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MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS COMRADE OLIVER TAMBO

TO THE RELAUNCHING RALLY OF THE ANC YOUTH LEAGUE
27-10-90 JOHANNESBURG

The Master of Ceremonies
Members of the ANC Youth League
Members of the National Executive Committee of the ANC
Comrades and friends

Compatriots,

As in 1944, you have converged from all parts of South Africa; you have come from the country side, towns, villages and cities; you came as the working youth, the unemployed youth, students and intellectuals to reclaim your birth right. You have come to renounce colonialism and reassert your humanity. You have come to perform a great and noble act. You have come to relaunch the ANC Youth League. I salute you on behalf of the National Executive Committee, the membership and the militants of the African National Congress, our entire people and indeed on my behalf. I want to reassure you of my spiritual presence in your rally, even though we are separated by thousands of miles.

Rarely have I been moved as I am today in sending a message of solidarity to a rally. Rarely has a single gathering ignited so much hope in the hearts of millions of our people as your august gathering has done today. We are moved and full of hope because you the youth of South Africa have refused and continue to refuse to succumb to slavery. Like your patriots and gallant forefathers, your love for your country and its people has passed the test of time. Those of us who were participants in the historic 1944 Youth League Conference, cannot but remember the important contribution that single gathering made to the development of our struggle. Many will recall that the ANC did not always have a Youth League. It was the youth of the 1940's who gave our movement its first Youth League and a militant programme of action which was adopted in 1949. It was the youth of the 1950's who took part in the defiance campaigns of the stormy 1950's. Ever since, our people have expected no less from their youth and our youth have obliged throughout these long decades.

Taking place as it does, on the eve of the momentous developments in the history of our country, the relaunching of the ANC Youth League inside South Africa bears eloquent testimony to the monumental victories our people have scored over the years. In this regard, we pride ourselves over the sterling contributions the youth have made towards the attainment of these victories. "Your contribution is already manifest in the changed and changing fortunes of the apartheid rule in the country." You have played and continue to play a decisive role in giving shape to the South Africa of the future. That future is no longer a dream of tomorrow, but the reality of today.

From the epic battles of Wankie and Sipolilo, to the historic Soweto uprising and recent times of the young lions, our youth have demonstrated an unsurpassed capacity and willingness to sacrifice in the name of freedom, justice and peace. It was in recognition of the all decisive contribution of the youth to the struggle that the NEC declared 1981, the Year of the Youth. Our intention then, as it is now, was, "To honour our Youth, to salute their heroism and their dedication to the struggle, and to provide them with better possibilities to accomplish their future tasks."

Our victories have opened up a new terrain of struggle; a front as full of possibilities for swift and decisive advances as it is laden with the chances of reversals.

We are therefore burdened with much more complex tasks than ever before. Even as we meet, the country is gripped in an atmosphere of fear, insecurity and lawlessness. Enemies of democracy and peace are spreading mayhem amongst our people. The carnage in the townships and elsewhere is aimed at undermining the peace process and destroying the ANC. The evil schemes of these criminals can easily succeed in a situation where we are not sufficiently organised on the ground.

We cannot allow the forces of the past to destroy the ANC at any time, least of all on the eve of our freedom. It will remain our principal task to rally all progressive forces to the defence of our people. In this regard, we need to pay attention to questions of organisation. As well as empowering us to defend our people better, our strength will enable us to carry the struggle forward and win our freedom.

Freedom is indivisible, and so must be the unity of all democratic forces. The ANC Youth League has the historic obligation to zealously promote and jealously defend the unity in action of all progressive forces. This we must do for the sake of our country, for the sake of its youth. We have survived these many decades of ruthless persecution because not for a moment did we ever lose sight of the necessity of defending our unity. We can win our freedom by fostering maximum unity amongst our people. Whilst it is important for us to strengthen the ANC Youth League and its mother body, we must at the same time look for co-operation and alliances with other progressive forces. Some of these may not have been identified with us in the past, but they have taken and are continuing to take steps away from apartheid. It is our ongoing duty to encourage and win them over to the side of the struggle.

In this regard, the ANC Youth League should open its membership to all South African youth, including those who formally belonged to apartheid structures. They too must participate in the process that must culminate in the liberation of us all. Apartheid has created an artificial wall of division between blacks and whites in the country. It is our responsibility to break down barriers of division, and create a country where there will be neither whites nor blacks, just South Africans; free and united in diversity. The fact that even the National Party has finally acknowledged the correctness of the ANC positions by opening its membership to blacks, must encourage us to redouble our efforts in uniting all South African youth, Black and White. We must form alliances with those not yet ready to belong to the same structures with us. Let us destroy disunity in words and deeds. Let us build a great South African nation.

The heavy political task falling on the shoulders of the ANC Youth League is not to be taken lightly. Our young people are looking up to you for leadership. It is your duty to provide this leadership by giving our youth the correct attitude to life in general and fostering a sense of responsibility amongst them. Those in need should feel our love, understanding and compassion. They should feel that we are their equals, and not their tutors and masters. There will be those who will approach our membership with an air of superiority. Let's meet them with humility, whilst matching them intellectually. Yes, we can be wise in knowledge and humble in approach.

Without discipline there can be no organisation, and without organisation there will be no struggle. Our ability to rise to one mighty contingent, our ability to retreat as an organised detachment depends on the discipline each and all of us is able to master and practice. Discipline has never been a point of weakness, rather it is a virtue to be emulated. Only through discipline can we remain a cohesive and combative force. If we are to succeed in our historic mission we should be able to integrate both individual and organisational discipline into our daily work. In the past, some of the youth have shown a propensity to breach rules of discipline. We need to be vigilant against this and take necessary corrective measures in order to advance our struggle.

We can never be truly free until we are able to govern ourselves efficiently. Our ability to feed ourselves, run the economy and raise the living standards of our people all depends on our national capacity to produce high quality personnel in all fields.

Because of the heinous crimes of apartheid rule, we are sure to inherit a country where the majority of blacks are illiterate. The African National Congress has always understood the centrality of education in our efforts to liberate ourselves.

When Bantu Education was first introduced in 1953, we opposed it with all our might. Our people rose in their thousands to protest this evil measure. In 1955 we enshrined the right to education in the Freedom Charter. In 1976 and ever since, our people have consistently demanded the right of every child to education. In 1979 we established the Solomom Lahlangu Freedom College in Tanzania. Our aim was to give our children the education that apartheid denied them in their own country. Additionally, we sought to introduce our children to a more humane education system; a system which not only teaches a child to love his or her country and humanity in general, but also to combine both mental and manual work without difficulty. Following our appeals, SO-MAFCO has come to symbolise goodwill and co-operation. As a result, we have succeeded beyond our expectations to give our children education.

As we move closer to a democratic society, the education front becomes the most important front of our struggle. It is the duty of the ANC Youth League, to open the eyes of the youth to this reality. In collaboration with specialised academic bodies, the Students Movement, the Trade Union Movement, Civic Bodies and other interested institutions, the Youth League should work out a detailed emergency plan aimed at resolving the education crisis. In this regard, the "Go Back to School Campaign" and the "People's Education Campaign" should be vigorously pursued. Let us set ourselves goals and be ready to struggle for their attainment. It is no longer enough to criticise. Our true value should be measured by our level of creativity.

Ours is a political struggle, being fought at many fronts and assuming different forms dictated by the objective situation we are confronted with at any given time. Today we are negotiating because our struggle has convinced the other side that it cannot win a war against the people. However, as recent events have shown, there are still many who believe they can stop our march to freedom. No one can stop a people from attaining their freedom once they have decided to be free. Let those who still hope to turn the wheel of history back be reminded that they have tried this before and failed. They are certainly bound to fail again.

The people of Southern Africa, Africa and indeed the world, have contributed and are continuing to contribute to make immense contributions to our struggle. The ANC Youth League should strive to forge and consolidate links with Youth Organisations the world over. There are many areas where the youth should co-operate and make this world a better place to live in. Even with the thaw between the super powers, the preservation of the world remains one of the thorniest problems of the day. Nuclear weapons of mass destruction are still a reality. All peace loving people must work towards the elimination of these weapons, which threaten the survival of the human race.

There are those, who like us, are still struggling for their own liberation. The Palestinian youth and others need your unwavering support for their struggle for national liberation. The youth of the underdeveloped countries need your solidarity in their struggles for survival against poverty and deprivation. The youth of the world need your support in their struggle to protect the world environment against man-made destructive substances. The youth of the world want to co-operate with you in education and cultural programmes. I have no doubt that in you they will find a willing and reliable ally.

I want to thank you most profoundly for the honour you have bestowed upon me, by relaunching the ANC Youth League on my birthday. This is a birthday present I shall always treasure. I can only hope that you have learnt something from these 73 years of my life. I shall be most pleased if you can disregard the wrongs I did and emulate the good. I am looking forward to meeting many of you in December when I return home. In wishing your rally all the success, I want to leave you with the words of one of our most outstanding leaders, the late Moses Kotane.

• In a statement to the youth of South Africa in 1968 he said: "At this hour of destiny your country and your people need you. The future of South Africa is yours and it will be what you make of it."

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

MATLA!

AMANDLA!