

PERSPECTIVES ON THE CURRENT SITUATION

THE ANC VIEW

Compatriots, friends and comrades,

In introducing, very briefly, the ANC's perspective on the present situation, I will inevitably be coming back to the central point made by my comrade (Pres. O.R Tambo) in his welcoming remarks. The present situation is complex, relatively fluid and full of challenges. It is a situation that more than ever underlines the timeliness and importance of our meeting together over the next three days.

Friends,

History sometimes moves very slowly indeed, with changes being scarcely perceptible. As we approach the end of the 1980s, looking back over this decade, and perhaps looking back another five years into the 1970s, there can be no doubt that we, in this region of the African continent, have NOT been living in one of the quieter periods of history. Over this time we have witnessed - or rather, participated actively in - a period of very rapid, large-scale changes as the process of national liberation and decolonisation has moved ever southwards.

Within these 15 years it is possible to distinguish a number of phases, each dominated by one or another major turning point. We believe that the present phase should be characterised as the "post-Cuito Cuanavale" phase. It was at Cuito Cuanavale in southern Angola that a very significant change in the balance of power became evident. It is a change that has rapidly produced in its wake a flurry of events - the New York Accords, the beginnings of an implementation of UN Resolution 435, and many other ripples and ramifications in all the countries of our region.

To understand our present situation, therefore, it is essential to understand the combination of forces that produced Cuito Cuanavale. Cuito Cuanavale was essentially a battlefield victory of the combined forces of Angola, SWAPO and the Cuban internationalists over the apartheid war machine. This defeat was itself directly related to several other factors :

* The growing international isolation of the apartheid regime - not least the international arms embargo. The still uneven international economic sanctions also contributed to Pretoria's defeat. An ailing apartheid economy is less and less able to sustain costly military adventures.

* Mass struggles in Namibia and in South Africa also played a major role in the defeat of the apartheid war machine in southern Angola. In the last period no fewer than 35 000 SADF troops have been tied down, occupying townships, black schools and universities in our country.

* And finally, another major feature that must be singled out is the moral factor. Increasingly the morale of SADF troops involved in an unjust, aggressive war of occupation in defence of the doomed apartheid system has affected their fighting ability. When even the white Dutch Reformed Church begins to question the justness of a war, then it is clear that the moral crisis has begun to sink fairly deep. We salute the role of white democrats in spreading an alternative vision for our country, and our region. And in particular we salute those courageous objectors who are defying conscription.

Friends and comrades,

It is very important to emphasise these factors that lay behind Cuito Cuanavale. It was all-round struggle, it was force, not a change of heart that brought Pretoria to the negotiating table on Namibia and Angola.

The importance of this emphasis is directly related to the situation within South Africa itself. The apartheid regime, with the help of its international allies, is attempting to turn military defeat into a diplomatic victory, a drubbing in southern Angola into victory at home. The essence of this initiative is precisely to suggest that the jackal has become a lamb. Using Pretoria's enforced presence at the negotiating table on the South Western sub-region, and using the impending change in the apartheid head of state, an intense campaign is under way. This campaign has as its primary objectives the lifting of international pressure on the regime, and the sowing of division and confusion in the ranks of anti-apartheid forces within South Africa, within the sub-continent, and in general within the international community.

This campaign requires clarity, resoluteness and creativity on the part of all of us who are committed to ending apartheid and ushering in a united, non-racial and truly democratic South Africa. In the first place we need to be very clear that the changed balance of forces in the south western sub-region of our continent, symbolised by the events at Cuito Cuanavale, does not apply - does not YET apply - within South Africa itself. Unquestionably the apartheid regime is in deep crisis within our country, but it does not yet have its back to the wall, it has not yet accepted the inevitable demise of white domination and oppression.

Although the regime has accepted the principle of one person one vote in a unitary system for Namibia, it has yet to be convinced, by pressure of course, that this basic democratic principle has any validity for South Africa. The electoral platform unveiled yesterday by the National Party represents a now familiar attempt to maintain white minority rule, while drawing in some "accepted" (accepted by whom, we wonder) black collaborators.

The jackal has not become a lamb. Consider, for instance the over 20 percent increase in military spending announced in the recent

budget. Consider also the regime's election campaign that has already opened up here in Lusaka in the last weeks. There have been bombings of our welfare office, random terrorist bombs in central Lusaka, poisonings of South African exiles, and the bombing of our clinic - used by ANC families and Zambian citizens alike. In previous years we have even had an attempt to bomb an ANC creche for pre-school children. These Lusaka election campaigns have become very familiar to us.

Friends and comrades,

You are well aware that those who are currently advancing the argument that Pretoria has had a "change of heart", are holding out the perspective of imminent negotiations. Is this a realistic possibility? And what is the ANC's view on the issue?

In the first place it is necessary to assert quite categorically that the ANC is not, and has never been opposed to meaningful negotiations. For negotiations to be meaningful they must, in the first place, be negotiations for the dismantling of apartheid and the installation of a truly democratic dispensation in our country. We cannot enter into a negotiating process whose only purpose is to stall, to buy time and alleviate pressure on the regime. We would be failing in our deep historical responsibility to the people of South Africa if we were to enter into a charade whose only result was the indefinite prolongation of their oppression and misery. This is a life and death matter - it is not a mere negotiating stance, it is not a bargaining chip.

The Pretoria regime, as we all know, is a past master in prevarication and delay - see the protracted, checkered career of UN Resolution 435. The regime has a long record of reneging on international treaties - see Nkomati - and of pulling the plug on international peace-making endeavours (witness the bombing of three Southern African capitals in order to scupper the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group initiative in 1985). We cannot simply ignore all of this stark evidence. In seeking some assurances that negotiations would indeed be meaningful we would, therefore, not be looking so much at the subjective factor in the regime's leadership - the wideness of the smile, the warmth in the handshake, the implied sincerity in the eyes. No - the only real guarantee for meaningful negotiations will be the degree to which the regime is isolated, the degree which it is under all-round objective pressure.

Negotiations can also only be meaningful in a situation in which free and unfettered consultation is possible between the people of South Africa, between all anti-apartheid forces. The ANC's conception of negotiations is thoroughly democratic. If and when negotiations become possible, we envisage all anti-apartheid forces sitting together united on one side of the table, confronting the present regime. There is no way in which the ANC could enter into secret, behind the door negotiations with the regime. We are certain that we enjoy the support and confidence of the

overwhelming majority of South Africans. That support and confidence is of the greatest importance to us, and we are not prepared to gamble or speculate with it.

Friends and compatriots,

Trips to Lusaka (even when they involve such unprecedentedly large delegations as the present) are no substitute for daily consultation and democratic process, on the ground at home. For this reason the ANC has consistently insisted that the regime must implement certain basic measures in order to create a climate that would, at least, be conducive to negotiations. These measures include :

- * the unbanning of all political organisations ;
- * the unconditional release of all political prisoners and detainees, and the suspension of security trials and the judicial murder of patriots ;
- * the lifting of the state of emergency
- * the withdrawal of troops from the townships

and

- * the unconditional, safe return of political exiles.

I do not wish to pre-empt the far richer and deeper discussion that I am sure will be conducted later in the commission on Negotiations. We look forward to hearing the report-back from this commission. But, since this is an important, controversial and topical question, let me reiterate our basic ANC position on this issue. The ANC is not, and has never been opposed to negotiations in principle. However, we believe that, at this stage, the regime is not remotely prepared to sit down and conduct meaningful negotiations for the abolition of white minority rule. We do not see the intensification of all-round struggle as an obstacle to the quest for a negotiated settlement. On the contrary, it is the only possibility.

The object of our struggle is not negotiations per se, but the eradication of apartheid. If this objective (which is not our's alone - it is an objective shared by the overwhelming majority of South Africans, and democrats the world over) - if this objective can be achieved through a negotiated process, so much the better. But it is only all-round struggle, all-round pressure, broad unity in action, and the maximum isolation of the regime that will produce a situation in which negotiations will become feasible.

This then brings us to the question of perspectives, how do we push forward ?

Friends and comrades,

The ANC believes that there are several complementary strands in the struggle for a free and united South Africa. Unquestionably the most important of these is the mass mobilisation and organisation of the oppressed and democratic masses. Very important gains have been made on this front in the last years - in particular, with the formation of the UDF and the giant trade union federation COSATU. Although many of these mass democratic formations have been badly hit through mass detentions, death squads, vigilante assassinations and general repression - they have weathered four years under a state of emergency. In some notable cases they have actually strengthened themselves.

Another major complementary strategy is the armed struggle. No oppressive regime has ever given up power voluntarily. There are few, if any, historical examples of the defeat of such regimes in which the armed factor has not played at least some role. For our part, we did not embark upon this component of our broad struggle lightly ...

Friends and comrades... do I really need to repeat once again what we have said so often in the past? In Lusaka I am spared the privilege of being able to watch the daily bulletins of the SATV, but I have a feeling that those of my compatriots who are not so lucky will urge me, yes, that we cannot repeat often enough the basic facts in this regard...

So, if you will bear with me: It is a matter of historical record that for half a century the ANC pursued every form of non-violent struggle from deputations and petitions to mass defiance. The only reply we received from successive white minority regimes was obstinacy and massacres.

Today (regretfully) we remain convinced of the absolute necessity of pursuing our armed struggle. As a result of much heroism and self sacrifice, and despite many difficulties, the cadres of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the core of our People's Army, have succeeded over the last years in escalating the armed struggle, and in deepening the quality and strategic significance of their actions. This year MK has conducted successful operations against the Natal Command Officer's Club, and the Nataliahof police residence in Durban; the Municipal Police and Kitskonstabel bases in Kattlehong; the Municipal Police base in Dube; and attacks on police patrols in the Witwatersrand, Eastern Cape and Natal. The most notable MK action this year occurred last month, in the early hours, when a 21 strong unit of MK attacked a strategic military base near Slurry in the Western Transvaal. The base houses 3 Satellite Radar Station, a key SA Air Force installation which is responsible for monitoring air movement in Botswana and controlling SAAF fighter planes operating within 500 kilometres of Slurry. It is also the garrison for the enemy's troops currently occupying Bophuthatswana. So far this year, MK actions have resulted in at least 22 SADF and SAP personnel killed and 80 injured. During the same period no

civilians were killed, and three were injured.

The armed struggle needs at all times to be subordinated and directed by our political objectives. For this, among other reasons, the building of a strong ANC political underground remains another major strategic objective.

Yet another important strategic component of struggle is the international campaign for the isolation of the apartheid regime, and its economic, cultural, technical and sporting support structures.

Compatriots, we are proud of the remarkable achievements on this front. We believe that our liberation struggle enjoys an unparalleled international solidarity. At the same time, there should be no room for complacency. There are still some powerful (albeit often closet) international supporters of the regime. We need to ensure that the regime's isolation is intensified, and here April 1990, the date for the re-negotiation of international loans, is an important dead-line. We must do everything to ensure that apartheid is not bankrolled back into a semblance of health.

These, then, are the four main strategic components of our struggle - mass mobilisation, the armed struggle, the political underground and international solidarity. These are what we have come to call the four pillars of our struggle. But there is a fifth pillar which is complementary to the all the others. It is a pillar that has assumed growing importance. This is the strategic objective of forging the broadest possible alliance of anti-apartheid forces, to isolate the regime, not just internationally, but INTERNALLY. And here, in particular, political work within the white community is of the greatest importance. For this is the community which historically has been the major social support base for the regime.

Today, more than ever before, the white community is deeply confused, uncertain, even demoralised. This presents real possibilities for detaching growing numbers of whites, at least from an unquestioning support of apartheid and white minority rule. It is a challenge to which the Five Freedoms Forum has already responded with intelligence and creativity. But it is a challenge that we must all take up, and to which we must respond with an ever greater sense of urgency.

Friends and comrades,

Another relatively unique feature of our national liberation struggle has been the fact that, down the decades, significant numbers of whites have stood shoulder to shoulder with their fellow countrymen and women in the struggle for freedom, braving ostracism

from their community, and facing repression. On the roll of honour of martyrs in our struggle there are outstanding white comrades - among them Ruth First, Jeannette Schoon, Dr Neil Aggett and David Webster.

I think it would be appropriate for us to observe a moment's silence for David Webster of the Five Freedoms Forum, and for all those who have died in the struggle...

In remembering our martyrs, let us remember that non-racialism is, for us, not an abstraction, it is not some vague and distant goal. It is a living principle, forged continuously in shared sacrifice, in united and determined action.

The Five Freedoms Forum comrades will know better than we that a persistent question asked by whites is : "What guarantees do we have that there is a future for whites in South Africa ? Will we not simply be overrun by a black majority ?" Of course, there are some who ask this question in bad faith. They want the sort of guarantees that will simply perpetuate white privilege and domination. But there are certainly many, many whites who realise that matters cannot continue as they are, but who are genuinely fearful of the future. It is a fear born of decades of disinformation, racist propaganda and ethnic isolation.

To those who, in good faith, want "guarantees" let our answer be the living example of our active non-racialism, of our unity of purpose, of our ability to unite in action (whatever differences of strategy there may be), against the common enemy of our shared and beloved motherland.

Amandla ! Maatla !