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SPEECH BY ALFRED NZO, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS OF
SOUTH AFRICA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE CEREMONY CONFERRING GOVAN MBEKI WITH
AN HONORARY DOCTORATE, AMSTERDAM, HOLLAND, 9th January 1978

Dear Friends,

We have just listened to and indeed earlier this afternoon we participated in a ceremony of moving solidarity with the struggle. The meaning of a campaign for awarding Govan Mbeki, a leader of the African National Congress, with a doctorate degree by the University of Amsterdam has become clearer and more evident.

This was a campaign which through the person of Govan Mbeki became an important milestone on the road to consolidating the bonds of friendship and solidarity between the fighting people of South Africa and the fraternal Dutch people; between the African National Congress and the progressive and democratic parties and mass organisations of the Dutch people. This event has also opened the way for more concentrated efforts in Holland and elsewhere for campaigns such as the call for the release of Political Prisoners and those detained without trial in our country; for demands for comprehensive sanctions and for more intensive efforts for the further international isolation of the regime of terror in South Africa.

It goes without saying friends, that Successful efforts to weaken the international positions of the Vorster regime create more favourable conditions for the resolute advance of the struggle of our people to inevitable victory. This will have removed once and for all the source of aggression against independent African countries and a threat to world peace and security permanently posed by the Vorster regime. This will be of mutual benefit both to our people and the international community as a whole.

On behalf of the National Executive Committee and all the members of the African National Congress and its progressive allies we express our deepest gratitude to all the progressive forces in Holland, to the leaders and staff of the progressive student body at the University of Amsterdam who made possible the award of a Doctorate to Comrade Govan Mbeki.

Friends we propose at this meeting not to go over the details of Comrade Govan Mbeki's contribution to the revolutionary struggle of our people. Both this aspect and some details of his personal life have been sufficiently covered in the news media of this country, a factor which undoubtedly contributed to the raising of the consciousness of the Dutch people to the deepened crisis facing South Africa today. We shall instead deal briefly with the general aspects of the current situation in our country based on some experiences of the past year - 1977:

We have come to the end of a year during the course of which the revolutionary masses of the oppressed people of all over Southern Africa have advanced further along the path of determined struggle for the total destruction of colonial and racist domination.

It has been a year also of important victories for the consolidation of genuine independence of the African continent and the further strengthening of the world-wide progressive movement in defence of world peace and security, breaking through the fierce resistance of the enemies of progress which admittedly succeeded in bringing about temporary reverses in certain sectors of bitter confrontation.

The dominant trend has been an upward surge of the revolutionary movement of the people a factor which was clearly demonstrated by the enthusiastic commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution - an event of world-wide significance.

The oppressed people of our country fighting side by side with their democratic allies have played their full share in this great revolutionary movement of the people. To them it is not just the end of another year but it is also the 66th anniversary of an organisation which has consistently been in the vanguard of their militant struggle against racist-fascist oppression. That organisation is the African National Congress which in the past year demonstrated yet afresh that it is the only force capable of organising and mobilising the millions of oppressed people and leading them in the confrontation against fascist oppression under conditions made infinitely difficult by the increasingly murderous reprisals of the racist regime.

The unfolding situation in our country has fully confirmed that the enemy of our people consistently supported by international imperialism has totally failed now and in the future to destroy the revolutionary movement led by the African National Congress. This fact has now been openly admitted by none other than Johannes Vorster who can no longer be blind to the growing struggle and impact of the African National Congress and her revolutionary allies, mainly the SACP. He has had to echo the repeated warnings given by James Kruger, the chief gendarme of the fascist state, against the complacency of the racist white minority in the face of an expanding revolutionary onslaught of the oppressed masses of our people. It is in the background of the growing prestige of our organisation as the undisputed leader and organiser; the spear and the shield of the fighting people in our country that we are marking the 66th anniversary of its birth. On this occasion as in the past we must pay our respectful homage to the leaders, past and present, to the ordinary men and women who have courageously borne the brunt of the worst excesses of the fascist enemy, determined to hold aloft the revolutionary banner of the African National Congress, the guiding light on our path to inevitable victory and seizure of power by the people.

The political, social and economic crisis which had been aggravated by the events of 1976 continued to deepen in 1977, plunging the Vorster regime and the racist

white minority section generally into a state of confusion and political instability. What are its chief manifestations?

The inability of the fascist regime to bring political stability and calm in South Africa after many months of unrelenting aggression against the oppressed population further aggravated the state of unease and panic both within the ranks of the white section of the population and those of the imperialist supporters of the Vorster regime. In particular this was reflected in the developing cold shivers which were generated through the international investment circles which were no longer guaranteed any safety in the face of the mounting struggles of our people, especially the revolutionary Black working class. The renewed and intensified efforts of the regime assisted by bodies such as the South African Foundation to allay the fears of international capital did not achieve the desired results. The international market for South African products further shrunk.

This situation was further aggravated by the growing tempo of the relentless onslaught of the international progressive solidarity movement against the Vorster regime. Of notable importance were the international conferences for action against Apartheid that were held in Lisbon in June and in Lagos in August 1977. Both conferences adopted militant programmes of action which clearly reflected the growing support for the revolutionary forces of change in our country headed by the African National Congress.

The power and impact of the militant international solidarity movement with our struggle has forced certain circles in the Western world to grudgingly accept the need to recognise the African National Congress as the only viable political force capable of bringing about genuine democratic changes in South Africa.

Some of these positive changes were underlined during the visit of an ANC delegation headed by our President, Comrade O.R. Tambo to Holland during October 1977. Public statements pledging support for certain aspects of our humanitarian programme were made by the various leaders of the then Dutch government emphasising their decision to channel such and through the African National Congress. This was indeed an important breakthrough.

These developments have strengthened the hand of those governments in the Scandinavian countries, especially Sweden, which for sometime now have been giving the African National Congress generous material assistance specially directed to meeting the humanitarian needs of our organisation. At the same time it has become increasingly difficult to hold out much longer against the consistent internal political pressure by local progressive movement in their countries which has forced them to give ground in certain areas of collaboration with the South African fascist regime. This happened in Canada where the government has recently announced its decision to impose a trade boycott against South Africa. At the same time the Canadian government has declared that it will not give any form of support to the Canadian multi-national companies that continue to invest in the apartheid economy. The African National Congress appreciates these developments as steps in the right direction.

Comrades, the imperialist regimes with veto powers in the United Nations' Security Council have at last succumbed to the pressure for imposing a mandatory arms embargo against South Africa. We do not subscribe this to a sudden change of heart on their part but it is clear that it had become increasingly difficult for them to maintain their former positions on this issue, without totally losing credibility in the eyes of those whom they seek to retain as their friends especially on the African continent. The aggressive propensities of the fascist regime not only against the oppressed population but also against neighbouring independent African states has become too blatant to be ignored and swept under the carpet.

We must not however, overestimate the importance of this development. This is only a tactical retreat on the part of imperialism. Its strategic objective of ensuring the continued survival of its bulwark on the African continent remains the same.

Comrades, the political instability of the social base of the apartheid system cannot be corrected, no matter what the fascist regime will do in the future. Neither can this be covered up by the so-called land-slide victory of the fascist ruling party at the end of the so-called general elections in November last year. The results of that election have proved that (a) the white electorate has finally lost all confidence in what has always set itself up as the "opposition" to the draconian policies of the fascist regime, and (b) as a consequence, has as a last desperate effort to protect its privilege, it has placed its hopes in the lap of the devil.

The immediate future will prove that they were wrong in placing their destinies in the protection of the Vorster regime. Hardly a month has passed when already it has become clear that the revolutionary movement and militant masses are as determined as ever to relentlessly pursue their struggle as before.

As we were approaching the commemoration of the 16th anniversary of Umkhonto we Sizwe in December 16th, widespread sabotage actions took place covering a wide area in the Transvaal. This led the Western imperialist news media to repeat the obvious fact that the guerrilla movement is firmly established inside the citadel of apartheid.

During the third week of December the revolutionary youth participated in militant demonstrations both in Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth.

It is thus already obvious that the recent land-slide "victory" of the Vorster regime has solved nothing. Instead it will further sharpen the contradictions between the contradictions between itself and the oppressed masses as it will attempt to further regiment the lives of the people by intensifying its fascist

repression over the oppressed population and the revolutionary movement.

The search for a way out of the crisis will continue. In the past year, a growing number of white people decided to flee the country rather than face the grim prospect of an intensifying armed struggle for the overthrow of the Vorster regime. Whilst as a result of the increasing exodus out of the country various professional services that mainly benefit the white section of the population especially the medical profession are already suffering, the only white immigrant that the regime has been able to attract are the racist elements that are fleeing from the wrath of the Patriotic Front and the revolutionary masses of Zimbabwe. The Rhodesian immigrant is not likely to expose himself to the danger of defending white privilege in South Africa when he could not do so in Rhodesia itself.

The concept of draft-dodging among the white youth has spread in the past year. This further exposes the depth of the crisis of the apartheid policies of the Vorster regime which have become so repugnant to a growing number of white youth that they refuse to defend them as members of the fascist army. There is no doubt that more and more of the white youth will become disillusioned with the Vorster regime more especially as they face the prospect of defending the fascist regime against an armed revolutionary movement and people.

Comrades, having fully realised that naked aggression alone was not able to solve the political crisis of its own making and, instead, as it became confronted by an increasingly united resistance of the entire Black population, the Vorster regime intensified its tactical manoeuvres aimed at dividing and weakening the revolutionary movement.

During the second half of last year the Vorster regime announced its decision to set up three "equal" but separate "parliaments" for the white, coloured and Indian sections of the population. This was intended to win over the coloured and Indian communities and mobilise them as unwilling allies against

the revolutionary movement. This scheme has already floundered on the rocks. The Coloured Labour Party has already characterised it as a scheme designed to entrench the apartheid system. Even the right wing leadership of the Indian community could not lend its support to such a manoeuvre without risking total isolation from the majority of the Indian community.

During 1977; the fascist regime was forced to resort to imposing arbitrary bans on a number of political, social and religious organisations and two newspapers. It suprised noone when the regime's chief gendarme Jimmy Kruger listed as one of the reasons for the bans the fact that the organisation had been infiltrated by the African National Congress. It was only confirmation of the fact that it has proved impossible to wipe off the liberating ideas firmly planted by the African National Congress throughout the 66 years of its heroic leadership of the revolutionary struggle of our people.

Experience of the past 17 years has demonstrated that bans imposed on political activity have only served to steel the revolutionary forces which constantly find new ways and forms of organisation. This is the only course open into the future for all dedicated revolutionaries and patriots.

The Vorster regime trumpeted yet another Bantustan into so called independent statehood in December. Prior to this farcical circus, the supposed "citizens" of the Bophuthatswana Bantustan had massively rejected their future "independence" as was clearly demonstrated by the voting strength during the last "general election" before independence.

The Vorster government's Bantustan programme is being forced through in the face of growing opposition from the Black people of South Africa. Clearly, the tragic comedy that is now being played out in the Transkei whose main actors and beneficiaries are the Matanzima brothers and their close circle

of friends acting on behalf of white capital to the economic detriment of the other millions of impoverished Transkei citizens, has confirmed the worst misgivings of the opponents of this scheme.

At a conference held in July last year in Hammanskraal near Pretoria organised by the Black People's Convention delegates representing 10 organisations called for resistance to be organised to the whole Bantustan scheme. A conference resolution unanimously adopted states: "The balkanisation of the country can only be validly carried out by the state if expressly authorised by the whole South African nation. Any decision, therefore, by any small group of people to grant independence to Bantustans is invalid".

The African National Congress continues to take into account the fact that the Vorster regime is proceeding with its plans to build mini armies in those Bantustans to act as a counter-revolutionary force against the people in a bid to "Vietnamise" the liberation struggle of our people. On the international scene we shall continue to mobilise world public opinion to continue its total rejection of the creations of the Bantustan policies of separate development. Comrades, the Vorster regime has continued to rely on the imperialist system for its overall policy of fascist aggression and murderous reprisals against the progressive movement and the oppressed population in general, unprecedented in the history of oppressor and oppressive relations in our country. The price our people have had to pay for their undeviating commitment to the universally accepted ideals of freedom, human dignity, peace and social progress has been high in terms of patriots murdered in the streets of our ghettos all over the country and in various police stations and prisons; in terms of thousands who have been arbitrarily arrested and detained some of whom are still either facing serious charges before the courts of law such as the "Pretoria 12" and

the militants involved in the Gogh Street incident and many other political trials whilst others have been sentenced already to long terms of imprisonment; in terms of the rapidly deteriorating economic and social conditions in the background of an ever deepening economic crisis who man weight rests heavily on the already impoverished black population expressing itself in rising unemployment. These have not deterred our people; it has inflamed them more. This is the crux of the problem for the regime.

So also has it relied on this aggressive system for the perpetuation of its illegal occupation of Namibia, grounding down to dust the fundamental human rights of the Namibian people. The Vorster and the Smith fascist regimes inspired and heavily buttressed by the imperialist system continued to pursue their aggressive policies against neighbouring African states of Angola, Mozambique, Zambia and Botswana. In the summary of their "Successes" against the liberation movement of the people of Zimbabwe led by the Patriotic Front, the murderous regimes of Smith and Vorster boasted, inter alia, of having killed over one thousand so called Rhodesian terrorista in Mozambique during 1977. The whole world is clearly aware that those whom Smith refers to as "terrorists" were old men, women and hundreds of school children massacred by the regime in the cpurse of its unbridled aggression against independent and sovereign Peoples Republic of Mozambique.

In the background of these monstrous crimes against our peoples, imperialism sought in 1977 to befuddle our minds by attempting to project itself as our allies in the struggle for national liberation. There was feverish activity by the Anglo-American administration supposedly aimed at securing majority rule for the people of Zimbabwe whilst it had been clear that their real aim and the purpose of their activities were to work for the installation of a neo-colonial puppet regime in Zimbabwe so as to ensure the continued hegemony of imperialism over the rich natural resources

of the southern African region. The Patriotic Front has rejected these manoeuvres. We support them.

A similar coercion was being played out in Namibia by representatives of 5 Western members of the security council who suddenly assigned themselves the task of negotiating with the Vorster regime for the independence of the people of Namibia.

In characteristic fashion, the Vorster regime has persistently refused to recognise SWAPO as the only authentic representative of the people of Namibia and consequently, it has also rejected SWAPO's just demand for the regime's total withdrawal from Namibian territory. Notwithstanding all this, the circus show continues but, SWAPO, supported by the African National Congress and the rest of progressive mankind, refuses to be out-manoeuvred out of its position.

Then there is the question of human rights which has been the 1977 swan song of the Carter administration and international imperialism not with standing the fact that the worst violations of these rights - the fascist regime in Chile, Southern Africa, Israel and in many other places - enjoy the support of that very same system,

Who is to believe the genuineness of the Carter administration's championing of human rights when it is no secret that the Vorster regime has advanced its scientific and technological capability to produce its own nuclear bomb through the assistance of the imperialist countries; when this peace loving forces of the whole world are up in arms determined to obstruct the Carter administration's plans to produce and stockpile the neutron bomb whose designers boast that it has the capacity to destroy only human beings but save the buildings and other structures.

Nothing will hide the fact that it is the aggressive system of imperialism which consistently violates the independence and territorial integrity of newly independent countries by crudely interfering in their internal affairs; which manoeuvres to incite

different peoples and countries to conflicts and hostilities; which has assigned itself the avowed task of creating conditions for the political destabilisation of progressive countries in order to obstruct the advance of peoples to social progress so as to maintain these countries within the sphere of its influence and also put obstacles to the rapid progress of revolutionary national liberation movements by denying them reliable rear bases. Africa has had the full taste of this poison in 1977.

Comrades, the African National Congress and its progressive allies are committed to intensify the armed struggle for seizure of power in the new year. We shall continue to subordinate everything else to the central task. We call upon our people to maintain the high tempo of resistance by intensifying still further the mass political struggles to involve ever greater numbers of the oppressed population. In order to continue to give effective leadership to our people, the African National Congress will never relax its efforts to unite and consolidate its own ranks and we shall continue to expose and isolate any manifestations of tribalism, regionalism and racial exclusiveness which have always proved the worst enemies of our united struggle for seizure of power and the attainment of objective enshrined in our Freedom Charter.

The African National Congress will work for further strengthening and consolidation of its fraternal relations with the Patriotic Front of Zimbabwe, SWAPO, POLISARIO FRONT, PLO, FRETELIN and all other progressive and democratic forces of the world. We shall work for the further consolidation of our relations with the independent African countries and contribute whatever we can for the peaceful solution of problems besetting African states in the interests of consolidating the anti-imperialist unity of our continent.

In assessing the developments during 1977, spokesmen of the fascist regime in our country have admitted that 1977 was a hard year for South Africa. They are right and we shall make it harder still in 1978. We must build on the limited victory of the mandatory arms embargo by pressing further for comprehensive sanctions against the regime. This calls upon the ANC to strengthen our work in the United Nations and other progressive international

forums. We should mount more resolut campaigns for the release of political prisoners and those detained without trial. We should intensify our international efforts for the release of the "Pretoria 12" and save them from the possibility of facing the gallows.

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