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African National Congress (South Africa)

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SPEECH FOR AAB CONFERENCE ; 1987.

On behalf of the African National Congress, we would like to convey to you our warm solidarity greetings. We believe that this also means greetings from the oppressed majority of the people of South Africa.

1987, the 75th anniversary of the A.N.C. has truly been celebrated in South Africa by all sections of our people and has been marked by fear and foreboding by the Botha regime. Even in a situation such as the one prevailing in South Africa, where the army and the police have frightening power, there has been a radicalization and determination of our people, unparalleled in our history.

Even during the State of Emergency, the slogan put forward by the A.N.C. "Advance to People's Power" is being put into practice by our people. The arrest of thousands, the murders, the torture by the South African army and police and by the vigilantes of Buthelezis and other puppets, has been unable to dampen or halt the march to revolution by our people. The struggle has spread to every part of our country and involves all our people.

South Africa today is facing the most serious crisis in the history of that country. It is, a fact, that the regime has lost both direction and control of the country.

Force was a sufficient weapon as long as the crisis remained a political one. Botha, and previous regimes, and their friends, were quite happy to arrest hundreds or several thousands, shoot as many, and expect calm for a year or two. But with the establishment of organisations such as the UDF and COSATU, with literally hundreds

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of organisations as members, it has become impossible for the regime to destroy organised resistance.

It is also a fact that there is a new spirit amongst our people.

They are not afraid to replace those arrested or killed. They have reached a new level of politicization and a new level of organisational ability. Our people are not afraid to die. It is not only the street committees, but also regional, committees in the Bantustans, that are functioning not only as rudiments of Peoples Power but as organizational units in the complex and difficult struggles now.

The delusion the regime had that the murder and jailing of thousands would destroy these organisations and thus the basis for the underground struggle, including the armed struggle, has remained a delusion. They have not only failed in their endeavour to destroy the democratic organisations, they have failed to disturb the underground machinery of the A.N.C.

The A.N.C. has been confirmed as the focus and the leader, even in the eyes of the enemy. The people, in fact, have legalised our organisation. In the present General Election of the white minority, the single most important subject matter is the A.N.C. In other words, not only the people of South Africa, but also the government of South Africa, the white so-called "opposition", the puppets of the regime, the international friends of Botha and racism, etc. have to admit that the only alternative is the A.N.C. The Freedom Charter, has become, more than ever, the alternative to Facism, and is the political programme of increasing numbers of all our people, including growing numbers of whites.

If you agree that revolution in South Africa will have to involve all our people across the country, you will also agree that the Freedom Charter is truly today the only accepted alternative by the broad masses of our people and their organisations. Even the Bantustan governments for example, are faced with opposition, an opposition supported by over 90% of our people, whose demands are

based on the Freedom Charter.

Of course, this does not mean that we do not have problems, in fact we are faced with serious short-comings and problems. The State of Emergency has affected the capacity of our people to organize and to carry out decisions etc. Serious problems have been created by the arrest and also in many cases, through the murder of our people. We would have liked to have been operating in a situation, for example where the government had been less successful in coopting the Bantustans puppets and using them to maim kill and suppress. We would have liked to have moved quicker in the field of armed struggle. There are other fields where for example, we would have been happy if things had moved with less problems and more quickly. Trade Union Unity is one field; but on the whole if one were to look at the changed situation over the last 5 years, we believe that unbelievable progress has been made in all fields. We also believe that the pace of progress, the pace of consolidation and advancement to our goal of a democratic future South Africa will increase.

The unity of the democratic forces and thus the increasing strength of the resistance and revolutionary movement has been paralleled with the increasing division and disarray in the white camp. The whites have never been so divided and insecure as they are today. The Botha regime, and the openly fascist forces both do not want any change in South Africa. The only difference between them are their tactics. They want to retain white supremacy and white domination, firstly, by open brute force, and secondly, by adapting Apartheid to a changing situation nationally and internationally. The Progressive Federal Party, on the otherhand, is prepared to make certain concessions and even accept a few changes, but want also white control, especially that of the economy with the pretext of protecting minority rights. They all know that without the A.N.C. there is no solution to the South African problem, but they are still hoping that somehow, by a miracle, they could come to reach an acceptable formula.

We do not believe that this election will bring about any meaningful change within the white political forces, nor will it have any effect on the lives of more than 80% of our population. Keeping white privilege and domination cannot be reconciled with democracy. They are opposite poles. They are contradictions.

Even the introduction of an additional chamber or parliament or what is called by our people "outhouses" for the Africans, will never be accepted. Botha and white solutions to the problems of South Africa cannot work.

The peoples demand for democracy based on "one person, one vote" in a unitary state, is already a minimal demand.

The white regime is not only facing increasing opposition in terms of dissent, thousands of whites are refusing to join the army. Recently Malan, the Minister of Defence, refused to give the figures in Parliament of those not registering for conscription.

It is a fact, that the white population in South Africa is suffering from a negative growth rate. This is a serious problem since it is highly qualified white South Africans who are leaving the country.

The number of whites joining the democratic forces inside South Africa and the A.N.C., are increasing.

Even those whites with strong reservations, support negotiations with the A.N.C.

Of course the changes that have taken place are not the result of a change in the moral attitude of the supporters of Apartheid, it is the result of a serious situation within the country- not only political, but also economic.

We have a situation where 48% of our people are unemployed. Increasing numbers of whites are also becoming unemployed. Bankruptcies are the highest in living memory. We have an official inflation rate of 20%, and this, over the last 5 years.

Average production increase for the last 10 years was 30%, average increase in the last 5 years has been 1,1%. The number of blacks coming onto the market every year averages at 300,000. Rescheduling or no rescheduling of debts will not change this catastrophic situation. With few exceptions, nobody will invest in South Africa today. The situation not only adds to the political tensions within the country but it is also making the international friends of Botha realise that the Apartheid system has become a hindrance to their interests. Of course, they have not abandoned Botha, of course their contacts with the A.N.C. does not mean that they trust the A.N.C. They are looking for an alternative, but at best, a few changes that will keep the present economic system intact and thus safeguard their interests. Their problem is Time. Suddenly they do not have sufficient time to develop alternate forces. A lot of them are also beginning to realise that people like Buthelezi may turn out to be disasters in relation to their interests ie their profits.

Buthelezi, for example, is a recipe for even worse turmoil. Of course they would be very happy if the A.N.C. were to agree not to nationalise. They want the A.N.C. to erase the clauses on nationalisation from the Freedom Charter. They are trying to convince us that they know best and that Free Enterprise will be the only recipe for a future South Africa.

On the otherhand, they are afraid of the radicalization of the black population in South Africa. They are afraid of the demands for a socialist solution by the population of South Africa.

Many of them are trying to convince the people of South Africa and even bribe people and organisations in South Africa in order to convince them that they are on the side of progress; that they are anti-apartheid, but that they are also anti any meaningful interference in the economy of South Africa. It is unfortunate for them that the dialectics of the situation in South Africa allows no room for any true anti-Apartheid person to opt for a capitalist solution

made to look attractive. Our peoples experience, including their experience as workers in foreign companies, has made it an unacceptable equation. We must and will have to find a solution that will serve our people, a political and economic solution. It will be based on the Freedom Charter,

You are activists and have been consistent supporters of our struggle, you are amongst the people who are most aware of what is going on in South Africa. I do not have to ^{here} ~~hear~~ answers to the South African regimes propaganda, nor do I have to answer to the apologists and supporters of apartheid in this country. Of course the clamp down on the press and the reporting from South African right wing correspondents and ultra conservative organizations in this country are having a field day. It is not a contradiction when we say that if they really look for news, there is a lot coming out of South Africa. But it seems that the majority of the press in this country and the media generally are deliberately trying to keep Southern Africa off their pages. Nevertheless, I was saying, that I do not have to convince you, nor go into the fact that there are no reforms in South Africa. The myth of the abolition of the Pass Laws and influx control is a lie.

They have found other means of controlling our people. Mass removals in an atmosphere of a State of Emergency, are going ahead unabated. The Group Areas ^{Act} ~~Act~~ etc etc have not changed. The Education System remains ~~the~~ the same. In fact, a lot of the above, has been put into practice with even more force and vigour. Facism and Apartheid are alive and well in South Africa.

Apartheid cannot even accept democratic and progressive states on its borders. The laws of Apartheid demands the destabilisation of its neighbours and its occupation of Namibian and Angolan territory.

The question of Apartheid existence and therefore support, collaboration and cooperation with the racist regime has been stated, and I am sure discussed at your conference. The recent submarine scandal, the supply of helicopters and Unimogs, the role of your banks and other

present discussions and future work. I would nevertheless like to record the fact that the FRG is increasingly becoming, like no other country in this world, the most important upholder and supporter of an inhuman regime.

The Federal Republic not only supplies these weapons of death, nuclear technology, credits etc. but has also become the vocal protector of the Botha regime.

I am sure my comrade Tshoombe will agree with me that their policy towards Namibia is akin to the recolonization, by this country, of "lost" territory. This fact is nakedly stated and claimed. And to add insult to injury, forces in this country are still trying to bribe, and in fact, lie in order to create a "holy" image to the victims of Facism in South Africa, and Southern Africa.

They want to bribe them with crumbs from the table. The very same forces are producing arms or parts thereof, in South Africa. The FRG companies in South Africa are the biggest single donators to the Botha party.

We are not surprised with this behaviour. We do not have delusions. Our people, who are becoming aware of these facts, do not expect the FRG government to abandon Botha or to support a majority government.

Maybe we are too moral and against our own reading of the situation, hoped that even they will have learnt from history. Apartheid is Facism. From the above it follows and maybe even defines our task and the task of all the anti Apartheid forces in this country. We believe that these forces have grown and that although we would like them to go further than they have, there has been progress.

Since your last conference, we are sure that we have addressed hundreds of thousands of people in major festivals, Peace rallies, May Day demonstrations and at meetings that averaged 10 per week. The Figure "hundreds of thousands" is not an exaggeration. Complementing this, have been the wonderful work from members of the opposition parties in Parliament. It has become very difficult for this government to hide

their collaboration with Botha. With added pressure, we believe it is possible to go from exposing the FRG government to stopping this country's shameful role in the oppression of our people. We believe that the withdrawal of the Bank Account by the Kirchentage has shown that pressure does work.

We believe that it is very important not to confine the knowledge of the FRG's involvement with South Africa, to this country alone. We think that the South African people should know that the helicopters flown by the police are made in Germany; that the vans transporting them as prisoners or as arrested persons are made in Germany. It is also important for the people and governments of the Front-Line States to know that South Africa's future submarines are made according to West German technology and plans. We believe that our people should also know about those organisations that have strong reservations, and in fact oppose, any meaningful change in South Africa and in Southern Africa.

I am not suggesting that our churches, our Trade Unions and the mass professional and other organisations are not aware of what is going on. In fact, the added interest and the unbelievable amount of traffic of people between South Africa and the world, has made our people aware of the subtle and crude manoeuvres and intrigues of certain forces. It has also made our people aware that there are tremendous forces on their side, and against, Apartheid and Facism.

Our task is to continue and improve our work with friends in the opposition political parties, and make Apartheid, Racism and Facism, part of the political parties programmes.

It is necessary for the rank and file members of those parties opposed to Apartheid to understand that their support is not a favour to our people. That in fact, our struggle against this inhuman system is also their struggle. That our struggle is one also for democracy and peace.

We are grateful to the Peace Movement for having accepted this fact. South Africa's nuclear potential is a danger to all of us.

It's nuclear potential is also a baby of this country.

Our progress in Church circles and in the Trade Unions has also much room for improvement. We welcome their "preparedness to treat the A.N.C. as a factor" and to depart from their positions that they only deal with their "respective partners". We believe that it is important for us here to realise that this "principle" is not, I repeat not, accepted by our people at home.

We believe it is about time that the Trade Unionists and Church leaders of this country join or organise mass rallies and demonstrations against Apartheid and for support of our struggle; that they, more than before, go beyond petitions and letters regarding the inhuman conditions of their fellow workers and/or Christians; that they demand

(1) the release of our Church, Trade Union and other leaders,

(2) ^{the} ~~for~~ total support of the campaign to release our children and against the torture of our children and political prisoners.

I do not want to here, spell out in detail, what the Churches or the Trade Unions or any other mass organisation in this country should be doing. They know the situation better than most of us. Our task is to see that they go beyond verbal and so-called "private" protests.

Our people in South Africa have realised and are clear on the fact that their conditions and lives can only change with the destruction of Apartheid. The anti-Apartheid forces and the mass organisations must support our struggle with this fact as the basis of their activities.

We hope that your commissions will discuss some of these points and plan new activities and also strengthen the already successful actions taking place. Let us make 1987 a decisive year in the support of not only the South African people, but for the support of the people of Southern Africa. We must increase activities around the question of Namibia and for support of the legitimate representatives of the people of Namibia, SWAPO. We must increase our support of the Front-Line States and expose the human disaster that is taking place in that part of the world. This conference should seriously discuss the question of support for

the Front- Line States. We have to have a structure to coordinate and plan activities around this question.

We would like to take this opportunity to extend our thank and solidarity greetings to all anti-apartheid forces in this country. We would also like to greet and thank the anti-imperialist forces supporting the peoples of Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chile, Palestine, East Timor, Western Sahara and of course, our fellow freedom fighters and comrades in arms, SWAPO of Namibia.

We believe our slogan "Advance to Peoples Power" is both objective and apt for the present situation.

We are sure of your contribution.

Amandla Ngwethu!