we have scored in youth mobilisation and organisation already provide a basis for greater advances toward the emergence of a society which will defend and promote the genuine interests of our youth.

Compatriots,

We designated 1984 as "The Year off the Women" with the express purpose of concentrating our efforts on the mobilisation of our womenfolk as active participants in the various struggles waged by our national liberation movement: The response to this call has been commendable and gratifying.

In the course of the year we saw the resurgence of our women on the march in answer to the sloganⁿ of the year - "Women Organise and Unite for People's Power!" At district and provincial and rallies to observe their historic days like the 30th anniversary of the Federation of South African Women. They transformed the national Women's Day - August 9th into a week of campaigning against the fraudulent Coloured and Indian parliamentary elections. In this manner they put into practice the slogan of the unity of all the oppressed and democratic forces, transcending the barriers of race, colour, sex or creed.

Through intensive grassroot mobilisation of women as equal participants in the overall national struggle, a basis has been laid for the creation of a national Women's organisation which could be founded on the principles of the historic Women's Charter.

Our women were active in all the battles which confronted our communities during the year. As parents, mothers, and workers they stood firmly beside their menfolk and children against forced removals, starvation wages, increased rents and taxes, inferior education and health services, demanding full citizenship rights for all our people in a unitary, non-racial society.

The commendable response of our women to the call to join Umkhonto We Sizwe which has resulted in the swelling of the ranks of our glorious people's army by more and more women joining during the course of the year has been one of the best ways of observing the Year of the Women. All these achievements should be seen as a resolve of the National Liberation Movement to see the women of our country play their rightful role in the struggle for liberation.

The response to our appeal by the International community in general and women's organisations in particular in practically all the continents of the globe was most outstanding in mobilising more moral and material support for our struggle through seminars, symposia, conferences and speaking tours. This support was crowned by the presentation of the Eugene Cotton Award by the WIDF to A. Sisulu.

We call on our women to build on these impressive achievements. We call on the other sections of our people to continue to give their support and concrete assistance to our heroic women and mothers, so that they can play their rightful role as co-fighters and co-liberators of our motherland.

Despite all the achievements we have so far made, we are still faced with the necessity of accomplishing other tasks we have set ourselves, particularly to struggle for the unity of the democratic trade union movement. 1985 is the 30th anniversary of the founding of SACTU. During this 30th Anniversary year, let us consolidate the gains we have thus far registered. We need to intensify our efforts aimed at pooling our strength in one united democratic trade union federation. The working class of our country has demonstrated its combativeness in the unprecedented number of strikes that were waged during the past year. So that this militancy will not be dissipated we should now strive towards one union for each industry.

We can and must find the means of harnessing the collective strength of the working class not merely to improve the immediate economic conditions of that class, but to bring about democratic change in our country. The ANC lends its voice to that of democratic trade unionists who call for greater involvement on the part of workers and their unions within various mass political movements.

1985 falls on the eve of the centenary of May Day. In recognition of the bonds that link the workers of South Africa with those of other lands, May Day was marked in a number of industrial centres throughout South Africa during 1984. We call on all our workers to intensify the demand for the official recognition of May Day as a fully paid workers' holiday.

In a unique show of international solidarity the black Mineworkers, who are amongst the lowest paid and most bitterly exploited of our workers, dipped into their even-lean pockets and made a modest donation towards the strike fund of the British miners, who are waging a life and death struggle to save their jobs. We take this opportunity to commend this exemplary action on the part of our miners.

Dear Compatriots,

The land question, that is, the dispossession of our people of the land still remains the most burning national grievance. The injustice of this historic crime has been compounded by the racists' arrogant attempt to deprive the African majority of their South African citizenship, thus giving statutory endorsement to military conquest. The millions of our people in the rural areas, engaged as agricultural workers on farms carved out of their ancestral lands, remain the least politicized and organised. Their daily lives are dominated by the dictates of the racist white farmers and Land Companies against whom they have absolutely no legal redress.

The absence or weakness of basic trade union organisations, has made the millions of our people in the rural areas easy prey of the most ruthless exploitation and brutalization. We charge all our people to give special attention to the mobilisation and organisation of our rural masses. Basing ourselves on the needs of the people, and taking due account of the concrete conditions of their existence, we must devise suitable organisational ~~structures~~ and mechanisms to reach our rural masses and provide them with the organisational and political tools to defend themselves against exploitation and to assert their rights. As we said last year, we must place the perspective of seizing the land from the dispossessor in front of our rural masses and educate them to understand that this is a task that shall devolve primarily on themselves.

The solution to the land question is inextricably tied to the struggle against the Bantustans where the regime's puppets, not content to do the dirty work of the Pretoria racists, have taken it upon themselves to impose even greater burdens on our oppressed people. Some of these Bantustan puppets have taken firm positions on the side of their masters in Pretoria and against the oppressed people and their organisations. While opposing the revolutionary violence of the national liberation movement, they have not hesitated to unleash systematic violence against the fighters for the people's cause. They have banned the trade unions and brutalised trade union activists. Matanzima has even gone so far as to ban the UDF.

Our people are engaged in the struggle for their rights as citizens of a unitary South Africa. Yet some of these puppets who claim to have the interests of our people at heart, are fanning fratricidal conflict amongst our people in order to boost their impoverished fiefdoms. This situation can no longer be countenanced. The offensive against the Bantustans and other Apartheid institutions must be extended to reach all corners of our country and all population groups.

Fellow Country-women and -men,

South Africa remains a rich country endowed with ~~an~~ enormous mineral, land, industrial and human resources sufficient to maintain our entire population at moderately comfortable standards of living. Yet we continue to have, side by side, people living in royal luxury and abject poverty.

A peculiarity of Apartheid economy is the growing shortage of skilled labour accompanied by an escalation of unemployment particularly among the blacks. The regime embarked on the policy of mass removals mainly to shift its responsibility for the unemployed on to the Bantustans. Coupled with the massive retrenchments which have been particularly severe towards the end of 1984, the number of unemployed black workers is well above 25% of the total black work force. Rather than create and improve the education and training of the black people, the regime continues to woo white skilled migrants from all quarters of the globe. We call upon the international trade union movement to intensify campaigns against migration of workers to South Africa because

they merely help to entrench the Apartheid system while taking the bread out of the mouths of families of the unemployed and retrenched workers.

The South African economy is in the grip of a serious crisis whose main source is the Apartheid system itself. The two major factors contributing to this crisis are the

- a) government overspending on Apartheid administrative institutions, i.e. all the quadruple structures concerned with the artificial compartmentalisation of our population into distinct racial groups and the concomitant coercive organs of the various police and security divisions as well as the army;
- b) the growing struggles of the exploited black working masses demanding equal opportunities, decent working conditions and equitable remuneration for their labour.

That is why we cannot separate our struggle for improved labour conditions from the overall struggle to bring about democratic change. In this overall national struggle against the Apartheid system, the central role belongs to the working masses.

The plight of the thousands of our people whose homes are regularly bulldozed to the ground and who are regularly "removed" to distant and inhospitable parts of our country requires our full attention and concerted actions of solidarity. We must elaborate organisational ways and means to halt this crime against our people and to express, in a concrete manner, our solidarity with them. We must organise the unemployed into organs of struggle and to address immediate issues resulting from their retrenchment. An injury to the 6,500 SASOL workers is an injury to all workers.

Dear Comrades,

The cultural workers - artists, writers, musicians, poets and sportsmen - and - women have the capacity to enrich the overall effort of our people in our quest for national liberation.

We charge our cultural workers with the task of devising the means of giving voice, not only to the grievances, but also to the profoundest aspirations of the oppressed and exploited, through their craft. A country and a people experiencing the birth pangs of a new social and political order can ill-afford artists who stand aloof from the struggles of the people. Basing themselves on the concrete experiences of the people, whose lives they share, our artists can transform their medium into once more front of our all-round offensive against the structures and institutions of oppression. Let the arts be one of the many means through which we cultivate the spirit of revolt among the broad masses, enhance the striking power of our movement and portray the future South Africa we envisage.

Fellow Combatants,

The vital cutting edge of our mass offensive is Umkhonto We Sizwe, the people's army. To render it more effective, MK must deepen its roots and grow inextricably amongst the popular masses. Only in this manner can the perspective of people's war be translated from an ideal into reality. Guided by this perspective we must build up the mass combat forces that are training themselves in mass political action for even sharper battles and the forcible overthrow of the racist regime.

In the last instance the people's war must be waged by the self-same popular forces who are today involved in mass political actions. In the course of these and with increasing frequency, we have created a situation in various localities such that the democratic forces challenged the apartheid authorities for control of these areas.

T The level of this challenge to the operation of the apartheid system had reached such heights, such intensity, in Sebokeng, and various other localities throughout our country, that the regime felt compelled to deploy, for the first time since 1961, thousands of regular troops to crush the people's resistance.

We have developed the popular struggle to such a high level that the democratic movement has visibly emerged as the alternative power. What this means is that, in these various localities, we created